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# Woman foils armed robbers

## Cops set trap after former chief executive became target of attack



ARSENAL: The R-4 and R-5 rifles, left, and handguns found by police.

SHAUN SMILLIE

**I**N A TOWN that doesn't see much in the way of violent crime, they came armed with R-4 and R-5 rifles – their target: a prominent South African businesswoman.

But the four men who had planned to rob former Billabong South Africa chief executive Cheron Kraak's Jeffreys Bay house never got there, thanks to a joint operation that involved several police units and a private investigator and his team.

The men, all from outside Jeffreys Bay, were arrested after a high-speed car chase during which they tried to kill the undercover operative who had led them into the trap.

The ordeal had begun days earlier, when Kraak received information that she could be the target of a house robbery. "I didn't know what to do, so I turned to a private investigator," she explained.

The private investigator was Christian Botha, who is based in East London. After arriving in Jeffreys Bay, Botha's employee was able to make contact with the gang and infiltrate it.

The gang had shown interest in how much money Kraak had in her home, and the operative said he could help them.

"What happened was that our informant arranged to meet them at 6pm and then take them to the house," said Botha.

But behind the scenes, Botha, together with the police, had arranged that they would intercept the heavily armed gang in an isolated part of Jeffreys Bay.

The spot was chosen so that if there was a shootout, there would be little chance of bystanders getting caught in the crossfire.

Botha's undercover operative, who he doesn't want named, would be in a white Toyota Quantum with the robbers.

Police spokeswoman Inspector Gerda Swart said: "The information we had was that they had firearms, but we did not know what they had. But it ended up being the right decision at the right time."

Not far from Kraak's house, police tried to force the Quantum to stop. A high-speed car chase ensued. As they drove, the robbers threw their firearms out of the vehicle.

"They turned on my agent, and



FOILED: Jeffreys Bay police, with the help of an informant, arrested four suspects who were on their way to rob businesswoman Cheron Kraak.

started saying 'You cheat, you cheat'," said Botha.

The operative was able to jump out of the car, just as police were bringing it to a stop. He wasn't injured.

Police stormed the vehicle,

handcuffed the men and laid them out next to the van. What they found lying further down the road startled the local police force.

There were R-4 and R-5 rifles with full magazines. Also collected was a Z88 automatic pistol and a

handgun police have yet to identify. The serial numbers were filed off.

"This is a different kind of crime, I have never seen criminals here so heavily armed," said Swart.

All the firearms were stolen – the R-4 was traced to a security

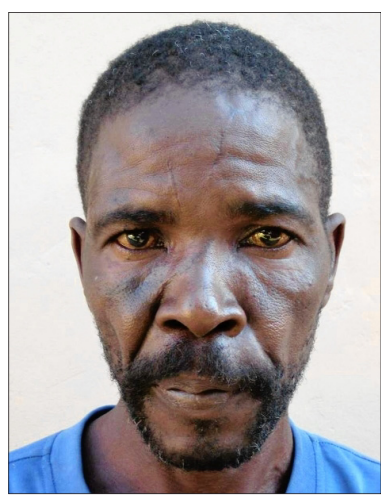
company in Joburg, and the R-5 was owned by the ex-Transkei military or police. The men were aged 23, 24, 28 and 40, said Swart.

The four are scheduled to appear in the Humansdorp Magistrate's Court tomorrow, facing charges of attempted

robbery and illegal possession of unlicensed firearms and ammunition.

"I was staring out at the sea this morning, it was quite a surreal experience, I could be dead. I really think they would have killed me," Kraak said yesterday.

# DNA samples the key in rapid conviction



SERIAL KILLER AND RAPIST: David Randitshene

ALEX ELISEEV AND LOUISE FLANAGAN

**I**N THE fastest serial murder and rape trial in South Africa's history, a man who terrorised a township in Modimolle, Limpopo, was convicted and sentenced in just two days.

It took only three police witnesses to secure a massive sentence of 26 life terms, plus 220 years imprisonment, against David Randitshene, who attacked 17 girls, a boy and a woman over a period of four years.

The man whose unit assisted local detectives in the case, Professor Gerard Labuschagne, called the speed of the trial a "strange turn of events", considering the 45-year-old killer had pleaded not guilty.

His undoing, however, was admitting DNA evidence collected by the police during another first: the largest mass DNA screening ever carried out in a South African police case. During the DNA tests, 543 samples were tested, and eventually produced the single match that led to Randitshene's arrest in May last year.

Labuschagne explained that the first scene his investigative psychology unit was called out to revealed two bodies, one recently killed and the other decomposed to a skeleton.

Knowing that serial killers often used the same dumping ground, a task team was set up to search for a serial killer.

Police gathered DNA samples from the small Phagameng commu-

nity under siege, hoping the killer lived among them. They had 12 cases (murders and rapes) where DNA evidence pointed to the same person – all they needed was that person, Labuschagne said.

Eventually, in April last year, a match led them to a neighbour of one of the latest victims. "We knew the township was small and serial killers often work in their own areas," Labuschagne said.

Randitshene lived with his wife and has three children. According to police profiling, he has a Grade 5 education and was an unemployed bricklayer and farmer. Police had previously arrested other suspects, but released them due to lack of evidence. The first day of the trial was taken up by the testimony of

the investigating officer.

The second saw a trial-within-a-trial over the pointings-out that Randitshene made within days of his arrest – during which two officers gave evidence.

The State prosecutor, advocate JP Marais, had lined up 113 witnesses but needed only the first three. "We started yesterday and we finished today," he said. "He made all the admissions (89 in total) I sought."

Yesterday, Randitshene was jailed by Judge Roger Claassen, of the Modimolle Circuit High Court.

Marais, who has convicted other serial killers, said the sentence – for 46 counts – was a personal best. Randitshene will be eligible for parole in 35 years, when he is 80.

# Harsh ruling after rugby 'bloodgate' scandal

**LONDON:** Former Harlequins director of rugby Dean Richards has been banned from coaching for three years by an independent European Rugby Cup disciplinary committee in Glasgow.

The ban, imposed for Richards's role in the Harlequins "bloodgate" row, applies to European competitions, but the ERC will request that, in line with standard rugby union policy, it applies worldwide.

Tom Williams, the player at the centre of the scandal, saw Monday's hearing reduce his 12-month playing ban to four months.

Team physio Steph Brennan, now working for the Rugby Football Union, England's national governing body, was banned from European competitions for two years.

But team doctor Wendy Chapman was again cleared of wrongdoing, as she had been at the initial hearing.

Harlequins saw their fine increased from €250 000 (R2.87 million) to €300 000. This is now to be paid immediately in full, after 50 percent of the initial fine was suspended.

Ex-England No 8 Richards resigned as Quins boss last week following the fallout from the incident where Williams used fake blood during a European Cup quarter-final against eventual champions Leinster in April to create the appearance of a cut in his mouth in order to allow a substitute onto the field. Williams was banned in July by an initial ERC hearing which

cleared Richards, Chapman and Brennan.

But the verdicts on the three officials were challenged by ERC disciplinary officer Roger O'Connor,

“We will continue with our internal review”

while Williams appealed against his year-long ban.

It had still to be announced whether London-based Harlequins would remain in this season's Euro-

pean Cup, northern hemisphere rugby union's premier club competition, or be expelled.

Williams's reduced ban and English Premiership Harlequins' increased fine are not subject to further appeal through the ERC.

A Harlequins statement issued after Monday's hearing said: "Whilst the club are pleased that Tom Williams's ban has been reduced, we feel this is a very significant penalty in terms of a fine."

"We will now continue with our internal review into all aspects of the business to ensure that we have the most stringent compliance and robust policies and processes in place throughout the club and work towards rebuilding our reputation on and off the field."

"We hope the club can now draw a line under what has been a difficult few months, learn from it and move on."

Richards, 46, who guided Leicester, the club where he made his name as a player, to two European Cups and four English titles before being sacked in 2004, helped Quins bounce back from relegation to English rugby's second tier to runners-up last term in the Premiership's regular season.

Williams was found guilty of faking a blood injury so he could be replaced in the closing minutes with his side trailing 6-5 by New Zealand goal-kicker Nick Evans, a move that failed with the Kiwi unable to land the points that would've seen Quins to victory. – Sapa-AFP

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