

Improved safety for border-lying communities

The police's Operation Vala Madi is making headway in preventing cross-border crimes in Limpopo, with two smuggling suspects recently arrested.



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The operation is targeted at the areas along the borderline between Phafuri, Beitbriedge and Pontdrift.

Members of the Tactical Response Team, Public Order Police Unit and K9 Unit -- supported by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) -- intercepted a Range Rover valued at R900,000 en route to Malawi. The driver was arrested and an amount of R30 000 was found in his possession, Brigadier Mottafela Mojapelo said on Thursday.

The team also recovered a vehicle that got stuck in the middle Limpopo River. The vehicle, a white Mercedes Benz, was stolen in Durban and it belongs to a renting company. It was being smuggled into Zimbabwe by a 28-year-old suspect.

The arrested suspects will appear in the Musina Magistrate's Court soon.

Mojapelo said other suspects in a Ford Ranger were intercepted when they were about to cross the Limpopo River. However, the suspects fled into the bushes when police pounced on them.

In addition to this, three more vehicles were also recovered along the N1, north of Musina, during the operation.

“Some of these vehicles belong to rental companies. The police will continue to operate at all identified areas to close the routes that are being used by criminals to smuggle stolen vehicles north of our borders,” Mojapelo said.

In December, the operation intercepted a stolen vehicle that was being ferried across the Limpopo River.

Police Minister Fikile Mbalula said he is encouraged by the success of this operation, as it will go a long way in the fight against crime.

“I am highly motivated by the work of the SAPS and its units in our fight against crime. With the recent major drug bust in Soweto and this operation, police are squeezing the space of the criminals. They must not feel safe at our borders,” said Minister Mbabula.

He said there will be no retreat as police will not compromise their radical approach towards criminals.

“We are squeezing the space and our operations are focused on wanted criminals. We will redouble our work and intensify our efforts. We have no time to waste.”

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