

KERNEELS



Gruesome Farm Murder

Ottosdal – Saturday (29 April) a beloved farmer of the Ottosdal district (between Klerksdorp & Delareyville), 49-year-old Andre van der Merwe was brutally murdered on his farm Gestoptefontein, and dragged behind his bakkie for about 1.2 km's.

This is the second farm murder for the Gestoptefontein farm. In 1995, Willie Scholtz (72) was gunned down 20 metres from his farm house. In the Delareyville district, not far from Ottosdal, farm attacks are a grim reality.

Thabo Motloko (25), Dithathang Kwakwa (29), and Shadrack Thapelo Smith (29) appeared briefly in the Ottosdal Magistrate's court on Tuesday morning (3 May 2011). The case was postponed to the 10th of May, the day on which van der Merwe would have turned 50.

The family of both the accused and the late Mr. van der Merwe was present at the hearing. Farmers and members of the community flocked to the court in expressing their loss, praying for the loved ones of the deceased and for the safety of the community.

Black people and white people gathered in front of the court to pray. The community members were led in prayer by Rev Wessels and Moruti Modishe.

The 49-year-old farmer who lived alone on the farm was overpowered by three suspects. "At about 8pm three suspects entered the farmer's house... They held him at gunpoint while they ransacked the house for money," Brigadier Thulani Ngubane said on Sunday.

Allegedly they shot Mr. Van der Merwe with an illegal fire-arm four times, once in the back of his head, in the chest as well as in his face. The suspects then took the farmer's bakkie, a Toyota LDV, and dragged him behind the bakkie for about 1.2 km's.

On the Ottosdal/ Delareyville road the vehicle overturned where one of the suspects was dis-

covered by the police in the vehicle and arrested, which further led to the arrest of the other two suspects. According to Ngubane his body was still tied to the Toyota LDV when police arrived on scene.

At this stage it is suspected that some cattle on the farm and an unknown amount of money were stolen during this gruesome ordeal.

The SAPS are investigating a case of murder, house robbery, theft of a motor vehicle, stock theft and the illegal possession of a fire-arm. More charges may be added depending on the investigation.

Comments from interested parties: Mr. Pieter Groenewald, chief spokesperson on Police for the Freedom Front Plus and leader of the party in the Northwest, says; "The cruelty of the farm murder is shocking and should force the government into action to take real steps."

"The Freedom Front Plus expresses its sympathy with the Van der Merwe family and applauds the police and farming community for their quick action in apprehending the attackers. Farmers increasingly have to organise themselves to ensure their own rural safety and the government should in the least assist them financially for doing so," he added.

Extract of memorandum handed to the police in front of the public at Ottosdal court by Paul du Plessis: "ADDRESS TO: STATE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA HEAD OF POLICE... 4. To restore the death penalty for murder. We want to assure you that our community prayed for this country and the government this morning in Ottosdal. We pray that you will attend to these matters as soon as possible. May God give you wisdom and strength in leading this country!"

These individual, "familiar barbaric" acts is petrol to an already raging fire – one that should not have ignited in the first place.

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