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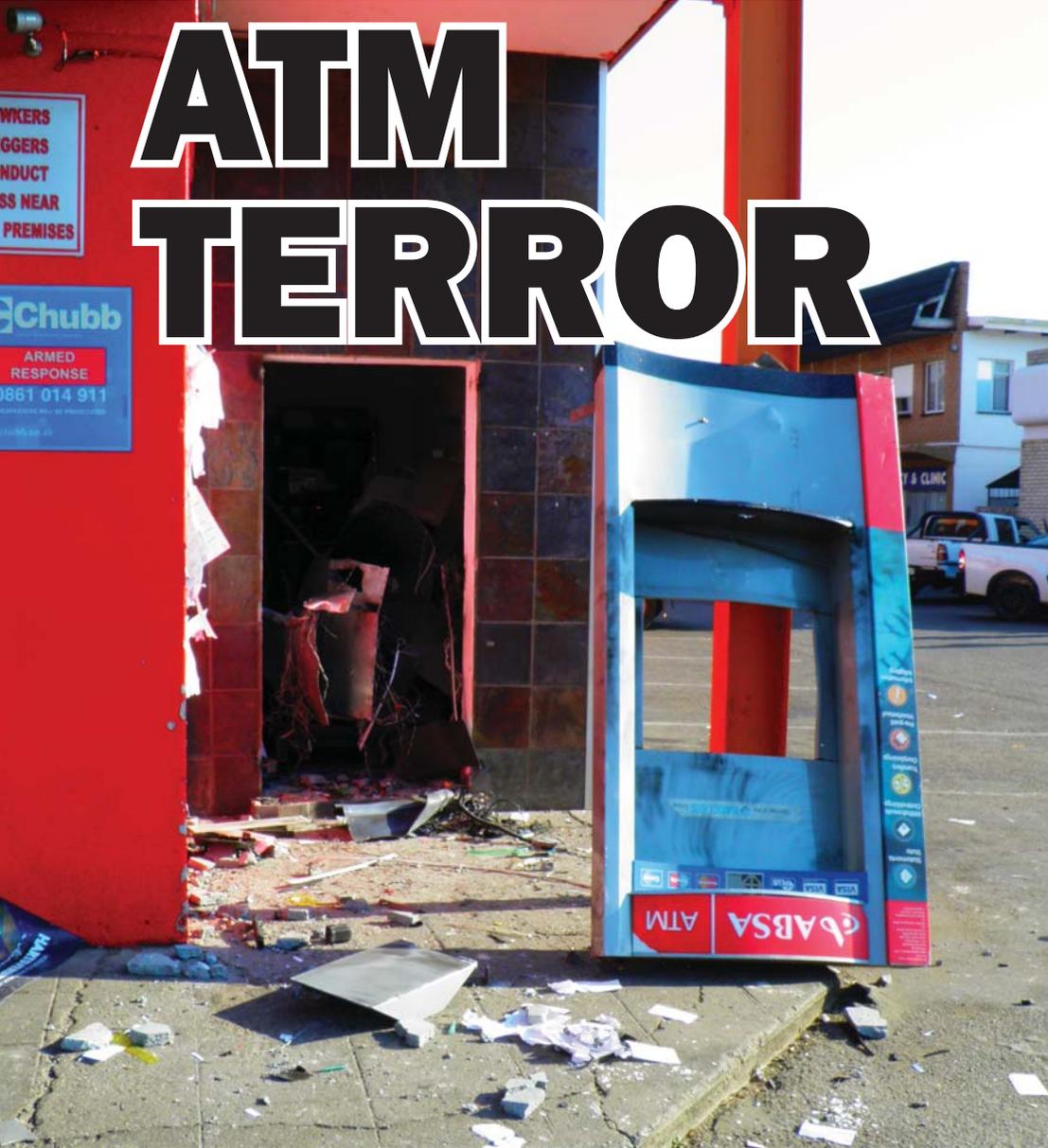
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ATM TERROR



Rustenburg - A scourge of ATM bombings has hit the North West Province and Gauteng, the likes of which has never been experienced before. Moreover, the gangs guilty of these crimes are a whole new breed; they are professional, ruthless and armed to the teeth.

As Bheki Cele puts it, "Criminals are not carrying feather dusters, nor mops and brooms when they go for an ATM bombing, they are carrying some serious firearms".

In what looked like a scene from a Hollywood action film, heavily armed men with R5s, stopped for "business as usual" at the ATM by the Omega Café on the corner of Kremetart and Klopper streets (Thursday, 14 July 2011).

It was easy to recognise that everything was planned to the "T". There was manned cars at every entry point to the scene. A charcoal BMW stood guard on the corner of Kremetart and Klopper streets, right next to Hyper Meat on the pavement and a white Golf 5 next to the Garage in Kruisbessie avenue. The 'men in action' arrived with a silver Mercedes Benz parked right in front of the Omega café.

One of the hoodlums went over to the Garage next door, ordering the petrol attendants to the floor. In two tics and a tango, very nonchalant, they wired the ATM with commercial explosives and a blast went off which could be heard blocks away. A cloud of smoke emerged from the scene... A lady staying nearby pressed her panic button. There were other witnesses also and of course CCTV, recording every gory detail. Security guards

from both ARS and Wesalarms who were in the vicinity, heard the blast and rushed to the scene.

At the corner of Kremetart and Klopper streets, ARS turned right and Wesalarms left, both of them straight into the firing zone. Without a second of thought, they were shot at. The ARS vehicle was fired upon by one of the hoodlums that got out of the Mercedes, whilst the Wesalarms vehicle was under attack from the purpottors in the BMW. A police vehicle who stumbled upon the crime, being called out on another case, was also shot at. It is only but by the grace of God, that not one bullet hit any of the occupants of the security or Police vehicles.

A top team of seasoned detectives are hard at work to track down these ATM bombers.

Beefing up security would not deter these criminals. Unless you can afford a security gang of about 12, armed with R5s or similar high powered rifles, you would be a sitting duck in a small war when the ... hits the fan.

They have declared war and we need to stand together to win ! Unfortunately there is another issue that sheds a different light on crimes like these altogether.

Last month a "most wanted" suspect Mabote Arnold Makgate, 31, connected with several cases of ATM blastings, was arrested in Silverton (Pta). What makes this case interesting is the mere fact that this dangerous criminal, facing seven cases, 3 of cash-in-transit, 2 of attempted murder and 2 of hijacking - was out on a bail of R1000 when he absconded.

That is the amount of the average traffic fine, or a night out in town. The SAPS is an easy target to blame for the state of crime in South Africa.

I think we must all focus one step further. Is it worth risking their lives to get dangerous criminals behind bars, just for them to be released back into the streets on a ridiculously low bail amount? That whilst Bheki Cele vowed that police will win the war against crime.

Members of the public are urged to give any information they have regarding ATM gangs. Police have warned that the men are "extremely dangerous, possibly highly trained and well equipped," and urged the public not to approach them.

Please pass on any information to Crime Line's SMS service at 32211 or phone Brigadier Ngubane at cell no 082 372 4511.

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