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TRUCK ATTACKS

Police make breakthrough with arrests in KZN and Mpumalanga

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POLICE have confirmed that the multidisciplinary team assigned to investigate the recent spate of truck attacks, in which at least 21 vehicles were set alight, has arrested two suspects linked to nine cases in Mpumalanga this week.

In KZN, Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube said the suspects were arrested after they were taken in for questioning.

Dube-Ncube said she was not sure whether the suspects formed part of the 12 people of interest announced by Police Minister Bheki Cele in a briefing on Wednesday.

She was speaking during a post-Cabinet media briefing yesterday.

The premier, who was accompanied by Education MEC Mbali Frazer, Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs MEC Siboniso Duma, and Human Settlements and Public Works MEC Sipho Nkosi, gave an update on the outcome of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday.

In a statement issued by SAPS on Thursday, national spokesperson Athlenda Mathe said the team made

their first two arrests in Mpumalanga yesterday morning.

Mathe said the two men, aged 29 and 27, were arrested at their place of residence.

"The first suspect was arrested on a farm in Piet Retief, with the assistance of a private security firm, and the other in Ermelo. Both suspects face a charge of malicious damage to property," she said.

The National Commissioner of SAPS, Fannie Masemola, said the net was closing in on those behind the attacks.

"Police are hot on the heels of more suspects, which include the ring leaders of these sporadic incidents of criminality. Either they hand themselves over, or we fetch them ourselves," he said.

Masemola said the police would continue to monitor the situation, while across the country law-enforcement agencies continued to maintain their high density operations through roadblocks, stop-and-searches, and the tracing operations of the suspects.

On Wednesday, Cele said law-enforcement agencies had identified at least 12 people of interest linked to the widespread burning of trucks in

provinces such as KZN, Limpopo and Mpumalanga, where most of the incidents took place.

Early on Sunday, on the Van Reenen Pass area in KZN, six trucks were set alight by armed assailants who forced the drivers out of their vehicles.

On Sunday night, five trucks were torched on the N4 in Mpumalanga. On Monday morning, three trucks were burnt on the R547 in Lydenburg in Limpopo.

On Tuesday, three trucks were torched in Empangeni, followed by four more in Ermelo and Piet Retief.

The operations manager at ACSU private security firm in Mpumalanga, Bester Maree, said after circulating information about a suspect who was caught on camera, the firm received a flood of tip-offs, which led to it identifying one suspect through CCTV footage, and then apprehending him.

"A lot of information came in and we verified it, and around 12pm yesterday we apprehended the suspect caught on camera inside the truck, burning it."

Mathe did not rule out the possibility of more arrests after Cele identified at least 12 suspects on Wednesday.

