

# People run as robbers hit casino

Port Elizabeth – The Boardwalk Casino complex erupted in chaos shortly after midnight on Sunday morning after about 14 armed men robbed it of more than ZAR 250 000.

Frantic casino visitors ran for cover after a group of six robbers walked out of the casino with the money, firing shots.

While three of the armed robbers covered the entrances to the complex and another two waited in the getaway cars, about six stormed into the complex shortly after 01:00. They bent open the security bars of the cash desks to reach the money, said investigating officer inspector Kanna Swanepoel.

The robbers apparently entered the casino by threatening two security guards at the entrance with a gun.

## Getaway cars found later

Within three minutes the robbers had stuffed their bags with hundreds of thousands of rand and walked out of the building. Once they were outside, security guards and even a few clients tried to follow them, said an eyewitness, Christopher Burisch.

Meanwhile, officials of Atlas security on a routine patrol were in the parking lot when the robbers entered the complex.

„The officials heard over the Boardwalk’s security radio that there were armed robbers inside the casino. Shortly afterwards the three robbers guarding the entrances ordered them to hand over their firearm and the Atlas radio. They were told to lie down on the ground,“ said Monty Montgomery, Atlas’s operational manager.

The robbers turned around to go to one of the getaway cars, a black Corsa bakkie. At that moment one of the officials jumped

up and ran in the direction of the film theatre to find shelter.

„The robbers fired four shots. These were the first shots during the incident,“ said Montgomery.

While the rest of the robbers, the casino security guards and guests fled, more shots were fired, said Swanepoel.

„They jumped into the getaway cars, the bakkie and a BMW, and drove through the boom gate.“

The police and more Atlas officials arrived minutes later.

### **Call came too late**

According to Mervyn Naidoo, the Boardwalk's manager, the casino officials pressed the emergency button while the robbers were still inside the casino.

Montgomery was of the opinion that the button was pressed later. „The emergency call reached us later after the robbers had left the building. If we had received it earlier, we might have caught them.“

The robbers' getaway cars were later found in 5th Lane, Summerstrand.

According to Swanepoel the robbers used the getaway cars to reach other cars, which had probably been parked there earlier on Saturday evening.

The getaway cars were stolen in Johannesburg. „There was a police identity card of a Johannesburg flying squad officer inside the bakkie,“ said an anonymous police source.

These vehicles were sent for forensic tests for fingerprints.

Director Ronald Koll, commander of the Humewood police station, said some of the robbers were clearly visible on the casino's security cameras.

Swanepoel said the cameras wouldn't be much use, however, as the robbers' hats were pulled down low over their eyes.

The police were investigating the possibility that the robbers were involved in other robberies elsewhere in the country. „They seem to be old hands at this type of robbery and we will pull records to see if they follow a pattern,“ said Swanepoel.

By late on Sunday no suspects had been arrested. (Bobbi Scheele and Riette Olivier)