



Peet Viljoen

Two lawyers on land fraud charges get R50 000 bail each

HANTLOTTO
COURT REPORTER

THE TWO lawyers accused of being involved in a multimillion-rand fraud scheme have each been granted bail of R50 000 by the Pretoria Regional Court.

Magistrate Adriaan Bekker found that Peet Viljoen, 41, of Silver Lakes, and Edwin Risimate Maringa, 40, of Roodepoort, were not flight risks, if certain conditions were attached to the bail.

The two lawyers were arrested on Thursday last week and appeared in court the next day with Dorah Madiso, 49, a property manager at

the Johannesburg Property Company (JPC) responsible for the transfer of council land, and two of Viljoen's employees, Ronel van Vuuren, 43, and Anelene van der Berg, 49. They are facing two charges of racketeering and 29 of fraud, involving about R39 million.

It is alleged that they were part of a syndicate that identified property of the City of Johannesburg's JPC.

Fraudulent documents were allegedly created, purporting to show JPC properties had been sold to a company or close corporation owned by Maringa. A sale contract would be signed between an oblivious buyer and the company or cc.

Payment for the property allegedly went into Viljoen's trust account, who also acted as conveyancer. The property was allegedly transferred in a fraudulent manner through the Pretoria deeds office.

The properties have a combined market value of more than R100m.

Bekker referred yesterday to State fears that the two men might intimidate witnesses, among them Wayne Africa, who was Maringa's office manager and turned State witness. Africa was fired.

The magistrate said this was merely speculation and a fear expressed by the investigating officer. "But there is no factual basis

(for thinking) that the accused will intimidate Mr Africa," Bekker said.

He said both men had assets and ties to South Africa. Although the court heard other charges were being investigated against them, they were not related to this case.

Also, Viljoen had not been arrested in connection with the other complaints.

Regarding Viljoen's financial predicament since the bank obtained a court order to sell his property in execution, Bekker said

the lawyer had indicated that he was seeking to have this order set aside.

He couldn't pay the bank what he

owed, which showed there were indeed financial problems, Viljoen had a business, employed 10 people and earned R230 000 a month.

Police had taken his files and he allowed them to search his property. "He probably knew something would happen soon. Yet he didn't flee."

There was also no real basis to believe that Viljoen would destroy evidence or influence others who might be arrested, Bekker said.

Among other allegations of threatening behaviour by Viljoen was that two men obtained an interim protection order against him.

The order had not been made final and had lapsed, Bekker said.

Also, Viljoen had acknowledged being involved in an altercation with James Dalton about Viljoen's dog. It has been alleged Viljoen took another man with him and told Dalton this man would "f--- him up".

Noting the State had argued that Viljoen seemed to be prepared to revert to "these tactics" to attain certain goals, Bekker said none of these incidents had led to criminal cases and they totally differed from the current matter.

"The accused knows if he ignores bail conditions, there are other remedies," Bekker said.

