



Breakthrough in Kiran Exports tiger kidnapping investigation

On Friday, August 2nd 2013 the Antwerp authorities announced a breakthrough in the investigation of a tiger kidnapping that took place on October 11th 2012 in Antwerp. At that time, three men entered the home of an employee of the Indian diamond company KIRAN BVBA. While the man's wife was kept hostage, he was forced to empty the vaults of the Kiran offices in the Hoveniersstraat in the Antwerp diamond district. The total value of the stolen diamonds was estimated at US\$ 13 million.

Police investigations now indicate the tiger kidnapping could be staged by the alleged victim, employee of KIRAN BVBA. The authorities believe the man was aided by a middle-man of Indian origin, who in turn hired an Armenian accomplice to execute the tiger kidnapping. The Armenian accomplice collaborated with two Chechen men.

Between July 22nd and 29th 2013, five persons were arrested in connection to their alleged involvement in the case, the prime suspect - a 27-year-old employee at KIRAN BVBA -, a middle-man - a 29-year-old man of Indian origin -, and three executors - a 48-year-old Armenian and two Chechens of 30 and 43 years old.

Four of them are currently in custody and are said to have confessed to involvement in the case.

The alleged middle-man of Indian origin was arrested at the Dutch airport Schiphol on July 30th 2013, procedures to extradite the man to Belgium are currently ongoing.

A large part of the stolen goods, estimated at a value of US\$ 8.5 million, was recovered during a raid in Antwerp on July 31st.

Former diamond dealer Ramesh Mehta from the Indian community in Antwerp commented; "This is a good thing for Belgium. Our threats to move to other diamond centres were unfounded. We were shocked by the fact this young woman was held hostage for hours. Now we are even more shocked to find out her own husband staged the whole thing." *Source: Het Laatste Nieuws, August 3rd 2013.*

Statement AWDC : progress in the investigation of the tiger kidnapping Kiran Exports – 2/8/2013

"We can not comment on individual cases but from a general perspective, we are very pleased with the progress that is made in the investigation. As the representative organization of the Antwerp diamond community we invest heavily in the security levels of the Antwerp diamond industry and we will continue to do so in the future. The AWDC Security Office anti-tiger kidnapping program, tailor made for the Antwerp diamond companies, is a perfect example of that approach.

A tiger kidnapping still remains an exception. The past three years, only two tiger kidnappings took place in Antwerp, including this case. The efforts towards security, prevention and the intensified collaboration with other authorities clearly pay off.

We are surprised and appalled to learn that an employee of the concerning diamond company might be involved in this case, especially seeing how confidence is a crucial element in the diamond trade."

Diamonds love Antwerp