

Sandton Rambo Cop put a bag over my head, assaulted me

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Alleged Sandton Knife Gang leader William Lehasa has, for the first time, taken the stand in his own defence and claimed a police officer put a plastic bag over his head and beat him into confessing.

The assault, which "Big Spender" Lehasa hopes to pin on a detective with 17 years' service, allegedly took place after police raided his house last year while he watched an episode of Generations on TV.

The seven men charged with Lehasa - including five Alexandra brothers - were at the Wynberg magistrate's court on Tuesday as their trial-within-a-trial dragged on.

The gang allegedly broke into at least 18 of the most secure complexes in northern Johannesburg and used their victims' kitchen knives to torment and rob the families.

Lehasa claims that on July 11 Inspector Bruce Macintosh took him to a stretch of veld and assaulted him before taking him to Sandton police station, where he was booked into a cell.

Asked by prosecutor Adele Barnard how he was assaulted, he replied: "He put a plastic bag over my head while he was assaulting me."

Lehasa identified Macintosh as the police officer concerned.

Macintosh submitted to the court the contents of his logbook and occurrence-book records from the police station's holding cells.

The times did not match Lehasa's claims.

The records noted that when Lehasa was booked out of the police station, he had no injuries.

But Lehasa was adamant that he never pointed out any crime scenes, did not lead police to one of his co-accused (Simon Shilenge) and did not sign the police form informing him of his rights - although his signature is on the paper.

Questioned about his version by magistrate Renier Boshoff, Lehasa said: "That's what he (Macintosh) told the court but he wouldn't admit it; he assaulted me."

The trial-within-a-trial covers the arrests, searches and confessions of some of the accused. It was postponed to January 24 because one of the defence lawyers' witnesses could not make it to court.

Lehasa, Shilenge, Tsepo Foster and Quvane brothers Siphelele, Mluleki, Gigimane, Richard and Dumisane are charged with 21 counts relating to the bloody robberies.

During their alleged spree, one man was stabbed 17 times, and another lost two litres of blood and suffered temporary heart failure. An 18-year-old karate champion was allegedly stabbed in the back and hands.