

Supercar crash- cop drug bribe theory

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SUPPLIED

Audi R8 driver Areff Haffejee. Photo: Handout/Supplied

Johannesburg - Six months ago, Ashley Cerqueira was accused of having dagga in his car. He was pulled over by officers from the Sandton police station, beaten and pepper-sprayed.

After a week-long battle during which Cerqueira claimed the dagga had been planted, the police dropped all the charges.

Now friends and relatives of Areff Haffejee, who was killed when his Audi R8 V10 supercar slammed into a tree in Rosebank, Joburg, early on Thursday morning, are wondering if officers from the same station didn't do the same thing.

Crime forum eBlockwatch told The Star on Sunday it had been alerted to several incidents where police claimed to have found dagga after stopping motorists.



The wreckage of the Audi R8 is seen wrapped around a lamppost in Saxonwold, Joburg. Photo: Dumisani Dube
THE STAR

Constable Goodman Lubisi, of the Sandton police station, was killed in the car with Haffejee.

Police claim Lubisi and his unnamed partner found drugs in the car during their patrol at the corner of Grayston and Rivonia roads.

Lubisi had entered the Audi, while his partner had remained in the police vehicle.

Haffejee's friends told the Saturday Star that they didn't see any drugs at the scene, and that they had asked police officers about this. They believe there was never any dagga found in the car.

On the evening of Sunday, May 27, Cerqueira was driving from Montecasino and had turned onto Bryanston Drive when he was pulled over by a police vehicle. He was asked to step out of his car while his vehicle was searched.

He claimed he was accused of being drunk, even though he had not had anything to drink that night. He said he was asked for a bribe. He refused and began recording the conversation on his phone.



The wrecked remains of the Audi R8 in which the driver and a police officer were killed in a high-speed chase in Oxford Road after a small amount of dagga was found in the car. Photo: Dumisani Dube

THE STAR

The police allowed him to go, but as he was entering his driveway, he was again stopped by police. An officer allegedly tried to grab his phone, and he was pepper-sprayed and beaten.

Later, police accused him of having dagga, but CCTV footage, showed the police had not found anything against him. A week later, the charges of drug possession were withdrawn against him.

eBlockwatch, who alerted The Star to the Cerqueira incident at the time, called on the public to report allegations of police corruption in the Sandton policing area.

"We had many claims of police intimidation; a common trend is for police to get into the car," said eBlockwatch's Andre Snyman. "This is something that has been going on for years."

Snyman said the police often drive to an ATM, where the owner of the vehicle would be told to withdraw money from the machine.

He said it was also common for police officers to drive their alleged targets home, so that they knew where they lived and could use this information for intimidation.

"The idea is if they plant dagga or claim to have planted dagga, the person would think they are in bigger trouble and will be more willing to pay a bribe," Snyman said.

In another incident last March, he said a man travelling near Northgate shopping centre was stopped by police. Officers claimed that a chewing gum wrapper was drugs and threatened to arrest him unless he withdrew money from a nearby ATM.

On Monday night, police spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Lungelo Dlamini said that if people had information of police corruption or the planting of drugs, they must come forward.