

Global DNA Database News - South Africa passes DNA legislation

International Forensic DNA Community,

Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Affairs monitors the advancement of DNA database programs globally. We frequently advise foreign governments on DNA policy, legislation, law and standards. As part of our continuous effort to keep global forensic DNA community leaders informed of significant international DNA database developments, I am pleased to make you aware of the following:

South Africa has become the 57th country to pass criminal offender DNA database legislation/policy. President Zuma signed the legislation on January 29, 2014. Consistent with global DNA database trends, the new law will require most people convicted or arrested for crimes to submit a DNA sample. Also consistent with global trends, arrestee samples and profiles will be destroyed if not convicted.

The South African Police Services (SAPS) has worked hard during recent years to pass the legislation. The DNA PROJECT, a South African NGO was the lead public voice advocating for the legislation. If you know any of the leadership team from the SAPS Forensic Services (General Phahlane, Major General Shezi, Major General Ngokha) or Vanessa Lynch from the DNA PROJECT, I encourage you to send congratulations their way. Their leadership to pass this legislation was impressive.

The legislation is expected to be implemented over the next few years. SAPS currently has an impressive DNA casework infrastructure. Immediately upon passage of the legislation, SAPS started construction on new automated reference sample lines that will be capable of testing over 500,000 offender samples annually. Based on the scope of the legislation and SAPS' aggressive approach to DNA infrastructure and automation, South Africa is positioned to become one of the world's largest DNA database programs in the coming years.

The new DNA database legislation is welcomed news to crime victims throughout South Africa, as South African continues to have one of the highest sexual assault and violent crime rates in the world. As they stated many times during SAPS' recent forensic services conference, SAP is looking forward to enforcing this legislation to help solve and prevent crime in South Africa.

Listed below is an Associated Press article about the new law that received global coverage. Washington Post link provided http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/south-africa-to-fight-crime-with-new-dna-law/2014/02/21/b180d098-9afd-11e3-8112-52fdf646027b_story.html

As always, please let me know if there is anything Gordon Thomas Honeywell can do to assist you with your DNA database program.

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