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Attention: Andrew Salomon
SAHRA File no: 9/2/300/0023

REPORT: FIRST PHASE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS ON THE FARM DE VLUGT 340 (LINWOOD), CLARENS, FREE STATE

My CIA report dated 13 March 2007 in connection with the proposed developments at Linwood, Clarens, has reference.

BACKGROUND

Residential developments are planned at the farm De Vlucht 340 (Linwood), near Clarens, Free State.

The whole area is very rich in cultural and historical remnants from the Later Iron Age and Anglo-Boer War origin.

A number of circular and rectangular stone-walled structures were found on top of the hill and along the western slope below the ridge.

Surrender Hill nearby, is also famed for the nearly 4000 burghers from the Free Sate Republic, who capitulated there on 30 July 1900 during the Anglo-Boer War. Records claim that over two million rounds of Boer ammunition had been destroyed by the British forces at several places in the area after the surrender.

The sacred cave known as Mothuleng or Slaapkrans is located nearby. There is a very strong belief in the supernatural powers of this holy place and people

come here to be trained as Sangomas or to pray and sacrifice in honour of their ancestors.

During a personal visit to the site it was clear that there is an active presence of people from as far as the Eastern Cape and Gauteng who visit and stay over at the cave regularly. Even the number of people living at the site permanently is ever extending.

The recommendations in my original report (13 March 2007) were as follows:

1. Due to the great historical and cultural significance of the area, the whole region should be handled with caution.
2. There is a risk around the development of a relatively small residential area near the sacred cave as a cultural feature with an elaborate population.
3. A comprehensive survey to establish the viability and desirability of the developments in the whole area before any further planning.

DISCUSSION

Prof Phillip Nel, Head of the Department of Middle East Studies at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, is an expert on the sacred caves in the Eastern Free State. He has a vast experience of the dynamics of the cave at Mothuleng acquired over many years of close involvement.

Currently Prof Nel has several PhD and MA-candidates doing research at the cave.

During a recent discussion with Prof Nel, he shared the following views on the present situation at Mothuleng:

1. The number of people settling at the cave is increasing rapidly and residents are now even building huts outside the cave along the spruit.
2. Opposing groups are forming amongst the inmates.
3. Self-appointed caretakers are collecting entrance fees, resulting in a profitable money-making scheme.
4. Conflicting interests between different groups are developing over financial income and control of outsiders entering the site.
5. Unwanted elements have managed to sneak in and are creating a security risk by causing an escalation of criminality in the area.
6. Tension is growing amongst the inmates about the presence of researchers and tourists, (who sometimes enter the site without appointment or permission), during the execution of their sacred rituals and the training of traditional healers.

7. There is a growing risk that the situation might get out of control if nothing is done to regulate the current state of affairs.
8. A meeting of the main stakeholders, including representatives of the inmates, affected farmers, South African Police Services (SAPS), the Mautse Municipality and SAHRA (or PHRA?), is set for 10 February 2009.

CONCLUSION

1. It is clear that the atmosphere in the area is very sensitive at present.
2. For future relations the historical and cultural significance of the cave and surroundings should not be endangered.
3. My main concern is about the development of a leisure residential housing scheme, with visitors wandering about in relatively close proximity to the sacred cave, together with all the unwanted elements present.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The developers should temporarily stop any further planning of the project.
2. SAHRA ought to withdraw their proposal that a permit should be obtained and that test pits should be made at the stone-wall remains.
3. The application of minimum standards for site museums, as recommended by SAHRA, also seems unnecessary in this case.
4. The owner/developers should contact Prof Nel (051-436 1468), or the local farmer's union to obtain particulars about the forthcoming meeting.
5. The owner/developers should attend the meeting on 10 February 2009, to observe the attitude of the people and officials and only then make a final decision, either to continue or to terminate the planning of the development.

J. DREYER