The provincial commissioner of police, Hamilton Ngidi, has picked a task team of crime intelligence and bomb disposal experts to probe an arms cache that was found in Boston in the Midlands, KwaZulu-Natal, in Monday.

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Police went to investigate what they believed was a grave, but on closer inspection found the cache.

Police spokesperson Bala Naidoo said the investigation was launched after information was received about what appeared to be an open grave.

The bomb disposal unit found 17 M26 rifle grenades and 43 M26 handgrenades in boxes, he said.

Police also found an anti-personnel mine, three smoke grenades, four stoppers, one 60mm barrel mortar launcher and one 1 000-foot flare, he said.

Twenty-four magazines for various types of firearms were found. Two light machine gun bands, each containing 20 rounds, were unearthed.

Naidoo said 478 rounds of 9mm ammunition, 241 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition and 1 640 rounds of R-1 ammunition were found.

The cache had been removed by the bomb disposal unit for safekeeping.

Forensic experts would examine the grenades and packages for clues, Naidoo said.

The police were determined to establish the origin of the grenades and ammunition and would not hesitate to prosecute anyone responsible for burying the cache.

The national minister for safety and security, Charles Nqakula, announced an amnesty in 2004 for the illegal possession of firearms and ammunition.

The amnesty ends on March 31.

Naidoo urged people to take advantage of the offer and hand in illegal weapons, "failing which they will be dealt with severely in terms of the law on termination of the amnesty."

"The amnesty entails indemnity against prosecution for being in possession of firearms and ammunition illegally," he said.


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