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2017/10/24
Cape Town, 24October 2017

Chairperson and Honourable Members, thank you for the opportunity to present to you the Annual Crime Statistics for the 2016/2017 period.

I will give opening remarks and then I will invite the department of police and where necessary other officials, with your permission Chair, to present the actual numbers behind the headline numbers I will touch on, they will be assisting myself and Deputy Minister to provide you with all the information you may require today.

Chairperson, The National Development Plan’s Outcome 3 states that; “In 2030, all people living in South Africa feel safe, have no fear of crime, are properly served by the police and courts, and know corruption no longer eats away at their livelihoods.”

The annual crime statistics enable government, this parliament, civil society and our people to monitor key targets, in particular the reduction of reported serious crimes, as set out in the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). The statistics could also be utilized as early warning to strengthen crime prevention operations and strategies of various departments of Government beyond just the South African Police Service.

I wish to mention something important from the onset. I am aware that crime involves high emotions, rightly so. We must not see these statistics just as pure numbers. Behind the numbers are real feelings, real lives, real hurt, real harm, real losses, deaths, feelings of un-safety – these statistics represent the memory of that gruesome rape or murder, the fearful home invasion and loss of property. These numbers have consistently said no community can claim they live in safety and feel safe in South Africa.

Our people are losing their children from heinous crimes, drug gangs’ infighting for turf wars, our people have no go areas due to criminality and violence that visits such areas. In Vuwani, adults commit crimes of arson and harassment against little children intending to get an education.

I acknowledge that most our people live under siege from crime.

We must ask whether we have accepted to live side by side with violent criminals who literally emote terror across our nation, be it amavodo in the rural areas of Lusikisiki where this past Saturday we opened a new state of the art police station or the hard livings gangs across the Cape Flats.

We must ask – have we accepted to live side by side with violent criminals in our big cities where car jackings and home invasions are a common phenomenon.

We have no time to waste time. Crime is delivering terror and grave harm to our people and the economy.

I am aware that it is important to understand there will never be a victory lap until such time that our people feel safe and are indeed safe. Safe from crime, safe from fear of crime, in particular violent crime.

All this makes crime statistics a very important tool in the fight against crime. We simply cannot fight against an enemy we do not understand. We get to understand the patterns, the occurrences and types of crimes through these statistics so that we may plan accordingly.

The integrity of the crime statistics is very important and the public must trust that there are no numbers game or “clever accounting” taking place.

SAPS has entered into a formal and structured arrangement with Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) through a memorandum of understanding in order to integrate SAPS national crime statistics with the official statistics.

This arrangement entails the following:

(a) The use of common statistical standards;

(b) Adherence to quality criteria determined by the Statistician General;

(c) A commitment to building institutional statistical capacity to meet the  data requirements of government generally; and

(d) Adherence to the UN principles that guide the production of  official statistics.

The SAPS national crime statistics measure twenty-one serious crimes.

Seventeen of these crimes are reported by the community and the other four are detected as a result of police-initiated operations. Put differently, the seventeen crime categories are supposed to decrease, whilst the other four which are illegal possession of firearms and ammunition; driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs; possession of and dealing in drugs; and sexual offences detected by the police - are supposed to increase as a result of police action or detection.

The seventeen community-reported serious crimes have continually decreased during the last half of the ten-year period from 2007/2008 to 2016/2017 under consideration in this release of crime statistics for the 2016/2017 financial year.

However, the contact crime figures which generally reflected a fairly consistent decrease during the first half of the ten-year period under discussion have increased over the preceding three financial years. In the financial year under review a reversal is observed and a decrease was recorded.

Despite the decrease in this financial year, some of the individual categories such as murder and robbery with aggravating circumstances have over the past four financial years tended to reflect an upward trend.

Among the contact crimes, robberies are still of particular concern.

Robbery is not only considered a more policeable crime than the other contact crimes, but also increasingly considered as an important contributor to the other contact crimes. Allow me to make an example, a simple robbery because serious when a weapon is used in the process or when assault occurs or a murder or rape occurs during the said robbery. So robbery must be treated as serious focus area.

Some of the sub-categories of robbery with aggravating circumstances; namely the TRIO CRIMES (carjacking, house robbery and business robbery), including hijackings, which are to a greater extent organised in nature.

Analysis conducted by the national and provincial offices revealed that most of particularly the TRIO Crimes are organised crimes in nature and need a different approach to crime combating.

I have emphasized the need for intelligence led crime prevention and fighting plan. Division of Crime Intelligence should play a vital and prominent role in our approach.

Research has further shown that the majority of contact crimes are social in nature and occur among people who know one another. It is for this reason extremely difficult, if not impossible in some cases, for the SAPS alone to reduce or prevent the levels of such crimes.

This calls for structured partnerships with other stakeholders such as the Department of Social Development, non-governmental organisations, Community Policing Forums, Community Safety Forums and everyone in our society – each citizen.

Findings during preceding financial years and the current financial year’s analysis reveal that the role of alcohol, drugs and firearms in the commission of crime is predominant and requires multi-sectorial special attention.

Research findings not only indicate that a notable number of victims and perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the commission of particularly the social contact crimes, but also indicate the role of dependency on such substances as motivation to commit other crime – and property-related crime in particular.

I wish to emphasise the need to involve the society at large in campaigns to create awareness about the dangers of substance abuse and alcohol abuse.

In the financial year under review, 2016/2017, approximately 2.1 million serious crime counts were recorded, of which 1 738 980 were community-reported serious crimes. The latter decreased by 1.8% compared to the 2015/2016 financial year.

This decrease was driven mainly by reductions in all the broad crime categories, namely contact-related crime (3.3%), contact crime (2.4%), other serious crime (2.0%) and property-related crime (0.5%). The contact crime experienced a reversal from the 1.0% increase recorded during the preceding financial year.

Contact crime decreased by 2.4% in 2016/2017. The decrease followed upon increases during the preceding two financial years.

The decrease during 2016/2017 resulted in the figure for the 17 community-reported crimes decreasing to a level lower than three years previously when the figures started to increase.

Contact-related crime decreased by 3.3% in 2016/2017, following upon a decrease of 0.8% during the preceding financial year and an increase of 1.9% recorded during 2014/20015.
 Property-related crime experienced a decrease of 0.5% in 2016/2017. This follows upon decreases of 1.8% and 0.8% respectively during the two preceding financial years.
 Other serious crimes decreased by 2.0% in 2016/2017, following upon decreases of 4.1% in 2015/2016 and 2.2% during 2014/2015.
The crimes that are considered as indicators of the effectiveness of police activities, these are crimes detected as a result of police action, experienced a reversal from a decrease of 0.3% in the preceding financial year to an increase of 9.6%.

This increase is too small and are indicative of the lazy efforts by the police to detect such crime in order to make South Africa a safer place to live in. Police in this instance are letting our people down and I am here to stop it. Gauteng, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape must have increased police action.

When there is an increase in these sets of numbers – police action policing, it indicates more police work having taken place, we continue to do less here. We need to stop inertia and innovate.

We have cash in transit crimes going up – on the other hand the financial institutions are not investing properly in the high assets in transit. The armoured vans we see on our roads do not compare with serious armed vehicles we see in Europe in particular. SABRIX and banks must invest more in proper equipment and inform SAPS of high value cargo well in time for planning. Internal hiring in these companies must accompany deeper security vetting and continual lie-detector tests and other methods.

Banks must return the dye that assisted in slowing down the cash-in-transit crimes. Rendering the money useless is important. I am told that banks stopped using the orange dye because of costs. This is not acceptable.

Efforts to deal with the high levels of crime in the country continued to find further expression in several practical initiatives such as Operation Festive Season, Operation Paseka, Operation Fiela and Operation Coastal Dragon.

Successes achieved in this way should not only serve to encourage members of the Service in the performance of their duties, but also motivate members of the public to become positively involved in efforts to eradicate crime. I do wish to emphasize the words; “the public must be positively involved” in efforts to eradicate crime.

Honourable members, crime should be addressed by all of us as an issue of national interest and priority, we must not score political points over these issues and thus lose focus while criminals laugh at us as elected leaders of society.

Crime knows no race, no creed, no religion and certainly no social strata. The Deputy Minister Mkongi is not here because he has lost his nephew, Andile from a knife attack in Khayelitsha. We have Minister’s in this parliament who have buried their own children due to violent crime. We interact and meet many victims and their families. South Africa cannot continue this way.

We must ask whether we have accepted to live side by side with violent criminals. Is criminality a South African citizen itself? Our answer must be an emphatic and radical “NO!” – We must deal with crime in a radical and energetic way – our language must be clear and understood.

Let me remind you of what our former president Nelson Mandela taught us, he said; “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

When I send a message to these violent criminals that “bazowuchama bawuphuze”, I seriously mean it and I am communicating in the language that these violent men who rape and murder would understand. This may be isiZulu A – let me translate it into English, “violent criminals will receive a proportional response to what they dish out”.

When women marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 said; “Wathinta Abafazi Wathinta Imbokodo You Will Be Crushed” – they were communicating in a language that the violent criminal apartheid government would understand.

Today I am saying to criminal gangs; “Nilibambe Lingashoni – I am coming for you hard, enough is enough”.

Honourable members, this is not just talk. We are strengthening our capacity, we are appointing strategic thinkers in police management and stabilizing our Crime Intelligence Division to enable intelligence led crime prevention and policing. We have re-launched specialized units to focus on drugs, rape, violent threats and violent criminals. We are enhancing our technological capacity to match the evolved digital technology arena.

Importantly, I have directed police to focus on crime modus operadi to curb the multiplier effect of crime.

We are working with our partner departments to make sure that Correctional Service does not let criminals who are in our pending system out – We are working with NPA to make sure our dockets are speedily court ready – We are working with NPA to make sure we together vigorously oppose bail applications on rape and other high category crimes. We will focus on prisons to make sure this repeat offender phenomenon ends.

Social Development and Human Settlement are working with us to deliver safety to the vulnerable. Our approach is multipronged and extends to making sure there is adequate victim support and reduction of barriers to reporting crime – Our Six Point Plan is being auctioned in this regard.

As Minister, I have set out to deliver a police service which is professional, courteous, understands constitutional democracy policing and important I have directed that our approach should be that of de-escalation policing.

Upon getting these statistics, the president has demanded that we stop lamenting about the contributing factors to crime and he has instructed that we return back to him immediately with a plan and proposals on how we intend dealing with the issue of alcohol abuse, drug abuse and fire-arms. Minister of Health informed me that we are the 10th most drunkard nation in the world.

With a population of 56 million and growing, this is a serious worry and indeed we locate alcohol in the overwhelming number of crimes and violent crimes.

Indeed, crimes like car jackings today end up being cross border crimes where our people’s cars are being freely driven in Mozambique to Lesotho and beyond.

Yes, we have a 1.8% drop in crime, I do not feel it, and our people do not feel it and they are correct. We have a drop in sexual violence, but we have more and more pictures of our women going missing. People must feel the drop in crime where they live.

We have no time to waste time – We are still on the road towards safe communities.

SAPS have an acute lack of woke leadership from station level up. The customer service on our people is appalling. Batho Pele was just an event inside SAPS; it is not something management truly bothers with.

Police Stations and 10111 are the places at which service delivery begins. Police must treat our people courteously and with sensitivity. We agree with our people that much needs to be done to improve our front office services.

The #MyPoliceStation Campaign came about as a result of people being treated badly in police stations. Police treat our people as nuisance. Let me be clear, our people do pay for your living and they are your clients and customer as policemen.

Crime is general down but when you zoom into the numbers we have a big problem where violent crime is going up and there is no time to hide this. Our police are working under tremendous situations but are not led properly by management. Management must have strategic capacity or else we have accepted living with criminals as a part of life.

I now wish to invite Lieutenant General Mothiba and his team to present the 2016/2017 National Crime Statistics.

Hon. Fikile Mbalula, MP - Minister of Police