

080521
PC Safety

**PRESENTATION
TO THE
PARLIAMENTARY
PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
SAFETY & SECURITY BY SAPU**



**21 MAY 2008
CAPE TOWN**

1. Introduction

The Portfolio chairperson, members of the portfolio committee, members of parliament, the acting commissioner of police, ladies and gentlemen it is with great pleasure that we accept the invitation to make our submission to this committee for the 22nd budget vote. Comrade chairperson, let me take this opportunity on behalf of the South African Police Union (SAPU) to salute our men and women in blue for their dedication and sacrifice in protecting communities from people who are hell bent on terrorising them. The high crime levels which have not only impact on community members but also on our members is a serious cause for concern. As a union of choice, we are proud of our members who despite difficulties, continue to discharge their duties with courage, selflessness, and at times criticism because of crime levels we are experiencing in our country.

Comrade chairperson, let me take this opportunity to also make a few remarks about what we see as important in creating a safe and secure environment for all who live in this country. We believe that the time of empty rhetoric should come to an end and we simply need action. We have been encouraged by positive signals from government about policy direction in addressing the scourge of crime in South Africa.

2. Policy Direction of Government

Comrade Chairperson, SAPU is encouraged by the policy direction taken by our government particularly with regards to its commitment to revamping the Criminal Justice System and addressing the ridiculously high crime levels which have literally held our country to ransom. We are convinced that the fight against crime does not only require the SAPS but

everyone in this country. Crime combating or reduction cannot be achieved by the police alone but by a strategic partnership with communities, key departments such as education, social development, welfare, and civil society organisations.

Further we welcome, though with great reservation, the disbanding of the Scorpion Unit. We welcome any attempt to strengthen the fight against the crime and in particular organised crime. The Scorpion has scored successes in this regard and we have been encouraged by its ability to successfully prosecute any person irrespective of their status. Even more worrying comrade Chairperson, is the announcement that police officials joining the new specialized Directorate of Priority Crimes Unit will not be streamlined to match those from the concern. This is a serious cause for concern and it creates serious structural imbalance which needs to be corrected if we are to build a strong and united specialized unit. We are not concerned that people coming from the Scorpions are paid good salaries, we are concerned that members from the SAPS will be treated as inferior members in the new Unit. We call on this committee not to allow this happen as this might create a perception of superiority and inferiority within the Unit.

Comrade Chairperson, we are convinced that our men and women are doing a sterling job in creating a safe and secure environment for everyone in this country. We are also equally convinced that more can be done by changing the structural conditions which promote crime. Our members have to deal with issues that are beyond their capabilities. Comrade Chairperson, we are convinced that we need to come out with crime initiatives which target our youth. Various studies and our own experience show that young people are the key to addressing the crime

problem. It is a fact that young people in this country are both perpetrators and victims of crime and any effort which does not address this sector is likely to be less effective. It is for this reason that we are convinced that the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) of 1996 was the best ever crime strategy that this country has ever adopted. However the failure of this strategy was a lost opportunity to address the root causes of crime in this country.

3. Police Budget

Comrade Chair, we welcome the proposed budget and in particular the increase from the previous year. However, we have a responsibility as a responsible organisation to ask questions around the budget. We are concerned that there has been a significant increase in the budget for border policing when we have been made to believe that we will be scaling down our operations in favour of the Home Affairs' Immigration Unit. This duplication of services requires an integrated approach that will enable government approaches and strategies to talk to each other.

4. Strengthening Community Police Forums

The other important issue that we hope to highlight comrade chairperson relates to Community Police Forums (CPFs). We believe that CPFs are an important party to addressing the crime problem. However, for CPFs to be effective requires that there be a paradigm shift in the way CPFs have been operating. To a great extent, CPFs have been hamstrung by a number of structural problems, problems to do with lack of resources, and lack of clarity of their mandate. As an organisation, we are deeply concerned about the failure of many Community Police Forums (CPFs)

particularly because studies indicate that CPFs have been successful elsewhere in addressing the problem of crime. In this country, many CPF's have become a liability in the fight against crime hence a new approach is required. Part of this approach could require more resources to be given to strengthen the capacity of CPF to make a meaningful contribution in the fight against crime.

In his "State of the Nation address", President Thabo Mbeki set the tone for the country when he said that "it is business un-usual". We are also convinced that it cannot be business as usual in the SAPS given high crime levels that we are experiencing. The majority of people in this country are living in constant fear of becoming victims of crime. People are living like we are in a state of emergency and that is completely unacceptable. Further, in less than 24 months South Africa will be hosting the biggest and ultimate in sports entertainment, the soccer world cup. As an organisation we are convinced that a lot of work lays ahead towards creating a safe and secure environment for our people and those who will be visiting our shores.

5. Increasing Personnel

Comrade Chairperson, we welcome the increase of our police personnel. Already, our members are overstretched, over worked, but underpaid. We are convinced that a decision needs to be taken to pay police officials more than other public service employees. Notwithstanding the work of other departments, our members face being killed every day and every time they go out to work. However, research has shown that increasing personnel should always be accompanied by increasing management system and capacity in order to address occupational hazards that often

confront police work. It is for this reason that we remain convinced that the SAPS must put in place a system which will deal with corruption within the service. Given the size of our police service and the challenges our members face, we believe that such a system will assist in cleaning up the image of our organisation. Research clearly shows that communities are likely to gain confidence of our organisation if they see us doing something to address misconduct of our members.

It is for this reason comrade Chair, this committee needs to look at the issue of misuse of police resources and misconduct that results in millions of Rands being paid as litigation. We are concerned that every year we are paying millions and we wonder whether people whose actions result in litigation are held accountable.

The other issue that concerns us relates to bottle neck particularly in the rank of Inspector to the Captain. The bottle neck is a serious cause of discomfort for our members because we have people who average more than 20 years of service stuck in this rank. Almost a third (about 47 000) of police officials are at the rank of Inspector. While we want deserving members to become officers we believe that many hard working, highly skilled and educated police officers are simply stuck as Inspectors because few posts are being created. We want more posts created at captains' rank to increase management capacity given the increased intake of new recruits. It is every police dream to become an officer and failure to achieve this milestone discourages a lot of our members. We would like to assist this committee to look at ways in which we could break this bottle neck and make sure that people deserving of recognition are not unnecessarily overlooked.

Police Union, is the issue regarding the health of our members and in particular HIV/AIDS. Given the impact HIV/AIDS is having on our communities, we are mindful of the fact that the majority of our members fall within the category of high risk and come from communities severely impacted by the epidemic. We believe that more needs to be done not only to prevent our members from getting infected but that those already living with the virus remain effective in their duties. As an organisation, we would like to see more research being conducted which will indicate how this epidemic is manifesting itself in the organisation and how it is impacting on service delivery. We believe that, in this way, we will be able to understand what resources to deploy and in what quantities in order to improve the health of our members.

7. **Xenophobia**

Lastly but not least, the South African Police Union would like to express its disgust about the attack on foreigners. Just like we have condemned the ugly face of racism and discrimination every time it has raised its ugly face, we condemn in the strongest terms the attack on the defenceless foreign nationals and South Africans. We believe that the attack on foreign nationals and South Africans is an attack on our Constitution and in particularly the Bill of Rights.

The xenophobia recently engulfing the country, in particular the Gauteng Province has not only tarnished the image of our country internationally, but has further marginalized the migrant community from the rest of

society. Given the legacy of discrimination based on the colour of one's skin, we believe that these events have taken us backwards in achieving equality and freedom of our people. South Africa is expected to hold a truly 'All embracing soccer world cup" and these events show that some of our people are not ready to embrace our brothers from other parts of the continent. The murders and the violence unleashed on innocent people should be dealt with harshly by all freedom loving South Africans including state security forces.

It is also for this reason that we would like to express our concern with the closure of the Crime Combating Unit, a specialized unit which was trained to deal with such problems. As a result, ordinary police officials with no training to police rowdy crowds are being sent to police these riots. It is the view of organization that this committee reflects on the issue of specialized unit because we need capacity to deal with serious and complex criminal problems.

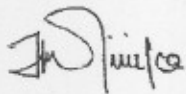
8. Conclusion

Lastly, comrade chairperson we would like to commend your committee for its oversight role of the department of Safety and Security and in particular the SAPS. We are encouraged by your committee's commitment for strengthening its oversight role of the functioning of the police service in this country. As crime continues to ravage the fabric of our country, communities are looking to this committee to ask tough questions in order to understand why crime levels are this high.

The challenges that this country faces with regard to the high crime rate requires portfolio committees such as this one to have strong mechanisms

to perform its duties. We strongly believe that your commitment to accountability and good governance will go a long way towards strengthening a new culture of service in the South African Police Services. We support the police budget.

I thank you Chairperson!



MPHO KWINIKA
PRESIDENT : SAPU



OSCAR SKOMMERE
ACTING GENERAL SECRETARY : SAPU