

MEDIA STATEMENT

15 January 2010

MEC MCHUNU ALARMED AT THE TAXI RANK SHOOTING

AT least 400 rounds of ammunition were expended in the exchange of gun-fire between two security companies in Mandeni – north of KwaZulu-Natal this morning.

The KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Willies Mchunu has condemned this incident calling it, “a blatant disregard for public safety, and irrational business practice”.

According to the Department of Transport senior officials who rushed to the scene, the taxi rank resembled a “war zone”. The incident occurred at around 04:00 a.m. It is believed that these two companies are fighting over the lucrative contract to provide security to the Mandeni-Sundumbili Taxi Association (Taxi Rank.)

According to the police: “it is alleged that shots were fired causing damage to three (03) taxis at the rank. Fortunately no one was injured. Police responded to the shooting incident and arrested twenty three (23) security guards from both companies. We also seized twenty three (23) rifles and two (02) pistols. We recovered approximately 400 cartridges on the scene”.

Mchunu said: “I have repeatedly warned taxi operators to be circumspect with regard to the use of private security companies in their business. It is pure luck that no lives were lost. We have since beefed up security in and around the area

to prevent the occurrence of what can only be described as gung-ho behaviour – completely unnecessary and unjustifiable.”

He added: “However, I am pleased that the SAPS responded immediately and arrests have been made. More arrests are expected. This anarchy has reached new heights, and we will do whatever it takes to bring order to this industry”.

Today’s incident comes a month after the MEC had tasked a multi-sectoral Technical Committee that includes the top brains from South African law enforcements agencies including the State Security to develop a Comprehensive Strategy to deal with Taxi Violence in the province.

At the time Mchunu said. “Although the policy thrust of engagements will continue, we do need the full might of the State to descend upon the taxi industry so that anarchy may be stopped. Unfortunately, engagements alone have proved inadequate in an industry wrecked by fear, mistrust and the lust for blood,”

Mchunu said: “The team is tasked with looking at the intelligence capacity, early warning systems, improving arrests and prosecution levels. It will also look at the role of Izinkabi (hitmen) in the industry, any need for a legislative framework, and securing taxi ranks during conflicts. The team is also to investigate the possible ban of security firms that guard taxi ranks. The overall aim of the strategy is to support the industry and make it thrive like others of a similar size.”

Mchunu has convened an urgent meeting with the Mandeni-Sundumbili Taxi Association – to be held tomorrow. “The aim of this meeting is to understand the root causes of such unacceptable behavior that endangers public safety and instill fear among our people,” he said.

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, Hon. WILLIES MCHUNU

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