

**SPEECH NOTES FOR KWAZULU-NATAL TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIASON MEC
MR WILLIES MCHUNU DURING THE TRAFFIC OFFICERS PASSING OUT PARADE ON
THURSDAY, 06 DECEMBER 2012.**

Programe Director;
Transport Acting Head Mr S'bu Gumbi;
Members of RTI and other various Traffic Authorities;
Families and relatives of our new officers;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is once again a great pleasure for me to be part of this graduation ceremony today celebrating traffic officers who will be joining us permanently in our struggle to save lives on our roads in KwaZulu-Natal.

Today we are here to congratulate 11 new traffic officers that have endured this past eleven months of hard work and study. This is a very tough course that prepares the officers to face the more important task of guarding peoples' lives out there.

These officers will receive certificates of appointment and diplomas as traffic officers. This means that they will be suitable for duty as of tomorrow morning.

I am confident, therefore, that these officers will be capable of fulfilling their duties because of the training that we have offered them.

They are additional officers that will be able to further capacitate our ongoing attempts to make a difference in reducing and eradicating the carnage on our roads during this festive season and beyond through maximum visibility and strict enforcement of traffic laws.

In fact, we have always maintained that we need to ensure that our traffic officers are visible on the road. This is something that the public sees as a commitment to safety on the road. It makes them feel safer and protected.

It is your duty as traffic officers to protect and serve the public. But we are also sending a message that if road safety education is not effective, then we are left with no option but to crack the whip. The importance of such a task therefore cannot be undermined.

We do this because as South Africans we have to discuss ways of moving forward as a developing country, but unfortunately we still have to deal with the road carnage that continues to hold us back in the province and the country as a whole.

If one goes back and realizes how, as Government and the Transport Department in particular, we have led the way in the matters of road safety and transport, nobody would have thought that by 2012 more than 110 people could lose their lives on our roads each month in this province alone.

We take this opportunity to congratulate you for your conscious decision to serve your country as traffic law enforcement officers. Becoming a traffic officer should not be the last resort. We don't want people attempt other careers first and when they fail they come to join us here.

This is not a zama zama profession. it is not a dumping ground.

On the same vein, as new officers you have joined the Road Traffic Profession at a time when as a province, we have in place an aggressive and integrated campaign to halt the increasing trend in road fatalities. This campaign has been dubbed '*Operation Val'ingozi*'.

Operation Val'ingozi seeks to revive our morals and consciences as individuals who contribute to societal safety and well-being or lack therefore It calls for people to speak to their conscience as they use the roads.

We are sending a clear message: 'Speak to your conscience, don't break the law, don't kill people'.

We are taking measures against any wrongdoing which results in road crashes and the often unnecessary and preventable loss of lives.

On the basis of this, I want to pose a challenge to you as new officers that the province and the various municipalities where you will be stationed expect you to demonstrate your conscience as you perform your duties.

Therefore, you must be determined to tackle the problem of road crashes and root out all criminal behaviour on our roads. From today, you are now sent out to help cure the disease of road user defiance. You are sent out from here to help save as many lives as you can by prosecuting traffic law offenders, and not to be friends or make deals with them.

I know that you work under the most difficult and dangerous conditions, and your daily duties include things most of us would avoid doing in a lifetime. You operate under difficult conditions, in terrible weather conditions and at all hours of the day and night.

Nonetheless, let that always be a challenge to all of you to help reduce the amount of the terrible crashes we see everyday on our roads. As the people of KwaZulu-Natal we now depend on you for assistance and protection.

It is also true that some people don't understand the nature of your duties and are still hostile to you because they see you as nuisances on the road and people who want to spoil their fun.

This happens while at great personal sacrifice and trauma and anxiety of your families, you work to save lives of others and promote road safety. I know that as a result of your work to combat road violence, you also become victims of crashes and criminal violence.

On the other hand, it would be amiss of me not to warn all our new officers that you have also joined this profession during a very interesting period. This is the season when most traffic offenders, especially speedsters, have cash and will frequently attempt to bribe you.

You need to be ambassadors of proper and good behaviour on our roads as all eyes will now focus on your behaviour. Civil society and the media are watching and when you are caught you will make news because accepting bribes is a corrupt act.

I have always said in previous graduation ceremonies here that such conduct contributes directly to increased incidents of carnage on our roads precisely because failure to prosecute deviant behaviour amounts to promoting it.

So, yours is to never indulge in corrupt practices like bribery. You will be caught and you will pay the price. It has happened to others, and it can also happen to you. And that price would be the end of a challenging and rewarding career in traffic law enforcement.

An officer who dresses smartly, who takes pride in his or her uniform, who shows a high degree of self-discipline and who respects others, is generally perceived by the public to be an officer of integrity. Be proud of your uniform and make a difference as a team.

Finally, once again we congratulate all officers who are graduating today. We would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

I thank you