

REMARKS BY THE KWAZULU – NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON, BHEKI NTULI (MPL), DURING THE ENGAGEMENTS WITH HEADS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, AT WESTVILLE CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CENTRE, DURBAN, 27 NOVEMBER 2019

- Programme Director, HoD Mavundla;
- Acting HoD for Transport, Ms Ngubo;
- Provincial Commissioner, Lt General Jula;
- Cluster Commanders;
- DDG's
- Management;
- RTI commanders
- PTES commanders
- Members of the media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great honour and humility to have this rare session, where we meet as law enforcement agencies in KZN to discuss issues of securing our people and visitors during the upcoming festive season and beyond.

Let me start by thanking all of you, who left everything else, but chose to prioritise this meeting organized at such a very short notice. That on its own is a demonstration of your commitment to building of a safer KwaZulu-Natal.

We view this session as a very strategic working session where we all come together under one roof to discuss and engage on possible and practical ways of implementing our adopted Integrated Festive Season Safety Plan. Therefore, today's meeting is about us determining common purpose and uniting behind that purpose.

Importantly, it is our desire to improve the integrated approach when it comes to issues of safety and security in the province. We must close the ranks! Like Thomas Sankara said "The enemy is trembling" we must make utsotsi to tremble this festive season.

Equally, we know that during this period, we will have an influx of people coming to visit our beautiful province, therefore we must unite to fight the scourge of road crashes and fatalities. We must declare crime and road fatalities as our main two enemies that we need to fight collaboratively and decisively.

The challenges of safety both on the road and in our communities are calling on us to be sober minded and develop an understanding that our responsibility is what stands between life and death.

We have carefully analysed the root causes of all the safety challenges, what is now important is to respond to those challenges to change the status quo.

I therefore submit, here today, that returning KwaZulu-Natal to be a no-nonsense province is possible – hence our theme "**Repositioning KwaZulu-Natal as a Zero Tolerance province.**"

This theme must be a driving force in the minds of each officer on the road and be a reminder that through your individual action, this province can reclaim its reputation as a province that is intolerant to law breakers.

We cannot win the battle of repositioning this province if within our ranks we have not changed our mind-set and internalized the reality that we have a greater responsibility that requires man and women of integrity and true calling.

We, therefore, call upon all of you and all the law enforcement fraternity to rise and occupy the high moral ground by working hard and dedicating their time to the service of our people. Wear your uniform with pride!

Programme Director, last week an Integrated Festive Season Safety Plan was presented to the Justice Crime Prevention and Security Cluster (JCPS) for consideration and adoption.

This bold plan was hugely welcomed because it is talking directly to areas that need attention during this period and beyond. This integrated plan must be owned by all of us because its success or failure lies with all of us in this house.

This plan cannot implement itself hence there was an important need for this meeting. We must all leave here, satisfied that indeed our province will be safe and be assured that anyone who breaks the law will be dealt with severely. We must have no mercy!

We also welcome the decision by the national JCPS to make additional resources available for the province, since our province is regarded as one of the flashpoint areas in the country.

Intensifying the fight against crime

Programme Director, the crime statistics are alarming in this province. This is despite the great work done by the police in arresting in most cases – however this points to the society we have out there. People are so brazen and have no regard for human life, which is a fundamental constitutional right.

Worryingly, is the fact that most crimes are happening on weekends and during the late hours of the day. This is pointing to the effect of the drugs and substance abuse. The proliferation of illegal taverns must be tackled with more determination if we are to save the youth and the future generations of this country.

Part of deliberations and resolutions at the JCPS was to address the issue of the mushrooming of taverns, especially those close to schools and places of worship. We are glad that a profile of all taverns near the schools has been completed by the KZN Liquor Authority – and this will make easy the interventions in this regard.

We have directed law enforcement agencies to close all unlicensed liquor outlets in the province. Those with licenses must also be monitored to ensure adherence with license provisions and the law.

We have also agreed that as schools are closing this week, police must clamp down on the “pens down” events, because if not controlled, these events result into murders, mainly through stabbing of learners.

Contact crime

Programme director, the levels of murders in our townships are concerning and something drastic need to be done. For the past years, some of our stations have consistently been in the national top ten leading stations. Inanda, KwaMashu, Umlazi and Plessislaar are among those.

The fact that the murder continues to increase in our province, must strengthen our resolve to fight this scourge and fight the proliferation of illegal fire arms. Tailor made strategies and plans must address these areas and turn the situation around.

In the last crime statistics, murder increased by 0.3 percent shooting to 4 384, out of those cases, firearms are accounting to 73.1 percent of crimes and sharp object such as knives are accounting to 11.7 percent. Believe you me, this 73.1 percent, most are illegal firearms and that is where we need to zoom in. That is where we need to direct our targeted operations.

We have not also taken our eyes away from the hostels in Durban, mainly KwaMashu and Glebelands hostels. Those two must be constantly monitored – however we are grateful that perpetrators of violence in these two areas are being arrested and some key ring leaders are facing trials.

Working with the Gauteng government and the team of traditional leaders assigned by His Majesty Isilo samaBandla, we are working tirelessly to address conflict in Gauteng hostels. Some have their root causes here in KwaZulu-Natal and during this time they come back to continue their fight here.

Programme director, during this time the trio crimes is one of the major sore points that need to be addressed. House breaking, business robberies and carjacking. Most people are travelling for holidays, some are visiting families, their properties are targeted by criminals. Areas such as Mthunzini, eMpangeni, Pinetown and Hillcrest will be given attention in this regard.

The issue of carjacking is very serious in the province, especially around the township of uMlazi, KwaMashu, iNanda and Durban central. There is a network and clear syndicate that is involved in and we must get the kingpins of this. This crime also showed an increased in the latest released figures, also showing that firearms are used in committing this crime.

We are also aware that during this time, criminals are also up in arms, that is why we commend the police for having dealt with cash in transit heist in this province. Previously, it was known that during this period, there would be rampant robberies of cash businesses. In the recent past that has since changed, and the police have improved intelligence and operations around this area.

We appeal to the police to fight until the last bullet when facing dangerous and heavily armed and merciless criminals. No police must die in the hands of the criminals. It is very disturbing that 18 police officers were killed in the last financial year. Three (3) died in the line of duty and 15 died off-duty. This tells us that police might be a target of criminals even in the communities where they reside.

We also urge the communities to protect the police. During this period, we will intensify our campaign of galvanizing communities to play a leading and an active role in protecting our police officers.

Programme director, the scourge of gender-based violence requires us to move beyond sloganeering but instead put tangible measures to end violence against women and children. Again, the abuse of women and children like all other crimes must be addressed and perpetrators must rot in jail. It is disturbing that these cases increased by 6.3 percent in the last financial year. We owe it to ourselves to reduce these heinous deeds.

The stations that are along major routes such as N2 & N3 have a mammoth task of monitoring the national roads. The torching of trucks must be prevented before they happen, and suspects must be arrested to send a clear message that such economic sabotage has no place in KZN. The task team assembled by government continues to do its work and to engage with all affected parties with a view of ensuring that such ugly scenes do not repeat themselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, the continued killings in the taxi industry does not only endanger the lives of commuters but it also causes fear to the public in general. About 50 people were accounted last year for having been murdered in the taxi conflict. This must come to an end.

Areas such as Ladysmith, where there is on going conflict between the two associations; Hammarsdale and others will receive priority. Police task team will be looking closely at all these cases. We will continue to work with SANTACO, in a bid to find solutions to those areas that are still engulfed by violence. Police are there to monitor all illegalities in the industry, therefore there is no security company or “amabhokobhoko” that should be threatening people and stopping taxis on the road.

Road safety and Traffic enforcement

Programme director, every year, 1.25 million people die globally as a result of road crashes. More than 50 million on average suffers from serious injuries. South Africa is also a signatory to the United Nation’s Decade of action to half road accidents by 50 percent in 2020.

The question is how far we are from the attainment of our own contribution as the province and the country. The realty is that people continue to die on our roads.

Since I came to this Department, I have spent most of my time attending funerals and memorial services where five or more people have died. This is a serious embarrassment to us as a country and more work need to be done.

These accidents continue to happen despite the good work by the police, who on a daily basis stop and enforce the law to those who have total disregard for the rule of law. We know that KwaZulu Natal is attractive to many holiday makers and there are many migrant workers from this province to other parts of the world, but we must all exercise caution and patience on the road.

After receiving the plan as the JCPS cluster, we have issued an instruction that no vehicle must exit or enter the borders of this province unchecked. Our plan of Repositioning this province as a Zero Tolerance province starts now and there is no turning back.

As the province, we are also gearing ourselves for the implementation of the Administrative Adjudication of Traffic Offenders (Aarto). We believe this will be a solution in addressing repeat offenders who have no regard for traffic laws.

All these efforts will not yield results if law enforcement and traffic police themselves are colluding with errant drivers and accepting bribes instead of punishing the offender. The acceptance of bribes by our police is also contributing to the high levels of crashes, because a vehicle that was supposed to be suspended paid a bribe and got away with it. We must cleanse ourselves if we are to reclaim our position. This festive season, we want all those officers to be arrested!

We are also prioritizing the Driver License Testing Centres (DLTC’s) because they are the foundation phase for the kind of drivers we produce. As schools will be closing, long queues will be found at our centres for leaners and drivers licenses applications. We have dedicated the 3rd of December 2019 as the day of heightened operations. In all corners and all tolls, we want to see visibility of integrated police.

On the same day, we will be launching a new driver testing technology, which will help us fight fraud and corruption in our DLTC’s. This innovation has started and is proving to be a game changer even in the manner in which we deliver services to the people.

Conclusion

Programme Director, in conclusion, we are planning to have more than 2040 operations across the province during this period with a deployment of more than 24 325 personnel from all enforcement agencies in the province. All resources, including technology in our operational centres will be deployed to ensure that our people are safe and protected during this festive season and beyond.

From here, let's go out to reclaim our approach as a Zero tolerance province.
Alufakwa
I thank you