

Budget Debate on Vote 28, 24, 21: Police

Speech by Okkie Terblanche MP

DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Police

Honorable chairperson, honorable members and fellow South Africans.

Einstein's definition of insanity is doing same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

Insanely, this is exactly what happens in South Africa!

We're here again to approve an incrementally driven budget, but it's still the same clumsy, top-heavy organization, with the same outdated and out of touch approach.

The predictable outcome is that crime will remain out of control.

The top 30 police stations in the country are only top in terms of highest crime statistics, not for crime detection or prevention. This has been the legacy since President Thabo Mbeki's reign and it's unacceptable!

Notably, visible policing and detective services are neglected repeatedly when section 205 of the Constitution makes it clear that these areas are part of the crucial focus areas for policing.

In contrast, the budget doesn't support this strategic importance and both areas remain underfunded.

Protection services are yet again overfunded and frankly raise serious concerns about SAPS's inability to prioritize. The protection of VIP's can never be regarded as more important than serving and protecting the public.

The impact of the recent exodus from the police by offering attractive early retirement packages has decimated police skills and capabilities and eroded their ability to perform duties that simply cannot be replenished in the short term. Middle management has largely been demolished, experience lost and few left to pass the baton on to the next level.

Both Minister Bheki Cele and National Commissioner Masemola are stubbornly resisting the devolution of police functions to lower government levels. In reality, the skyrocketing serious crime stats and the severity thereof is generating a momentum of its own, steering in that direction and it simply cannot be stopped anymore.

Cape Town's Leap Officers successes are steadily filtering through and has already led to the establishment of other units in Gauteng, Nelson Mandela Bay and others. These institutions found loopholes in other legislation to appoint these units as a deterrent for criminals in the areas where they govern.

This trend in gaining traction and legislation like the Police Amendment Bill will have to be finalised urgently to accommodate the new emerging policing model. This trend must be welcomed as it will speed up partnership policing where the public actively participate in the policing of their respective areas.

The independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) has demonstrated its inability to fulfil its mandate. A lack of funding and professional leadership means that as at 28 February, there were still 14 063 active cases, with over 10 000 being backlogged cases. This number is growing daily, forcing IPID to randomly pick cases to be investigated and setting a target of only 7% of cases to be prosecuted by the National Prosecuting Authority.

Likewise, The Civilian Secretariat for Police Service also fails to perform its mandate to provide efficient and effective civilian oversight over the SAPS for safer and more secure communities through community participation, -legislation and policy development. This department is leaderless at present with very negative consequences.

So, what can be done to rectify the situation?

The SA Constitution (Bill of Rights) aims to ensure (inter alia) the safety and security of all South African Citizens and the following steps will go a long way to bring that about:

- Transformation of the police service.
- Demilitarizing.
- Flattening of rank/organizational structure.
- Professionalization, by the reintroduction of promotion exams and academic qualifications as a basis for promotion to higher levels.
- Introduction of a new suitable policing model like total policing.
- Community participation.
- Appointment and training of reservists.
- Devolution of powers.
- Streamlining and devolution of procurement functions to lower levels.
- Technology like cameras, drones etc.

Most importantly though is Professional Leadership.

The SAPS cannot be led by a compromised Minister. Serious allegations against the minister must still be investigated.

The National Commissioner has no security clearance and is thus unable to perform his job.

A fish rots from its head and therefore we must start there, at the top, and we can start next year when the voters have the opportunity to send a new government to the Union Buildings. Unlike the failed Minister, once the DA is in power, the DA will get things done.