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# Operation makes its mark in Reiger Park

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The SAPS' operation Okae Molao descended on Reiger Park on November 19 where Gauteng police and other law enforcement agencies cracked the whip on known crime hotspots, arrested suspects and seized illegal items.

The team consisted of different law enforcement agencies including SAPS, EMPD, Gauteng traffic officers and private security companies such as Tracker and Fidelity.

The jointly integrated operation, which commenced at 18:00 on Saturday ran until Sunday morning. It was held in reaction to complaints of lawlessness received from residents who recently stormed the police station calling for the removal of the management team and closure of the 'useless' police station.

The residents' complaints attracted the attention of the Gauteng provincial legislature and top leaders from the provincial SAPS, who responded with provincial multidisciplinary anti-crime operation raids and roadblocks.

The operation, led by Gauteng acting provincial police commissioner Major General Thomas Mthombeni and the MEC for Community Safety Faith Mazibuko, resulted in the arrests of 19 suspects.

It also resulted in the recovery

of two unlicensed firearms and five rounds of ammunition, seizures of illicit drugs, the closure of four illegal shebeens, and arrests of four drunk drivers and eight illegal immigrants. A total of 980 people and 509 vehicles were stopped and searched during the raids and roadblocks.

Traffic officials who were also part of the operation issued 56 fines for traffic violations to the value of R23 500. Ten vehicles were tested for roadworthiness and three of these did not pass the test and were discontinued.

Occupants of the vehicles pulled over at the roadblocks on Middle Road and Commissioner Street in Delmore Park were randomly subjected to a mobile fingerprint-scanning device to check if they were linked to any crime.

## Special focus

Speaking to the media during the operation, Mazibuko said amid the reports of deadly shootings, including police killings, robberies, attacks on the public infrastructure (power cables) and encroachment of zama zamas into the community, it was decided to focus these law enforcement operations on Reiger Park.

"This is another area that is infested with drugs and the majority of young people are hooked on drugs. As you know the premier has been calling on young people to go



Cir Edith Klassen (left), the MEC for Community Safety, Faith Mazibuko, and Gauteng Acting Provincial SAPS Commissioner Major General Thomas Mthombeni.

for rehabilitation.

"There is no use that they go for help but then come back to the community still infested with drugs.

"We want to make sure that when these youngsters come back they find a clean and peaceful environment where they can live happily with their parents," said Mazibuko.

The MEC pointed out that some of the social ills in the community do not necessarily need policing, but need parents, social workers, faith-based organisations and everyone to work together in

ensuring a safer community.

"However, police still need to take their responsibility of ensuring that they fight lawlessness. Many communities have acknowledged that when law enforcement is visible enough in their areas they actually feel safe."

## Exciting results

Mthombeni said the series of operations held across the province, including Reiger Park, have yielded some exciting results.

"The reason why we chose Reiger Park is because the community raised concerns about the level of crime in some areas, like the shootings in the informal settlements.

"In general, the station is experiencing a problem in terms of contact crime and property-related crimes like business robberies and car hijackings. With collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, we will be working closely with the community to address the highlighted problems in their area."

## Festive season

Mthombeni stated as we are moving towards the festive season, the province will ensure that, with the integrated workforce and collaboration, police operations and visibility are ramped up. More officers will be deployed on the ground.

According to the MEC, the Gauteng government is also working towards introducing

smart technology solutions that will help fight crime.

"The move to e-security will entail the introduction of an e-panic button for every household that you simply press and law enforcement agencies will respond quickly wherever you are."

## Response to alleged police inaction and poor service

Among the policing shortcomings highlighted by the protesting community of Reiger Park are an incapacitated workforce, lack of resources including vehicles, inadequate police infrastructure and fewer referrals of cases to court for prosecutions, compared to the number of arrested suspects and of those that end up in court an even smaller proportion lead to a conviction. Responding to these complaints, Mthombeni said some of the highlighted challenges, such as a shortage of vehicles due to mechanical breakdowns and insufficient building, are being attended to. He, however, pointed out that concerning human resources, the station is, based on the SAPS formula for police personnel allocation, adequately equipped to service the community.

"In terms of human resources, the station I can confidently indicate that it's not less than 90% resourced.

"When it comes to the vehicles, the

station doesn't have less than 70% of the required vehicles to function properly.

"The challenge there is the breakdown of vehicles, resulting in vehicles sent to the garages for repairs. This is an issue we have indicated to management that they will have to ensure to manage that process, especially when it comes to the issues that cause the vehicles to break down.

"In respect of the police station building, it's important to understand that the process that needs to be followed to address the issue of the building involves the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. We aim to link up with all relevant stakeholders, including the community leaders, to find a solution on how we can address the issue of the building."

## Incompetence

About the issue of incompetent officers, Mthombeni said the claim is unconvincing because officers employed by the SAPS undergo a vigorous process to become a full-fledged efficient police officer. Even at the entry-level, there are psychometric tests that they go through before physical or fitness assessment and before they do the basic training.

"From time to time our HRD take care of the needs of developing police officials where they are lacking."

## Convictions

Mthombeni said the issue of conviction is not only dependent on the arrests made or cases reported, but from the point that a crime is reported and someone is arrested: there are many major hurdles to overcome, such that some cases are not referred to a court.

"Once a suspect is arrested, we decide whether the preliminary investigation reflects with this investigation that this person can be charged and go through the court. Only after this can it go to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, which also decide whether there is enough evidence to prosecute."

