



**Publication:** Mail & Guardian - Main  
**Title:** STOP PASSING THE BUCK, TOP COP TOLD  
**Publish date:** 10 Mar 2023  
**Page:** 15

**Reach:** 27969  
**AVE:** R 119691.03  
**Author:** Staff Reporter

NEWS

# Stop passing the buck, top cop told

A forensic audit was launched into the appointment of 10 000 police recruits last year

**Eunice Stoltz**

**T**he chairperson of parliament's police committee Tina Joemat-Pettersson this week told national police commissioner Fannie Masemola to stop blaming others, as members of the National Assembly and police unions demanded answers on declining police numbers, shortages of trainers and archaic systems that are still manually operated at stations.

Joemat-Pettersson was responding to a forensic audit into allegedly irregular appointments of police recruits last year. The review was launched after media reports of alleged corruption during the recruitment drive for 10 000 new officers, the majority of whom completed training in December.

"[The South African Police Service, SAPS] does almost everything manually, and then they have [the] inclination to shift the responsibility to SITA (State Information Technology Agency). But an application cannot be done manually," Joemat-Pettersson told police authorities appearing before her committee this week, referring to the police's job

applications system.

"We cannot say that we are in the fourth industrial revolution and we still need to apply manually."

Preliminary findings of the review suggest that the applications of 337 trainees could not be traced. Additionally, the trainees were not captured on the police's in-house employment system, Persap.

According to Major General Lenny Govender, 168 trainees had to be withdrawn from police academies because of "pregnancy, death, [being] medically unfit and various misconduct like criminal conduct".

Out of 9 831 trainees, 4 188 were cleared while the status of 5 567 trainees will only become clear when the forensic review is finalised, expected by the end of March.

The forensic investigation found that the police's manual recruitment process was open to abuse, with the pre-approval of the appointment of trainees being outside the computerised system, "thus allowing room for manipulation of the system and audit trail".

In his State of the Nation address in February, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that 10 000 new police personnel would be

recruited and trained this year. Police Minister Bheki Cele has previously told the *Mail & Guardian* that he intended to focus on strengthening the police service.

But police numbers continue to dwindle.

The police service added 3 976 police officers to its existing 176 180 members in 2022.

The senior police officers told parliament this week that 2 809 new officers were ready for training while medical reports were pending for another 7 907 prospective trainees. Those approved include 62 law graduates, 32 science graduates, 507 "other" graduates and 2 208 matriculants. Some 10 000 new police trainees will be enlisted and commence training in April.

But the senior officers said there was a deficit of 325 trainers at police academies and a further 358 trainers at external training facilities, which are needed to supplement capacity

**'But every time SAPS come to us, they blame the department of public works'**

shortages at the academies.

"Our facilities are in a shocking state, and yet we are carrying on with this massive process to recruit 10 000 officers," committee member Ockert Terblanche remarked.

Sharing Terblanche's sentiment, committee member Ntaoleng Peacock called for more advanced and modernised training to address the changing methods of crime in the country.

The president of the Independent Policing Union of South Africa, Bethuel Nkuna, said the organisation had observed that when recruits were placed at police stations to complete their practicals "there is no proper structure in place which will ensure that they get maximum support in terms of training".

"Recruits are easily absorbed into day-to-day policing matters at stations because of the critical shortages of manpower and vehicles. Depending on police stations, most of them are left unsupervised," he said.

Masemola conceded that the police service was "not without" problems but insisted steps were taken when corruption was discovered in the recruitment process.

Addressing problems such as decaying police infrastructure and the primitive manual application system, Masemola placed the

responsibility at the door of SITA and the department of public works.

"If it was for us ... we would have been there by now," he said.

But Joemat-Pettersson pushed back, asking the national police commissioner why the police service always resorted to blaming public works and the SITA for its failings.

"We can attest to the fact that police stations are in a state of disrepair and haven't been refurbished or maintained ... But every time SAPS come to us, they blame the department of public works," she said. "You just keep saying it is not the function of SAPS. You are always just passing the buck."

She reminded the police officers that they had the right to hold meetings with the entities or present their problems to the peace and stability clusters in the government "but SAPS cannot throw their hands up in the air every time it comes to SITA or public works".

Masemola said the police service was in discussions with the public works department on the construction of police stations, which he said would "happen as soon as the financial year starts".

Joemat-Pettersson asked the national commissioner to "send me the agreement and documents. I do not work on a pipeline that we don't even know how long it is."