



REPORT ON ISS SEMINAR

Theme: 'The incidence of house robberies in South Africa'

Date: 4 November 2008 (10:00-12:00)

Place: ISS Head Office, Pretoria

Speakers:

- Dr Rudolph Zinn, Senior Lecturer, Department of Forensic Investigations, UNISA.
- Dr Johan Burger, Senior Researcher, Crime, Justice and Politics Programme, ISS.

Chair: Major General (Retired) Len le Roux.

Dr Burger

Dr Burger began with a brief introduction of a definition of house robberies as a sub-category of aggravated robbery. He drew a distinction between ordinary house-breaking or burglary and house robbery, the latter of which is a crime that includes interpersonal violence. The violence refers to perpetrators who are armed with firearms or other weapons, commit grievous bodily harm or threaten victims with grievous bodily harm. Dr Burger noted that the incidences of house robberies have increased in recent years.

Dr Zinn

Dr Zinn centred his presentation on his Ph.D thesis in Police Science. The crux of his presentation was on the usefulness of a particular policing model, intelligence-led policing. This model that is used in the West engages incarcerated criminals, using their responses to create a profile of what motivates criminal activity and what tactics are used. According to Dr Zinn this method is used successfully in a number of police systems internationally. For his study Dr Zinn undertook studies of countries that have adopted intelligence-led policing, including the FBI in America and Scotland Yard in Britain. According to this research criminals can be better targeted and these methods have driven crime down dramatically.

Dr Zinn shared the findings of the study he conducted in South Africa using similar methods to those used by the international policing systems he studied. Dr Zinn,

whose study is mainly qualitative, interviewed 30 offenders in 6 major custodial facilities in Gauteng. Some of the findings were as follows:

- Many criminals committed their crimes on the basis of inside information
- Generally houses with little or no security were targeted
- House robbers stole for purposes of greed rather than survival
- House robbery is preferred to burglary because general security in the home is most penetrable when the house is occupied

Dr Zinn recommended that the South African Police Service adopt this method as a method of reducing crime. He suggested that targeted crime fighting is a more efficient use of human and financial resources and is more likely to yield positive results.

He added that his study is a first step in showing how first-hand information from criminals themselves is a useful intelligence-gathering tool and on a larger scale could impact on crime rates.

Approximately 45 people attended the seminar including representatives from the embassies of Denmark, Belgium, Canada and the USA, the South African Police Service (SAPS) and private security personnel.

Question and Answer Session

Dr Zinn's presentation was followed by a few rounds of questions.

Sponsor

The seminar was funded by the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

Report compiled by the Crime, Justice and Politics Programme of the ISS.