

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The public order police units of the South African Police Service have undergone many changes in the last 15 years. Under the apartheid government, the units started off as the Riot Units, and in 1992 became the Internal Stability Division. In 1996 the units were reorganised as Public Order Police Units, and in 2002 they were transformed to become the Area Crime Combating Units. In 2006 they underwent yet another restructuring, and they now operate under the name of Crime Combating Units. Each of these changes has meant different chains of command as well as different training and deployment structures, which has affected the skills and capacity of the units. Some of the changes, particularly the most recent one in which the manpower of the units has been severely reduced at a time when crowd control incidents are on the increase, have not been to the benefit of the units or to public order policing.

The task of this monograph is to assess the Crime Combating Units' capacity to manage protest marches and the impending 2010 FIFA World Cup. The research was confined primarily to two Crime Combating Units in Gauteng: Johannesburg and East Rand. In addition, interviews were conducted with metro police in Ekurhuleni because the mandate of their newly established Public Order Unit overlaps to some extent with that of the Crime Combating Units. Interviews were also conducted with various other organisations concerned with security for the 2010 FIFA World Cup: the South African Football Association, the Premier Soccer League, the Private Security Industry Regulating Authority and the management at Ellis Park Stadium.

The research shows that in its respect for human rights, public order policing has improved since the advent of democracy in South Africa. However, the size and distribution of the Crime Combating Units, and the maintenance of their skills, have been severely eroded. A full consideration of the findings leads to a strong recommendation that SAPS management reassess the recent restructuring of the CCUs.

It is recommended that in Gauteng the public order policing structure should revert back to the more decentralised formation of the seven

previous Area Crime Combating Units (ACCUs). However, given the recent dissolution of the area policing level to which these former ACCUs were accountable, the reinstated public order units should be made accountable to the provincial police office. Thus Gauteng would have seven fully capacitated Provincial Public Order Policing Units, primarily performing crowd management and, when required, assisting neighbouring stations in the combating of crime.

Concerning the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the way the police have coped with past international events in South Africa suggests that they will be able to undertake crowd management competently. However it is important to ensure that the public order/crowd control units are sufficiently resourced. In addition, the dynamics of soccer crowds internationally present some unique problems which the units will have to take into account. Given the media attention, the FIFA World Cup is a likely target for additional protest marches which will place even more demands on the already over-stretched Crime Combating Units.

The following challenges and recommendations arise out of the study:

Legislation, policy and regulations

- The Regulation of Gatherings Act (Act 205 of 1993) governing crowd management needs to be updated. While the 14-year-old Act is a most useful piece of legislation, practical experience in the management of events has shown that there is a need to more clearly define the role and responsibility of march organisers and marshals.
- Crime Combating Units need a new working document providing guidance on their new roles. With the dissolution of the area level, Standing Order 262 and other policy documents have become outdated and have to be revised.

Management and restructuring

- Decisions from the national level that affect provincial or local level police should be discussed with the provincial commissioner's office before being made. Many directives issued at the national level supersede the provincial office, thus creating confusion and challenges for units, stations and the provincial office. Communication and consultation is essential.

- The restructuring which diminished the role of the Crime Combating Units in September 2006 should be re-assessed. Trends show an increase in protest marches and the FIFA World Cup in 2010 is looming. The management of the South African Police Service is urged to reconsider the restructuring process. Although the area policing level has been disbanded, the buildings located in the previous policing unit areas could still be utilised; the units could become accountable to the provincial office, and be renamed Provincial Public Order Police.
- The Crime Combating Units are experiencing serious human resource shortages. The restructuring has resulted in the units being depleted by 50 per cent, while continuing to service the same geographical areas. The additional travelling now required of members has exacerbated the problem. If this issue is not addressed, members could potentially suffer severe stress and fatigue.
- The South African Police Service needs to, as far as possible, refrain from using the Crime Combating Units for tasks other than those which their specialist skills are intended to serve. In this respect the statistics showing the outcome of Operation Trio – a three month national crime prevention operation which drew on the units – will be telling. If the statistics look favourable for the police, this could spur the South Africa Police Service's management to permanently or at intervals, call on the Crime Combating Units to support general policing operations.
- Members of the CCUs who have been sent to stations to assist in crime combating should be returned to the units from which they came. If necessary, they can be deployed from their units to assist stations with crime prevention operations.
- It is recommended that the CCUs be returned to the structure used under the ACCU arrangement, and be made accountable to the provincial office rather than the area office which has been disbanded.

Training

- While Crime Combating Unit members seem to be well informed about the Regulation of Gatherings Act, an in-depth refresher workshop spanning at least three days is required, and should be run at least once every three years.
- Some of the outdated terminology that is still occasionally used by the members of Crime Combating Units needs to be addressed. 'Crowd

control' is now referred to as 'crowd management', and 'riots' are referred to as 'protests'. Unit commanders and trainers should ensure that the issue of terminology is addressed in training sessions.

- Training must be made a priority by unit commanders even if it is at the expense of crime combating duties. In-service training had for some time been neglected by the units, and since the most recent restructuring it has come to a total standstill. This means that members are becoming de-skilled. Fortunately, the specialist crowd management skills have not been lost because the units are largely staffed by police officials with between 10 and 20 years relevant experience. Nonetheless the skills base is eroding, and more seriously, incoming members are not receiving in-service training.
- With regard to the use of firearms in crowd control, the police need better and more regular training, including when and how it is appropriate to use firearms. The same applies to metro police officers, some of whom have tended to be over-zealous in their use of firearms.

Role of private security in 2010

- The training of private security guards has to be made a priority in view of their role in the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Since this is not the responsibility of the SAPS, it could be co-ordinated at ministerial level.
- The Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority (PSIRA) has a vital role to play if the World Cup is to be a success. Private security companies have been tasked with an important role so proper training in crowd management and registration of stewards is essential. PSIRA must also ensure that security officers wear their registration cards.