1. Introduction

The Portfolio Committee on Police arranged a seminar on Risk Factors for Police on 17 February 2016. The seminar was held because the Committee was concerned about the number of police officers who were injured or killed in the course of executing their duties. The seminar followed a hearing called by the Committee on police killings during August 2015. In that hearing, the Committee expressed its concern about the number of police officers killed in the line of duty.

In addition to the number of police officers killed in the line of duty, the Committee was also informed of police officers dying in motor vehicle accidents which appeared to be one of the highest reasons for police deaths. The Committee wanted to ascertain if there were other risk factors for the police and called the seminar which comprised of all the relevant departments, trade unions, civil society organisations and academics to examine what risk factors for police are and what possible strategies to employ to address such risk factors. The Committee also invited the Compensation Commissioner in the Labour Department to appraise it with the statistics of police officers who have applied for post-traumatic stress disorder leave or medical boarding over the last ten years.

1.1 Objectives of the seminar

The objectives of the seminar were as follows:

1. The Committee hoped to bring role-players and stakeholders together as a first step in beginning to understand the depth of the problem affecting the police.
2. The Committee proposed to sharpen the public debate about the safety, health and welfare of police officers in executing their duties and mandate.
3. The Committee intended to improve policies on surveillance systems tracking police officers at risk so that the necessary systems can be put in place for early detection and prevention of catastrophe for individual police officers.
4. The Committee hoped that the seminar will lift the lid on the circumstances police officers have to work in and develop a greater appreciation of the need for police safety when interacting with and confronting violent criminals.

The seminar addressed in particular issues of training, employee health and wellness and post-traumatic stress disorder in particular and measures to reduce such risk factors.

The seminar was opened by the Chairperson who emphasized the fact that the Portfolio Committee already had two hearings on the question of police deaths and the seminar was opportune in view of the fact that the President had in his State of the Nation Address addressed the matter of the police going back to basics in their approach to policing and safety. He also noted the fact that a metro police officer was killed in the course of duty in the last week and that the Committee sympathised with the family of the slain officer. The killing made the deliberations at the seminar important and the outcomes were of critical importance.

2. Address by the Deputy Minister of Police, Hon. M. Sotyu

The seminar was then addressed by the Deputy Minister for Police, Hon. M. Sotyu.

The Deputy Minister apologised for the absence of the Minister of Police and indicated that decision makers should take note of the deliberations of the different role-players and stakeholders and mainstream the outcomes of the Seminar. One of the areas that the Ministry was concerned about was that Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) should not be compromised. The Deputy Minister was also concerned that frontline police officers were from the lower ranks and people’s safety and survival depended on them. For that reason, it was important that the health and welfare of employees should be taken seriously.
The Deputy Minister mapped out that the issue of police killings has enjoyed prominence over a number of years and pointed to the fact that several such interventions were held. In 2011, a summit was held on police killings, which was followed by another summit on police suicides in 2013. This was followed by a summit in 2014 which addressed employee health and welfare matters such as HIV in the workplace. She was happy that the seminar was held by Parliament and noted that the Firearms Summit held by Parliament in 2015 completely dispelled the notion that no action will follow such summits.

Vehicle accidents were the highest cause of unnatural deaths and the country has already lost 88 police officers in 2015.

The SAPS has adopted a Back to Basics –Towards a Safer Tomorrow theme for the 2016/17 financial year. A call was made to the Portfolio Committee by the Deputy Minister for the Committee to assist and support the police with restructuring the SAPS. One of the areas where such assistance would be welcome was that the Deputy Minister was responsible for setting up a Transformation and Institutional Task Team that would look at the restructuring and transformation of the SAPS.

The Minister requested the Portfolio Committee on Police to assist with recommendations of experts in organisational development to serve on the Transformation Task Team. It will address and review policies relating to the work environment, career progression and their living conditions. Lastly, the Deputy Minister pleaded with the Committee to prioritise the wellness and safety of police officers and address the issues of housing and accommodation for police officers. These matters affects the morale of police officers. She concluded by saying that the SAPS members would never rest if the question of their wellness was not addressed.

3. **Professor E. Van Der Spuy - Centre of Criminology, UCT**

The participants at the seminar were reminded that the technological age was a huge challenge for the police. To illustrate the point, a photograph of police officers in a police vehicle, all on their cellphones in India was presented and analysed. Researchers at the Centre of Criminology had undertaken a study of police funerals and conducted a docket analysis in the Nyanga station. Researchers had attended police funerals and over 140 questionnaires were distributed and analysed. Police occupational risks were a critical issue, but was under-researched.

It was critical that role-players have a complete understanding of risks and there should be conceptual clarity about what we mean when we speak about risks. She questioned the types of mundane everyday risks as opposed to psychological or physical risks faced by police officers. There were inter-linkages between risks and the police occupational culture also played a role in mediating these risks.

According to the Centre, much more detailed mapping was required to fully understand the impact of these risks on the police. The Centre used Parson (2004) definition of risk which included police officers being exposed to cardiovascular diseases, chemical hazards and cancerous rates.

Professor Van Der Spuy indicated that the survey was based on police officers speaking in their own words on the types of concerns. The results of the survey elicited the following responses from the police officers at the station:

- 48% said morale is very low, impact on alertness;
- 55% of respondents indicated that they felt that their safety had got much worse;
- 38% had colleagues killed over the past 5 years;
- 57% blamed their risk on corruption in the police;
- 50% identified organised crime as a risk;
- 54% indicated that insufficient training was a risk;
- 45% of respondents identified community issues as a risk; and
- 45% blamed a dysfunctional criminal justice system.
As a solution, the officers suggested that security clearance and vetting processes should be regularised and that there should be regular integrity testing to restore trust. She also highlighted the need from certain officers to exact revenge for the killing of police colleagues as well as sadness and ambiguous emotions. There should be a multiplicity of role-players involved in seeking solutions.

4. **Acting Commissioner of Police**

The Acting Commissioner of Police, General Phahlane stated that the killing of police officers was something that troubled the Department immensely. The National Development Plan was critical with respect to the specific vision of well resourced, professional police officers. Despite this, the SAPS mandate implied a high degree of risk and the high degree of unnatural deaths impacted on the ability of the SAPS to give full effect to its mandate.

There were different types of strategic risk which if not implemented and complied with, led to the murder of police officers on and off duty, suicides and accidents. The response of the SAPS have been to put in place a four-pillar risk response strategy which included avoidance of risk; sharing the risk; accepting the risk; and reducing the risk.

The SAPS have also mitigated risks through implementing corrective, preventive and detective controls and by following procedures. The Acting Commissioner indicated that in view of the increase in violent unrest related incidents and increasing levels of violent and non-violent crimes, policing has become a high risk occupation.

According to available statistics, the majority of murders are happening while officers are off duty and the statistics shows an increase in murders of police officers for the last four financial years. The table below shows the unnatural deaths of police officers over three financial years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Unnatural deaths of police officers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murders</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012/2013</td>
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<td>2013/2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014/2015</td>
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Source: SAPS

Comparative figures for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd quarters in 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial years show that there has been an increase in police murders:

<table>
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<th>Table 2: Third quarter data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murders</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Quarters: 2015/16</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Quarters: 2014/15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: SAPS

The SAPS requires an integrated approach to develop better community mobilisation approaches and better inter-departmental co-ordination and co-operation. The SAPS will continue to implement proactive interventions with respect to testing for firearm competency and wearing of bullet resistant vests. The management has also developed internal police safety campaigns and have launched reactive and co-ordinated interventions. Consequence management approaches have been applied
to police officers who do not comply with the safety standards and regulations and this is communicated on a regular basis from the time the officer is recruited.

5. **Acting Secretary of Police**

The Acting Secretary of Police, Mr Rapea noted that there has been an increase in public order protests and that affected the safety of police as protestors were carrying dangerous weapons to protests. The carrying of dangerous weapons presented a serious risk to the police, especially during protests. During the 2014/15 financial year the Civilian Secretariat for Police commissioned a study to explore how public education and awareness can play a role in reduction of violence during protests. The study was conducted in five provinces and included Gauteng, Western Cape, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the North West provinces. The study found that the community was generally not aware of the role and function of Community Safety Forums and as a result there should be an improvement in the communication and public awareness between police and community.

The findings also showed that the communities involved in the study showed a limited knowledge of the Regulations of Gatherings Act (ROGA). Significantly, 82% of respondents indicated that they were unaware of any other avenue of letting government know when they had complaints, except protests. Another 95.9% of respondents did not know if there was a Community Safety Forum (CSF) in their area. The study also found that 30% of respondents were fearful of the police while 62.2% of respondents were not fearful of the police. Another 7.5% of respondents were very fearful of the police.

Significantly, the Secretariat study found that police community relations were poor and that it required intervention as the chart below demonstrates:

![Diagram 1: Police Community Relations with police during protest](image)

Source: Civilian Secretariat for Police

6. **Member Concerns**

Members of the Portfolio Committee raised a number of concerns with respect to the presentations. Amongst the concerns raised by Members was the fact that there appeared to be more police officers killed off-duty than on-duty. Other Members raised their concerns and wondered if the killing of police officers should not be classified as a crime against the State. Other members raised discrepancies in the Secretariat’s presentation with respect to the findings of their study.

Members also raised whether in the process of police officers travelling in their uniforms to jobs, constituted them being on or duty? The concern was that police officers who have to travel to their
allocated stations are at risk in the process of travelling when they are target, especially when they travel with public transport. The question of members facing job-related stress was also emphasised.

The question of police officers having to receive a danger allowance was sharply raised by Members who questioned the wisdom of police officers having to endanger their own lives in protecting the lives of citizens, with receiving some form of compensation in the form of danger pay.

Members also wanted to know if the public was being serviced by healthy policemen and women as the figures presented by the Minister on HIV-related diseases were quite high.

6.1 Departmental Responses

 Members were reminded that the social contexts in which police officers who were off duty raised questions about when and what constituted “off duty”. The Deputy Minister indicated that the SAPS must have Nyala vehicles is an operational decision and that it was a Cabinet instruction. She indicated that some of the policies must be reviewed specifically those relating to police officers using public transport travelling in uniform to and from work. The Transformation Committee will have to address such policies and change others that impact negatively on police work and morale.

As far as police officers on anti-retroviral treatment were concerned, the Acting National Commissioner reported that 88% of 27 246 police officers who are enrolled with the medical aid, Polmed are on anti-retroviral treatment. This figure includes family members who are also enrolled on Polmed. Only 69,7 % are SAPS members.

The SAPS reported that they have not yet determined why the attacks on police officers off duty are happening, but it is something that should be addressed. Firearms were used in a high percentage of cases (62%) where police officers were killed.

The Secretary of Police indicated that normally there was a high percentage of people who were not afraid of the Police. This changed when there were public protests.

7. David Bruce - Independent Researcher

David Bruce presented that there was a gap in information that was made available on police deaths and that the information on the killing of police officers must be improved. According to him, the majority of non-natural deaths of police officers was as a result of motor vehicle accidents. This placed a new dimension on the problem.

The majority of police officers that were murdered, were killed while they were off duty. The killing of off-duty police officers accounted for 60% in the years 2010/11 to 2014/15 while 59% were killed off-duty in the 2014/15 financial year.

The highest deaths of police officers were in three provinces which accounted for 70% in last three years (272 out of 389) while officers were off-duty. There were 115 suicides in the 2012/13 financial year.

A provincial breakdown showed that 34% of deaths are in Gauteng, 20% in KwaZulu-Natal, 14% in the Eastern Cape and 12% in the Western Cape over a five year period from 2010/11- 2014/15. The SAPS analysis of the causes of deaths should be done more carefully and in its current form it is limited and perfunctory. While the issue of police killings have been foregrounded since 2003, there has not been the type of improvement required for the analysis of data. The last presentation in August 2015 by the SAPS to the Portfolio Committee was a step in the right direction. With the exception of Gauteng (50% of deaths are on duty) and the Western Cape, the majority of deaths are off-duty. One of the questions that is missing from the police analysis is what is the contribution of total number of disputes or arguments to the total figure of police killings?

Mr Bruce argued that the responsibilities of police officers should be clarified. They should call in on duty police officers in situations where they are off duty. He suggested that the Federal Bureaus of Investigation collect data on police killings from over 18 000 organisations. There is a case to be made for better data collection which includes data on municipal police officers killed on duty.
8. The Compensation Commissioner

The Compensation Fund is a public entity of the Department of Labour, in terms of Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act no. 130/1993 as amended by the COIDA 61/1997. The main objective of the Act is to provide compensation for disablement caused by occupational injuries or diseases sustained or contracted by employees, or for death resulting from such injuries or diseases, and provide for matters connected therewith.

The SAPS is considered an exempted employer for the purposes of compensation. The Compensation Commissioner receives the claims for compensation and then issues an award, which the Department then pays. Police Reservists are not covered for the purposes of injury and award and mental disorders are not recorded, while some claims often require further investigation. Recently there have been improved communication between the Chief Executive Officer of the Fund and the SAPS.

A breakdown of SAPS claims shows that between 2005 and 2015, that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) claims have totalled 41% of all claims. A further breakdown of claims is shown in Table 3 below for the period 2005 -2015:

### Table 3: SAPS Claims Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Injuries Reported</th>
<th>% of Cases</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Diseases</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression &amp; anxiety</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amputation</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compensation Commissioner

9. SAPS Employee Health and Wellness (EHW)

General Buthelezi reported that the SAPS Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) component has four key focus areas, namely:

1) HIV/AIDS and TB Management;
2) Health and Productivity Management;
3) SHERQ Management; and
4) Wellness Management.

As far as mental health are concerned, 89% of the treated/ diagnosed cases are of active in service members have depression, 22% are suffering from PTSD and 5% with substance abuse, not much different from the 2013/2014 financial year. Of the reported cases, Police Act members from Free State reported the highest incidence of psychiatric conditions with 14%, followed by KwaZulu Natal with 13% and the Northern Cape and with 12%.

9.1 HIV related diseases

The reported that the total number of members enrolled on the POLMED HIV program for 2014/2015 was 27 246, (Females 14 799 and 12 447 Males). Of the total, 88% of those enrolled are on antiretroviral treatment (ART); 10% are too early to treat and 2% defaulters. Another 69.72% of enrollees are principal (main) members. The highest affected age group is between 34 - 44 years, a slight increase in age from the 2013/2014 financial year which ranged between 25- 35 age group. The highest HIV infected by age and gender is females aged 34-39 and males aged group 44-49. The
KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng and Eastern Cape Provinces have the highest number of programme participants.

9.2 Suicides

It was reported that the most common cause of police suicides include relationship challenges (private and workplace relationships); finances; disciplinary issues in the workplace; psychiatric conditions and substance abuse. SAPS group most susceptible to suicide are between 30-34 years old with 30 claims from POLMED report, which indicate a slight decrease in the suicide cases within the 3 year period.

9.3 Homicides and Femicides

The police are most susceptible to members attacking and killing their intimate partners/ families, harassing colleagues, spouses’ partners and or children. The SAPS have identified the following factors as causes for such behaviour:

- Relationship Challenges (at work and in private life)
- Finances
- Mood Disorders
- Substance Abuse
- Sexual harassment

Police members also have the following lifestyle diseases: high blood pressure; hypertension; obesity and maladaptive coping strategies. Police officers also face various risk factors including occupational risk factors which include:

- Occupational exposure to hazardous material (FSL – laboratories, divers, pilots etc.)
- Exposure to occupational diseases and injuries (Ports of Entries, Crime scene experts, analysts)
- Exposure to gruesome crime scene (Crime scene experts)
- Poor infection control mechanism in managing crime scenes

The Employee Health and Wellness (EHW) component has been able to develop various response to questions of employee health. EHW has designed programs and interventions that are targeted in order to offer support and care services to employees and their families. EHW services are directed to individual, groups, teams, families and to the organization. EHW programs are offered through an integrated multidisciplinary approach by psychologists, chaplains and social workers.

10. Mr Don Gold – Training the SAPS

Mr Gold suggested that policing is 97% talking to people and 3% use of force. Police casualties were high while the morale and public image of the police were low. The solution for the police should be a “back to basics” approach. For this reason there is a need to reprioritise training and generate compliance with safety and dignity. According to Mr Gold, training should therefore start here. Many clashes start as a result of some police officer’s unprofessional approach. Police officers should therefore be trained in the effective use of communication to de-escalate situations. The training in the use of force by the SAPS was seen as abysmal to mediocre and there were only small pockets of excellence. Officers are taught to shoot, not to fight as police officers are trained once a year and receive shooting practice. It was for this reason that the training was inadequate and inappropriate for the reality of the streets.

Mr Gold further emphasised that without proper training, police officers will not react professionally and instead rely on their primal instincts. If suspects and people are aggressive and nasty, the police will respond in the same manner. It is therefore necessary to infuse police training with ethics with concern for citizen dignity and a deep reverence for human life.
11. Civil Society Contributions

The Chairperson invited comments and contributions from Civil Society organisations invited to the seminar.

POPCRU supported the fact that a renewed sense of urgency was evident amongst all role-players. One of the key issues for the union was the fact that transport to and from work was stopped about five years ago and they called for such transport to be re-instated. POPCRU also suggested that it was time that the killing of police officers should be declared high treason and suspects should not be eligible for bail.

Dr Johan Burger of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) stated that there appeared to be very little integration with different pockets of research on the topic and that it was thin on practical level. Between 1994 and 2004, there was a decrease of 70% in police killings, while since 2004, there was only a 9% decrease. The question should be asked what was so different. There was also increase in police brutality and aggressive policing linked to a militarised approach. According to Dr Burger we need to examine to what extent the violence against the police is perpetrated as a result of decreased respect for police officers. Conversely, one of the reasons why there is aggressive policing is because of the violence perpetrated against police officers.

Ms Adele Kirsten of Gun Free South Africa stated that there is insufficient information and very little understanding what weapons were used in the killing of police officers. There is also a requirement of understanding of the loss and theft of firearms used in off duty killings. Role-players should consider applying international global standards such as the Zimri civilian standard to the SAPS.

12. Member concerns

Members raised questions about police officers not having sufficient accommodation and then they befriend criminals as they live in the same community. Members wanted to know to what extent this contributes to police killings. In addition, members wanted to know what constituted adequate training for police officers.

Other concerns related to police officers receiving danger pay and the element of corruption as a risk factor. Members wanted the respective divisions in SAPS to investigate the improvement of wages, salaries and accommodation.

Members also noted that while officers are learning to shoot, not fight, the policy position of the National Development Plan is for demilitarisation to be implemented. Members also supported the call for the killing of police officers to be declared a crime against the State and called for more research on the topic. Members noted that the best defence for police officers against criminals is a mobilised community and a good relationship with the community. In view of the fact that crime is a moving target it was better that police officers are not on-duty when in public transport to work.

One of the proposals raised by Members was that recruitment of police officers should start far earlier and immediately after school. In this way, better respect would be cultivated for police officers. Specific concern was raised on public perceptions that police officers could not be trusted and have high HIV infection rates.

Another key concern was also whether the local authorities were responsive to community needs. There ought to be better co-operation between local authorities and the police.

12.1 Final Responses

The Deputy Minister thanked all presenters although she did not agree 100% with all researchers and presenters. She pledged to look into accommodation as it was a serious matter and affects some of the police officers negatively. Some police officers are staying in shacks and some of the shacks did not have street lights which was why the police sometimes had to face being ambushed. This was
one of the reasons why accommodation was therefore the number one priority for the Deputy Minister
and she stated that local government must work with the police in this respect.

The Acting National Commissioner, General Phahla, in his response raised questions about the lack
of training. He reminded the participants that there were over 140000 incidents relating to public
disorder. In the first quarter, there were over 7000 incidents which required policing. While there is
room for improvement, it is possible that officers may have been overtaken by developments since
their first training. SAPS members could not afford to be spectators to crime whether they are on or
off duty and that is why they are considered to be on duty 24 hours, seven days a week.

In 62% of the cases where police officers have been killed, firearms were used as compared to 14%
where knives were used. Only trained members of the SAPS receive firearms and clerks are not
issued with firearms. The curriculum is work in progress and FET colleges are used in this respect.
The Commissioner also noted that corruption is unwelcome in the SAPS and compensation for
occupational injuries is an issue that is made visible at the highest level in the department. Cellphones
are the tools of the trade and a communication tool and should not impede or compromise the work.
He agreed that there is a relationship between where police officers live in informal communities and
them being killed. He also reminded the research community that the views elicited in one research
project at a single police station could not be a complete picture for the police at national level.

Tactical training was part of the training of police officers and combat shooting is something the
institution reviews on a regular basis, as every shooting incident is assessed and reviewed. There are
twenty-four (24) police training academies countrywide, of which ten (10) offers basic training to police
recruits and the remaining fourteen (14) training academies offer specialised training to police officers.

13. Recommendations

1. The Committee envisages that the seminar will lead to a greater appreciation and
   understanding of the risk factors that goes together with policing and the dangers such risk
   factors pose for the police.
2. The Committee recommends that the Civilian Secretariat develops improved policy
   development proposals to ensure greater safety for police officers.
3. The Committee recommends that better data sets on police deaths and other risks factors
   should be developed by the SAPS.
4. The Committee recommends that the Civilian Secretariat for Police finalises strategies for
   better community mobilisation in the Community Policing Forums (CPF) and Community
   Safety Forums (CSF).
5. The Committee recommends that the SAPS must develop an improved profiling system in
   order to identify at-risk police officers based on the completed case analysis data available
   and act proactively to neutralise impeding situations.
6. The Committee recommends that the SAPS and CSP must conduct collaborative research on
   the use of technology in the SAPS in order to prevent the unnatural deaths of police officers.

14. Conclusion

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Police stated that the seminar was timeous as it dealt
with the complex issue of police killings. He reminded everyone that Chapter 12 of the National
Development Plan focusses on the implementation of the SAPS Code of Conduct for police. The
police were on the right track and the Committee would monitor its implementation. The police work in
a changing environment and the Civilian Secretariat of Police should evaluate the role of the
Community Police Forums and Community Safety Forums. At the same time the number of suicides
were very worrying and the SAPS should look at the use of technology in preventing deaths of police
officers.

Report to be considered.