

SAPS AND PRIVATE SECURITY INDUSTRY JOIN HANDS IN PE

Government has admitted that it cannot deliver certain services on its own; it needs more public/private partnerships. The fight against crime is but one of the areas where government needs assistance.

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Photos courtesy of Atlas Security

After the successful initiative by Honeydew Police Station where a sustainable model based on partnerships between the SAPS, businesses and the community has been established, the Port Elizabeth police investigated the possibility of a similar initiative. This initiative is in line with the new Minister of Police, Mr Nathi Mthethwa's strategy to improve partnerships between communities, businesses and private security companies.

Asst Comm Kapp from Motherwell SAPS arranged meetings between the SAPS and private security companies, Omega Risk Solutions, ADT, Chubb and Atlas, to discuss the possibility of such an initiative. The relevant roleplayers agreed to participate, and on 14 November 2008 a Memorandum of Understanding between the parties was signed at Mount Road Police Station, in Port Elizabeth.

Through this initiative the police aims to achieve a reduction in trio crimes (house robberies, business robberies and hijackings); the prevention of crime; the raising of public confidence and participation; an increase in crime detection, arrest and prosecution rates and quicker reaction times to Priority 1 complaints.

The project leader, Supt Glen Liebenberg, told SERVAMUS that good communication is of utmost importance in order for the SAPS and private security companies to work closely together. He said that the emergency channel in the 10111 centre was identified for security personnel to monitor, which also has a direct link with the SAPS. Security companies immediately report Priority 1 complaints to the 10111 centre, whereafter the police vehicle closest to the scene has to respond immediately.

A Memorandum of Understanding

As mentioned earlier, the security companies have all entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the SAPS, whereafter a standard operational procedure was developed. At this stage a security officer from Omega Risk Solutions mans the emergency channel in the 10111 centre. This gives private security companies in Port Elizabeth direct access to the police's 10111 line, alerting police to crime scenes and sharing valuable information about crimes. This also helps the police to map out hotspots for hijackings, robberies etc on a resource map of Port Elizabeth in the 10111 centre. By using magnets to plot with, a map of Port Elizabeth is constantly updated, marking the areas where all SAPS and security vehicles are patrolling. Each security company also has a coordinator through which all relevant information sharing goes. This ensures even distribution of resources in Port Elizabeth and also quick response times. The security companies support one another without disrupting their own routine. The project is monitored in the 10111 centre and it has been found that the response time has improved significantly.

Mike Burmeister from Atlas Security said that the officers manning the 10111 centre communicate directly with the armed patrol control room and with individuals on the ground. He described the partnership as a "give and take" situation on both the SAPS' and security companies' side.

During the signing of the MOU Asst Comm Kapp said: "We have created this partnership because we cannot fight crime in isolation. We need partnerships to provide a safe environment to Port Elizabeth's residents."

The centre can be described as the new eyes and ears of the police. Mike Burmeister said with the extra vehicles on the road information flows back into the 10111 centre and that apprehension of criminals and response times are much quicker. Currently there is only one policeman for every 500 people in the Eastern Cape. The shortage of vehicles and other resources make matters even worse. With this initiative more vehicles and human resources are available to fight crime in the friendly city.

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The project's success has once again confirmed that law enforcement cannot be done in isolation. Only when the community, business and the SAPS join forces and share information, resources and skills, the fight against crime will be won!