



Media Statement

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Vehicle smugglers antagonize Nkomazi community

The communities of Steenbok bordering Swaziland and Mozambique have called on government to enhance security on the borderline saying that vehicles are stolen and transported into neighbouring countries. They were speaking during a community meeting that was held at Steenbok on Saturday.

At a highly emotive meeting, residents who have been victims of the scourge, also complained to Mpumalanga Community Safety, Security and Liaison MEC Pat Ngomane, that car thieves are known and they are not being arrested. The criminals were mostly targeting Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) and Light Delivery Vehicles (LDVs).

They further alleged that even the illegal routes where their stolen vehicles are taken out of the country are known even though SAPS and SANDF are patrolling the borderline. Community members further alleged that the buyers of the stolen vehicles in neighbouring countries are also known.

Other residents appealed to government to enhance the vehicle tracking systems so that stolen vehicles are quickly recovered before they even cross the border. They have called for increased co-operation between the neighbouring countries in crime prevention because this would impact positively on tracking stolen vehicles.

They also alleged that some police officers were colluding with criminals and that made it difficult for crime cases to be solved. They further wanted the MEC to ensure that the police informants were safe because when they give police tip offs; the suspects would later come and intimidate them at their homes.

They have also told the meeting that as part of addressing challenges of light delivery vehicle theft, illegal crossing of foreign nationals, smuggling of counterfeit goods, government needed to ensure that SANDF members patrolled the borderline regularly.

Mr Stanley Madonsela who is a member of the Community Policing Forum in the province had to organize people to help him retrieve a vehicle from Mozambique stolen from his sister. Narrating the ordeal, he and the men located the informants who allegedly led them to Mozambique where the vehicle was tracked and brought back to the country, however he had to organize payment to the people who were found in possession of the vehicle.

Responding to community issues, MEC Ngomane pleaded with the community to work with the police to combat and prevent crime. He said: "Government will only win the war against crime if effective partnerships between the police and the community exist. Community members should not support rogue elements even if they are related to them.

Police should also play their part by ensuring that they speedily arrest the suspects and protect whistle blowers. Witnesses of crime should testify in court so that suspects are successfully convicted."

The MEC also called on SAPS management to identify some rotten apples in the service that are colluding with criminals and ensure that they are removed for the benefit of the communities.

At the same meeting Ngomane pleaded with parents to play their role in ensuring that alcohol consumption particularly among teenagers is curbed because they often become victims of crime and are also at risk of becoming involved in road crashes. He added that the department will continue to work with the police to ensure the closure of liquor trading establishments that do not comply with the law.

In May this year, Mpumalanga Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison and SAPS, SANDF and Nkomazi Local Municipality launched a Border Security Project to end the stealing and hijacking of vehicles, which are later moved to Mozambique illegally through the borderline.

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