



# The Death of Police Officers at The Scene of Incident: A New Approach within The South African Police Services Response to Crime



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**Submission:** January 9, 2023; **Published:** January 27, 2023

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## Abstract

Policing encompasses a multitude of diverse tasks, including peacekeeping, criminal investigation, traffic control, and providing emergency medical service. Being a law enforcement officer is to engage one's own life to save the state and its citizens, to ensure the safety and security of the people and to ensure people are respecting the rules and regulations that govern the country including its constitution and the Bill of rights. The significance of this study is to analyze the circumstances in which police officers are killed by examining their tactics used to respond to the scene of the incident and suggesting new approaches that can help in preventing the loss of manpower within the law enforcement structure. The study used a qualitative secondary data approach to generate data with a systematic method for data analysis. The findings reveal that the proliferation of firearms in South Africa, the suspect's perseverance in violence, suspect protection, and defense are some of the causes of the killing of the police officers on duty. This study suggests that the interventions of law enforcement officers should depend on the type or nature of the crime. A violent crime that involved murder should be attended to carefully to neutralize or incapacitate the suspect by all means. Intelligence-led policing involving ununiformed members of the community, the zero tolerance and community policing approaches must be applied to curb or prevent the killing of on-duty law enforcement officers.

**Keywords:** Policing; Crime; The scene of the Incident; Death of police

## Introduction

Let us first remind the public that the South African Police Service is governed by Chapter 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) that stipulates the South African Police Service has a responsibility to:

- prevent, combat, and investigate crime.
- maintain public order.
- protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property; and
- uphold and enforce the law.
- create a safe and secure environment for all people in South Africa.
- prevent anything that may threaten the safety or security of any community.

- investigate any crimes that threaten the safety or security of any community.
- ensure criminals are brought to justice, and
- participate in efforts to address the causes of crime.

Following long and often bitter negotiations, the ANC, Inkatha and the government signed a National Peace Accord on 14 September 1991. The agreement contained 'general provisions' which included the following: The police shall endeavor to protect the people of South Africa from all criminal acts and shall do so in a rigorously non-partisan fashion, regardless of the political belief and affiliation, race, religion, gender or ethnic origin of the perpetrators or victims of such acts... The police shall be guided by the belief that they are accountable to society in rendering their policing services and shall therefore conduct themselves to

secure and retain the respect and approval of the public. Through such accountability and friendly, effective, and prompt service, the police shall endeavor to obtain the cooperation of the public whose partnership in the task of crime control and prevention is essential...

... the police must 'preserve the fundamental and constitutional rights of each individual in South Africa, to 'secure the favor and approval of the public', to use the least possible degree of force, to 'be sensitive to the 'balance between individual freedom and collective security and to act professionally and honestly.

Concerning the above, Kreuzer [1] points out that with the state's means of legitimate force under their control, why should regimes resort to or tolerate vigilantism, instead of employing the state security apparatus? One obvious answer is a weakness of the police and the judiciary branch that undermines their capacity to enforce the rule of law.

Research on on-duty police violence hardly encounters such problems because the police do not conceal such activities. In the case of on-duty police killings, the challenge is to distinguish between real self-defense, individual acts of excessive violence, and signs of a systemic application of such violence. In this study, the terms Police officer and law enforcement will be used interchangeably.

### **Police brutality, but in which circumstance do they become brutal?**

One of the most important decisions the state can make is to cause the death of one of its citizens and perhaps the most difficult and controversial decision a police officer can make as an agent of the state is to take the life of a fellow citizen [2]. The authority of the police to use force represents one of the most misunderstood powers granted to representatives of the government. Police officers are authorized to use both psychological and physical force to apprehend criminals and solve crimes [3]. The use of force typically occurs when police are to make an arrest and the suspect is resisting. Research indicates that the police are most likely to use force when pursuing a suspect and attempting to exercise their arrest powers [3].

Deadly force is justified when an individual poses a serious threat to the safety of the on-scene officers or bystanders [4]. An armed individual is a prime example of such a threat. Klinger et al. [5], in an analysis of police shootings in St. Louis, MO, report that in 79 per cent of incidents in which police discharge their weapon, at least one of the suspects possessed a firearm. Zimring (2017: 56) analyzed a dataset assembled by The Guardian of fatal police shootings in the United States in 2015 and reports that in 56 per cent of those instances, the decedent possessed a firearm.

The major reason police shoot so often is that guns appear to be in the hands of civilians. Because firearms are also the cause

of death in more than 90 per cent of all fatal assaults on police, the dominant role of fear of opponents with guns is easy to comprehend (Zimring, 2017: 57). It is thus a commonplace that the proliferation of concealable firearms in the civilian population is a major source of the singularly high rate of killings by the police in the United States (Zimring, 2017).

Because firearms, unlike most other weapons, provide the capacity to inflict bodily harm at a distance, suspects possessing firearms pose a particularly high risk to police officers. Zimring (2017) argues that weapon availability is the only plausible explanation for the vastly higher rates of fatal police shootings in the United States compared to European countries. Still, the linkage between firearm availability and fatal police shootings is not obvious. As described by Cook [6] presently only 31 per cent of U.S. households possess firearms. For the vast majority of those owners, there is no realistic prospect of their using the weapon for an illegal purpose. But Cook [6] goes on to observe, "*in jurisdictions in which gun possession is common, offenders may find it easier to access a gun in the informal or underground market. Indeed, the stock of guns in private possession serves as a reservoir from which most problematic transactions originate.*"

By this mechanism, higher overall firearm availability may translate into more frequent encounters between police and armed suspects, even though most guns are held by law-abiding individuals. The general availability of firearms may also affect the probability of fatal shootings in circumstances in which the decedent is later found to be unarmed. Police officers must make judgements about the risk of harm at the beginning of each encounter. In places where gun availability is higher, police officers may surmise that they are at greater risk of harm via what economists and statisticians call statistical prediction/discrimination and act accordingly [7].

Nevertheless, police officers have been blamed for being brutal, but what remains to know is to find out what makes them brutal. In contemporary South Africa, people tend to forget the mission of the police and its challenges. The name "Law enforcement" itself says it all. They can only be law enforcement where there is disobedience of the law, where there is a breach of the law. In most cases, the breach of the law is done in a violent way threatening the lives of the surrounding people together with their properties. This calls for the intervention of law enforcement officers whose mission is to protect the people and their properties from danger.

However, law enforcement is an inherently hazardous profession. Officers are at risk for duty-related accidents and illness, as well as intentional assaults that result in injury or death [8]. Assaults occur spontaneously during arrests, investigations, or the pursuit of suspects. In most cases, these assaults are unplanned acts of violence that arise to resist arrest, although they may also be opportunistic expressions of hostility during an encounter between law enforcement officers and someone

who rejects police authority and presence [9]. These unplanned assaults have been referred to by some scholars as spontaneous ambushes [10].

In 1 month in 1980, four New York City police officers were murdered and six more were badly wounded in gunfights. Over the past 26 months, 14 police officers have been killed, 53 were hit by gunfire, and another 150 have been shot at but not hit. Of the four men charged with killing police officers in 1980, two had backgrounds of severe mental disorders, while the remaining two carried extremely long records for assault, robbery, and drug offences but had spent little time in prison [11]. These last two offenders typify a new breed of criminal who accepts brief periods of incarceration as a way of life and learns to manipulate the criminal justice system.

Police are charged with preventing crime and apprehending perpetrators, putting them in conflict with suspected and actual perpetrators of crimes. They actively seek encounters with suspects, who may tend towards violence and lack respect for authority. In the form of performing their duty to protect the public, police officers can find themselves in the sensitive and potentially volatile position of protecting protesters who are protesting the actions of the police themselves. Police deal with a wide variety of situations in their work. They encounter minor to serious potentially dangerous deadly incidents. Hence, in some instances, they are obliged to be brutal to must the violent situation.

### Targeted violence against law enforcement officers

The police are the instrument of the people to achieve and maintain order; their efforts are founded on principles of public service and ultimate responsibility to the public. The role the police officer plays in society is a difficult one; he must clearly understand complex social relationships to be effective. He is not only a part of the community he serves, and a part of the government that provides his formal base of authority, but he is also a part of the criminal justice system that determines what course society will pursue to deter lawbreakers or rehabilitate offenders in the interest of public order.

Nevertheless, as highly visible representatives and guardians of society, law enforcement officers are very public figures. Targeted assaults on police officers, referred to as ambushes in previous literature, are a particularly perplexing problem with significant implications for society at large [9].

Studies from the USA suggest that the rate with which law enforcement officers are killed can be predicted by the general homicide rate, the rate of justifiable homicide by police officers and by the degree of violence and social disintegration in a society [12]. On July 7, 2016, five police officers were killed and nine wounded in Dallas in an act of targeted violence. Three days later, in Baton Rouge, three officers were killed and three wounded in a targeted attack [9]. By 2015, the majority of the American public (58%) supported the view that there was a "war on police" in the

United States [13].

### The murder of police officials in South Africa

Death and injury to serving South African Police Service (SAPS) is a major concern. Recent spates of police murders in South Africa confirm that policing is a high-risk profession (Correspondent, 2018, Huffington Post, 2018/06/27; Correspondent, 2018, South African Government Agency, 2018/09/11, Hosken, 2018). South African society is characterized by high levels of violent crime and interpersonal conflict and police officials serve on the front line in this context with many deaths occurring among serving officials [14]. This means that police officials in South Africa are exposed to the darkest elements of human nature.

Kempen (2005:19) states that the high incidence of attacks and the killing of police officials is cause for concern. According to the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation [CSVR] (2009:65), the rate at which members of the police are murdered in South Africa is considered exceptionally high. During the 2016/2017 financial year, 57 police officials were killed during active duty, while 29 were killed in the line of duty during the 2017/2018 financial year (Peterson, 2018, News24, 2018/09/02).

In the first six months of 2019, 26 police officials were killed while on active duty (Correspondent, 2019, South African Government Agency, 2019/06/27. Between 2014 and 2017, a total of 325 police officials died, which is an average of 81 police officials annually. What is noteworthy, is that approximately 60% of police officials are murdered while they are off duty (Correspondent, 2019, South African Government Agency, 2019/06/27). The killing of police officials was highlighted as a problem in the Quarterly Report of the SAPS before the turn of the new millennium (CIMC, 1998:42). In conjunction with this, Conradie [15] emphasized that attacks on police officials have a detrimental effect on police morale and poses a stumbling block to their effectiveness.

Geldenhuis (2007:11) echoes the same sentiments by reiterating that "there are many police heroes who have paid the highest price to protect us and our property from criminals who walk our streets". Police officials who are killed while on duty are vulnerable when they respond to crime and enter a dangerous situation. They sometimes rush into the situation without any thought for personal safety and the seriousness of the crime situation, for example, during a crime in progress [16]. The fact that the situation develops rapidly, means those police officials arrive at active crime scenes and do not have time to take proper precautions, such as wearing bullet-proof vests, thus placing themselves at greater risk of being killed. Hence the need for new approaches to the scene of an incident by police officials when attending to a crime situation.

In South Africa, the killing of police officers by criminals has become a norm. South Africa has lost many of its SAPS at the crime scene in the past years. In 2021, more than 27 police officers have

lost their lives in the line of duty with considerable consequences attached to the death of police and their families victims of the losses. This can be condoned by the current policy denying police officers the right to shoot, even in the event of self-defense.

Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union provincial secretary Nthabeleng Molefe said: *“they were deeply saddened by the widespread police killings”*. According to Police Minister Bheki Cele, by Friday, seven police officers had been killed in 15 days in South Africa (2021)<sup>1</sup>

The police officer’s distraught sister, Sindi Gule said the family was on their way to Cape Town from Makhanda in the Eastern Cape. She did not want to comment further. SA Policing Union (Sapu) acting deputy general secretary Peter Ntsime said the continued killing of police officers in the country, whether on or off-duty, reached an alarming rate a long time ago (2021). Ntsime said the union had consistently condemned police killings, and there had been national summits and other plans to curb the scourge, but to no avail.

The killing of police officers was *“a pandemic that the whole population should be concerned about. The justice system should show no mercy to police killers,”* said Ntsime (2021). There should be a unit dedicated to investigating incidents where police are killed, because if a police officer is suspected of having done something in the community, then there is the Independent Police Investigative Directorate, said Molefe. We have also asked the police to shoot and kill, and we will represent them as a union because we see that now the police attacks are on the rise as if it is a matter of leaving the community alone so that criminals are left to fend for themselves. Molefe.

Molefe urged the public to work with the police to arrest criminals.

We strongly urge that those who have been arrested be charged with treason and receive a heavier sentence than in the past so that others who wish to do the same can see the consequences. They should be made an example of, he said.

Five police officers have been killed in the province in the past three weeks which is a clear indication that criminals are on a warpath against the police. The murder of a police officer is a direct attack on the state and the rule of law, therefore the only bodies we should be counting are those of criminals and not of police officers. Police must not die with a gun in their hands, but they must defend themselves decisively, said Mshengu<sup>2</sup>.

### Police officers killed in KwaZulu-Natal in 2021

March 6: Sergeant Thamsanqa Mbedu from Empangeni FCS was shot dead 27 times while performing investigation duties.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/concerns-grow-after-five-cops-killed-in-kzn-in-three-weeks-a25a36d8-ecb3-4e42-a2f3-6a3f2695972a>, Accessed 16 March 2021

<sup>2</sup><https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/concerns-grow-after-five-cops-killed-in-kzn-in-three-weeks-a25a36d8-ecb3-4e42-a2f3-6a3f2695972a>, Accessed 16 March 2021

<sup>3</sup><https://www.msn.com/en-za/news/other/off-duty-cop-shot-dead-in-eersterivier/ar AAO11QY?ocid=msedgntp>. Accessed 03 September 2021.

March 4: Detective-Captain Sam Nyawose, 55, of the Umkomaas SAPS Detective Service, was gunned down in an alleged hit while on his way to work.

February 20: Sergeant Makhosaze Mdlangathi, 33, and Sergeant Mfikelwa Mtolo, 36, were killed execution-style while off duty in Taylor’s Halt, near Pietermaritzburg.

February 18: Constable Mfihloyakhe Ndlovu, 45, was killed when he and his colleague responded to a domestic violence complaint in Welbedacht East, Chatsworth.

February 7: Constable Sizwe Mthethwa, stationed at Inanda police station, was stabbed, and killed while off duty.

On top of the police dearth in KwaZulu-Natal, the latest quarterly crime statistics show 32 officers were killed between April and June 2021 in the country at large of whom nine were on duty<sup>3</sup>.

Police officers are of any threat to the community, instead, they are here for our safety and security. Generally, criminals and delinquents are the ones who shout about police brutality forgetting that to some extent police officers are called to be brutal when they deal with violent situations due to the nature of the incidents they deal with on a daily basis. Any law-abiding member of the community will feel protected by the presence of the police during police patrol, but those who will see their unlawful business deterred will always cry out about policing activities in their areas. The killing of a police officer must be severely punished since such a killing is a threat to the sovereignty of the state. The purpose of this study is to seek to make a society where criminals will be afraid of law enforcement officers and not vice versa. This paper will address the following objectives: (1) to determine the causes of death of police officers at the Scene of the Incident. (2) to evaluate their strategies to respond to the Scene of the Incident. (3) to establish different approaches to respond to the scene of the incident.

### Methodology

Because qualitative researchers examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others and how they structure and give meaning to their daily lives, this research adopted a qualitative approach in a quest to respond to the objectives of the study. According to Walters [17], qualitative research involves the collection and interpretation of subjective data that often is shaped by social, cultural, and political realities that are evident at the time of data collection. However, due to the difficulty of obtaining Ethical approval and reaching the targeted population (police officers) during this period of the Covid-19 pandemic, the researchers decided to use secondary data



collection following a systematic method. Secondary analysis is an empirical exercise that applies the same basic research principles as studies utilizing primary data and has steps to be followed just as any research method [18].

Using large secondary data sets provides an alternative to the collection of primary data, often giving the researcher access to more information than would be available in primary data sets [19]. One of the advantages of secondary data is that it can include any data that are examined to answer a research question other than the question (s) for which the data were initially collected, but also it includes access to large amounts of information, coverage of a broad range of individuals or other entities (e.g., schools, hospitals), [19]. They tend to be far less costly and take far less time to organize relatively to primary data sets. This article used secondary data from accredited journals by the institution for which this research was conducted, the University of KwaZulu-Natal. These journals and books were accessed online through web-based resources leading to the institution's online libraries, the South African government website, and online newspapers.

Despite that secondary data presents many opportunities for researchers, there are still good reasons for using primary data. One of the problems with using secondary data is the lack of control over the framing a wording of survey items [19]. This may mean that questions important to your study are not included in the data. Trzesniewski et al. [20] point out that the primary disadvantage of secondary data is the flip side of the major advantage – the data have already been collected.

Nevertheless, to access the data, the internet was used in a way that the researchers formulated a search strategy using appropriate keywords, through Google scholar and Jstor.org, but also some official websites were visited, which then allowed for a collection of estimated relevant articles, books and other web-based resources from which secondary data were extracted to respond to the purpose of this study. The ethical procedures were taken into consideration by describing articles that protect human subjects in their analysis. Such data were de-identified before the secondary data analysis was conducted.

### Results

#### The causes of death of police officers at the Scene of the Incident

The motives of police assailants range from spontaneous to planned, simply too convoluted, and bizarre to rational. Often the timing of police intervention plays a critical role in the offenders' perceptions and reactions [21].

#### Household firearm availability in South Africa

Firearms or guns in the hands of civilians are one of the root causes of police death on and off duty. Police officers' concern about encounters with armed suspects is real. Zimring (2017: 57) reports that in more than 90 per cent of killings of police officers

in the line of duty, the killer inflicted fatal injury to the officer with a firearm. However, South Africa has had a long history with arms, and by its first democratic elections in April 1994, it had been identified as one of the top ten arms manufacturers in the world [22]. Robinson [23] points out that the Apartheid government developed a strong domestic arms industry in addition to building and strengthening its national defense force. In addition to its highly militarized state, Robinson [23] concedes that South Africa was able to develop a wide range of military hardware including nuclear bombs, rockets, launchers, grenades and various light and heavy machine guns including pistols and assault rifles. Robinson [23] noted that during Apartheid, the South African government participated in the illegal manufacturing sales and purchase of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) due to its isolation from the international arena.

The Apartheid era was characterized by the accumulation of SALWs as nationalist groups armed themselves for violent clashes. The end of the Cold War –resulted in the influx of arms to the African continent, resulting in their circulation within South Africa [22]. Thus, in developing their caches, liberation armies had access to these weapons. SALWs thus gained dominance in the Apartheid era, continuing even after the Independence in 1994. The proliferation of these weapons in South Africa is also due to the remnants from the Apartheid era where weapons were accumulated and kept for private use.

However, in South Africa's current democratic dispensation (post-1994), the threat of SALWs continues to affect communities. These weapons have contributed to high levels of insecurity in communities. According to Ettang [24], there has been a rapid increase in the use of illegal firearms to carry out violent criminal activities throughout the country. Thus, authors like Shaw & Gastrow [25] wrote that South Africa sits as one of the most violent countries in the world when it comes to crimes, including rape and armed robbery.

Beyond the apartheid remnants, these illegal firearms have been identified as coming from three primary sources: fraud and corruption where unfit individuals obtain firearm licenses; guns smuggled in from different countries and the loss or theft of firearms from licensed owners and the state (SAPS 2015/2016) [24]. In 2017, 33 firearms went missing from two police stations in Cape Town<sup>4</sup>. Guns have gone missing in police stations in areas plagued with gang violence like Mitchell Plains and Bellville South in Cape Town<sup>5</sup>. These lost and stolen firearms are used in gang hits, taxi violence and politically motivated attacks. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, two police officers were arrested for selling police-issued weapons and ammunition, including bulletproof vests and pepper spray<sup>6</sup>. Thus, South Africa continues to face a significant security challenge in the proliferation and illicit trafficking of SALW [24]. The problem is highly challenging and persistent in a way that the possession of illegal weapons has a bearing on individual security. As long as these weapons are in the

wrong hands (including rogue security officials), they will be easily used to perpetrate extreme levels of violence against innocent victims [22]. The existence of firearms in the hands of civilians is a serious threat to law enforcement officers when conducting their operations, mostly when they attend a crime scene where firearms were used, in most cases, they meet resistance on the part of the suspect if this last is holding a firearm.

### Perseverance

Perseverance is one of the causes of killing on-duty police officers. Perseverance in the transfer of or extension of violence as a motive of police assailants occurs when violence exists before the arrival of a rape, an argument, or perhaps in the less personal context of a robbery in progress [21]. The attack on the responding officer may be a reaction to the officer's interference in or interruption of some act of violence, or it may be a reaction to the assailant's perception of the officer as siding with the original victim – the officer serves as an additional source of frustration.

For example, in 1917, an officer on solo foot patrol was summoned to the scene of a domestic disturbance by a widow, who told the officer she was afraid of the man in her apartment. When the officer walked into the apartment, the incensed boyfriend, a professional prizefighter, grabbed the interfering officer's club and beat him to death. This is one of the rare cases of domestic argument leading to a police officer killing. More typically, perseverance in violence involves situations in which a person is engaged in some act of violence when the officer arrives at the scene, and the realm of violence is expanded to include the officer.

### Protection

Violence is also used to seek protection by persons who perceive the victim officer as an "instrument to impending doom" [26]. Assailants may use violence in the course of fleeing or escaping arrest; to prevent transport, for example, from the station house to the jail; to avoid the discovery of incriminating evidence; or to avoid perceived personal injury [21]. However, some police assailants use violence to avoid or escape arrest and some try to prevent the discovery of evidence, others react violently after the arrest as a manifestation of displeasure with the run of events.

### Defense of others

The motive refers to actions taken by one offender to aid or rescue a friend, acquaintance, or fellow conspirator who is engaged in a physical struggle with the victim officer, someone who is being arrested, or someone subject to the threat of physical danger [21]. Margarita [21] reports that the most common motivating

factor, present in almost two-thirds of police homicides, was the perceived need for protection against the concrete danger posed by the officer – usually during an escape attempt following the commission of a violent crime. Most victim officers responding to robberies – the largest single category of precipitant incidents – were killed by offenders who perceived the officer as presenting some imminent danger [21].

Similarly qualified by a small number of cases, the evidence suggests that one-half of rapists and mentally deranged persons killed police to avoid or retard the imposition of fearful consequences [21]. Investigations of suspicious circumstances accounted for more attacks in defense of other activities. Offenders expressing contempt, hostility, or disapproval of specific policy actions or the police function, in general, were more likely to kill police during ambush attacks on civilians, service calls, and routine patrols than in other incidents [21].

### Strategies used by the police officers to respond to the Scene of the Incident

Initial arrival at the scene may be chaotic, depending on the scope and nature of the crime. The presence of first responders, law enforcement, fire or rescue, emergency medical services, and multiple jurisdictions' agencies has an impact on scene order [27]. Baxter Jr [28] concedes that the first officer to arrive at the scene often finds a very chaotic, uncontrolled situation. This includes the identification of potential victims and witnesses and identifying suspects and involved parties. Once these individuals have been identified, they should be separated from each other [28]. It should be noted that the actions the first officers take or choose not to take at the scene affect the case in many ways.

Nevertheless, police agencies use uniformed or patrol divisions as well as detectives to process crime scenes. The patrol officer, who is usually the first police officer to respond to the crime scene, and the detective, who may arrive later, are responsible for the investigation and processing of the crime scene [29]. The first officers' most important task at the scene is to prevent the destruction or diminished value of potential evidence that may lead to the apprehension of the criminal and the ultimate resolution of the crime [29]. The responsibility of the first uniformed officers at the scene can never be minimized. What these officers do or do not do, whether innocent or intentional, may have serious ramifications for the course of the investigation [29]. Ogle & Plotkin [3] state that the safety and physical well-being of officers and other individuals, in and around the crime scene, are the first responders' priority.

4<https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/hunting-rifles-drugs-and-child-suspects-what-guns-seized-in-cape-town-reveals-20171114>, Accessed on 14 Sep. 21

5<https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/hunting-rifles-drugs-and-child-suspects-what-guns-seized-in-cape-town-reveals-20171114>, Accessed on 14 Sep. 21

6<https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/kzn-cop-arrested-for-allegedly-selling-police-guns-ammo-to-criminals-20171030>, Accessed on 14 Sep. 21

The duties of the first officer to arrive at the crime scene are the same, no matter what his/her rank, and remain the same regardless of the seriousness of the crime. The first responder at the scene must assume that the criminal left clues or physical evidence behind. The first responder's actions or inactions must not be allowed to destroy, change reconstruct the crime or prove the identity of the suspect. Furthermore, the first officer must not inadvertently add material that may mislead investigators. In certain serious crimes, it may not be possible to preserve the crime scene because of its location. A busy street or highway with heavy traffic is an example of a situation in which it may not be possible to protect a crime scene properly for a sufficient period.

Nevertheless, first responders should not approach the scene in haste. All movements should be calm and deliberate. Officers should expect the worst and take the position that it is better to be overly cautious and remember the popular wisdom: if something can go wrong, it will! Approaching the assignment with an open mind helps an officer avoid carelessness and false moves that may prove to be disastrous [29].

According to Fisher & Fisher [29] in today's terrorist atmosphere, seemingly innocent items may harbor explosive devices. While officers should not become overly paranoid of such possibilities, they must keep this and other possibilities of danger in mind as they begin their investigation at a crime scene. The eventual success of the investigation may be dependent on the preventative and preliminary measures taken by the first officer to arrive at the crime scene. Because police work is so tightly connected to the community and its daily life, police work covers a wide spectrum of very different tasks. Police officers go on patrol, investigate, direct traffic, counsel and mediate, administer, warn, or threaten – but the fluidity between these tasks means they are not easily separated. Police work, in contrast to military work, is a daily task that of its nature is never finite because it is centered on the daily life of a community.

### **Suggested approaches respond to the scene of the incident**

Police should change their strategies in attending to cases. Criminals know how police officers operate, hence, new approaches to police behaviors should be set, and the modus operandi of South African Police officers must change. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has repeatedly warned law enforcement officers that “the threat is from the hardened criminal and the emotionally disturbed or insane person” [21]. This awareness should attract the attention of the police when responding to a scene of the incident. Baxter Jr [28] admits that one of the first actions officers should take after their initial arrival at the scene is to deal with the suspect, provided that they are still at the scene. According to Baxter Jr [28] “officer safety should ALWAYS be of priority”. However, when police attend to a scene of the incident, the first thing to find out before they even depart, is

the nature of the crime, because if the crime involved murder, then they must get ready to incapacitate the suspect by all means. Most often when police are called for intervention, they do not ask what has happened or what is happening, they jump in the car and drive toward the scene of the incident even though they never reached the scene on time.

First, the police should familiarize themselves with the members of the community in the area where the crime has happened. This calls us to the community policing approach. The community policing approach is the most important tool which can assist police officers in approaching the crime scene with proper guidance from community members. This allows the law enforcement officers who are called and informed by the community members mostly witnesses, to be aware of the nature of the violent incident that has happened. The community members know the whereabouts of the suspect and can cooperate with the officers to assist in the arrest or incapacitation of the suspect [29,30].

What is needed in this case, is a proactive approach to policing within the communities. Since a reactive approach to policing is not conducive to policing in a democratic political system because it creates a particular distance between the police and the citizens and a contact and communication exchange takes place only in cases of emergency, a proactive form of policing and fundamental and trustful cooperation between the police and the population is intended to establish public security and social peace [31].

It can be agreed upon that through active and continued communication with the residents, the police would be able to identify the most pressing problems of the respective neighborhood and try to cooperatively find workable and sustained solutions, and the same residents will be the informants of the officers about suspicious movements in the areas and if violence occurs, they will stand as witnesses and signal the whereabouts of the suspect, allowing police officers to take precautionary measures when attending the scene of incidents and trying to find the suspect.

### **Integrating Intelligence into Policing Practice**

An intelligence-led approach to policing is now well established as a key element of modern accountable police work [32]. Intelligence-led policing involves a process for enhancing law enforcement effectiveness and has been defined by Ratcliffe [33] as a business model and managerial philosophy where data analysis and crime intelligence are pivotal to an objective, decision-making framework that facilitates crime and problem reduction, disruption and prevention through strategic management and effective enforcement strategies that target prolific and serious offenders (89). Intelligence has a central role in guiding the business of policing.

Intelligence-led policing is a model of a police organization that invites police forces to go beyond their reactive management

of events and their iterative approach to problems, and instead adopt a proactive stance focused on the early detection of crime and disorder [34]. It is characterized by the ability to look at the big picture of crime in the community and to shift from a reactive to a more proactive posture in response. The idea is to understand the crime environment and set policing priorities, then optimize police actions first better. This can only be possible if trained civilian community members are part of the deal if they are tasked to invigilate suspicious movements in the neighborhoods and if they are the eyes of the police in the community.

Not only does intelligence-led policing intend to work in curbing the killing of police officers, but it is deemed to be an effective strategy for crime reduction if well applied by a trained detective unit. This approach assists in targeting offenders especially the targeting of active criminals through overt and covert means; the management of crime and disorder hotspots; the investigation of linked series of crimes and incidents; and the application of preventive measures, including working with local partnerships to reduce crime and disorder [35]. This intelligence approach is used to identify who is committing crimes, how they are committing them, and where they are committing such crimes. This can then be used to disrupt criminals from their activity through arrests or other methods such as making items more difficult to steal.

The importance of intelligence-led policing is that it typically moves to police from considering the individual crime to considering the impact and threats of multiple crimes. An intelligence-led philosophy is proactive in that it seeks to predict criminal activity and pre-empt its development. It provides actionable options on which managers can base their decisions at all levels of policing. Intelligence by its nature is proactive and works towards the possibility of hypothesized future events and ways of disrupting or preventing future crimes. By putting this approach into action, police officers will reduce their tactics of approaching the crime scene because the intelligence-led policing staff will be on the ground trying to figure out who the suspects are and get the entire record of the incidents before the arrival of law enforcement. The crime scene should be approached by uniformed police officers on the call of ununiformed partners of the police who might be well-trained civilian community members.

### Zero-Tolerance Policing

It involves frequent traffic stops, stop-and-frisk questioning of supposedly suspicious persons, and frequent arrests for disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and other minor offences. Barkan [36] is of the view that such visible, aggressive policing may reduce crime by increasing the chances that criminals get arrested and by deterring potential criminals from offending. By reducing incivilities such as disorderly youth and public drunkenness, it

may also prompt potential offenders to think that residents care what happens in their neighborhoods and again deter them from offending [37].

In a quest of eliminating the killing of the police, Ramaphosa was addressing the families of slain police officers at the police memorial site at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, where he also observed the annual SA Police Service Commemoration Day when he declared the following:

“Let us transform the anger we feel, the frustration, into a sense of determination to jointly rid our streets of all forms of crime. To all our men and women in blue, I call on you to honor your departed colleagues by remaining vigilant at all times and ensuring no police officer dies in the hands of criminals<sup>7</sup>.”

This statement can only work by applying the Zero-tolerance approach to criminal activities. According to Barkan [36], zero-tolerance or proactive policing might also work, but the mixed results overall leave unclear the actual impact of this style of policing. Because this style may lead to abuse of police powers and worsen civilian-police relationships, cities and police forces should practice it very carefully if at all.

### Community Policing

Community policing has been increasingly promoted, particularly in liberal democratic societies, as a suitable approach to improve police service and effectiveness along the lines of democratic governance, to reduce the fear of crime within the communities and to overcome mutual distrust between the police and the communities by enhancing police-citizen partnerships [38].

The main idea of community policing rests on the attempt to leave behind purely reactive and traditional approaches to policing. A reactive approach to policing is according to Alderson [39] not conducive to policing in a democratic political system because it creates a particular distance between the police and the citizens since contact and communicative exchange takes place only in cases of emergency, a proactive form of policing and fundamental and trustful cooperation between the police and the population is intended to establish public security and societal peace [38]. In the situation of police murders, community policing can help decrease the killing of officers in a way that community members are very aware of the whereabouts of the criminals in their midst. Only a good relationship with police officers can push the members of the community to cooperate and develop a willing attitude to provide susceptible information that might assist in tracing the offender. This also plays the role of intelligence-led policing in a way that the intelligence policing unit involves local citizens of the community who works undercover. They mostly witness crime incidents; they know the criminals and they can

<sup>7</sup><https://www.msn.com/en-za/news/national/stronger-ties-between-communities-and-police-will-help-tackle-criminality-says-cyril-ramaphosa/ar-AAO96gd?ocid=msedgntp>, Accessed on 06th September 2021.



provide full information about the criminals; hence they must be empowered in terms of training but also be given communicative tools and photographic devices that will assist them in information gathering in due time.

### Community involvement

Civic engagement usually extends to involving the public in some way to enhance community safety. Community policing promises to strengthen the capacity of communities to fight and prevent crime on their own. The idea that the police and the public are “co-producers” of safety, and that they cannot claim a monopoly over fighting crime, predates the community policing era. The community crime prevention movement of the 1970s was an important precursor to community policing. It promoted the idea that crime was not solely the responsibility of the police. The police were quick to endorse the claim that they could not solve crime problems without community support and assistance, for it helped share the blame for crime rates that were rising at the time [40].

Now, police find that they are expected to lead community efforts. They are being called upon to take responsibility for mobilizing individuals and organizations around crime prevention. These efforts include neighborhood watch, citizen patrols, and education programs stressing household target-hardening and the rapid reporting of crime. Residents are asked to assist the police by reporting crimes promptly when they occur and cooperating as witnesses. Community policing often involves increases in “transparency” in how departments respond to demands for more information about what they do and how effective they are.

To support the idea of community involvement in the war on criminals, Ramaphosa was addressing the families of slain police officers at the police memorial site at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, where he also observed the annual SA Police Service Commemoration Day when he declared the following:

Criminals live with us in our communities. We must work together towards strengthening community-police relations and bring strategic stakeholders on board to bolster the efforts of the police to bring down the levels of serious and violent crime in our country<sup>8</sup>. Brogden & Nijhar [41]. Concede that in the community policing context, crime prevention is regarded as not just a police responsibility but also as an activity that should be conducted in liaison with other agencies and more generally with the public.

### Discussion

When trying to find solutions to the killing of police officers, one should seek to understand the criminal minds which are about the worst of the worst: murderers, rapists, stalkers, kidnappers, molesters, and predators of every sort. Avid viewers know that these criminals can be categorized in several different ways. There

are organized and disorganized offenders. There are serial killers, spree killers, mass murderers, and family annihilators. There are lust or thrill killers, visionary killers, mission-based killers, and power, or control killers. When looking at their crimes, it is important to consider which aspects are part of their modus operandi and which represent their signatures. In his several books devoted to his work, Douglas & Olshaker [42] point out that the better we can understand these human predators, the better we as a society can protect ourselves from them and try to prevent them from doing the things they do.

### Criminal Mind

Criminals are uncompromising. In pursuing an objective, they are heedless as to the collateral effects of their behavior. They view other people as pawns to manipulate. Any means to achieve the desired end is acceptable. An offender commented in all seriousness to his probation officer, “This empathy thing; what is in it for me?” [43]. However, it can be argued that criminals often react to daily frustrations and disappointments in ways that differ dramatically from the reactions of ordinary people. Hence, when facing resistance from the suspect, police officers should be able to incapacitate the suspect, by all means, to prevent him/her from causing more harm than he/she has already caused.

The continuum concept also applies to anger. Some people have a sunny disposition and seldom get angry. They maintain calmness even in the face of major challenges and disappointments. At the other extreme is the criminal who simmers with anger throughout his life. When people fail to fulfil his unrealistic expectations, he reacts as though his entire self-image is at stake. Throughout his life, he is infuriated because people do not conform to what he wants, and he is unable to control them.

Psychology and sociology have long advanced the view that the criminal is basically like everyone else but becomes destructive because he has been traumatized or stymied in fulfilling his aspirations. A teenager “falls” in with the wrong crowd and joins a gang because he has never had a decent family life. Or a drug trafficker plies his trade because his skills qualify him only for jobs that pay minimum wage. Thus, both are perceived as people who are shaped by circumstances outside their control, ignoring the fact that most youths from dysfunctional families do not join gangs, and that the drug dealer’s lack of education and job skills is a personal failure, not a societal one. In many circles, the criminal is seen as a victim, not a victimizer. Those who hold this view go a step further, asserting that we are all, in a sense, “criminals” because we lie, lust, and yield to temptation. But it is absurd to equate the rare small lie of the responsible person with the gigantic network of lies of the criminal.

In response to whatever transpires in our lives, we have thoughts and make critical choices about what to do with

<sup>8</sup><https://www.msn.com/en-za/news/national/stronger-ties-between-communities-and-police-will-help-tackle-criminality-says-cyril-ramaphosa/ar-AAO96gd?ocid=msdgnpt>, Accessed on 06th September 2021.

those thoughts. The person who is responsible thinks about consequences and has a conscience [44]. The problem resides in the used strategies by law enforcement when attending or approaching the scene of the incident. Where the relationship between people and police is damaged, both citizen security and police effectiveness suffer.

One is to take steps to reduce the availability of firearms to active offenders or individuals at high risk of offending. Policies that are intended to have this effect are universal background checks and barriers to straw purchases [6] (Zimring, 2017). Sherman [45], also makes numerous policy recommendations related to the governance and training of local police. Keeping weapons out of the hands of the mentally ill may also be effective.

### Mental disorder

One of the individual risk factors for violence most commonly cited in studies is mental illness [46]. Severe mental illness alone is not predictive of violence, but there is an increased risk among those who have severe mental illness and a combination of other factors. These include a history of past violence, juvenile detention, physical abuse, or parents having been arrested; clinical features of substance abuse or perceived threats (paranoia); and dispositional factors such as age, sex, and low income [47]. Co-morbid substance abuse is a consistent finding for elevated risk of violence among individuals with severe mental illness [48].

Individuals with mental illness may engage in acts of violence that are motivated by factors other than the symptoms of their illness. In a study of inter-rater reliability of a new coding instrument for assessing the motivation for criminal acts, Penney et al. [49] examined cases of violence by people with major mental illnesses. In more than three-quarters of the cases (79.2%), the acts were judged to have been motivated by symptoms of the illness in conjunction with other motivations, such as anger, substance abuse, or other criminal goals. Such individuals will not hesitate to shoot at the police officers when they come to their arrest, again, police officers must beware of such people and act accordingly [50].

### Recommendations

South Africa should revise its law on firearm possession by civilians. A serious restriction should be imposed with a tough policy on who should or not be allowed to carry a gun. The availability of firearms in the hands of civilians is a serious problem that the South African government must deal with urgently. All Gun-related businesses must be closed. The government must take responsibility for gun selling with comprehensive policies with strict measures on who should carry a gun.

### Conclusion

Police officers are not criminals, they are peacemakers and safety keepers, hence they need people protection, they need people collaboration so that criminals can be easily identified and

dealt with accordingly. To most law-abiding citizens, explanations of insanity or misdirected passion are sufficient and are accepted reassuringly as the motivating factors behind police homicides; indeed, police are supposed to protect society from lunatics and psychopathic killers. But the public may be more alarmed to know the "true" facts: most police homicides are not manifestations of mental illness, but rather indicate clear calculations made by both professional and amateur criminals who use violence against police only to avoid apprehension and to escape from the scene of some illegal activity.

The most dangerous person for the criminal is a police officer. Criminals know that while in the operation of committing criminal activities, the only fearful people are law enforcement. Hence, criminals are ready to defend themselves during their operation and law enforcement officers are a major threat to them because they have the power to arrest them. Unfortunately, high-profile criminals know that the SAPS have no right to shoot and kill, but they can only make an arrest. They do not fear much the police, and they are ready to kill the police for their escape and the fear of being apprehended. This has made tough the work of law enforcement in the country at large.

In contemporary South Africa, we cannot imagine a safe community without the presence of the police around. Thus, our peacekeepers (police officers) should be given more power than criminals or potential criminals, they should be allowed to exercise their power by all means to incapacitate the criminals. More training is needed in terms of tactics and intelligence strategies to combat the criminals in our midst.

This research suggests that the police legislation should be revised, and a new policy should be crafted to give the police more power since they are employed for the general good. As it has been mentioned earlier in this paper, criminals should be afraid of a police officer and not vice-versa. This can only be effective if criminals know that the police have the right to shoot to kill in case of resistance. The police can apply shooting not to kill but to incapacitate the suspect in case of resistance. However, the police, the criminal justice per se, and the government, in general, could not control crime without the cooperation of a substantial portion of the people. In the absence of public support, there would be little that an army could not do better than the police. Hence, this study appeal to all the people of South Africa to love our law enforcement officers and to be cooperative with them by disclosing any suspicious movement within and around our communities for a safer South Africa for ALL.

### Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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50. (2021) IOL.



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DOI: [10.19080/ASM.2022.08.555732](https://doi.org/10.19080/ASM.2022.08.555732)

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