



FRIDAY 14 FEBRUARY

REPORT ON COMMISSION EVIDENCE

**“Is it possible to protect poor communities without infrastructure?”
– Pikoli**

Today the Commission will continue to hear the testimony of the Station Commander at Lingelethu West, **Colonel Michael Reitz**, who has served with SAPS for 37 years. Reitz became a station commander for the first time in 1989. Between 2005 and 2007, he served as the Head of Visual Police (Vispol) at the Harare and Lingelethu West stations, before transferring to Kensington where he served as Station Commander from 2008 to 2009. In 2010 he returned to Lingelethu West to take up his current position.

On a map of Khayelitsha, Reitz identified the four sectors that fall within the precinct of Lingelethu West, in addition to their crime ‘hot spots’. He confirmed that although there is a CCTV camera installed in the vicinity of each of these four hot spots, there is never any certainty as to whether they are fully functional. Reitz added that even when the cameras are functional, they are rarely used because the footage is inadequate. Commissioner O’Regan objected on the basis that during the Commission’s inspection in loco the camera technology had been deemed more than adequate.

Reitz said that at present there are 167 officers at the Lingelethu West station – a staff complement which he described as sufficient for the task at hand. The SAPS *Resource Allocation Guide* (RAG), reviewed on an annual basis, specifies salary levels and provides a breakdown of the staff and resources allocated to each station. Reitz explained that it is possible for a station to carry more resources than it is allocated. Although the RAG has set aside funding for 33 vehicles at the Lingelethu West station, at present there are 37 vehicles, because 4 are still in use, despite having been replaced. When Commissioner O’Regan asked Reitz to explain why there are times when the station carries more paid staff members than the RAG has allocated, he was unable to comment.

Advocate Nazreen Bawa later ascertained that approximately 25 of the station's 37 vehicles are currently in working order. She applied a formula used by SAPS to determine vehicle provisions, calculating that, at present, Lingelethu West should have approximately 52 functional vehicles.

The Commission was then alerted to a correspondence between the City of Cape Town and the Department of Public Works dating back to 2012. In it a plan to expand the Lingelethu West police station building was cancelled by the City on the basis that it had been deemed unnecessary. Reitz denied any knowledge of this, but acknowledged that his station has been under intense pressure in terms of its physical capacity.

In her cross-examination, Advocate Bawa worked through the complainants' long list of concerns: the neglected cases, the missing dockets, the absent staff, the shortage of visible police, their low morale and misconduct, the overburdened detectives, their inferior training and incomplete investigations. After a long day of questioning, she and Commissioner O'Regan spoke with a hint of exasperation, appealing to Reitz for some clarity on the Khayelitsha police's web of failures. Since 2009, each and every Khayelitsha SAPS report has indicated that despite the three levels of inspection that do occur (at station, cluster and provincial level), there never seems to be any action taken to improve performance.

This week, two recurring themes have emerged. The first is the relationship between Khayelitsha's degrading socio-economic conditions and its high levels of violent crime (and by extension the failure of the City of Cape Town and the provincial government to address these failures with sensitivity and on an inclusive basis). Again and again, witnesses have testified to the poor service delivery of housing, lights, water, road infrastructure, sanitation, schools, jobs and other opportunities, not just in Khayelitsha but in all working-class black communities. Today these reminders prompted Commissioner Vusi Pikoli to ask Colonel Reitz whether he believes it is difficult, or indeed impossible, to protect poor communities, given these infrastructural challenges. "I would not say it is impossible," Reitz replied, "but yes it is very difficult. The environment in certain areas can make them 'crime-friendly'."

The second theme is the breakdown in confidence, and the need for stronger links, between the community, the Community Police Forums (CPFs) and the police. In a testimony presented to the Commission on Wednesday morning, **Mr Chris Giles** of the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) project, singled out SAPS as the least cooperative link in this chain. He called for a radical change in attitude from the top down, recalling a striking comment made by former Station Commander **General Schooling** earlier in the week: that only once he had retired from SAPS, after 36 years of service, did he begin to appreciate the importance of public involvement in the policing system.

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