

## **MEDIA STATEMENT – For immediate release**

### ***'DIE POPPE SAL DANS' FOR NEGLIGENT MUNICIPALITIES WHO LOSE FIREARMS Minister Mthethwa calls for improved monitoring of firearm systems***

**CAPE TOWN – 20 April 2010.**

The Minister of Police, Nathi Mthethwa has learnt with astonishment about the number of firearms owned by municipalities that have continuously gone missing, following a recent preliminary departmental audit.

Approximately 17 482 firearms are currently owned by various municipalities in South Africa; with Gauteng municipalities possessing the most with 8867 while Northern Cape has the least with 64 firearms. The number of firearms lost range from 1 firearm to maximum 500 at a particular municipality. As required by law, in every municipality there is an appointed person responsible for the control and management of these firearms, who must ensure effective and efficient control.

So disturbing is this lack of compliance with the Firearms Control Act at some municipalities that the Minister has ordered the South African Police Service (SAPS) Central Firearms Registry to thoroughly investigate this matter. Part of the anticipated recommendations will look at how SAPS can assist these municipalities tighten their firearms security controls but equally formulate stern and punishable measures against anyone found to have transgressed the law.

Minister Mthethwa highlighted that the ministry will not shy away from raising such loopholes openly. “Where we uncover such discrepancies, we will not sweep them under the carpet but expose openly while finding corrective measures to fix them. For the record, it is apparent that some municipalities have the most effective, up-to-date control measures whereas others are completely below depth.”

That is precisely why when the ministry discovered earlier this year about some of the firearm losses within SAPS, we immediately introduced an Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS). The implications of the IBIS approach are that officers need to account for each and every firearm allocated to them. If it goes missing, whether through negligence or ulterior motives, then they must account. This is aimed at ensuring greater accountability and responsibility over firearms in the hands of our police officers.

He added that the variations of these firearm losses will differ in accordance with a municipality’s size and community it serves. “Irrespective of the varying ratios, whether it be a municipality’s size, geographical or crime trends, such practices are unacceptable. Indeed we cannot leave such acts unattended and those found to have acted in an irresponsible manner, *die poppe sal dans*.”

While a large number of municipalities have, in the spirit of the Firearms Control legislation and as part of government's strategy of addressing the proliferation of firearms in South Africa, participated in the voluntary handing-in of firearms to the police for destruction – those that were lost remain a perturbing factor in the fight against crime.

Meanwhile, a total of 42 firearms have not yet been returned by members who left the SAPS. Amongst the various reasons is owing to retirement of these former members or plainly failure to comply with legislation. There is now a process underway to ensure that all these firearms are recovered and we expect this process to be finalized in due course.

The Firearms Control Act is clear in terms of firearm ownership: that any individual allocated a firearm needs to exercise extra caution to ensure it does not fall into the wrong hands – those of the criminals. "One lost firearm in a municipality is one too many because in the end, such a firearms will most probably lend in the hands of criminals, which impacts significantly on high and unacceptable levels of violent crimes," concluded Minister Mthethwa.

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**Issued by the Ministry of Police.**