

## **Address by Acting National Commissioner of Correctional Services**

**Mr. Z I Modise**

**Launch of Operation Vala 2014**

**Johannesburg Medium B Sports Ground**

**27 November 2014**

- **Programme Director**
- **Acting Regional Commissioner for Gauteng: Mr. Mandla Mkabela**
- **Chief Operations Officer: Ms. N. Jolingana**
- **Chief Deputy Commissioner for Incarceration and Corrections: Mr. James Smalberger**
- **Other Chief Deputy Commissioners**
- **Regional Commissioners and Area Commissioner joining us via the special live broadcast**
- **Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster Representatives**
- **Members of the Media**
- **Distinguished Guests**

The end of 2014 is drawing near. Many people will go on holiday, and many activities will take place during the festive season. The Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster, and all law enforcement agencies and emergency services including the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), are, therefore, required to be even more vigilant, ensuring that the people of South Africa are, and feel, safe. Ensuring your safety, through providing security to the public from those offenders who constitute a threat to safety, is our daily task. We do not only focus on this over the festive season. Together, with other partners in the JCPS Cluster, we discuss, and devise, ways of responding to the dynamic nature crime in South Africa throughout the year.

From 1994 to 2012/13, the Department reduced inmate escapes from correctional centres by a staggering 95.7%, from 1,244 in 1995 to only 53 escapes in 2013, improving incarceration success rate to 99.97% per annum. In the last financial year (2013/14), although we experienced a slight increase to 60 inmates who escaped, 49 (or 81.7%) of the 60 escapees were re-arrested. The South African Police Services, inclusive of their detective and intelligence divisions, in conjunction with Correctional Services, as well as other law enforcement agencies are leaving no stone unturned in their investigations into these escapes. We extend our gratitude to communities that have upped their cooperation with law enforcement agencies to improve our re-arrest of escapees. We call upon you to provide no sanctuary for fugitives from justice in any corner of our country. We will also not hesitate to take action against any Correctional Official found guilty of related unlawful acts or omissions.

With the festive season just around the corner, the Department will once again be faced with security, and safety, challenges unique to this period of the year. This is, generally, a period during which inmates are desperate to escape for various reasons, which may include, amongst others, to participate in criminal activities or simply to be with family or friends. It is for this reason that special emphasis is placed on security measures in correctional centres during December and January, with increased visibility, and involvement, of managers at all levels in the operational activities at the country's 243 correctional centres. To this end, for the 2014/15 festive season, Operation Vala commenced on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014 until 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

Operation Vala does not only mark an enhanced security period for Correctional Services, but also demonstrates the Department's commitment to ensuring a safe, and secure, Festive Season for all citizens. Focus areas for the 2014/15 Operation Vala campaign include tightening security measures at correctional centres, increased supervision of officials as well as decreasing idleness amongst inmates. This will entail, amongst others:

- Drastic enhancing of security at all access control points;
- Increase in impromptu, and periodic, internal and external patrols, and periodic spot checks, and cell counts, at irregular intervals/frequencies;
- Adequate staff deployment, which is of utmost importance, to ensure sufficient managers, and officials, will be on duty during this period;
- Increased, and intensified, visitor searches at exit and entry points;

- Strict adherence to visitation times;
- Imposition of limits on recreation activities outside the secure area of correctional centres;
- Confinement, and the minimization of movements, of high risk inmates;
- Deployment, and increased visibility, of Emergency Support Teams, especially at high risk centres where Maximum, and Remand, Detainees are incarcerated;
- Limitation of unnecessary movement of inmates between sections, and increased vigilance during offender escorts;
- Introduction of special security measures at strategic sections, including hospital sections and/or sections where religious, and social workers, are at risk in correctional centres;
- Effective management and immediate attention to complaints of inmates;
- Active involvement of professional staff (social workers, medical staff, religious workers and so on) to support inmates, and staff, during this period; and
- Proactive handling, and management, of information received from inmates and/or other sources regarding planned escapes or other security threats.

To facilitate Operation Vala, offenders will not be allowed to participate in activities that would require them to leave the correctional centre, or that will involve mass external partners.

To this end, offenders will participate in indoor activities, and games, including hand ball, five-a-side soccer, board games, table tennis, pool table competitions, volleyball, action cricket, boxing, karate, judo, Jika-Majika dance competitions, Kgati, Ncuva boards, Diketo, Morabaraba boards, draught, snake and ladder, finger board and tug of war.

We also would like to warn members of the public that, in terms of the Correctional Services Act (Act 111 of 1998), any person who assists an inmate in escaping, or attempting to escape, from any correctional centre or from any place where he or she may be in custody, is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine, or to incarceration, for a period not exceeding ten years or to such incarceration without the option of a fine or both. Further, no person may without lawful authority, supply, convey or cause to be supplied or conveyed to any inmate, or hide or place for his or her use any document, intoxicating liquor, dagga, drug, opiate, money, or any other article. We are calling upon citizens to do their part in this regard, as Corrections is a Societal Responsibility.

In conclusion, one of the challenges facing correctional services is low levels of inmate visitations by families and their communities of origin. This reduces the requisite emotional, and psychological, outlook of inmates, which is critical for effective rehabilitation and social re-integration. The Department wants to encourage families, and communities, to visit, and maintain contact with, inmates. The Department will take all necessary steps to ensure the safe custody of every inmate, and to maintain security, and good order, in every correctional centre.

Finally, on Tuesday (25 November), at the Launch of 16 Days of Activism of No Violence against Women and Children campaign in Reiger Park, our President, His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, said: "We are building a society where women and children are safe at home, at school or at work. We are building a society where children play safely outside and where women walk freely in the streets, without fear of attacks. This is the society that the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children hopes to achieve. That society is achievable if we work together".

We wish you all a merry Christmas, and a prosperous New Year.

THANK YOU.