



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE REGRETTABLE SHOOTING INCIDENT BY A MEMBER OF OPERATION KALAHARI DESERT, IN WINDHOEK, KHOMAS REGION

The primary mission of the Namibian Defence Force (NDF), as enshrined in Chapter 15, Article 115 of the Namibian Constitution, is to defend the territorial integrity and national interests of Namibia. Its secondary roles include assisting civil power and local authorities in domestic support operations, when required, as well as to undertake SADC, AU and UN Peace Support Missions.

The security of the Republic of Namibia is a collective responsibility of State security agencies and the entire population of the country. The NDF is the custodian of the defence of the territory by virtue of its constitutional mandate, but it cannot be expected to fight and win wars if the nation does not rally behind it.

The internal security of the country is primarily the responsibility of the Namibian Police Force (NAMPOL)

because it falls within the scope of policing and the handling of civil disorder threats. Should this type of threats occur in the Republic of Namibia, NAMPOL would always be expected to take the lead in internal security operations and only involve the NDF when the need arises, to reinforce police officers during community engagements, patrols, and surveillance duties.

The high crime rate experienced across the country has become a serious concern to the Government and the majority of our citizens, because of its potential to destabilise peace and security in the country. Consequently, the President of the Republic of Namibia and Commander-in-Chief of the Namibian Defence Force directed that Joint NAMPOL/NDF Crime Prevention Operations be conducted quarterly until the situation normalises, with a guarantee that every person in Namibia and their properties are protected.

While the majority of our citizens and visitors to Namibia welcome and support the Joint NAMPOL/NDF Crime Prevention Operations, there are, unfortunately, few elements, especially criminals and their sympathisers, who are against these operations and, thus, they obstruct the duties of NAMPOL/NDF officers during such operations.

Those who are against the anticrime operations also defy and disrespect orders and warnings of the officers involved in the operations.

For example, on Thursday, 05 September 2019, at around 10h45, members of Operation Kalahari Desert, shift B, consisting of NDF, NAMPOL, City Police, Namibian Correctional Services members and Immigration and Customs officials were conducting routine operational duties in the general area of Khomasdal and found a male suspect in possession of two (2) bales of dagga in his car at a car wash. The suspect was interrogated and he directed the patrol team to the source where he bought the dagga.

The suspect led and directed the patrol team to house No. 8718, Shanghai Street, in Katutura, opposite Single Quarters, where he allegedly bought the dagga. A cordon and search action was then conducted by the patrol team, which resulted in the arrest of three (3) suspects for dealing and having drugs, in the form of two and a half (2½) parcels and ten (10) bales of cannabis.

While the patrol team was in the process of searching, a male person was allegedly detected in the street nearby, busy video recording the cordon and search activities with his mobile phone.

The illegal video recording was then reported to the Patrol Commander, who was also the Second-in-Command of Shift B, who then instructed two (2) NDF and one (1) Nampol members to instruct and make sure that the person who was recording deleted the recorded information from his phone, as he was not authorised to record a video of the

patrol actions and the motive for the recording was not known.

For the uninformed, recording a video of NDF and NAMPOL members in action is prohibited because it is very dangerous, as such a video could be used to identify the members who were at the spot for possible revenge or some other criminal intents. These days' videos can be doctored and used for all sorts of bad intentions. So, members of the public are cautioned to refrain from taking videos of security forces members in operations.

In this case, when the said person was approached by the three (3) patrol members and told to delete the recording, he defied the instructions and instead decided to flee from the scene toward Mungunda Street, in the general area of Single quarters. And logically, the members chased after him around Market Street when one of the members who were pursuing him fired one (01) shot, injuring him on the back and he fell.

The victim was still alive when he was transported to Katutura State Hospital and he received medical attention, but, unfortunately, he passed on three (3) hours later, due to the injuries that he sustained from the regrettable shooting incident.

The deceased was identified as Benisius Kalola, a 32 years old Namibian male and a resident of Single Quarters, Erf

No. 10281, Selma Ipinge Street, in Katutura. Consequently, NAMPOL is still investigating a criminal case, registered as **CR No. 122/09/2019, murder**, against a male suspect who is an NDF member. The suspect appeared before Katutura Magistrate Court on Monday, 09 September 2019, he was denied bail and remains in custody until his next court appearance on 29 January 2020.

On the other hand, the Preliminary NAMPOL Report on this case revealed that the deceased has been in conflict with the law before and had two pending cases against him. He was arrested for armed robbery under cases Katutura **CR No. 617/01/2019** (pending) and Katutura **CR No. 970/05/2015** robbery with aggravating circumstances (provisionally withdraw). So, you can see what kind of a person you are dealing with here.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) wants to make it categorically clear that this and other previous shooting incidents are deeply regrettable, as they send a wrong perception to the general public about the main objectives of the ongoing joint Operation Kalahari Desert, which is to protect our people and their properties. And the most unfortunate thing is that some media outlets, members of the public and politicians are sensationalising the incidents and using them to mislead and inflate the feelings of the public against the operation.

The MoD has no deliberate policy of shooting at or killing innocent civilians, but the behaviour of some rotten eggs is contributing to these incidents. In all the recorded cases involving NDF members, the victims were either trying to avoid or running away from the members on patrol. This is very unfortunate. Therefore, I appeal to the members of the public to cooperate with and obey the instructions of members on patrol to avoid similar incidents in the future.

Furthermore, it should be clarified that there are no deliberate orders, either from the Commander-in-Chief, the Minister or the Chief of the Defence Force, to kill innocent civilians, but the situation on the ground, including the uncooperative attitude of some people, unfortunately, resulted in shooting incidents in which lives were unfortunately lost.

To prevent further incidents of this nature, all members participating in the operation underwent a three days' induction course, which included, amongst other subjects, the code of conduct, common rules of engagement and Criminal Procedure Act. And after this latest incident, the Chief of the Defence Force amended his operational orders for the same purpose of avoiding more fatalities.

But for us to succeed in ensuring that our people and their properties are protected from criminals, there must be mutual understanding and cooperation between the public

and the security forces involved in the anticrime operations. However, I must make it clear that the Namibian Defence Force, for which I am responsible as Minister of Defence, will not tolerate any kind of behaviour and actions that could endanger the lives of the soldiers.

Anyone who might harbour any ill intentions towards NDF members, who are simply performing their official duties to protect our people and their properties from crime, will be dealt with accordingly. Things like abusive language, threats and potential or actual revenge actions towards NDF members (as we suspect was the intention of taking a video in this last shooting incident) will not be tolerated and will be responded to swiftly and adequately.

We aim to have a crime-free, peaceful and stable environment to enable the socio-economic progress of our country, more especially now that, as a country, we are facing economic and drought emergencies.

I THANK YOU

