

# Press Release



**South African  
Institute of  
Race Relations**

*South Africa's Leading Research and Policy Organisation*

**For immediate release**

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## **More security for those who can afford it**

**The number of active private security officers has increased by 167% in the period 1997-2007, while the number of sworn police officials has increased by only 18%, according to data released by the South African Institute of Race Relations this week. There were 192 012 more private security officers in 2007 than in 1997. Over the same period there were only 19 687 more police officials.**

In 1997 there were 115 331 active security officers and 110 177 sworn police officials in South Africa. The ratio was 1.05 security officers to one police official. In 2007 there were 307 343 active security officers and 129 864 sworn police officials. This puts the ratio at 2.36 security officers for every police official.

Mr Kerwin Lebone, a researcher at the Institute, said that private security companies can be an important source of support for the police. Police resources are limited and private security companies can provide area specific patrols or services such as ensuring clients get into their houses safely at night. These services are provided only to individuals who can pay for them.

The increase in the number of private security officials is visible in affluent suburbs, as well as businesses and shopping malls. Government departments (including the police) have spent millions on hiring private security guards to secure their buildings. For example, the Department of Home Affairs spent R37 million on private security in one year, up until March 2009.

The minister of safety and security, Mr Nathi Mthethwa, spoke about this issue last year saying that the police and private security firms could work together, without the security firms taking over police responsibilities. The co-operation extended to police authorities giving private security officials training on how to secure a crime scene. However, private security officials cannot make arrests so co-operation with the police is necessary when private security officers detain criminals.

Private security could form a specialised part of the anti-crime network by providing support to the police and extra security for people who can afford it.

However, there are now more than double the number of private security officers than there are police and people need to pay the monthly subscription fees in order to benefit from the services these private officers provide. Mr Lebone said that this seems to indicate that the private security sector is not just a supplement to the police-force, but has become an essential part of the security framework. This is problematic as the police-force is a service intended to protect the entire population whereas private security will protect only those who can afford to pay for it.