

**- Media Release -**



## **Business Against Crime South Africa Statement on the Scorpions**

**For Immediate Release: Friday, 15 February 2008**

Business Against Crime South Africa has sought since its inception in 1995 to marshal the collective resources and expertise of business in support of the government obligation to combat crime and create a safe environment for its citizens. Two years ago when violent crime spiked, through the offices of Business Leadership South Africa, Business Against Crime South Africa became part of a new higher level anti-crime partnership with Government, spearheaded by a Leadership Forum of Criminal Justice System Cabinet Ministers and senior business leaders. Business Against Crime South Africa therefore speaks from a history of twelve years of sustained anti-crime action.

Business Against Crime South Africa was involved in the creation of the National Prosecuting Authority and of a dedicated corps of investigators, the Special Operations Directorate (DSO), that came to be known as the Scorpions. This body, modelled on best practice internationally, was agreed by business and Government as a key institution in the fight against corruption and organised and violent crime.

Business Against Crime South Africa has worked closely with the Scorpions and believes the Scorpions have a significant track record of achievement and have been a critical and effective weapon in the war against crime, though their methods have not always been above reproach. The independent status of the body has been key to its ability to help detect and prosecute high level individuals without fear or favour.

Business Against Crime South Africa is fundamentally opposed to proposals to disband the Scorpions. President Mbeki's response to Parliament's debate of his State of the Nation speech indicated that what is intended is not the disbanding of the Scorpions, but their restructuring. The tests of whether any changes to the Scorpions leave the country better or worse able to combat organized crime are objectives ones. First, does the unit retain the range of skills, prosecutorial, investigative and other that it presently possesses. Second, is it able to operate as a cohesive unit, not dependent on either authority or resources from others. Third, would it have the independence, capacity and opportunity to investigate corruption and crime in echelons of society and government, right up to the most senior officials and Ministers in Government, including those in the Criminal Justice System.

There is no doubt that much if not most of the high level capacity in the Scorpions will move to the private sector if the independent status of the body is lost and any less independent replacement grouping will be compromised and ineffective. Such an outcome is at odds with and would undermine the redesign of the Criminal Justice System agreed by Cabinet in November and presented as a key national priority in the President's State of the Nation Address last week.

Business Against Crime South Africa looks forward to participate in the Parliamentary hearings which must follow any proposals to change the status of the Scorpions and stands ready to make its detailed views known.

## **Note to the Editor:**

### **Business Against Crime South Africa**

Business Against Crime South Africa was formed in 1996 at the request of former President Mandela for business to play a pivotal role in supporting Government on crime fighting initiatives, through harnessing business resources and skills.



Business Against Crime South Africa is not a law enforcing agency or lobby group. It is a Section 21, not-for-profit organisation mandated to support Government in the fight against crime.

Since 2006, Business Against Crime South Africa has been working with Government to implement the Step Change Initiative which falls under the governance of the Anti-Crime Leadership Forum, with representation at Ministerial and CEO level on the side of the JCPS Cluster and business, established to provide structure to the need to tackle crime in the country as a matter of urgency.

The organisation is primarily funded by Business Sector, with a national and provincial footprint and its national office in Johannesburg, Gauteng.

#### **For further information contact:**

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