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POLICE Minister Fikile Mbalula yesterday proudly introduced new national commissioner Lieutenant-General Khehla Sitole to the SAPS and said they were ready to smoke out criminals together.

Mbalula, who was at the Tshwane Police Academy, said he could finally say he did not have a nice working relationship with Lieutenant-General Lesetja Mothiba, who was acting police commissioner before President Jacob Zuma appointed Sitole on Wednesday.

Sitole, 53, comes in as a career police officer with more than two decades of experience, and the relevant know-how after serving as deputy national police commissioner under sacked Riah Phiyega.

Prior to that, Lieutenant-General Khomotso Phahlane was acting top cop before he was suspended in June.

Mbalula said: "General Khehla Sitole is a seasoned member of the service who grew through the ranks. He served and obtained practical exposure at all levels of the organisation, from police station to province and national office. He has practical experience through serving in both the organisational support and operations of the organisation."

"(Sitole) possesses a strategic policy framework understanding of the service and has fresh ideas in this regard. He has, in the past, been involved in the development of numerous policies, legislation and strategies which link the police service to the broader framework of government, the international community and our diverse nation."

He explained that criminal manifestation in various areas of the country depicted the advancement and sophistication of criminal modus operandi. This meant the police needed a high level of innovation and creativity to tackle that challenge. And it was for that



Minister of Police Fikile Mbalula greets new national police commissioner Lieutenant-General Khehla Sitole at the Tshwane Police Academy.

PICTURE: OUPA MOKENA/ANA

reason that he believed Sitole was fit and proper for the position.

Sitole said: "We all know that SAPS has a vision, which is to provide a safe and secure environment for all. SAPS is there to protect all the outcomes outlined in the national development plan. Crime has manifested itself in such a manner that it has started to dispel investment."

He said there were various ways in which crime took place which sought to undermine the resistance of the police and also suggested that the authority of the state was not taken seriously.

"There are a few areas in the country which criminals are beginning to declare as no-go areas. In those areas, communities have developed tendencies of protecting criminals by attacking the police. "We are going to reclaim all those

areas and stamp the authority of the state," he said.

Sitole made it clear that his allegiance was to the constitution and he would not hesitate to protect the integrity of the police, and say "no" to political interference, even if it came directly from Mbalula.

He was proud that the parliamentary portfolio committee on police was pleased with his appointment, irrespective of numerous mixed reactions from other organisations such as the DA. He felt he had won the battle at the right place when he presented a policy direction and scope under which he provided the "controversial" VIP protection to Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma to the portfolio committee, which was not contested.

"On the issue of political interference, let me first explain that it is my

responsibility to orientate the minister on all operational policies that govern the policing processes in this country. I want everyone to understand that the role of the minister is policy and strategic direction and mine as commander of the police is execution. These are two roles that have no confusion but, further to that, I will not be able to fully implement policing in this country without his support."

Sitole said he and Mbalula shared a vision to enhance policing in the country and he couldn't foresee himself protecting that vision against the ministers, although he would always protect the integrity of the SAPS.

Zuma will preside over a ceremony on Monday to mark the installation of Sitole as national police commissioner.

Police commissioner warns criminals

NTOMBI NKOSI

NEWLY appointed national police commissioner Gen Khehla Sitole, 53, has given notice to criminals that he intends to put an end to their activities and make South Africa safe for its citizens again.

The career policeman, who rose through the ranks, was revealed by President Jacob Zuma as the country's top cop this week.

Sithole was introduced and congratulated by Police Minister Fikile Mbalula at a media briefing at the Tshwane Police Academy yesterday.

"We are chasing the crime committed by criminals. Criminals sit down and design ways capable of producing a million crimes," Sitole said.

He said when one crime is committed, police investigate after but never deal with the modus operandi per se.



NEW: Police commissioner Gen Khehla John Sitole. PICTURE: GOS

"One of the measures to combat crime, we are going to put in place is not only to focus on the crimes but destroy the modus operandi so that criminals should start from scratch. The minister spoke about innovative or creative ways to source ideas and have capacity."

Mbalula said he wanted the heat of the police to be felt on the ground with high police visibility and believed Sitole was the right man for the job who would bring stability to the force.

"I am not sleeping on the job. I have no time for criminals," Mbalula said.

The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru), which is adopting a wait and see attitude before pronouncing its views on the new commissioner, noted that over the years it had witnessed a lot of inconsistencies that had impacted on the fight against crime.

"This has had a negative impact in policing in our country and surely has delayed much needed progress that could have otherwise been attained in our common goal of fighting crime," Popcru spokesperson Richard Mambolo said.

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