Issue Brief on Borderland-related Crimes and Security Threats in Kenya, 2019

This study was carried out in randomly selected sites in all the 21 border counties in Kenya and covered 2884 sample respondents. The aimed at describing the dynamics of borderland-related crimes and security threats and to suggest ways of addressing the challenge.
Some of the findings are:

i. Kenya's 21 borderland counties are inhabited by 14,587,947 people some of who have inadequate means of livelihoods and commit borderland-related crimes for survival. The most prevalent borderland-related crime is smuggling of illicit goods. Other borderland-related crimes reported by at least one (1) out of five (5) respondents in borderlands are: drug trafficking; illegal migration; border-point corruption; cross-border robbery/theft of motor vehicle/cycle; cross-border stock theft/cattle rustling; smuggling of counterfeit goods; cross-border theft of motor vehicle/cycle parts; illegal possession of forest products (e.g. charcoal, sandal wood); tax evasion; trafficking of forest products (e.g. charcoal, sandal wood); destruction of forest produce in borderland areas; use of unauthorized fishing techniques and/or equipment; cross-border kidnapping and/or abduction; provision of safe havens for both local and cross-border criminals; cross-border terrorism; smuggling and proliferation of arms and weapons; cross-border robbery/theft of goods on transit; human trafficking; and currency forgery. These crimes are mainly committed during night times, weekends, public holidays and festive seasons.

The most smuggled goods reported by at least one (1) out of ten (10) respondents are sugar, alcohol and/or illicit brews, illegal drugs (including cocaine and heroin), cereals, clothes, shoes and hand bags, charcoal/coal, wheat and maize flour, body jelly oil, cigarettes, firearms (e.g guns), cooking oil, timber and fish. The goods are smuggled using boda boda motorcycles, vehicles, water vessels, bicycles, donkey carts and persons crossing borders on foot.

The major ***potential borderland security threats include: t***error attacks and terrorism; bandits/cattle rustling/raiders; attacks and theft of properties; drug smuggling, peddling and usage; and smuggling of goods.

ii. The perimeter of Kenya's international land borders is 3,446 Kilometres. This stretch is expansive and in some instances porous and sparsely populated thus inviting the

challenge of policing the periphery. The most prevalent borderland-related crime in each of the border regions of this perimeter is as follows: Kenya-Uganda (933Kms) - use of unauthorized fishing techniques and/or equipment in Lake Victoria; Kenya-Somalia (682Kms) - cross-border terrorism; Kenya-Tanzania (769Kms) - cross-border robbery of motor vehicle/cycle and/or parts; Kenya-Ethiopia (830Kms) - cross-border terrorism; and Kenya-South Sudan (232Kms) - cattle rustling.

iii. Kenya's coastline has a total length of 1,420 Kilometres with the Kenya-Indian Ocean border region and especially Mombasa coastline being notorious for drug trafficking. Policing of the Indian Ocean waters faces the challenge of inadequacy in the required equipment to keep surveillance, a challenge that is compounded by private beaches and villas (whose activities are hard to monitor) and the use of the waters by other countries as transit routes.

Key recommendations
  (i)   Enhancement of human capital through recruitment and deployment of additional personnel in keeping with the labour provisions of an eight-hour working day and to ensure adequate staff strengths during night times, weekends, public holidays and festive seasons.

  (ii) Expanding specialized teams and rapid response capabilities by way of specialized skills development training on counter-terrorism, anti-counterfeiting and smuggling for border control officers to handle the dynamic and intricate nature of borderland-related crimes and security threats.

  (iii) Maximizing security through appropriate balance of personnel equipment, technology, communication capabilities and tactical infrastructure by way of building a strong modern management infrastructure initiative on enhancement of infrastructural resourcing.

  (iv) Adoption and implementation of the concept of 'Community Asset Management in Security, Crime and Violence Prevention' which entails a programme for community members and leadership participation in borderland security, crime and violence prevention through: community-driven acquisition, installation and maintenance of basic security infrastructure; improved community-policing relations; and the concept of 'Volunteer Border Control and Management Officer' to improve on neighbourhood security watch.

  (v)   Border control and security management institutions of bordering countries create a shared law enforcement culture amongst themselves, leverage their expertise, capabilities and human resources and enhance their cooperation, information and intelligence sharing.

  (vi) Regulation and random and incognito inspection, monitoring, surveillance and crackdowns by relevant agencies of the modes of transport used in borderlands

especially boda boda motorcycles, vehicles, water vessels, bicycles, donkey carts and persons crossing borders on foot.

(vii) Improved collegiality between the national and county levels of government, between Border Management Committee agencies and between criminal justice system agencies.

(viii) Regulating and conducting regular impromptu inspection, monitoring and surveillance of goods' containers at ports, warehouses, guest and rental houses and exclusive and private villas and beaches.

(ix) Fighting of border-point corruption and related malpractices by: use of a total cashless payment system; online computerized accounting and document verification; regular vetting of border control staff; curtailing unexplained accumulation of wealth; dismissal and/or prosecution of corrupt officials; and aggressive citizen awareness campaigns against corruption and related malpractices.

Our response

We disseminate research findings and recommendations to government agencies concerned with the administration of criminal justice for purposes of policy planning and formulation.

What you can do to help

You can help prevent borderland-related crimes and security Threats in Kenya by reporting to the Police, NCRC website (http://crimeresearch.go.ke/report-crimes/) and NCRC Mobile Phone Crime Reporting/Monitoring tool from mobile phones operating systems: Google Play Store, App Store and Windows Store (Free Service).