

Zimbabwe Police News

22 July 2009 (IRIN)

The demise of the all-but-worthless Zimbabwe dollar and its replacement with foreign currency is being mirrored by a rise in violent crime, perpetrated particularly by police officers. A serving Zimbabwe National Army officer, who declined to be identified, told IRIN that junior soldiers and police officers were being driven to crime by desperation, as they suffered the same economic hardships as most of the population. However, unlike non-uniformed Zimbabweans - 94 percent of whom are thought to be unemployed - soldiers and police, like all public servants, enjoy a US\$100 monthly wage. "They have observed how senior security officers drive luxury cars, get free fuel for their multiple farms, and other benefits. Soldiers and police officers have no other skills which they can use to raise extra money - all they can do is to use guns, but when they get used to that lifestyle, they can easily become warlords," the army officer said. Since the beginning of 2009, local newspapers have been awash with headlines like: "Four detectives face robbery charges", and "Bank Heist: Two cops in court", which illustrated the trend among security force personnel to resort to crime.

The dollarized economy has made goods and services more freely available, but at high prices, which was "causing some rogue elements within the security ... [forces] to use armed robbery as a way of raising extra income ... and that creates a climate of insecurity and instability," he said.