



Summary

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Police management of volume crime – an activity whose capabilities need to be strengthened

Summary

The Swedish National Audit Office (Swedish NAO) has audited how the police handle volume crime. Volume crime accounts for more than 80 per cent of all reported crime. It involves theft, criminal damage, fraud, assault, and more. Volume crime can inflict serious injury on those who are subjected to it. It leads to financial losses for any company that is affected. There may also be strong links between volume crime and serious organised crime. It is thus important for the police to combat volume crime efficiently. Despite major increases in appropriations, more employees, and a comprehensive reorganisation, the clearance rate of handled volume crime has nevertheless declined.

The Swedish NAO has come to the conclusion that the Police Authority is not handling volume crime efficiently. The Police Authority's increased appropriations have produced favourable conditions for both employing more staff and training existing staff to handle more complex crime investigations. Despite this, the operational ability to manage volume crime is lacking due to a number of factors that the Police Authority has at its disposal:

- The Police Authority's approach to distributing resources has not managed to generate sufficient staffing in the local police districts. This situation arises because staff in the local police districts to an excessive extent need to take over investigations of serious crime from other levels, or are

commanded to assist other parts of the Police Authority with such investigations. The Swedish NAO recognises that the Police Authority is sometimes forced to make priorities that involve extensive regrouping of staff. However, the audit shows a constant drain of investigative resources from local police districts, that are supposed to be the foundation of police activities.

- The Police Authority does not conduct essential skills training to increase capacity, and does not systematically disseminate knowledge and good examples within the organisation.
- Through an internal decision, the Police Authority has limited employment of civilian staff, even though civilian staff are important for the ability to effectively receive police reports, investigate, carry out forensic investigations and provide administrative support to both external and internal staff.

Consequently, the operational level experiences an extensive workload, resulting in inadequate investigative actions. This, in turn, risks leading to crimes that have a prospect of being investigated instead remain inactive for so long that it is no longer possible to solve them, because the evidence has been weakened. Another consequence may be that processing has been concluded without any investigation being undertaken, even though the crimes could have been investigated further.

At the same time, the audit shows that there are opportunities within the police organisation to increase its capacity. These strengths deserve to be highlighted and are important to build on to create more effective management of volume crime. It is mainly concerning the fact that:

- there are many police officers and civilian employees who are competent and want to do a good job, but whose work has been hindered by resources being withdrawn from the local police district investigation groups.
- the new rapid procedure – faster prosecution – makes it possible to increase capacity since it allows more efficient handling through urgency requirements and simplified procedures for issues such as service of process.

The Swedish NAO considers that the situation is serious. If the Police Authority does not address the shortcomings highlighted by the audit, the Swedish NAO assesses that in the long term, this may mean that the safety and security of individuals, business owners and organisations subjected to crime is not met. The Swedish NAO also considers that public trust in the judicial system is at risk of declining.

Recommendations

For the purpose for increasing the ability of investigating volume crime, the Swedish National Audit Office makes the following recommendations to the Police Authority.

- Make sure that the organisation's needs and access to competency govern how many police officers and civilian staff are hired.
- Make sure to fully staff the Police Authority's contact centre and secure essential skills and crime coordination capacity so that all adequate investigation and coordination measures can take place at the contact centre.
- Increase collaboration between the Police Authority's contact centre and the on-duty police investigation officer and ascertain that case coordination and the preliminary investigation limitation occurs as early as possible in the process.
- Review how the system of e-reports works, with the aim of raising quality and reducing extra work that arises as a result of the need for corrections and additions.
- Develop and strengthen coordination on crime at all levels and ensure that IT support is available to facilitate this, for example by enabling local situation images in real time based on received police reports.
- Review how further training can be better designed and adapted to the needs of the organisation to build a good ability to handle all volume crime.