

Ramaphosa deploys the army to fight Zama Zamas

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President Cyril Ramaphosa has authorised the deployment of 3,300 army personnel to help combat illegal mining activities, Ramaphosa's office said in a statement on Thursday.



President Cyril Ramaphosa gestures during the opening of the US-sub-Saharan Africa trade forum to discuss the future of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), at the NASREC conference centre in Johannesburg. Source: Reuters/Siphiwe Sibeko

The deployment of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which is expected to cost about R492m, is aimed at maintaining law and order under "Operation Prosper", Vincent Magwenya, Ramaphosa's spokesperson, said in the statement.

The SANDF was previously deployed in 2019 to the Western Cape province to fight gang violence under the same operation.



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"Members of the SANDF will, in cooperation with the South African Police Service, conduct an intensified anti-criminality operation against illegal mining across all provinces, from 28 October 2023 until 28 April 2024," the presidency said.

Mining industry body Minerals Council South Africa says illegal mining takes place at both disused and active mines and has dimmed South Africa's attractiveness as an investment destination.

It says it costs operating mines as much as R7bn annually and the economy tens of billions of rand more in lost export earnings, taxes and royalties.

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