

Budget Vote Debate 23 & 20
Police & Independent Police and Investigative Directorate
By
Hon. MA Mncwango, MP

14 May 2015

Honourable Speaker,

The IFP begrudgingly supports this budget, because we know that it is important that services are continually delivered for the benefit of our people.

The instability within the South African Police Service (SAPS) leadership has truly become a crisis, as generals are too busy taking time out of work, either being on suspension or going to court, instead of combating crime. The police lower ranks do not have leadership at the operational level and this is similar to the blind leading the blind.

The number of these leaders out of commission is alarming. General Mdluli, former crime intelligence boss, is on suspension with full pay. General Sibiya, who could be helping the Hawks deal with the drug scourge, is busy in court and is at home. General Booyesen, leader of the Hawks in KZN, who has immense experience and has had an illustrious career in the police, won his court case but is still at home. General Lamoer, provincial head of the Western Cape SAPS, is busy with a court case and is also suspended. And recently, General Dramat had to resign after being suspended and being in and out of court.

As for Mr McBride, the executive director of IPID, it is absolutely ridiculous that he was suspended before he even knew where his office was, let alone not having received his first salary.

This situation has dampened morale in the service and brought chaos in leadership. There are no incentives for most of the police officers as they are not rewarded for their hard work through proper promotion. There are some officers who have been in their posts for years, yet some spokesperson or the other gets promoted to the level of general over these deserving officers. This has resulted in people leaving the police service who have invaluable experience.

Honourable Minister, we need you to truthfully tell us the rate of resignations, early retirement as well as the amount of sick leave taken.

As we have stated before, civilian leadership of the police does not inspire any confidence or provide the much needed leadership within the service.

Dilapidated infrastructure is another aspect of SAPS that is in need of urgent attention. For instance, the holding cells being utilised for housing awaiting trial prisoners in Nongoma consist of structures built in 1906, a messy kitchen, have no toilet access and are hugely overcrowded. Even though it is not fit for human habitation, one finds 100s of people in these cells.

There are no offices for the Crime Intelligent Unit in Nongoma and they are currently housed in a park house, which they are about to lose the services of. Yet they are responsible for many areas, including Hlabisa, Pongola and Magudu. The worst part is that these officers do not even have vehicles to use.

The garage for their vehicles is located in Ulundi, yet it can take up to 3 weeks for repairs to be done on vehicles, because of the need to get Financial Authority from the province. Something this simple ends up causing massive delay in services and any ability to stop criminal activities from taking place.

Corruption is still a major concern, especially when perpetuated by members of the police service. For example, the KZN Provincial Commissioner's involvement with a local businessman who happens to have thrown a party for her husband, himself a Brigadier with SAPS, compromises the integrity of these officers.

We cannot continue to have such a disorganised police force, because it means criminals will continue to have free rein in our country. With so many officers demoralised, no strong leaders within the service and with civilians in charge of SAPS, how can we expect the state of our police force to improve?

We need decisive political leadership on this issue, to ensure that experienced police officers lead SAPS and that those who deserve it are promoted. Otherwise we claim that crime is under control when the opposite is actually the case.