**REPORT OF THE OVERSIGHT VISIT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS TO SELECTED MILITARY BASES AND DMV HOUSING SITES IN THE BLOEMFONTEIN AREA OVER THE PERIOD 23 – 25 NOVEMBER 2022, DATED 01 MARCH 2023.**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans (PCDMV) arranged an oversight visit to selected Military Bases and facilities of the Department of Military Veterans in the Bloemfontein area. The areas visited visits included the South African Air Force Base (AFB) Bloemspruit; the DOD Mobilisation Center at De Brug; 3 Military Hospital; the Tempe Military base and DMV Housing sites in Hillside View.

* 1. **Primary aim of the Oversight Visit**

The primary aim of the Oversight visit was for the PCDMV to conduct site visits to the above-mentioned facilities to acquaint itself of the conditions and challenges experienced at these facilities. It was also to facilitate inputs and insights to enhance its oversight function, as part of its oversight programme for the 2022 calendar year.

**1.2 Defence Committee Members and Support Staff**

The Delegation comprised of the following:

**Members of the Defence Committees:**

**African National Congress**

Mr VC Xaba (Chairperson)

Mr TN. Mmutle

Me TI Legwase

Dr M Basopu

Ms M Mothapo

Ms Mthembu

**Democratic Alliance**

Mr SJF Marais

Mr ML Shelembe

**Economic Freedom Fighters**

Mr TWI Mafanya

**Support Staff**

Peter Daniels - Content Advisor

Wilhelm Janse van Rensburg - Content Advisor (JSCD)

Bryan Mantyi - Committee Secretary

Jabulani Majozi - Communication Officer

Thurston Arendse - Committee Assistant

**Officials from entities, DOD and DMV**

Lt Gen W Mbambo - Chief of the SAAF

Maj Gen MJ Tyhalisi - General Officer Commanding: Army Support Formation

Brig Gen NJ January - Director Facilities Logistics Division

Col MF September - Acting GOC: Army Support Base (ASB) Bloemfontein

Col VOE Witbooi - Chief of Staff ASB Bloemfontein

Col (Adv) AWR Segone - Acting Officer Commanding (OC) Air Force Base Bloemspruit

Col D.L. Romain - OC: School of Armour

Col W Hendricks - Officer Commanding: 3 Military Hospital

Col AM Motloung - Senior Staff Officer: Parliamentary Liaison Officer

Lt Col P Struwig - Acting Officer Commanding: DOD Mobilisation Center

Maj K.S. Molebatsi - Ops Thusano Commander: Bloemfontein

Maj R.P.G. Gerber - Acting Officer Commanding: 1 SA Tank Regiment

Mr S Monakali - PLO - Defence Ministry

Mr C Monyela - DHS Free State: DDG

Mr NR Khomola - DMV: Compliance Officer

**1.3 Programme**

Upon arrival in Bloemfontein, the Committee held a brief meeting at the hotel in order to go through the programme for the duration of the visit and identify areas of particular concern to the Committee. The Content Adviser, Mr P Daniels and the Acting Researcher, Dr W Janse van Rensburg briefed the Committee on the various Military Bases, their functions and importance within the SANDF. They highlighted areas of concern with the delivery of housing by the DMV and further pointed out focus areas that the Committee should engage with during the visits.

On the first day of the visit, the Committee visited AFB Bloemspruit which is located alongside the Bloemfontein Airport. On the second day, 24 November 2022, the Committee visited the DOD Mobilisation Center in De Brug as well as at the DMV housing project in Hillside View. Due to the unavailability of a boardroom at De Brug, the briefing session took place at ASB Tempe and thereafter the Committee proceeded for a site inspection at De Brug.

On the third and final day, 25th November 2022, the Committee first visited 3 Military Hospital (3MH) in Tempe. The visit commenced with briefing sessions on all three sites to be visited. This was followed by a site inspection at selected areas of 3MH (i.e. Isolation Ward, Radiology, Maternity and the helipad area). At the School of Armour, the Delegation visited the Centre for Training Excellence, the simulators, as well as the old and temporary messes. The visit was concluded with a tour of the Tank Regiment facilities which are co-located within the School of Armour.

**2. OVERSIGHT VISIT AT AIRFORCE BASE BLOEMSPRUIT 23 NOVEMBER 2022**

The Chief of the SAAF, Lt Gen W Mbambo welcomed the Committee at AFB Bloemspruit. He expressed appreciation for the Committee’s visit and pointed out that the visit is critical to ensure engagement on pertinent issues that affect the Base and the SAAF in general. He advised the Committee that the Chief of the SANDF had appointed Maj Gen MJ Tyhalisi, GOC: Army Support Formation, to lead the DOD delegation and to accompany the Committee for the three-day Oversight Programme. The Committee was then briefed by the Acting OC: AFB Bloemspruit, Col (Adv) A.W.R. Segone.

**2.1 Presentation**

The presentation highlighted the following areas:

**2.1.1. Mandate**

The DOD informed the Committee that the mandate of the AFB Bloemspruit mandate is:

* To provide an Attack Helicopter Capability (16 Sqn).
* To provide Aircrew and Ground crew training (16 Sqn, 87 Helicopter Flying School (HSF) and 6 Air Support Unit (ASU).
* Support external deployments to the DRC and Mozambique.
* Support mobilisation of deployments.
* The protection of assets (506 Sqn).
* Supporting Disaster Management for the Free State Government (which is a large area of responsibility).

**2.1.2. Successes**

Col Segone outlined the following successes achieved by the AFB Bloemspruit:

* Qualifying of Aircrew (16 Sqn & 87 HFS).
* Qualifying of Groundcrew (16 Sqn, 87 HFS & 6 ASU).
* Conducting high level servicing of helicopters
* Attack Helicopter successes in the DRC (especially against M23 rebels).
* Hosting of 7 Sporting Championships in 2022.
* Hosting combined medal parades (Chief of the Air Force & AFB Durban) in 2022.
* Hosting of 44 Parachute Brigade training.
* Hosting of 101 Air Supply Unit training.
* Hosting of the new Modern Airborne Brigade.
* Hosting the Military Veterans Imbizo.
* Supporting official visits (President, Deputy President of RSA, Chief of Zimbabwean Defence Force, Chief of Cuban Defence Force.
* Hosting of various Senior and Junior Staff Courses.
* Participation in numerous Air Shows, Displays Flypasts and Expo’s.
* Operation Thusano:

 - Technical Assistance on Oryx Fleet.

 - Repairing of D-Vehicles (sedans) and C-Vehicles (clarktor).

* Hosting of the Grade 12 schools camp:

 - Program running for 5 years.

 - 226 Grade 12 students currently assisted.

 - Target for 2022: 98/65 (2021: 94/53).

 - Base members assist daily with student discipline.

**2.1.3. Challenges**

The following challenges were listed:

* A lack of helicopter fleet serviceability and availability of spares for operations and training (16 Squadron & 87 HFS).
* Limited availability of spares to service helicopters (6 ASU).
* Security threats due to the state of fences and entrance control systems.
* Hanger Roofs flaking.
* Mimic boards and fire warning and protection system in hangers and Base are non-functional.
* Crumbling of the hardstand/dispersal area.
* Flight line gates are inoperative.
* No petrol, diesel and limited Jet A1 fuel.
* Lack of machinery to maintain dirt runway in flying training area as well as fire breaks.
* Refurbishment project that was postponed indefinitely.
* Dilapidated infrastructure (buildings, hangers, bulk fuel storage and ICT equipment)
* Low procurement Office Staffing levels.
* Old and unreliable vehicle fleet to support operations and training.
* Slow disposal processes (creating other risks and hazards).
* Training courses stagnation due to low helicopter availably.

**2.1.4. Mitigation**

The following measures were introduced to mitigate the prevailing challenges:

* Flying Training continues with available resources.
* Holes in fences are patched as they appear.
* Daily patrols and Counter-Intelligence.
* Job-cards raised and site visits with the DPWI.
* Manual operation of Flight Line Gates.
* Procure landward fuel by means of Petty Cash. Aviation Fuel provided by other Bases like AFB Hoedspruit.
* Infrastructure maintained with Base funds.
* Monthly Base OC Walk improves fitness and morale.
* Sport is well supported.

**2.2 Observations and questions by Members**

* The Committee noted that the plight of the AFB Bloemspruit is a priority based on its strategic contribution when the SANDF is called on to urgently deploy troops in defence of the country and/or the region.
* The Committee stressed the strategic importance of ensuring quality helicopter pilot training and the maintenance and sustenance of the SAAF helicopter capabilities.
* Serious concern was expressed with regards to the listed unserviceability of aircraft as a result of the lack of spare parts due to funding constraints.
* The extremely long delays in Deep-level Maintenance of helicopters conducted by Denel is of real concern. In February 2022, Armscor indicated to the PCDMV that currently there is full capacity and additional personnel at the Denel Aeronautics providing a full array of services required in the Product System Support contract. However, the lack of funding to procure spares is hampering the delivery of aircraft and components. AFB Bloemspruit noted that some helicopters have been in Deep-level maintenance with Denel for more than four years.
* The Committee noted the concern by the SAAF that the reduced DOD budget and protracted procurement challenges further contribute to the unavailability of spare parts. The Committee was of the opinion that Armscor is a key stakeholder who must be engaged to ascertain the reasons for delays in acquiring spares.
* It was enquired whether the SAAF has the necessary capacity to take over the repair and maintenance of its aircraft fleet, especially deep-level maintenance. The Committee was assured that the SAAF does have the required expertise but would require additional personnel and specialised tools in order to effectively take over the task. Having noted the above, the Committee commended the SAAF for its efforts to acquire the skills required to execute the services and repairs in-house.
* The Committee noted with concern the obsolescence and a lack of spares that challenges the continued deployment of the Rooivalk Combat systems in the DRC. It was enquired whether all the Rooivalk aircraft were to be serviceable, it would be sufficient for the current demands on the SAAF. The Committee was informed that the current fleet is wholly insufficient for the demand and that the associated challenges demand that the Rooivalk be withdrawn. Further, the SAAF is engaged in a process of conducting a review on the continued utilisation of the Rooivalk as well as the Oryx, especially in the DRC.
* Questions were raised around the reasons for the lack of fuel supply given that the DOD has recently entered into an agreement on the procurement of fuel with the Central Energy Fund (CEF). The DOD clarified that the supply of fuel is not a challenge but rather that the supplier was experiencing challenges to deliver timely given that PetroSA relies on outside service providers to deliver its fuel. It was indicated that there are ongoing engagements with the CEF to rectify these challenges.
* The Committee requested information on the reasons why the SAAF is unable to process the procurement of minor services and work around the Base, i.e. repair of perimeter fencing, maintenance of hangars, etc. The response was that the GOC has a limited procurement delegation, that the SAAF is unable to undertake repairs or work above R30 000 and that the petty cash allocation for the Base is only R2 000. The Committee expressed its concern that this limited delegation delays the resolution of urgent work even though it may constitute minor repairs.
* The Committee noted the infrastructure collapse due to the prolonged neglect of the essential infrastructure such as the hangars.
* **Site Visit**

At conclusion of the briefing session, the Committee undertook a site inspection to the hangars where the repair, maintenance, training and storage of various aircraft are done. The Committee was shown the hangars for the Rooivalk, Oryx and A109 helicopters where the repair and servicing take place. The Committee was informed of the following during the site inspection:

* The majority of the aircraft remain in storage and unserviceable due to the indicated unavailability of spare parts, largely owing to funding constraints.
* The mechanical and operational challenges presented by the continued utilisation of the Rooivalk system for external deployments in the DRC. The Committee was informed that obsolescence has begun to creep into the system and it is in need of substantive upgrades, especially software upgrades. Moreover, the Committee was informed that the over-reliance on the Rooivalk systems in the DRC has begun to have negative social effects on the lives of the Members operating the system, i.e. pilots and engineers, who are deployed for extended periods.
* A general shortage of aircraft for training and deployment given the growing demands on the DOD.
* A number aircraft remains unserviceable for protracted periods due to a lack of spares.
* Pilots, engineers and mechanics are at times unable to practice their craft due to the lack of spare parts and equipment.
* Structural damages to the roof tops of the hangars remain unattended to for long periods.
* The morale of pilots has been impacted by the prevailing circumstances.
* Insufficient funding of AFB Bloemspruit in order to effectively operate in pursuit of its mandate.

In concluding the visit, the Committee was taken to the Early Child Development Centre which has been established within the Base. The centre caters for children of members of the SANDF and, to a limited extent, does allow for persons outside of the SANDF who meet the prescribed criteria. The center forms part of the SAAF’s initiative to provide family-friendly bases with all services to members.

**3. OVERSIGHT AT THE DOD MOBILISATION CENTER AT DE BRUG, 24 NOVEMBER 2022**

The Delegation was welcomed by the Officer Commanding of the ASB Tempe, Col September. The briefing session was hosted at ASB Bloemfontein due to the fact that the Mobilisation Center at De Brug did not have the facilities to host the briefing session. The first briefing on the DOD Mobilisation Centre was led by Lt Col P Struwig, Acting Officer Commanding. The second briefing covered the Project Thusano activities which also take place at De Brug, presented by Maj K.S. Molebatsi, Ops Thusano Free State Commander.

**3.1 DOD Mobilisation Centre**

The presentation highlighted the following:

**Mandate:** The DOD Mobilisation Centre is a 4th line depot in support of landward mobilisation and demobilisation. It is responsible for the Chief Army’s operational reserves, warehousing and preservation.

**Core Functions**

The DOD indicated the core functions of the Centre as to:

* Preserve the landward forces’ Prime Mission Equipment (PME).
* Provide 4th line Logistic Support to landward forces.
* Provide 4th line Warehousing Depot.

**Commodities Preserved:** The commodities under preservation at the facility are:

* PME (Combat, non-combat vehicles and Container systems (Project Swatch and Teamster)).
* Base Ordnance Depot (Combat clothing and equipment).

**Successes / Achievements:**

* Since January 2022, the DOD Mobilisation Center has been assisting all Tempe units with diesel, while not being a fuel depot;
* Assisted the Modern Brigades as well as ASB Bloemfontein,
* Assistance to Workshops of Mobilisation Units with their corps training.
* Took part in parades and the Armed Forces Day;
* Maintenance of the Olienhoutplaat siding by unit members;
* Outreach programme for support to a local Primary School (Eersteling), selective pupil's uniforms;
* A CALMIS course was successfully presented within the unit to empower more members;
* During 2022 the Unit also assisted with the issuing of stores and equipment for 7 SAI Battalion for Operation Vikela, 10 SAI Battalion for Operation Mistral, Infantry School and 3 SAI Battalion with their 2022 Military Skills Development system (MSDS) intakes.

**Challenges:**

* Large number of vacant Defence Employee (Civilian) posts (78) who are largely responsible for maintenance and cleaning tasks;
* Hospitality, Quarter-Master, Transport Parks and Procurement Sections have no structure. Members are drawn from other sections to function in this virtual structure to perform these tasks;
* Old Material Handling Equipment that have to be replaced, including nine battery-driven bin pickers (replacement cost estimated at R2.7 million);
* The migration process from the SA Army to Chief of Logistics has its command and control challenges as the Officer Commanding is continuously talking to commanders on different levels;
* During 2022, no funds were allocated for the maintenance and repair of preservation equipment in 16 warehouses - Most equipment is currently dysfunctional and an estimated amount required for repairs in 2023 is R2.4 million);
* The current dilapidated state of the "Broekskeur" security systems - Previously installed and managed by the DPWI (estimated amount to restore - R3 million); and
* Deterioration of facilities and infrastructure due to a lack of maintenance and repair by the DPWI.

**3.2 Observations and questions by Committee Members**

* The Committee enquired about the motivation for the termination of the contract with the service provider for the service of the environmentally controlled warehouse systems, noting the importance of the system in preserving the state of PME stored at these facilities. The Committee was advised that the DOD did not derive ‘value for money’ from the contractor, hence a decision was taken not to renew the contract. The Committee expressed concern with regard to the effects of this decision noting the importance of the system on the lifespan of PME.
* Concern was expressed regarding the indicated 78 PSAP vacancies within the Base, given the high unemployment rate within the country. The Committee queried the cause for the vacancies. The Committee was informed that the vacancies could not be filled due to funding constraints, which have recently been resolved with the most recent allocation of funding to fill some of the critical vacancies.
* The Committee highlighted the reported dysfunctionality of infrastructure and equipment which require repairs, maintenance and preservation for the PME of the SANDF. The Committee highlighted that PME kept at the Mob Centre must be kept in pristine condition and must at all times be readily available for immediate deployment in cases of emergency.
* To this end, the Committee enquired about the types of equipment required for the Base to fulfil its mandate (repair, maintenance and preservation), which was reported to be dysfunctional and requiring R2.4 million for restoration.
* The Committee was encouraged with the resuscitation of rail system at the base through the utilisation of Operation Thusano.
* While the Committee commended the DOD for establishing its own in-house capability to do some of the work which was predominantly done by service providers and the industry, the Committee questioned whether this would not exacerbate the already high cost of COE budget, given the reduced DOD budget.

**3.3 Project Thusano Presentation**

The presentation highlighted the following:

**Contracts:** The presentation referred to the various contracts under Project Thusano between the Republic of Cuba and the DOD.

**Skills transfer:** The skills imparted to the artisans and apprentices will have a positive impact in technical support and bear fruits in capacitating the Technical Services Corps (TSC) even after the Cuban specialists have left the country.

**Composition of Members:** The presentation tabulated the composition of Members of the DOD participating in Ops Thusano in the region. A total of 144 Members participate in the province, which includes 66 mechanics, 8 electricians, 8 spray painters, 4 inspectors and 8 spray painters and 5 panel beaters.

**Successes/Achievements:**

* A total of 1182 PME (B-Vehicles)were completed since the beginning of Project THUSANO until December 2021 (stats tabulated from 2015 to 2021 within the presentation);
* A total of 156 PME (A-Vehicles section) completed since the beginning of Project THUSANO until December 2021;
* A total of 775 PME (Preservation section) were completed since the beginning of Project THUSANO until December 2021;
* Completed vehicles for 2022/23 include 57 Casspirs; 148 Mambas, 1 locomotive, 10 tanks, 24 vehicles on conservation;
* The DOD presented and estimated total cost saving of R 66.887 million (including Component Repairs Spares Cost savings of R 19.852 million).

**3.4 Observations and questions by Committee Members**

* The Committee commended the DOD for the successful transfer of skills through Operation Thusano.
* To this end the Committee applauded the building of internal/in-house capabilities for the repair, maintenance and preservation of the PME of the DOD in view of the prevailing funding constraints.
* The Committee emphasised that the transformation of the Defence Force into a self-sustainable Force is key to the rejuvenation of the SANDF.

**3.5 Site Visit**

Having received the briefings, the Committee proceeded to Mobilisation Center at De Brug, where the Committee conducted an oversight of the facilities. It was shown the site where vehicles that have been declared beyond economic repair (BER) are kept, the Mobilisation Centre Workshops and the environmentally controlled warehouse. The Committee was informed that vehicles declared BER are kept at the base and cannibalised for spare parts in order to be used on other vehicles. Some of the vehicles are also deregistered, scrapped and auctioned off.

The Committee was shown the various workshops (mechanical, electrical and pain-spraying) where repairs and maintenance of the PME takes place. The following challenges were outlined to the Committee:

* The unavailability of electricity, especially at the environmentally controlled warehouse (which is required for the functioning of the temperature control and lighting).
* The availability of certain spares that cannot be canalised from other vehicles.
* The long lead times to procure certain parts to repair vehicles.

**4. OVERSIGHT VISIT TO THE DMV HOUSING SITE HILLSIDE VIEW 24 NOVEMBER 2022**

The Committee was briefed by Mr C Monyela, DDG: Department of Human Settlements (DHS) in the Free State, on the delivery of housing to Military Veterans within the Province.

**4.1 Presentation**

The presentation covered the following aspects:

* **Background**

The Military Veterans Housing Assistance Programme was started in the 2014/15 financial period in the province. The first project started in Mangaung Metro Municipality and comprised 30 beneficiaries and the programme has since been rolled out to other parts of the province as per current project list. The Province has to date received a list of 204 beneficiaries to be assisted from the National Department of Human Settlement. A total of 133 units has been completed from the 2015/16 to 2022/23.

* **Beneficiary Issues**

The Free State DHS outlined that the Approval List of 2020/21 made provision for 46 beneficiaries and noted the following progress:

* 11 Military Veterans units are at the completion stage Hillside View Mixed Housing Projec.
* 4 Military Veterans are on the Welkom 62 Military Veterans Project, and they are occupying their houses.
* 5 Military Veterans were under Kroonstad.
* 6 Military Veterans will be assisted under individual military veteran subsidy.
* 4 Military Veterans were under Parys 9 Military Veterans, and they are occupying the houses.
* 3 Military Veterans were assisted under purchase of property.
* 4 Military Veterans were assisted under newly built houses
* 3 Military Veteran`s houses were refurbished.
* 2 Military Veterans' houses will be refurbished.
* 1 Military Veteran`s house is under construction.
* 1 Military Veteran passed away before the purchase of the house.

The **Approval List of 2021/22 made provision for 104 beneficiaries** – Progress to date:

* 20 Military Veterans approved under 104 List and will be assisted in Rheederspark.
* 4 Military Veterans from Bethlehem have no serviced sites. Currently there's a reticulation services project running under Barkenpark 6 and 7 developments.
* 11 Military Veterans from Harrismith have no serviced sites.
* 4 Military Veterans will be assisted on own sites in Excelsior.
* 1 Site verification to be done for one military veteran in Smithfield.
* 2 Military Veterans have no serviced sites while one site has yet to be verified.
* 1 Military Veterans in Henneman to be assisted at his own site.
* 5 Military Veterans to be assisted at Hillside View Development.
* 55 Military Veterans to be assisted under individual subsidy and site verifications are being concluded.

The **Approval List of 2022/23** – Progress to date

* The Department received a list of 54 Military Veterans, one is based in Upington.
* One to be assisted at Rheederspark (Welkom).
* 8 to be assisted on own sites once verification is completed.
* 44 approved veterans do not have sites and the Department is in the process of assisting them with application forms for site allocation by municipalities.
* **Projects– Lourier Park**
* Project was started in 2014/2015 Financial Year
* 30 Units were constructed for qualifying beneficiaries
* The units constructed were 82 m2
* All the units are occupied
* Two units have been noted to have settlement (cracking) issues for which technical reports and recommendations have been made
* The project has since been completed.
* **Projects– Hillside View Development**
* 50 Houses completed
* 25 Military Veterans approved on DMV lists (20 on 46 list and 5 on 104 list)
* 35 Houses occupied
* 15 Houses unoccupied
* 20 Military Veterans approved from 46 Military Veterans list
* 11 Military Veterans are not on the DMV Lists and occupying the houses.
* 15 Houses not yet ready to be occupied, waiting for water connections
* **Projects– Welkom 62**
* Welkom 62 Military Veterans
* 20 Riebeeckstad
* 21 Rheederspark
* 21 Hospital view
* The implementation of the project started in Riebeeckstad
* 20 Units has been completed and occupied.
* Only 4 Military Veterans are approved on the DMV list
* The 16 Military Veterans are not on DMV list and are occupying the houses.
* Second phase has been implemented in Rheederspark with 22 Military Veterans approved on DMV list. Contractor has started with the Construction. The 22 Military Veterans is implemented under individual subsidy.
* 6 Houses completed in Rheederspark and 15 on wallplate level
* 1 House to be constructed in Henneman
* **Projects– Kroonstad 9**
* The Project was aimed to address 9 Military Veterans
* Only 4 Military Veterans are approved on the DMV list
* The 5 Military Veterans are not on DMV list and are occupying the houses.
* **Projects– Parys 6**
* The Project was aimed to address 9 Military Veterans
* Only 4 Military Veterans are approved on the DMV list
* The 5 Military Veterans are not on DMV list and are occupying the houses.
* **Projects– Theunissen 2**
* One house occupied
* One house not occupied and badly vandalized (The Military Veteran passed away)
* **Military Veterans Housing Assistance Plan 2022/23**

The DHS outlined the plans for the 2022/23 FY as follows:

* 50 Military Veterans Houses to be constructed in the current Financial Year.
* 21 Military Veterans houses under construction in Rheederspark- Matjhabeng Municipality
* 1 House completed in Dewetsdorp
* 1 Completed in Bloemfontein
* 5 Houses to be constructed in Kroonstad
* 1 House to be refurbished in Bloemfontein
* 1 House to be Constructed in Henneman
* 1 House to be refurbished in Sasolburg
* 2 Houses to be Constructed in Sasolburg
* 21 Houses to be Constructed in Hospital View
* **Challenges**

**The Free state DHS outlined the following challenges experienced by the Province in the delivery of housing:**

* Getting hold of some of the Military Veterans who are on the List of 54 beneficiaries as they are not yet captured on HSS
* SANMVA previously assisted before the Department receive the list from DMV is not known.
* The Department received the list of 46 Veterans to be assisted in the middle of financial year which causes confusion amongst the military veterans who have been approved by Province.
* The list was received while the Department was implementing houses for beneficiary approved by Province.
* Beneficiary who were on the waiting list to be assisted are now reporting the Department to the Office of the Minister, Public Protector and SANMVA.
* Validation of military veterans by DMV is taking long.
* Military veterans who were previously approved by Province are now threatening officials.

**4.2 Observations by Committee Members**

* The Committee enquired whether Military Veterans are granted a standard design of a “plot and plan” and the response was that Military Veterans were engaged on the various options and they chose one particular option which is being implemented throughout the Province. It was noted that the Province has increased the size of the plot to 100m2 from the original 60m.2
* The Committee expressed concern with regards to the alleged illegal occupations of houses for military veterans. It was questioned how this was allowed to happen and that both the Provincial DHS and the DMV, should put measures in place to prevent such illegal occupations.
* The Committee was informed that the two Departments have since devised a mechanism through the Verification Committee, to manage the process of verifying qualifying military veterans. The Committee was also informed that the Verification Committee is looking into how it came about that houses were illegally awarded and that the Verification Committee will provide a report in this regard.
* The Committee once again expressed its dissatisfaction with the continuing delays to cleanse and finalise the National Database for Military Veterans. It stressed that many of the challenges originate with the National Database and needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.
* The Committee was alerted to challenges with the quality of some of the houses as a result of constructors delivering substandard work.

In concluding, the DHS Free State committed that its National Department together with the DMV will speed up the process of verifying military veterans. Beneficiaries who are not verified will be given written letters that they are not approved by the DMV. They also undertook that the two departments will attempt to resolve the issue of Military Veterans who are occupying the houses without appearing on the DMV approved lists.

**4.3 Site Visit: Hillside View**

After the briefings, the Committee proceeded to site inspections of three houses awarded to Military Veterans. Whilst inspecting the first site, the Committee was approached by a group of Military Veterans who complained about the state of the houses that they were allocated. The Committee decided to inspect two of the said houses and made the following observations:

* The first house inspected by the Committee appears to be in a good state, except for one visible crack in a passageway.
* The next house had a carport erected that was spanning into the neighbour’s yard, and which could only be resolved by breaking it down and erecting it on the other side of the house.
* The third house had sewerage infiltrating the yard from an adjacent plot, where the wet sewerage could be observed. It was indicated that during the rainy season, the whole plot would be filled with sewerage with the accompanying stench.

The Committee requested the DHS Free State and the DMV officials to follow up on these cases with the contractors and to report back to the Committee.

**5. VISIT TO TEMPE MILITARY BASE ON 25 NOVEMBER 2022**

The Delegation was welcomed by the Maj General MJ Tyhalisi, General Officer Commanding: Army Support Formation. The Committee was briefed by Col D.L. Romain, OC School of Armour on the activities of the School of Armour.

**5.1 First Presentation: School of Armour**

The presentation highlighted the following:

**Mandate:** The School of Armour must remain the SA Army Armoured Corps’ Centre of Training Excellence to Educate, Train and Develop Competent Personnel for the South African Armoured Corps.

**Vision:** The School of Armour provides quality Education and Training by being a Professional and Dynamic Training Centre of Excellence.

**Functions**

* Initial, Technical and Tactical training of all South African Armoured Corps (SAAC) Personnel (Regular and Reserve Force).
* Education, Training and Development of SAAC Leaders.
* Training of Driving and Maintenance Instructors, Examiners and Drivers for the SANDF.
* Developing and improving of SAAC Doctrine.
* Accommodating the SA Armour Museum and Library.
* Research and Development support to the SA Armour Formation.
* Support to the Training function.

**Budget Overview**

The total budget of the school was indicated as R1 551 414 for the 2022/23 FY. The budget breakdown is as illustrated below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MAIN OBJECTIVES** | **COST**  |
| **COMMAND & CONTROL** | **R 192 299,00** |
| **FORCE PREPARATION** | **R 817 557,00** |
| **FORCE SUPPORT** | **R 280 998,00** |
| **HR MANAGEMENT** | **R 260 561,00** |
| **RENEWAL** | **R 0,00** |
| **TOTAL** | **R 1 551 414,00** |

**Status of vehicles**

The Committee was briefed on the status of all categories of vehicles as follows:

* Out of 14 of Category A vehicle, 10 were serviceable (71%) and 4 are unserviceable.
* Out of 42 of Category B vehicles, 26 are serviceable (62%) and 16 unserviceable with 7 Beyond Economic Repair.
* Out of 3 of Category C vehicles, all 3 are serviceable (100%).
* Out of 82 of Category D vehicles, 67 are serviceable (82%) and 15 unserviceable with 42 Beyond Economic Repair.

**Achievements:** The following are some of the achievements of the School:

* Two members of the unit received 30 Year Good Service Medals during Chief of the Army Medal Parade in Kimberley;
* Courses presented for 2022/23 are 33;
* Personal Development Sessions;
* Educational Outreach on the mandate of the Military Ombud: 30 August;
* Combat Readiness – R5 Shooting in each quarter with high pass rate; and
* Participated in the Armed Forces Day Parade: 14-22 February.

**Challenges:** Some of the challenges reported related to:

* 19 x Vacant PSAP posts (Currently 2 x posts are advertised, closing date is 9 Dec 2022);
* A number of vehicles and equipment require service and maintenance;
* Unavailability of Medical Support poses a huge challenge to training (the medics were occupied with the floods in KZN and unserviceable ambulances also played apart);
* Non Allocation of common ammunition for 12,7 mm and 60 mm course had a negative impact on the course – no live firing to qualify learners, due to budget constraints;
* The serviceability status and outdated software (obsolete) of the simulators of the PME have a huge impact on the quality of training, since the priority is simulation training, because of the budget constraint. (Only R2M is allocated to the PME of the Armour for 2023/24. The current contract does not make provision for the updating of the software.);
* Security fence and biometric security system not operational;
* Unavailability of A and B Vehicles’ spares (PME for training). Ageing of D and B Vehicles (most of the D Vehicles should have been already replaced); and
* Operational budget for general commodities is not sufficient to present quality training.

**5.2 Observations by Committee Members**

* The Committee expressed serious concern with regards to the DOD budget cuts which have been the cause of the funding challenges at the School of Armour. This has, inter alia, resulted in the School being unable to undertake live ammunition training. The School therefore had to resort to mainly utilising simulators for training. While the use of simulators makes financial sense, the Committee was further informed that even the utilisation of simulators is problematic given the outdated software.
* While the Committee commended the School for its gender balance, it expressed concern with regards to the absence of an age analysis. The Committee reminded the SANDF that it should seek to rejuvenate its leadership through the intake and promotion of younger soldiers.
* Concern was also expressed regarding the racial composition of the School, and it was encouraged to improve in this regard in order to reflect the demographics of the country, and especially as far as the enlistment of young white persons are concerned.
* The Committee noted the shortage of auxiliary support services, such as medical personnel, which makes it difficult for the School to conduct some of its training activities.
* The Committee further noted the over-reliance on simulators with outdated software. The School indicated that the upgrades have not been done as a result of the prevailing fiscal constraints.
* The unavailability of live ammunition was highlighted by the Committee as a serious issue which requires urgent intervention, noting that this has a direct implication for the combat readiness of the trainees and the SANDF.

**5.3 Second Presentation: 1 SA Tank Regiment**

The Committee was briefed by Maj R.P.G. Gerber, Acting Officer Commanding, on the capabilities of 1 Tank Regiment. The Regiment was previously under School of Armour as the Tank Wing. It was established on 1 April 1999, and it resides within School of Armour lines. The Regiment is fully fledged and has self-accounting status.

The presentation highlighted the following:

**Mandate:** The mandate of 1 SA Tank Regiment is to provide appropriate Armour capabilities, accountable Armour admin and to meet commitments in pursuance of Chief Army requirements. The Short Term focus is laid down as discipline, improving control (monitoring and evaluation), governance, risk and compliance, attention to detail and getting ‘back to basics’ to achieve the end state of arresting the decline.

 **Functions**

* Maintenance of a Rear Headquarters,
* to be Combat Ready Regiment,
* to Deploy Rapidly, and
* to maintain a Strategic Road Movement Capability.

**Achievements:** The following are some of the Regiment’s achievements:

* Successful completion of Pre-deployment training for deployment to the Limpopo border;
* Successful deployment to the Limpopo border (254 persons);
* Successful completion of MSDS Tank training;
* Successful movement to SA Army CTC for Ex VUK’UHLOME (275 persons); and
* Successfully maintaining area of responsibilities (cleaning) with very little resources and manpower.

**Challenges:**

* Tank Fleet - In the current financial year the Regiment did not receive funding for maintenance (Mk 1 or 2 Tanks). This continues to the next financial year, and will have an impact on the serviceability status, that will have an impact on training. (R3 million per tank requested but not allocated.)
* The simulator option is un-attainable as they are reliant on the School of Armour;
* Training technical personnel. (Due to the age of our technicians it will be advisable to rejuvenate.)
* Spare parts (cannibalisation can only go so far.)
* The Olifant Mk1 was upgraded into the Mk2 in 2009, but only 25 were manufactured due to financial constraints.
* In order to do a credible deterrence, they will need another 29 to be a fully-fledged Regiment.
* The strategic Land Lift Capability fleet is not big enough. With the rapid changing political environment in Africa it is suggested that they fit the Tank Transporters to the Regiment to be able to lift a Tank Regiment if need be. The maintenance requirement of R 750 000 per combination was planned but partially funded.
* Planned Maintenance (DPW Repair and Renovations)

In a land battle the final destruction can only be delivered by tanks! The procurement of new or the continuation of upgrades of which the technology already exist, is paramount in order to be an effective deterrence as 1 SA Tank Regiment to the enemies of the RSA. 1 SA Tank Regiment and its Human resources remain committed in the protection of the borders of the RSA when needed, however their equipment needs serious attention.

**5.4 Observations by Committee Members**

* The Committee highlighted the importance of a sustained tank regiment to assert the image and authority of the Defence Force and serve as a deterrence.
* The Committee expressed concern with regards to the under-funding of the repair and maintenance of the fleet due to funding constraints.
* It was noted that the PME upkeep is mostly dependent on Denel. The Committee once again urged that Denel should be migrated back to the Defence portfolio.
* It was stressed that that the devolution of the responsibilities from the DPWI to the DOD, must take place as a matter of urgency in order to allow the DOD to take ownership of the state of its facilities.

**5.5 3 Military Hospital (3MH): Presentation**

The Committee was briefed by Col W Hendricks on the mandate, achievements and challenges at 3MH as well as the refurbishment projects. The presentation highlighted the following:

**Mandate:** to deliver comprehensive tertiary level of health care with a full complement of health supportive services to regional areas (5 x Provinces).

**Refurbishment Projects**

* **Completed Projects**
* The replacement/repair of storm damaged roofs of the main and surrounding buildings. *This project was finalised by contractors appointed by DPWI and the final completion meeting was held on 13 July 2021.*
* Replacing of the hot water storage vessels. *This project was finalised by contractors appointed by DPWI and was completed 2019.*
* The service and repair of all air-conditioning systems. *This project is currently in process as a 24-month term contract and was recently awarded by DPWI to a private contractor to service and repair all air-conditioning systems of government facilities in the Bloemfontein area.*
* **Incomplete Projects**
* Replacement of lead reinforced doors at X-Ray Department.
* Refurbishment of Club Mfezi.
* Construction of helipad.
* Establish a 24 hr DPWI Call desk.

**Challenges**

* Repair of leaking Boiler at the kitchen (since 28/04/22) as it incurs challenges with pathogenic organisms isolated, and the provision of hot water to the Casualty department.
* Club Mfezi was without electricity and water for more than 15 days and impact on personal hygiene of the living-ins and Health Care Practitioners (HCPs)
* The repair of the generator took more than 2 months and only half of the hospital and theatres were operational during load shedding/ power interruptions.
* The Full service of the second Generator is outstanding since 13/07/22.
* The Emergency repair of the leaking roof at the RSM’s house took six months (since 24/04/22)
* The term contractor for air conditioning provides poor service and has poor response time.

**Successes:** These included:

* The replacement/repair of storm damaged roofs of the main and surrounding buildings;
* Replacing of the hot water storage vessels;
* Term contractor for refrigeration provides good service;
* Term contractor for lifts has good response time (people get stuck) and quality maintenance service of lifts

**5.6 Observations by Committee Members**

* The Committee expressed its concern with regards to the state of the 3MH as many of the refurbishment projects are on hold. It was noted that the Hospital is no longer optimally utilised due to a decrease in its capabilities. The Committee noted that funding constraints have had a negative effect on the institution.
* It was noted that 3MH also had complaints with regards to the speed with which service requests are dealt with by the DPWI.
* The lack of a helipad was concerning given that limited cost to erect it, as well as the slow progress to finalise its construction.

**5.7 Site Inspection**

Having concluded deliberations on the various capabilities within the Base, the Committee was taken on the site inspection of the various wards at 3MH; the site for the envisaged helipad; Club Mfezi. It also conducted a brief site visit to the School of Armour and 1 SA Tank Regiment. At the former, the Centre for Training Excellence was visited as well as the old mess and the current temporary mess. The Committee was informed of the following during the inspection:

* The Hospital’s maternity ward requires funding to construct a connecting passage to the theatres.
* Radiology is in need of updated equipment and the installation of a door to prevent the risk of radiation.
* The Hospital requires funding for the construction of the helipad for use in emergencies.
* Concerns were expressed of the lengthy procurement processes with its associated challenge of medical inflation given that equipment is often procured from abroad.
* Club Mfezi, which accommodates medical practitioners, students and staff, has a leaking roof, which has resulted in a faulty electrical system and cracked walls.
* The mess requires refurbishment but the project was halted due to funding constraints.
* The perimeter fence is old and dilapidated. The DOD has indicated the requirement for a concrete wall around the whole Tempe military area.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COMMITTEE**

Given the briefings at the various defence-related and DMV provincial housing sites; as well as the responses to questions, the PCDMV makes the following recommendations:

**7.1 AFB BLOEMSPRUIT**

* The Committee noted the first hand the detrimental effect of the continued budget cuts on the visited military bases in the Bloemfontein area. The Committee therefore recommends that the DOD during the annual budgetary deliberations, present it with clear budgetary priorities that should be ring-fenced to address some of the most pressing challenges.
* The lack of funding for spare parts impacts on the ability of 6ASU to maintain helicopters and the ability of Denel to speed up Deep-level maintenance. The Committee recommends the following multi-pronged approach to alleviate this concern:
	+ National Treasury should be approached to consider the removal of customs duties on *all* imports that are for the exclusive use of the SANDF or consider a temporary reprieve on customs duties to allow the SANDF to re-build capacity.
	+ National Treasury should consider an additional ring-fenced allocation for aircraft spare part acquisition to the DOD in either the 2023/24 main appropriation or the 2023/24 Adjusted Appropriation.
	+ The DOD should consider reprioritising funds away from non-core expenditure items to properly fund spare-part acquisition for aircraft, including the helicopter fleet.
* The Committee noted the negative effects of the challenges at Denel on the equipment and PME requirements of the DOD. The Committee thus recommends that consideration should be given to the migration of the entity back into the Defence portfolio.
* Having expressed concern with regards to the various challenges related to the continued external deployment of the Rooivalk Combat Helicopter, the Committee recommends that the SAAF finalises its review of the utilisation of the system and that the Defence Command Council take an urgent decision on the continued utilisation of the system.
* While the DOD has its set of infrastructure development priorities, the Committee encourages the Department to reconsider AFB Bloemspruit as a priority for repair and maintenance, specifically the roofing concerns at the helicopter hangars. This is of specific concern to the Committee as it could impact on operational readiness of these platforms.
* The Committee observed that the procurement delegation vested on the Officer Commanding of the AFB Bloemspruit are wholly insufficient. The Committee recommends engagement between the DOD and National Treasury in order to allow for the effective command and control by Officers Commanding of DOD Bases.
* Problems with CEF and PetroSA need to be resolved and an uninterrupted supply of fuel needs to be supplied to all SANDF units as per contractual requirements. The DOD should provide the Committee with updates in this regard during presentations on its quarterly reports.

**7.2 DOD Mobilisation Center at De Brug**

* The Committee noted that the DOD is experiencing challenges with unserviceable and obsolete vehicles. The Committee recommends that the DOD conduct an assessment of the Army requirements in as far as their vehicles are concerned and quantify and rank these requirements. The outcome of this must be shared with the Committee, in order to allow it to engage with National Treasury in this regard.
* The DOD is encouraged to ensure that systems are in place to ensure effective skills transfers that will enable the SANDF to maintain its PME and other equipment more cost-effectively and efficiently.

**7.3 DMV HOUSING SITE, HILLSIDE VIEW**

* The Committee expressed serious concern with regards to the reports of persons who have been awarded houses irregularly, with no clear explanation as to how these persons were included in the Military Veterans lists when they do not meet the criteria. The Committee thus recommends that the DHS and DMV must jointly investigate how this came about and provide a report to the PCDMV in this regard.
* The Committee *once again* recommends that the DMV move with speed to finalise a credible Military Veterans National database which must be utilised as the basis for provision of benefits.
* It was observed that some of the houses constructed for Military Veterans do not meet the required standards. The Committee recommends that the DHS, DMV and the National Home Builders Registration Council must hold such contractors accountable for the substandard work and ensure such defects are repaired. The DMV should, during its Quarterly Report meetings with the PCDMV, report specifically on the outcomes of this process.
* The DMV continues to have poor performance against its targets for the provision of housing to Military Veterans. The DMV is encouraged to determine a realistic annual target for housing only *after* consultation with the DHS on what number of units can realistically be included in existing housing development projects for the year. The DMV should implement this approach in its 2023 Annual Performance Plan.

**7.4 School of Armour and 1 SA Tank Regiment**

* The Committee is concerned about the over-reliance on simulators as a result of the budget constraints, as this has a negative impact on the combat readiness of troops. The Committee recommends that the DOD prioritises the budget of the School in order to provide for the provision of ammunition for purposes of live ammunition training and the upgrading of simulator software.
* The Committee expressed serious concern over the lack of security at the arms storage magazine and the risks associated with this. The Committee recommends that the DOD resolves the situation through proper safeguarding and to engage the security company that owns the software rights to the security cameras within this environment. In general, the DOD should also prioritise funding for improved base security in Tempe, given that numerous bases are housed in the military area.
* The Committee recommends that the DOD reprioritises its budget and ring-fence a budget for the funding of the infrastructure requirements of 3 Military Hospital.

***Report to be considered.***