

**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE & MILITARY VETERANS**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**1288. Ms A M Siwisa (EFF) to ask the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans:**

(a) What total number of soldiers have (i) been diagnosed with mental health illness as a result of the nature of their work and (ii) committed suicide over the past five years and (b) what mental health programmes are there in her department to assist soldiers who suffer from mental illness? NW2499E

**REPLY:**

Mental disorder (Mental Health Illness) per se manifest in a wide range of conditions that affect mood, thinking and behaviour. The defined main groups are mood disorders (depression or bipolar disorder), personality disorders, psychotic disorders, eating disorders, trauma-related disorders (post-traumatic stress disorder) and substance abuse disorders. Given the complexity of the development and later manifestation of such disorders it is not possible to quantify the numbers that are involved without deep analysis of patient history per incident.

The suicide incidence is a problematic aspect. Suicides are classed as unnatural deaths and is therefore reverts to the state coroner for final classification. The cause of death coding is vague with most capturing indicated as “death unspecified”

All members have access to the full spectrum of clinicians in managing mental disorders. The SAHMS does have management and defusing programmes in place to render care after traumatic incidents and after every deployment. As mental health presents, more frequently than not, differently in individual, each individual group programmes are not commonly used.

Given the complexity of the clinical environment under discussion it would be prudent to do a complete study to be able to answer the question.