

**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE & MILITARY VETERANS**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**1471.** **Mrs N I Tarabella Marchesi (DA) to ask the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans:**

(1) Whether her department and/or the SA National Defence Force has concluded any work exchange and/or employment agreements with any entity of the Republic of Cuba from the 2010-11 financial year up to the 2020-21 financial year; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what (a) total number of Cuban nationals (i) have been employed in each of the specified financial years and/or (ii) are due to be employed in the 2021-23 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework period, (b) are the details of the work that each of the specified Cuban nationals was and/or will be employed to perform, (c) are the details of the specific skills sets that each of the specified Cuban nationals possessed and/or will possess that South African nationals did or will not possess and (d) are the details of the total cost of employing each of the specified Cuban nationals in each case;

(2) whether her department and/or the SA National Defence Force took any steps to ensure that the specific skills set of the specified Cuban nationals were and/or will not be available in the Republic amongst South African citizens; if not, in each case, why not; if so, what are the relevant details of the (a) steps taken and (b) outcomes of the steps taken in this regard? NW1675E

**REPLY**:

1. (a)(i) Yes, Project THUSANO commenced in February 2015. Since then the under-mentioned number of Cuban members have worked in South Africa as per the specified Financial Year (FY) indicated:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FY** | **2015/16** | **2016/17** | **2017/18** | **2018/19** | **2019/20** |
| **Total Number** | 117 | 133 | 166 | 179 | 172 |

* An increase in the maintenance and repair teams was approved during the FY2017/18, and a project on simulators also commenced during this period.
* A downscale process started in FY2019/20 and the number of artisans and interpreters was reduced. However, the Military Medical Brigade arrived in April 2020, consisting of 27 members.

(ii) The nationals that are due to be employed in the 2021 – 23 Medium Term Expenditure Framework are indicated below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **FY** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** |
| **Total Number of Specialists** | 172 | 145 | 134 |

* The Military Medical Team will finish in October 2021.
* The downscale process will commence in FY2022/23.

(b) The Cuban members have worked in the under-mentioned areas, and will continue performing in these areas going forward.

* Maintenance and repair of A, B, C and D-vehicles for all the Services and Divisions.
* Preservation of A and B-vehicles for the SA Army and SA Military Health Services (SAMHS).
* Deactivation of B-vehicles for the SA Army and SAMHS.
* Stocktaking, organization and management of warehouses in the SA Army.
* Maintenance and repair of components and spare parts for the vehicles of the different Services and Divisions.
* Maintenance and repair of transport airplanes and helicopters for the SA Air Force.
* Maintenance, repair and manufacturing of test benches for the SA Air Force.
* Maintenance and repair of avionics components for the SA Air Force.
* Maintenance and repair of medical equipment for SAMHS.
* Delivery of medical services to assist SAMHS in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.
* Research, development, manufacturing and installation of combat driving and shooting simulators and automated shooting ranges.

(c) The Cuban specialists are transferring the under-mentioned skills:

* A-type maintenance to B, C and D-vehicles.
* B-type maintenance to B, C and D-vehicles.
* C-type maintenance to B, C and D-vehicles.
* Light repair to B, C and D-vehicles.
* Major repair to B, C and D-vehicles.
* Maintenance to mechanical and electrical components of A-vehicles.
* Light repair to A-vehicles.
* Major repair to A-vehicles.
* Deactivation of B-vehicles.
* Organization and management of workshops.
* Panel beating, welding and spray-painting of A, B, C and D-vehicles.
* Auto electrician skills.
* Repair of different kinds of components.
* Repair, manufacture and exploitation of test benches.
* Stocktaking and warehouses organization and management.
* Operation maintenance and repair of avionics components, such as navigation systems, radio stations, magnetic indicators and power amplifiers.
* Joint work with the South African members in servicing the Oryx helicopters, as well as C-47 TP and PC7 Astra MKII aircrafts.
* Operation, maintenance and repair of test benches.
* Calibrating and testing components.
* Maintenance and repair of different medical equipment.
* Simulators designing and development.
* Simulators validation.
* Simulators operation.
* Simulators manufacturing and installing.
* Methodologies for training personnel with the use of simulators.
* Maintenance and repair of simulators.
* Simulators technologies, hardware and software.
* Electronic basics.
* Combat shooting training with the combined use of simulators and automated shooting ranges.

(d) The Logistics Division does not know the cost of employing the Cuban members. The figures as indicated in the table below indicate the payment of the contract and administration per FY.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **2015/16** | **2016/17** | **2017/18** | **2018/19** | **2019/20** | **2020/21** | **2021** |
| **a** | **b** | **c** | **d** | **e** | **f** | **g** |
| **Total Cost** | 6,125,800 | 143,952,671 | 170,662,596 | 274,393,655 | 219,595,670 | 252,386,010 | 9,555,856 |

1. In South Africa, the companies only provided PME maintenance and repair services for the SANDF, but hiring those companies have the following disadvantages:
* The services are too expensive.
* The maintenance and repairs provided by these companies take a very long time.
* The quality of the maintenance and repairs is not good.

As a consequence, the SANDF pays a lot of money, the vehicles spend a long time receiving the maintenance and repair, and when they are delivered back to the SANDF, these vehicles have to be returned to the companies as they break down very quickly. Taking into account the budgetary constraints faced by the SANDF, and the amount and complexity of the missions it has to fulfil, the SANDF requires a faster, cheaper and more reliable maintenance and repair service for the Prime Mission Equipment (PME). For this reason, the SANDF must build its own capabilities for maintaining and improving the serviceability rate of the PME, which is critical for having a better combat readiness. The companies are not willing to repair the vehicles for a lower price, nor to transfer the skills for doing it. The Cuban members, on the other hand, are providing the services in the required way, and are transferring their skills to the SANDF members at the same time. For example, at the Army Support Base (ASB) Western Cape, at the beginning of the Project, the vehicle serviceability was at 35%. At the current moment the ASB’s serviceability stands at 84%. Most of the unserviceable vehicles at the ASB are not repaired yet due to the lack of funds for procuring spares and material panel beating and painting.