

**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO: 2674**

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**QUESTION PAPER NO: 45**

**DATE OF REPLY:**

**Ms LL van der Merwe (IFP) to ask the Minister of Communications:**

1. Whether, with regard to reports that the SA Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) News Division has spent R1,8 million on bulletproof vests for staff, she will furnish Ms L van der Merwe with the relevant details as to (a) on what date the vests were deemed necessary equipment for SABC staff, (b) which company received the tender, (c) the total number of vests that were purchased, (d) the total cost per unit vest and (e) which staff members the vests were assigned to; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
2. Whether she will confirm that the SABC incurred an R11 million independent contractors wage bill for its News Division for July 2020 alone, which constitutes a R4 million increase from the previous month; if not, why not; if so, (a) what are the relevant details in this regard, (b) is it the case that the SABC cannot function and/or execute its mandate with its current staff complement only and (c) what is the SABC’s total spend on independent contractors from 1 April 2020 up to the latest specified date for which information is available;
3. what is the (a) SABC’s total legal bill as at the latest specified date for which information is available and (b) total breakdown of amounts spent per legal firm;
4. whether, with regard to the lockdown period, wherein the SABC News Division made use of the Nasrec facilities for a period of five months for the rental fee of R1 million a month (details furnished), she will justify the overspending during a time where austerity measures should have been the primary motivator behind spending; if not, why not; if so, what are the further relevant details;

(5) what measures has she put in place to ensure that the low staff morale at the SABC is addressed? NW3392E

**REPLY:**

**I have been advised by the SABC as follows:**

(1)(a) The signed Business Case was received by SCM on the 9 March 2018. This is a date in which vests were deemed necessary equipment for staff in the SABC News Division.

(1)(b) Mayehlome Communications

(1)(c) A total of 100 vests with various sizes were purchased

(1)(d)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Bullet proof vest Sizes** | **Number** | **Price per Unit (Excl. VAT)** | **Price per Unit (Incl. VAT)** | **Total Price** |
| Medium | 25 | R9,305.88 | R10,701.76 | R267,544.05 |
| Large  | 25 | R9,667.35 | R11,117.45 | R277,936.31 |
| X-Large | 25 | R10,175.28 | R11,701.57 | R292,539.30 |
| XX-Large | 25 | R10,978.53 | R12,625.31 | R315,632.74 |
| **TOTAL PRICE** |  |  |  | **R1,153,652.40** |

(1)(e) The vests are to be distributed equitably to all SABC News offices and not assigned to individual reporters.

(2) Yes, the wage bill for July 2020 was R11 million which was R9 million actual paid, plus a further R2 million for accrued expenses and not R4 million as alleged.

(2)(a) During the hard lockdown period, journalists were complemented by the independent contractors, and this is the period that more COVID-19 cases were reported in the News Division, and freelancers were utilised.

(2)(b) The nature of the SABC news operation is such that services of independent contractors are indispensable.

(2)(c) The total independent contractors spend from April to October 2020 is R58.4 million.

(3)(a) Total = R65 351 000.00

(3)(b) Total breakdown is as per attached Annexure A.

1. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SABC used the Nasrec Sentech DR site for a period of about 6 months free of charge. This was the agreement between SABC and Sentech which was extended to the end of September 2020.
2. The SABC has a Wellness Centre which conducts wellness programmes for all SABC employees.  Individual counselling is also available for employees with such needs.  An assistance programme will be rolled out for all employees affected by the Labour Relations Act section 189 process.

**MS. STELLA NDABENI-ABRAHAMS, MP**

**MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**