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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION No 2767**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO -2015)**

**Mr M G P Lekota (COPE) to ask the Minister of Police:**

Whether he has taken all steps necessary to ensure that (a) section 205 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, was fully complied with in that the country had a patently clear police service without any trappings of the military and (b) the service received by the public from the SA Police Service is a service dedicated to investigating crime, maintaining public order, protecting and securing the inhabitants of the Republic and upholding and enforcing the law; if not, why not; if so, (i) when and (ii) what changes were made to achieve the constitutional injunction?

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**REPLY:**

The South African Police Service went through a process of demilitarisation shortly after its establishment in 1994. In the process the previous ranks, which were similar to that of the military had been replaced by demilitarised ranks. The issue about military ranks being reintroduced in the South African Police Service before the present Minister took office, raised concerns about a possible re-militarisation of the South African Police Service. It must be emphasized that the use of military ranks is not the only measure for a professional dedicated police service providing a quality service to members of the public as required by section 205 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. What is much more important is the measure of respect and dedication shown to members of the public through proper service delivery by the police service.

During the tenure of the present Minister of Police, it became clear, through various incidents of police behavior, the extent of civil litigation against the police service as well as findings of the Marikana Commission of Inquiry, that the ideal of a demilitarised police service has not yet been attained. This ideal of such a demilitarised police service is also a clear aim of Government’s National Development Plan. The Department of Police is busy with a new White Paper on Policing and a Review of the South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act No. 68 of 1995), processes in which the central theme is improvement of service delivery by the police service, including a dedicated process of professionalising the police service. In the process we must ensure the strengthening of issues such as command and control and discipline which are elements of any professional police service in the world. The aim is to address, as a matter of urgency, these issues in order not to simply improve the image of the police, but to ensure the realisation for the police service of its constitutional mandate as set out in section 205, mentioned above. In the process a dedicated attitude of servicing the community and maintaining excellent relations with the community, demanding respect through service delivery and addressing corruption must be nurtured. This had been an ongoing process, which is receiving all the attention it requires.

It is also clear at this stage that our police members on the ground are profusely targeted by criminals and murdered, making it clear that policing also sometimes require the use of force to protect members of the public, and members of the police service. The police service remains a security service which can be expected to protect citizens, to uphold and enforce the laws of the land and to prevent and investigate crime, within the broader parameters of and with respect to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.