

Police to fortify stations

Province gets plan together in wake of death of two officers

Marvin Charles

AS POLICE top brass gather today to pay homage to two officers slain during separate attacks to steal their guns, police have unveiled plans to beef up security at police stations and protect officers.

Minister of Police Bheki Cele, National Police Commissioner General Khehla John Sitole and Provincial Commissioner General Khombinkosi Jula will attend the memorial service in Tafelsig, Mitchells Plain.

In Parliament, the issue of security measures was raised at a portfolio committee briefing by police. Members were told that to arm police with body cameras to record sound and visuals may fall foul of existing laws, and police had asked for amendments to legislation.

Statistics presented revealed that 36 police stations in the province have no perimeter fencing and 50 lack perimeter lights.

The number of police stations without secured entrances is 91 and 117 police stations have no security guard at the entrance. Some 42 police stations in the province have fewer than four members per shift.

Over the next eight months, police will be putting up fencing, lockable vehicle gates, lockable pedestrian gates and a guard house.

From next year, they will be rolling out other minimum standards that are not technology, but later will be making use of CCTVs and panic alarms.

Member of the committee Dianne Kohler Barnard said: "It's a huge issue and we really went at them and we

said that they have to keep our police members safe, no one must die to save equipment."

Barnard said that the police had an elaborate plan that it intended to implement over the next few years.

She said that although the plan sounded effective, they would have to convince the Department of Public Works to assist them.

"I was very impressed, but the problem is... the Department of Public Works can say no. Look at our infrastructure, clinics, etc... they all fall under Public Works," she said.

Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union spokesperson Richard Mamabolo agreed: "We need to urgently implement preventative measures to stop this type of violence. We have for a number of years said that police stations do not have proper security and what we would like to see is proper security measures."

Meanwhile, police boasted in the provincial legislature about their successes in combating crime after over 11 154 arrests had been made since "Operation Thunder" was launched in May.

"While I welcome the operation's deployment of 257 additional personnel imported from the provinces specifically for this operation, one cannot ignore the fact that these communities are severely under-policed, as confirmed by the Public Service Commission report," Mark Wiley, the provincial standing committee acting chairperson on community safety, said.

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