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MEC given deadline to explain R600k bill on security at his home

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Controversial North West MEC for social development Hoffman Galeng has been given until Tuesday to explain why more than R600 000 was spent on security at his private residence.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa) has called Galeng to account before it following recent media reports that he used money from the public purse to improve security at his private home.

The committee's deadline follows a meeting with the department where it failed to present a detailed report on the exact amount that was spent on the security upgrades and who was responsible for such arrangements.

The acting head of the provincial department of social development, Poppy Moremi, admitted before the committee that the department ignored recommendations made by the South African Police Service (SAPS) after an assessment was conducted at the MEC's private residence as per the ministerial handbook, the committee said in a statement.

"After receiving recommendations from the SAPS, we engaged the department of public works to provide cost specifications for security improvements and [they were] estimated at R128 398 but they were never implemented," Moremi is quoted as saying in the statement.

She said instead of implementing those recommendations, the department entered into a service level agreement with the North West Development Corporation for provision of security services, effective from July 1, 2017. The agreement was terminated in July 2018 due to irregularities.

'Four versions of one story'

Scopa chairperson Mahlakeng Mahlakeng said the committee was disappointed that although the department admitted that money was spent on security at Galeng's private home, there were disagreements among officials about who had ignored recommendations from the police and public works.

"We also hoped that the meeting was going to be simple and that information was going to come forward to refute media reports on security arrangement but no one within the department wants to tell the truth. There are four versions of the story on the number of months that the security company spent at the MEC's private home and why there were deviations from recommendations of the two state entities," said Mahlakeng.

He said the department had been asked to produce documents as an official statement showed that more than R600 000 was spent on security arrangements over a 12-month period.

"Some people in the very same meeting are denying this amount and the media statement issued. No one is able to take responsibility on the matter," said Mahlakeng.

"We just want to understand whether the MEC was aware of these security arrangements happening at his house and if so, whoever responsible must pay back the money," Mahlakeng said.

Galeng promised that his department would ensure that a comprehensive report on the security arrangements at his private home is submitted on time.