

Intruder alarms at parliamentary villages not working after R32m spent

MAYIBONGWE MAQHINA

DESPITE upgrading access control to three parliamentary villages for MPs to the tune of R32 million six years ago, it has emerged that not all intruder alarms transmit a signal to the police.

This was revealed by Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille when she was responding in writing to parliamentary questions from DA MP Madeleine Hicklin.

The department has placed the blame on Cape Town's SAPS Rondebosch static protection service for not relaying signals from intruder alarms to its site office at Groote Schuur Estate.

Hicklin had enquired why the alarm systems had been installed at parliamentary villages, in Acacia Park in particular, without any means for them to be used to contact either the SAPS office or an external security company.

Despite all the parliamentary houses being fitted with alarm systems, the alarm systems were not activated, she said.

Hicklin asked whether an appropriate study had been conducted prior to the installation of perimeter beams along the perimeter wall of the Acacia Park parliamentary village, and asked for the details of the company that had installed the security systems and perimeter security beams there.

In her written response, De Lille said the department had informed her that the intruder alarms were removed and re-installed as part of the scope of work under contract for the refurbishment of sessional officials' accommodation. "The challenge, however, was the ageing infrastructure at SAPS Rondebosch static protection service, where not all intruder alarms reported the signal to the SAPS site office at Groote Schuur Estate.

"The department is currently attending to these challenges and will resolve the intruder alarm and signal under the current MP maintenance project," she said.

The minister said that at the inception of the project in 2015 the appropriate study was done through the SAPS security assessment report.

De Lille said the study had recommended the erection of security fences and the installation of cameras, among others, at the Acacia Park, Pelican Park and Laboria Park parliamentary villages. She revealed that Liberty Technologies was sub-contracted by Bambana Management Services to install the security system and perimeter security beams at Acacia Park.

"The correct tender process was followed. The open tender was advertised in line with sound supply chain management processes," she said.

"The contract for the upgrading of the access control at the three parliamentary villages undertaken in 2015 amounted to R32 231 266.29 and the successful bidder was Bambana Management Services," De Lille said.

She told Hicklin that R25m was budgeted by her department for the maintenance services at the parliamentary villages.

De Lille said her department undertook maintenance on a day-to-day basis. "The department has various maintenance contractors appointed to render day-to-day maintenance according to their building disciplines."

The services rendered included maintenance and repairs to domestic appliances, pumps, pools and irrigation systems. Other work entailed maintenance to access control such as CCTV, and fire detection, automated doors or gates, public announcement systems, surveillance, air conditioning and pest control, among others.

In October 2019, Independent Media reported that the government incurred R743m in expenses over 10 years on the three villages, which have a combined 508 housing units and 155 apartments.

De Lille said at the time transport costs for the MPs for the three villages was R38 570 355 in the fourth term and R35 997 143 in the fifth term. The rates and services cost R112.6m in both terms.