



public works
& infrastructure

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Public Works and Infrastructure
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MEDIA STATEMENT

R300 MILLION CYBER CRIME THEFT UNEARTHED AT DPWI

The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, has decided to take the public into his confidence in the interests of transparency to reveal a staggering cyber - crime related matter that has been unearthed by the department resulting in an amount of at least R300million being stolen in the past 10 years, however this could be more as investigations continue.

In the latest episode that took place in May 2024, the cyber-attackers stole a further R24million. This prompted a full forensic investigation by the Hawks, South African Police Services, State Security Agency and experts in the ICT and cyber security industry.

This revelation emerged as Minister Dean Macpherson and Deputy Minister Sihle Zikalala, conducted detailed assessments on the work of the department and through the incoming briefings from department branches.

“It has become clear that the department has been a soft target and playground for cyber criminals for over a 10 year period and this should have been picked up a lot earlier. I felt it important to let South Africa know what has happened and what we are doing about it. I cannot discount the possibility of collusion between officials and criminals in this prolonged period of theft. It is clear that we need better financial controls which I have said to the department are a matter of urgency.” said Minister.

The Minister has pledged to crack down on these syndicates and those in cahoots with them internally or externally.

“We want to put a stop to this immediately because we cannot allow our department to be subjected to unchecked looting. This is money that could have been spent on our infrastructure drive to improve the lives of South Africans. The investigation will be expanded and deepened to find the masterminds and the beneficiaries of this grand theft, and I want to see them in prison” added Minister Macpherson.

Four officials have been suspended and 30 laptops seized by the investigators. The four DPWI officials suspended include three senior management officials and one middle management official. The department was forced to shut down all its payment system causing significant delays in the payment of its creditors.

In May the department announced that it has ordered a full forensic probe into what it called are vulnerabilities in the department’s information and technology systems. The department identified the cyber-security vulnerabilities with the assistance of its banking partners including ABSA and the South African Reserve Bank.

The investigation which involve cyber and ICT security experts covers the following:

- **Causes of the breach and vulnerabilities.**
- **Vulnerability and susceptibility to cyber-crime of the ICT infrastructure within the department**
- **Lack of staff capacity and weak ICT systems**

“I welcome the precautionary suspension of four individuals including senior managers and the seizure of over 30 laptops for further examination by the investigative teams. This will allow the investigations to proceed smoothly. We are appealing to the team probing this security breach to conclude their investigation with speed. We do not want prolonged investigations with no results and consequences. There is simply no place for corruption in this department.” said Minister Dean Macpherson.

“I further welcome the initial swift investigation launched by my predecessor and now

Deputy Minister Zikalala. The department has suffered a massive financial loss and those responsible for protecting us from cyber criminals must be held to account. We need answers as to what happened under their watch. We also ask the investigators to trace and follow the money and ensure that it is brought back to the coffers of government.” added Minister Macpherson.

The Minister has committed himself to work tirelessly to ensure the reinforcement of the cyber security systems within the department so that similar incidents are prevented in future.

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