



Defence in Democracy

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE LAUNCH OF THE SA ARMY HOSPICE

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Soweto: The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has to make itself increasingly relevant to the socio economic imperatives of the country because of its diverse skills capabilities.

This was said by the Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Thabang Makwetla, when he opened a hospice at the Lenz military base, next to Soweto yesterday. The hospice, built to take care of terminally ill members of the force and their families, provided a practical training opportunity for army members who are soon to form a Works Regiment division of the army. Members of the army dedicated their time to do site management, bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing, electrical wiring and the painting of the facility.

The South African Army Council decided in 2005 to establish a hospice in the central Gauteng region for soldiers and their families who require health care services. The donations and technical support of industries has made it possible for the construction of the hospice to be located under the command of the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS).

Makwetla described the facility, built in collaboration with the South African Army Engineers Formation, South African Military Health Services (SAMMS) and the Tshwane South Technical College, as making a "modest contribution to the goals of skills development, particularly the Joint Initiative of Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) and the Military Skills Development System (MSDS). The project was constructed by members of the army and supervised by Murray and Roberts, and funded through private sector donors.

"This is one of the clearest indications that the private sector and government can join hands in contributing to the skills development requirements of the country. This facility will provide palliative care to our members and their families.

It is a small step in the right direction to provide a much needed service within the army. It will also form the centerpiece of the envisaged Department of Defence Maintenance and Repair Capability” said Makwetla.

"Even though there is still a huge backlog regarding DOD facilities that require maintenance and repairs, we are however inspired that going forward, we will rely on our own internal capabilities and in the same breadth, afford members of the army an opportunity to pursue alternative careers within the DOD Works regiment" he added.

According to Makwetla, when democracy dawned in 1994, other equally important competing social needs led to a decline in the allocation of resources for the defence department and as a result some military infrastructure deteriorated. He said however that it is the intention of the ministry to ensure that the army "reclaims its place of pride as an institution of excellence in the country".

"The core mandate of the army is territorial sovereignty and stability. However, because the army has other capabilities such as quality health care provision, disaster management, engineering capacity, welfare support, research and innovation, strategies have to be developed to ensure that these capabilities do not lie fallow but are utilised in other government programs" he said.

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