



**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS**  
Republic of South Africa

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

Date: 29 April 2010

Embargo: None

**SISULU AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT VISIT SOUTH AFRICAN BORDERS**

**Komati, Mpumalanga**, the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans has arrived at the border town of Komati to join members of Parliament's Portfolio Committee On Defence and Military Veterans who are on a three-day visit to the borders of South Africa and Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique and Swaziland. The Minister invited members of the Committee to visit the borders to inspect the facilities, interact with soldiers, and understand the challenges the SANDF is interacting with as they return to the borders to take over patrol as part of the new cabinet approved South African National Border Management Agency.

The Minister and the members of parliament are being hosted by the Chief of the SANDF, General Ngwenya, Chief of the Army, Lt General Shoke, Acting Chief of the Air Force, Lieutenant General Ngema and Chief Defence Intelligence, Lieutenant General Shilubane and all Major and Brigadier Generals responsible for border operations, engineering and works regiment.

The Generals indicated that since the Cabinet decision to return to the border they have completed an assessment of all operational challenges and security issues, and that cross-border international syndicates are smuggling vehicles through the border, stock theft is common on both sides of the border, in particular the Lesotho and South African border. They added that many community members along the border are helping criminals and defeating the ends of justice.

The Minister expressed her confidence that the SANDF will bring a new dawn to border management and security. "We return to the borders a more advanced SANDF than when we left in 1998, I am very impressed by the ground work already done to take over the full patrol from SAPS and the progress and presence we have already made along the border, we are engaging the defence industry on some of the best technology to monitor illegal activities and also keep an eye on our fence 24 hours, together with other law enforcement agencies the SANDF will ensure that their constitutional mandate to secure the borders is done with pride and excellence" Minister said.

The Minister added that the SANDF is returning to the border in phases due to shortage of funds and in line with Government budgeting processing funds will start being made available in the next financial year. “ This is a major programme, the infrastructure is not the best it can be, the fence is not in a good state, we have over two thousand kilometres long, land border we have to look after and that requires both financial, technology and human resources, but we are up for the task and I am confident that many South Africans are happy that their troops are back on the border” She said.

The Minister called on communities along the border to help in stopping illegal human trafficking, vehicle theft and international syndicates trading on other illegal goods including drugs.

Responding to concerns from members of the committee that soldiers say they need the same allowance as police when deployed in border patrols, the Chief of the SANDF, General Ngwenya said there are benefits that soldiers get that police do not get. “Our troops will have to make a decision, the police get the amount they get because they do not receive meals from the SAPS, but we provide all the three meals. If they want us to stop providing meals and they get the same amount as SAPS we are ready, we are engaging them on this matter through necessary military channels” He said.

The General added that he is meeting with Chief of Defence Forces of neighbouring countries to re-establish coordinating structures and to urge them to deploy soldiers on their side of the fence. “ We are interacting with Generals from our neighbouring Forces to also deploy on the other side of the fence, it is important that the fence is patrolled from both sides, the response is good” He said.

The Minister and the full delegation drove for over fifty kilometres along the South Africa and Mozambique border to inspect the state of the fence and patrol root. During the visit, members of the committee will drive along the Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique border.

After receiving a briefing from the Chief of SANDF, interacting with soldiers and driving along the Zimbabwe and Mozambique border lines, the Chairperson of the portfolio committee Mr Nyami Booi said the SANDF is capable of delivering on the task but they need a lot of resources.

“We would have preferred that the SANDF takes over full border patrol as soon as possible, but we understand that this phased approach is necessitated by lack of funds and we will do what we can to assist the SANDF to perform this function, we are happy that the return to the border has started” He said.

**ENDS.**

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