

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION



REPORT: INVESTIGATION INTO THE APPOINTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL CUBANS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE



2004

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Service Commission undertook the investigation on the Appointment of Professional Cubans in the South African Public Service (PS) on a Parliamentary question by the Freedom Front (FF). Based on the inputs received from Vulindlela, the Departments of Housing, Water Affairs and Forestry and Health, the following overall figures on the appointment of Cubans in the PS are reflected in the table below:

Information Required	Information Obtained	Remarks
Total number of engineering posts vacant in the Public Service	1,734 posts	
Total number of engineering posts filled in the Public Service	1,482 posts	
Total number of engineering posts occupied by foreigners in the Public Service	53 posts	
Total number of Cubans in service of the Public Service Occupations in which these Cuban employees are employed.	388 Cuban employees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CSE Educators (1) ➤ Architects (13) ➤ Engineers and related (25) ➤ Medical Practitioners (339) ➤ Health Science and related (2) ➤ Emergency Services and related (1) ➤ Mining and Geology (2) ➤ Other occupations (5) 	The information is obtained from the Public Service's PERSAL System, and the accuracy of this statistics is based on how accurately the country of origin, job-title and occupational classification fields have been captured on the system. The country of origin is, however, not a mandatory field on PERSAL and is therefore not always captured.
Number of Cubans on ground of bilateral agreements being employed in the Public Service Occupations in which these Cuban employees are	74 Cuban nationals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Architects and Engineers (62) ➤ Engineers and Technicians (8). ➤ Clinical Engineers (50) 	Department of Housing Department of Water Affairs and Forestry Department of Health – only (4) were already employed by 20 November 2003

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A parliamentary question was posed to the Minister of Public Service and Administration by the Freedom Front (FF) on the appointment of professional Cubans in the Public Service. On 10 September 2003 the Minister referred this matter to the Public Service Commission for investigation.

More specifically, a certain Mr PJ Groenewald acting on behalf of the Freedom Front made this request. The reason advanced for this request by the FF was that it was revealed that the Department of Health is in the process of employing Cuban engineers in the Public Service. It was also contended that other departments (Water Affairs and Housing) are also in the process of employing Cuban engineers.

Mr Groenewald requested that the Commission investigate the following:

- i. Number of engineering posts vacant in the Public Service?
- ii. Number of engineering posts in the Public Service which are filled by foreigners?
- iii. What are the qualifications of the Cuban engineers and if they are up to standard with the qualifications in South Africa?
- iv. Are Cubans being directly remunerated for their services or remunerated via Cuban government? *
- v. The remuneration they receive for their services?
- vi. How widely have the engineering posts been advertised and how many affirmative action posts have been advertised?
- vii. How many applications were received for the advertised posts?
- viii. Number of Cubans in service of the Public Service and in which occupations?
- ix. Number of Cubans on ground of bilateral agreements being employed in the Public Service and in which occupations?

2. INVESTIGATION APPROACH

In undertaking the investigation, the Commission requested Mr Abdul Moosa, an Ad Hoc Analyst working on Vulindlela to provide available information from the PERSAL System (Public Service's personnel and salary system) on the above questions. As he was only able to provide information on certain questions, the national Departments of Housing, Water Affairs and Forestry and Health were requested to provide information on the above questions. The Department of Foreign Affairs was also approached with the objective of obtaining the names of departments involved in the appointment of Cubans and the relevant contact persons in those departments.

3. FINDINGS

The detailed findings and responses to the questions posed are included below. It should be noted that whilst the approach of the South African government is to encourage closer ties with Cuba and to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise in various sectors, individual Ministries and Departments have taken responsibility for inviting Cuban professionals (engineers and architects) to engage and work in South Africa.

3.1 South African Housing Programme

On 5 February 2001 an agreement was signed between the Republic of Cuba and the Republic of South Africa to constitute a Joint Bilateral Commission on Economic, Scientific, Technical and Business Cooperation. The second session of the Joint Bilateral Commission (JBC) was held in Havana, Cuba, on 30 December 2002. During the second session of the JBC the Bilateral Agreement was signed by the Cuban Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation, the Honourable Mr Marta Lamos Morales and the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

The two parties expressed the desire to continue strengthening cooperation in the context of existing agreement in terms of identified areas on housing matters and made a commitment to develop a comprehensive programme for housing cooperation, as follows:

- (i) To support and extend the agreement concluded between the province of Gauteng and the province of Havana in line with the Declaration of the First Session of the South Africa/Cuba Joint Bilateral Commission. In this respect, the following areas of cooperation were identified:
 - To ensure skills transfer and empowerment in the context of people-centered housing delivery;
 - To assist with and enhance the development of a housing education training curriculum; and
 - To explore the establishment of partnerships in the housing sector with an emphasis on empowering small medium, and micro enterprises and black economic empowerment.
- (ii) To establish a joint institutional arrangement to oversee the programme.
- (iii) To ensure the sharing of information and best practices.

The Cuban government has managed to increase its housing stock by 2.5% per year for the last 6 years and has consistently increased the quality and quantity of housing stock in Cuba.

Through their various programs, all of which are self-funded and self-generating, they have housed over half a million of their poorest households. Their Building Brigades and Community Architects strategies have been so successful that Habitat International declared them the winning submission of 2001. The fact that Cuba faces similar problems to South Africa in some ways and, has conducted this highly successful project means that there is a great deal that South Africa can learn from its Cuban contemporaries within the South African context. It is the intention of the Department of Housing that they learn from the Cuban experience and enhance their capacity to create a better environment for the poor in South Africa.

There are several areas that currently limit the participation of certain professions in low cost housing delivery process viz architects, some of which lie beyond the control of the department, e.g.

- In many ways architects receive little undergraduate training on engaging with the needs of poor clients who represent their needs as a collective rather than as individuals. Many tertiary institutions are correcting this tendency and offering programs that will improve negotiation and need assessment skills. Designing for affordability is also a challenge.
- Provinces have mentioned that they find difficulty in filling posts advertised for architects.

3.2 Department of Water Affairs and Forestry

The Cuban professionals are not employed by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. They have been seconded to the Department through an agreement entered into by both the Republic of Cuba and the Republic of South Africa.

The Cubans are assisting the Department with the following services:

- The provision of geohydrological specialist and engineering services to rural and other disadvantaged communities within areas where such services are inadequate;
- The development of sustainable approach to the use of available water resources and the promotion of proper operation and maintenance of water supply infrastructure;
- The promotion and support of proper sanitation; and
- The training, support and transfer of skills to local staff.

3.3 Department of Health

The Department of Health's conditions of employment for Cuban technicians are the same as those for Cuban doctors. They are therefore receiving direct remuneration from the Department.

4. RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS POSED

The information received from Vulindlela and the Departments on Mr Groenewald's request, is reflected under each question:

4.1 Number of engineering posts vacant in the Public Service

Persal recorded a total of 1,734 vacant engineering and related posts in the Public Service.

4.2 Number of engineering posts in the Public Service filled by foreigners

Persal recorded a total of 1,482 engineering and related posts filled in the Public Service of which 53 posts are occupied by foreigners.

4.3 What are the qualifications of Cuban engineers and if they are up to standard with the qualifications in South Africa

Cuban professionals contracted for the housing programme have architectural and civil engineering qualifications. Consultations with Professional Bodies in South Africa to assess the qualifications of Cuban professionals is underway. Currently Cuban engineers are not involved in the certifying of projects.

Cuban Nationals were not and are not employed by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry but have been seconded to the Department through an agreement entered into by both the Republic of Cuba and the Republic of South Africa. Their qualifications were not, therefore, assessed by SAQA. However, all the secondees have academic qualifications in the fields of Geohydrology, Operations and Maintenance (Mechanical Engineering) and Water Quality Management.

The Cuban technicians that will be employed by the Department of Health are highly qualified, given the fact that they first do the training that is equivalent to South Africa's Clinical Engineering training offered at only one institution in the country. Beyond this initial training, they proceed to a specialization, e.g. they would then specialize in diagnostic equipment, etc. Their training level, experience and expertise puts them at a Control Technician Level, in accordance with public sector standards. Presently there is no registration requirements for this category of engineers. The Engineering Council of South Africa has only just

created a Clinical Engineering Category, under which this group of engineers and technicians will fall.

4.4 Are Cubans being directly remunerated for their services or remunerated via Cuban government

Cuban professionals contracted to the housing programme of the Department of Housing are employed and remunerated by provincial governments on contract basis for three years. The employment of the Cuban professionals is in terms of a cooperation agreement signed between the South African government and the Cuban government.

In terms of the agreement reached between Cuba and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), the government of Cuba pays the salaries to the secondees and the DWAF pays a monthly stipend of R3 300.

The Department of Health's conditions of employment for Cuban technicians are the same as those of Cuban doctors. They are therefore receiving direct remuneration from the Department.

4.5 The remuneration received for their services

Persal recorded a total of 26 Cuban engineering and related personnel with a gross annual income of R4.68 million per annum.

4.6 How widely were the engineering posts advertised and how many affirmative action posts have been advertised.

The Department of Housing only advertised posts in Cuba, whilst the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry did not advertised any posts, because the Cuban secondees are not employees.

The Department of Health has always had a shortage of clinical engineering technicians and engineers. The Department has been informed by health technology managers in provinces that posts are regularly advertised but the quality of applicants is such that they do not meet the criteria. Clinical engineering is actually one of the very scarce skills in the country as a whole, because of further training required, over and above the normal electrical engineering that is done in most Technikon country wide. What complicates the situation is the fact that there is only one institution that is accredited by SAQA to offer clinical engineering in the country. Further more, there is a shortage of instructors that could train medical equipment specialists. As it is, the public service is presently running on a 10% staff capacity that is required in accordance with the norms recommended for the country. This has been a persisting problem and as a result, the status of medical equipment in public hospitals has deteriorated to alarming levels.

4.7 How many applications were received for the advertised posts

Hundred and fifty eight (158) applications were received for the engineers posts of the housing programme advertised only in Cuba. Senior officials at both the national and provincial Departments of Housing went to Cuba to interview the applicants.

Since the Cuban secondees are not employees of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry application for these posts are not necessary.

The Department of Health is presently compiling statistics and gathering information from provinces in this regard.

4.8 Number of Cubans in service of the Public Service and in which occupations

Persal recorded a total of 388 Cuban Employees in the Public Service and they belong to the following occupational classes:

- CSE Educators (1)
- Architects (13)
- Engineers and related (25)
- Medical Practitioners (339)
- Health Science and related (2)
- Emergency Services and related (1)
- Mining and Geology (2)
- Other occupations (5)

The above statistics are based on how they were classified and captured on the Persal system. The country of origin is not a mandatory field on Persal and is not always captured. Therefore, the accuracy of these statistics is based on how accurately the country of origin, job-title and occupational classification fields have been captured on Persal.

4.9 Number of Cubans on ground of bilateral agreements being employed in the Public Service and in which occupations

The Department of Housing confirmed that on 30 November 2003, a total of 62 Cuban Architects and Engineers were employed by the 9 provincial departments of housing. They were employed as of the following dates:

- Since before August 2003, Gauteng employed 13 Cuban Architects and Engineers as a result of an agreement between Gauteng Province and the Cuban Government.

- On 19 August 2003, an additional 37 Cuban Architects and Engineers arrived in South Africa who were employed by the following provincial departments of housing, namely, Northern Cape (1), North West (4), Free State (5), Limpopo (4), Mpumalanga (6), Eastern Cape (10), KwaZulu-Natal (6) and Western Cape (1). On 30 September 2003, 50 Cuban Architects and Engineers were employed by the provinces.
- On 1 October 2003, an additional of 12 Cubans arrived in South Africa and were employed by Gauteng.

In terms of the co-operation agreement between the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) and the Cuban government, nine (9) Cuban nationals were seconded to the DWAF as from 1 April 2002 until 31 March 2004 as engineers and technicians. However, one (1) of the secondees had to return home during December 2002, due to a very ill child in Cuba. All of them have been seconded at the level of engineer.

The total proposed number of Clinical Engineers for the Department of Health is 50 of which only four (4) engineers were employed in the provinces, namely North West Province two (2) and Eastern Cape Province two (2).

