

## **National Assembly question: Question 1411**

### **Mr P van Dalen (DA) to ask the Minister of Energy:**

- 1) Whether there has been any (a) alleged terrorist attack and (b) breaches of security at the Pelindaba Nuclear Research facility in the past five years; if so, (i) when did each attack/breach of security take place and (ii) what are the further relevant details;
- 2) Whether any nuclear/radioactive material was unaccounted for after these incidents; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) what types of material and (b) what action was taken to recover these materials;
- 3) whether these materials have been recovered; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details with regard to the (a) recovery process and (b) suspects;
- 4) Whether the United States of America offered to send troops to protect and secure this National Key Point Site at Pelindaba as a result of these incidents; if so, (a) when and (b) what was the Government's response to this offer? NW1579E

### **REPLY**

- 1) A Security breach occurred at Necsa's Pelindaba site at 00:16 on 08 November 2007. This event was widely reported in the media and about a year later was the subject of an episode of the CBS television programme "60 minutes". The details of the event were as follows:  
  
Four individuals entered the Necsa site at Pelindaba by cutting the perimeter fence. Their modus operandi implied prior knowledge of electronic security systems. Their activities were captured on surveillance cameras but not detected by the operators at the time. The intruders broke into a garage housing a fire engine and removed one of the ladders from the fire engine.

They then gained access to the first floor of a building next to the garage through a window. While the intruders were in the building, they encountered two Necsa staff members on night duty. They attacked one of these staff members, who resisted and suffered a gunshot wound. The intruders fled the Necsa site via the same route they entered. Necsa security, assisted by the SAPS, were unable to locate the intruders, after being alerted by the two staff members.

It is not known what the motives of the intruders were, since they have not been apprehended by the SAPS. However, since they stole the cell phones of the two Necsa employees and attempted to remove a computer (which contained no sensitive information), it is more than likely that they were criminals as opposed to terrorists.

After the breach, the security at Necsa was significantly upgraded. Three independent security evaluations, by the IAEA, by the NNR and the SAPS have been conducted, all with positive conclusions.

- 2) No radioactive material was unaccounted for after the incident.
- 3) See the response to question 2.
- 4) Such an offer was indeed received by the former Department of Foreign Affairs. The offer was declined because the proposed intervention was unnecessary. No South African troops were deployed at Pelindaba either.