

689. Mr Y Cassim to ask the MEC responsible for Community Safety:

Subsequent to the response to Question 211 of IQP 8 dated Friday, 04 April 2025:

- (1) How many helicopters (a) should have and (b) have actually been allocated to the province and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

(a) four (4) helicopters allocated to the province.

(b) four (4) helicopters allocated to the province, namely:

Two (2) H125 helicopters: one allocated to Bulembu Air Wing (registration number ZS-RDH) and one allocated to Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth Air Wing (registration number ZS-RPA)), and

Two (2) R44 helicopters: one (1) allocated to Bulembu Air Wing (registration number ZS-RKN) and one (1) allocated to Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth Air Wing) (registration number ZS-RLD)).

- (2) how many helicopters are currently fully operational and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

One (1) H125 helicopter is currently fully operational in the province at Bulembu Air Wing (ZS-RDH).

- (3) (a) how many helicopters are currently being serviced and (b) what is the breakdown of how long these helicopters have been serviced and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

(a) three (3) helicopters from the province are currently being serviced, namely:

One (1) H125 helicopter, ZS-RPA and two (2) R44 helicopters (ZS-RKN and ZS-RLD)

(b) The breakdown of how long these helicopters have been serviced:

Helicopter Type	Registration number	Air Wing Unit	How long being serviced/reason for unserviceability/expected date of return to service
H125	ZS-RPA	Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha)	Being serviced from 2020-11-11. The helicopter experienced a hard landing and suffered serious structural damage. Before any repairs could be done an accident investigation had to be conducted. The investigation could not be conducted due to the COVID-19 restrictions on

			international travel, aircraft components could therefore not be sent for analysis in Germany. The investigation was only finalised in 2024. Expected date of return to service is 2025-11-20
R44	ZS-RKN	Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha)	Helicopter grounded since 2024-07-12 after the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), Robinson, issued a Safety Bulletin indicating that all R44 helicopters worldwide are required to have the tail rotor blades replaced. Expected date of return to service is 2025-08-30
R44	ZS-RLD	Bulembu	Helicopter grounded since 2019-07-11 as it was due for a 12 year mandatory Periodic Inspection, during which time there was no contract in place and the cost of repair required a deviation from Treasury Regulations. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic the repair was delayed further due to unavailability of parts. The Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), Robinson, then issued a Safety Bulletin indicating that all R44 helicopters worldwide are required to have replace the tail rotor blades replaced. Expected date of return to service is 2025-08-30
-			

- (4) what is the reason for any shortfall in the number of helicopters that should be allocated to the province and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

There is no shortfall in the number of helicopters in the province.

- (5) how many pilots (a) should there be and (b) are currently available to fly the helicopters allocated to the South African Police Service (SAPS) and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

(a) Eight (8) pilots, (four (4) at Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth Air Wing) and four (4) at Bulembu Air Wing).

(b) There are currently two (2) helicopter pilots available to fly the helicopters allocated to the province, one (1) pilot at Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth Air Wing) and one (1) pilot at Bulembu Air Wing.

The process is underway for the four (4) vacant posts to be filled and appointments will be made in due course.

- (6) how many fixed-wing aircrafts (a) should there be and (b) are there actually in the province and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

(a) one (1)

(b) There is currently no fixed wing aircraft in the province.

- (7) how many fixed-wing aircrafts are currently serviceable in the province and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

There is no fixed wing aircraft currently serviceable in the province.

- (8) (a) for how long have these fixed-wing aircrafts been out of service and (b) what is the breakdown thereof and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

(a) None

- (9) how many pilots (a) should they have and (b) do they currently have for fixed-wing aircraft and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

(a) Two (2) fixed wing pilots.

(b) There are currently no pilots for fixed wing aircraft in the province due to no fixed wing aircraft.

- (10) how many drones (a) should have and (b) have actually been allocated to the province and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:

(a) A total of 77 drones allocated.

(b) Five (5) drones have been allocated to the province, three (3) in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth Air Wing) and two (2) at Bulembu Air Wing. 16 Drones to be allocated to the Provincial Operational Command Centre (POCC) and eight (8) drones to be allocated in each of the seven (7) districts in the province

- (11) how many pilots (a) should there be and (b) are currently available to operate the drones allocated to the (SAPS) and can he kindly provide the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:
 (a) A total of 84 drone pilots allocated to the province.
 (b) There are 6 drone pilots currently available to operate the drones allocated to the province: two (2) drone pilots in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth Air Wing) and four (4) at Bulembu Air Wing.
 16 Drone pilots are to be allocated to the provincial POCC and 12 drone pilots to be allocated to each of the seven (7) districts in the province.

- (12) (a) how often are air support services deployed and (b) for what type of operations and can he kindly provide all the relevant details in this regard;

Reply:
 (a) Air support services are deployed as per request from various units within the province or during self-initiated operations by the Air Wing units in the form of crime prevention, depending on serviceability. The deployments of air support services provided in the province during the financial year 2024/2025 (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 including the total number of 226.8 hours flown are as follows:

Air Support Service	Total hours flown
Crime prevention	17.3
Crime call out (attending to complaints from SAPS 10111 Call Centres)	10.8
Stock theft	32.8
Operational support (assistance to other specialised units such as Special Task Force, National Intervention Unit, Tactical Response Teams, Counter Assault Teams and Public Order Policing)	95.8
Search and rescue	62.2
Aerial photos	7.5
Shows	0.4
Total	226.8 hrs

(b) The following are types of operations for which air support services may be deployed:

Crime prevention; Crime call outs; Vehicle theft; Stock theft; Game theft; Destroying of Dagga plantations; Firearm related; Crime investigation;

Unrest and crowd control; Assisting Specialised Units (Special Task Force, National Intervention Unit, Tactical Response Teams, Counter Assault Team and Public Order Policing); Operational support; Search and rescue; Aerial photos; Communication flights; Shows; Training, Maintenance and Border-line control.

- (13) whether his Department has put any plans in place towards expanding air support services; if not, why; if so, can he kindly provide all the relevant details in this regard?

Reply:

Yes, the Department is in the process of establishing a new Air Wing Unit at Mthatha Airport which will include both helicopter and fixed wing operations. The Department is also in the process of allocating a new helicopter to the province which is expected to be delivered in September 2025.