

SA terror suspects expected to be arrested soon

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A solid case is being built against South Africans suspected of having links with terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab terrorist groups, Minister of State Security Siyabonga Cwele said yesterday.



(Image: GCIS)

Minister Cwele told a media briefing ahead of his Budget Vote on Tuesday that he was "quite confident" that the suspects would be arrested and charged. "We are committed to fight terrorism, not only in South Africa, but anywhere it occurs."

Previously authorities had not found any information linking South Africans to organisations that were participating in terrorism activities. But "last year we picked some information that some brothers and sisters are linked to terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab".

Counter-terrorism agents had been working hard on this information, Minister Cwele said, adding "I'm quite confident of arrests".

He said South Africa had never really faced a real threat of global terrorism. "The situation has changed." However, authorities were working to neutralise this threat.

Although South Africa did not have a policy of rendition it was working with other nations facing terrorism threats because there "is no friendly terrorist anywhere in the world".

Minister Cwele added: "To us it's not only religious extremists. We're trying to link the underlying causes. Fortunately in South Africa we have a good working relationship with the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities."

Minister's Cwele's revelations came in the same week as news reports claiming Al-Qaeda terrorist were being trained in Karoo.

Bolster ranks of spies

On other matters, Minister Cwele said South Africa is to step up its recruitment of loyal, young people, from all communities, who have degrees from tertiary institutions, to bolster the ranks of spies.

With this goal in mind, a recruitment drive will be launched soon. This drive will include visits to all institutions of higher learning, the minister said.

He said four different intelligence agencies had been consolidated into the State Security Agency, which had a dearth of highly skilled people in the fields of information technology, analysis and engineering as well as generalists.

"We are a very small community. What we need is not huge numbers, but quality, people who are dedicated, committed and striving for excellence," Minister Cwele said.

He did not close the recruitment door on would-be spies who only had matric certificates. "Where there is potential we will also consider those who have matric."

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