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Chihuri Warns Of Revolt Over ZANU PF Militia Pay Row

By Staff Reporter

BULAWAYO — Zimbabwe Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri has warned that President Robert Mugabe's government faced revolt by disgruntled junior security officers following the awarding by Harare of hefty salaries to youths from a controversial national service training programme.

In a confidential memo dated 22 November, a copy of which was seen by news site ZimOnline at the weekend, Chihuri said morale in the security services had hit rock bottom as the salary discrepancies had caused serious divisions between the security forces and the youths.

The five-page memo entitled "Salary discrepancies need urgent attention" was addressed to Home Affairs Minister Kembo Mohadi and State Security Minister Didymus Mutasa.

"The salaries they earn (national service youths) are more than 20 times what trained junior members of the uniformed forces who pay tax are being given per month and this has not only killed the morale of our members, but also made them more rebellious against the government.

"It is also worrying to note that these youths . . . earn more than three times a Senior Assistant Commissioner of the ZRP (Zimbabwe Republic Police)," reads part of the memo.

The youths, accused by human rights groups and the main opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party of unleashing terror on government opponents, are said to be earning untaxed monthly salaries of Z\$600 000.

A junior officer in the army and police earns a basic monthly salary of Z\$27 000, way below the food basket of over Z\$104 000.

President Robert Mugabe's government has since last November been deploying youths from the national service programme in cities and towns to monitor and enforce price controls on selected goods.

There have been reports that the youths had unleashed a reign of terror around the country as they beat up and harassed businessmen and informal traders whom they accused of inflating prices in a bid to sabotage the government.

In the hard-hitting memo which shows that all was not well in the security services, Chihuri warned that if the government failed to address the matter urgently, it could see the junior officers engage "in active rebellion against the government" which they already blame for triggering the economic crisis.

Zimbabwe is in its seventh year of a bitter economic recession that has spawned shortages of almost every basic commodity and the world's highest inflation rate of over 1,000 percent.

The police chief said Mohadi and Mutasa should warn Mugabe of the possibility of a "violent revolt" by junior officers who "feel abandoned."

"Senior officers have benefited and continue to benefit . . . in various ways, but the juniors, who make up the bulk of the security forces and who are active on the ground are considering themselves as abandoned beings.

"They will not take time to revolt as they already suspect that the government does not trust them as much as it does the youths. It is your duty as ministers responsible for security to convince the President on the urgency of this matter.

"I hope you will play your part," says the memorandum.

Some junior members of the security forces confirmed that the salary discrepancies had caused a serious rift between security forces and the youths.

"We work harder than them (youths) but at the end of the day they earn more money than us. I tell you most junior members will be leaving in their droves next year because of this," said a junior member of the army.

Contacted for comment yesterday, Mohadi confirmed receiving the memorandum but refused to divulge any information saying it was a "Top secret" document not meant for the Press.

"I cannot discuss the contents of such a document with the Press because it is a national security issue. All I can tell you is that the government knows that the security forces need a huge salary hike and they will get it in January," he said.

Mutasa could not be reached for comment on the matter last night.

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