

# Army called out to stem tide of illegal immigrants

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**MORE** than 130 000 illegal immigrants have been given marching orders — and the army has been called out to halt a flood of tens of thousands of others.

The deluge of illegal aliens has become one of the country's biggest headaches.

Special steps will also be taken to stem the flow of illegals from the Far East, Eastern Europe and South America. An increasing number are entering the country on visitors' visas. They then try to stay permanently.

There are moves to have work permits for aliens issued only at foreign missions of South Africa. Thousands of inquiries about immigration to South Africa are received each week.

Latest figures from the Department of Home Affairs show 132 779 illegal aliens were sent home in 18 months to the end of June — 80 926 of them from Mozambique.

They also came from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland, Lesotho, Nigeria, Zaire, Senegal and Ghana.

Officials maintain this is only the tip of the iceberg. Many more have entered and blended in with local communities, especially in rural areas of the Eastern and Northern Transvaal.

According to Minister of Home Affairs Mangosuthu Buthelezi, there could be up to two-million illegal aliens in the country, taking much-needed jobs from South Africans.

Stronger steps may have to be taken against employers of such labour.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad has named illegal immigration as one of the country's biggest problems. He said it would be to the country's detriment not to take note.

The marginalisation of Africa by the outside world and low economic growth in other parts of the continent made South Africa, after its political transformation and with relatively good infrastructure, an attractive country for immigrants.

South Africa would have to co-operate in developing other Southern African countries. Without growth in neighbouring regions it would not be able to avoid the problem of illegal immigrants.

Announcing the deployment of troops to curb the influx, SA National Defence Force chief Georg Meiring said Defence Minister Joe Modise had ordered troops to be used indefinitely.

"The national defence force will be used along all of South Africa's international borders including the coastline, especially with a view to curbing the flow of illegals," General Meiring said.

Another defence force spokesman said the flow of aliens had become "a situation of some concern" and the force faced "a huge task."

The defence force and police had for some time patrolled the borders — especially the border with Mozambique.

The army has foot patrols as well as soldiers on bicycles in the Kruger Park.