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Dog-bite man sues police over attack

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A DURBAN man is suing the police for more than R600 000 after being badly bitten two years ago by three police dogs which were allegedly set on him by members of the Durban dog unit.

Mr Bongani Bekebu told the Durban high court yesterday he had been unlawfully arrested by members of the Durban dog unit on June 17, 1998. He said he was not given reasons for his arrest.

He was then charged for being in possession of suspected stolen property and being in possession of dagga. The charges were later withdrawn.

He said the policemen had let the dogs loose on him at an open sports ground in Isipingo.

"One dog latched on to my leg and was holding on. The others were biting me. This lasted for



SCARRED: Bongani Bekebu shows the dog-bite wounds to his leg and arm.

PICTURE: ROBERT D'AVICE

about 30 minutes," he said. Mr Bekebu, who is claiming more than R600 000 damages from the minister of safety and security, said he spent about three months in hospital because of his injuries.

"I don't know why the government still employs police officers

who torture people," he said.

Mr Bekebu's attorney, Mr Feisal Abrahams, told the court he had reported the matter to the head of the Independent Complaints Directorate, Mr Stix Madlala, but had received no information about how the investigation against the policemen was proceeding.

Sgt Mark David Bristow, one of the policemen who allegedly let the dogs loose on Mr Bekebu, emphatically denied this had happened for no reason. Sgt Bristow told the court he and his dog, Kaizer, had won the best dog and handler competition twice.

He had stopped the car Mr Bekebu was driving in Umlazi as he suspected it was stolen.

"When I told him to alight with his hands up, he came out and fled into the nearby bushes.

"I realised I would not catch him on foot as it was dark and the bush-

es were dense, so I took Kaizer out of the vehicle and warned Bekebu in English and Zulu that if he did not come out I would release my dog into the bush."

Sgt Bristow said there was no reply and he released his dog and commanded him to apprehend Mr Bekebu. "A short while later, I heard screams and my dog barking. I ran in the direction of the screams."

Sgt Bristow said he later realised that Mr Bekebu's wounds were serious and summoned an ambulance to take him under police guard to hospital.

He denied that three dogs had attacked Mr Bekebu, saying only his dog had attacked him.

Responding to Mr Bekebu's allegations that he had been attacked for 30 minutes, Sgt Bristow said: "If the dog had attacked him for 30 minutes, Bekebu would not be sitting here today."

VIDEO BOUGHT FOR R50 000 SABC row erupts over dog footage

CHIMAIMBA BANDA
Johannesburg

THE taxpayer coughed up R50 000 for the nation to watch the television footage of police officers setting their dogs on suspected illegal immigrants. The Mercury has learnt.

A source within the SABC said the footage had been bought for R50 000 from a police officer whose identity was not known.

The source said the videotape was discovered two weeks ago and was bought from the officer. SABC executive editor Shuki Zikalala declined to divulge details.

Meanwhile, a row has erupted within the SABC over the video as it emerged yesterday that the Special Assignment team which broadcast the footage had not produced the material.

Instead, the corporation's news team had been responsible for producing the video which was then screened on Special Assignment. But the team was not credited with the exclusive footage that triggered

national outrage. The Special Assignment team has been heaped with praise for the scoop.

Sources said SABC acting CEO Cecilia Khuzwayo and SABC board member Thami Mazwai congratulated the team in pamphlets posted on walls.

The news staff have since demanded an apology from the management and the Special Assignment team for failing to acknowledge their work.

News staffers have accused the team of "plagiarism" and "hijacking" the video. "The SA team went on radio stations saying they could not divulge their sources."

The source said: "It's tantamount to plagiarism. Special Assignment hijacked the whole set-up."

The news team has drafted a petition to Ms Khuzwayo demanding an explanation and that the "record" be set straight. It says: "We are unhappy that attempts were made to downplay the news story when it broke... While news made mention of the Special Assignment broadcast, no credit whatsoever was given to news."

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Provinces could go, says Sutcliffe

13/10/2000
By SANDILE NGIDI

IF South Africa was to get rid of its nine provinces, the African skies would not fall.

Demarcation Board Chairman Dr Mike Sutcliffe yesterday told the Institute for Housing of South Africa conference in Durban it was possible for provinces - and provincial legislatures - to be scrapped.

This would markedly enhance the powers of local government and make their direct relationship with national Government more meaningful.

The white paper on local government noted that "municipalities have faced increasing demands and expectations, often without an increase in the resources to deal with these demands".

Sutcliffe said after the new local governments were elected next month, provincial governments would become mere "post boxes".

In the past six years, delivery of services at community level had suffered because of the bureaucratic nature and size of provincial governments.

The introduction of powerful and civil-based ward committees similar to street committees, was poised to enable "people on the ground to

influence decisions concerning their development".

The new system would give local government more powers, paving the way for a departure from the current three-tier governance system comprising national, provincial and local governments.

Functions such as housing development and the proclamation of townships would fall within the local government jurisdiction.

Ultimately the aim was "to move away from the present system of representative democracy to participatory democracy".

He added that apartheid legacy still permeated local government structures, which had been plagued by poor delivery of services.

"Integrated development planning will become the defining feature for development programmes in the new municipalities."

He said although the Government had addressed most grievances raised by traditional leaders regarding their role in municipal politics, putting this matter to rest would take another six years.

In his view, introducing the new local government bodies would not cost taxpayers much.

"The big costs would be to establish municipalities in poor places - like Mkuze for instance."