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SAfrica-AIDS-military: 17 percent of South African soldiers HIV-positive: minister

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CAPE TOWN, Sept 18 (AFP) - Some 17 percent of South African soldiers are HIV-positive, Defence Minister Mosiua Lekota said Monday. Lekota said this figure came from blood samples taken from South African soldiers taking part in joint African military exercises in 1999.

The minister said soldiers tested came from three of South Africa's nine provinces, but believed that if people in the military from all provinces were tested the percentage would have been lower.

According to the South African government, 4.2 million South Africans are HIV-positive or have AIDS -- one in 10 of the population, or one in five adults.