



**MINISTRY
STATE SECURITY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO.: 1666.

Dr P J Groenewald (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of State Security:

- (1) What are the criteria for top secret security clearance that is required for a senior appointment in the State Security Agency;
- (2) whether Mr Robert McBride attained security clearance and complied with the specified criteria; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (3) whether she will make a statement on the matter?

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REPLY

- (1) The criteria for Top Secret security clearance are multiple and include the successful completion of the vetting process that includes
 - (1.1) Verification of the subject's/applicant's records as reflected in databases:
 - criminal records;
 - financial records;
 - personal information; or
 - any other information that is relevant to determine the security clearance of a person.

(1.2) The positive outcome following a vetting fieldwork investigation. For a Top-Secret Security Clearance, the process entails the following:

- Full record checks on databases (as mentioned above);
- A subject/applicant interview;
- Two (2) interviews with references;
- One (1) work enquiry; and
- A polygraph examination and evaluation.

(1.2.1) Regarding the later point, all resultant reports (subject/applicant and combined References' Interview Report; Investigation Memorandum, and Investigation Diary and Polygraph report.) are then sent to the Evaluation division.

(1.2.2) In assessing the reports, the Evaluator will consider the following in his/her risk summary as per the Legislation:

- Integrity;
- Loyalty to the State and the relevant institution; and
- Non-susceptibility to extortion and blackmail;
- Non-amenability to bribes and non-susceptibility to being compromised due to his or her behaviour or vulnerabilities.

These qualities are critical criteria for employment in a position requiring Top Secret security clearance.

(1.3) Based on the Evaluator's recommendations – emergent from records, interviews and investigations – on whether to issue, degrade, withdraw or refuse to grant a security clearance, the State Security Agency's (SSA's) Director-General signs off on the vetting result.

(2) Regarding Mr Mc Bride's security clearance:

- (2.1) On 5 October 2018, the request for the vetting of Mr Mc Bride to the level of a Top Secret level was received from the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID).
- (2.2) His employment at the IPID was later terminated.
- (2.3) On 23 April 2020, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) requested the SSA to transfer his Top Secret clearance to them.
- (2.4) On 29 June 2020, the SSA Acting Director-General enquired about the progress on the vetting of the said subject.
- (2.5) On 30 June 2020, the SSA Human Resource Consultant enquired about the vetting of the said subject.
- (2.6) On 1 July 2020, the subject was contacted to avail himself for a personal interview and it followed all the steps outlined above.
- (2.7) As per the approved Standard Operating Procedure (VA01/2010) on Vetting Fieldwork Investigation, a Polygraph test for a Top-Secret Clearance is required. However, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, a Polygraph examination could not be conducted, the specific reason being that the procedure would require the Polygraph Examiner to be in close proximity of the subject in a closed area for an extended period; thus exposing them (polygraph examiner/subject) to a possible transmission of the virus.
- (2.8) Nonetheless, given that all the other tests resulted in a positive outcome, the security clearance was issued on condition that as soon as the COVID-19 infection rate flattens, the Polygraph examination will be conducted.

(2.9) Accordingly, a Top-Secret security clearance procedure was conducted on Mr Mc Bride and a Top-Secret security clearance was issued on the basis of the information currently available to the SSA.

(2.10) A Top-Secret Clearance was issued on 14 July 2020.

(3) Not at this stage.