

UNREVISED HANSARD

MINI PLENARY - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (VIRTUAL)

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*PROCEEDINGS OF HYBRID MINIPLenary NATIONAL ASSEMBLY*

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Members of the mini-plenary session met on the virtual platform 14:00.

Acting Chairperson Mr Q R Dyantyi took the Chair and requested members to observe a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

Announcement

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): Hon members, before we proceed, I would like to remind you that the virtual mini-plenary is deemed to be in the precinct of Parliament and constitute the meeting of the National Assembly for debating purposes only. In addition to the Rules of the virtual sitting the Rules of the National Assembly including the Rules of debate apply. Members enjoy the same powers and privileges that apply in a sitting of the National Assembly.

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Members should equally note that anything said in the virtual platform is deemed to have been said in the House and may be ruled upon. All members who have locked in shall be considered to be present and are requested to mute their microphones and only unmute when recognised to speak. This is because the microphones are very sensitive and will pick up noise which might disturb the attention of other members. When recognised to speak, please, unmute your microphone and connect your video.

Members may make use of the icons on the bar at the bottom of their screens which has the option that allows a member to put up his or her hand to raise points of order. The Secretariat will assist in alerting the Chairperson to members requesting to speak. When using the virtual system members are asked to refrain or desist from unnecessary points of order or interjections.

Lastly, I wish to remind you that we are meeting in a mini-plenary session and therefore any decisions will be taken in a full plenary session of the Assembly. The only item on the Order Paper is the subject for discussion in the name of hon T L Mmutle on: The need for a revised and strengthening regulatory environment to protect the territorial integrity of

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military bases and associated institutions. I now recognise the hon T L Mmutle from the virtual platform.

**THE NEED FOR A REVISED AND STRENGTHENED REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT  
TO PROTECT THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF MILITARY BASES AND  
ASSOCIATED INSTITUTIONS**

(Subject for Discussion)

Mr T N MMUTLE: Thank you very much hon Chairperson and hon members. As you correctly indicated, this debate is informed by the need to revise and strengthen the regulatory environment to protect the territorial integrity of the military bases and associated institution of the SA National Defence Force. It is therefore a critical debate that will highlight the challenges faced by the SA National Defence Force, particularly by several military bases across the country and also to present proposal on what we believe are the necessary step to be undertaken to arrest this situation.

The two committees of Parliament; the Portfolio Committee of Defence as well as the Joint Standing Committee of Defence have conducted several visits in the past three years. During those visits the committees often observed safety and security

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lapses in those military bases that were visited. The last visit that was conducted was on 22 April 2022 by the portfolio committee to the Special Forces School situated in Walmansdal, north of Tshwane. During that particular visit, the committee noted how the base was negatively affected by the security-related issues largely due to the encroachment of informal settlement in that area.

The committee then adopted the Report which includes the observation as I will outline that. The base is affected by the encroachment of informal settlement near or close to several military bases housed in Walmansdal, the fence around the base is in poor condition, there is no water supply to the military base since the water pipes have been vandalised, and the adjacent for vehicles reserved parking military-based electricity cable were stolen resulting in electricity and supply to all military units being affected.

Subsequently, recommendations were made during several recent oversight visits. The committee has noted the impact of human settlement on military areas notably the land invasion of area adjacent to the base and the defence entities. While the committee is cognisant of the sensitivities around human settlement requirements in South Africa, we are concerned

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about the security of military bases and the safety of the surrounding communities. We therefore recommend that the Department of Defence and other relevant departments work together to find an everlasting solution to land invasion around military bases.

We also noted that the observation that several South African National Defence Force areas are subject to land claim process. The committee is also aware that by 2021, the Department of Defence, DoD, was still waiting for the regional land claim commissioner to submit the official request for the release of state land to Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, DPWI. The Department of Defence and Military Veterans should in subsequent annual reports provide a more detailed breakdown of this specific bases and military areas under land claim and the progress on those specific claims.

The main impact of land claim against land that is used by the SA National Defence Force is that it stalls any development planning by the Department of Defence for the development and future use of such land. In many cases military bases are in urgent need of upgrade. However, the upgrade itself cannot happen as the outcome of the land claim process has not been forthcoming. This also impacts the broader ability of the

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Department of Defence to plan how it will use all its facilities countrywide to achieve maximum cost efficiency.

Of specific concern is that the base security measures such as fences and electric monitoring equipments are not being updated when military facilities are under land claim. This impact negatively on the safety and security of military facilities. The main impact of land invasion releases the safety and security concern as military or at military facilities. In many cases this result in three key challenges. For example, that which are observed by the committee: One, electric cable theft for vehicle reserve north of Tshwane; two, vandalism of the main water supply to military units in the Walmansdal area; three, land invasion of area adjacent to Waterkloof Air Force Base on the pipelines and lastly, the rail tracks that leads into the base.

The impact of land invasion and related safety concern at military bases include the following: Impact on troops moral, one of the matters that Parliament committees is tasked with is to review the morale of the SA National Defence Force and they report back to the House of Parliament. It has become evident that troop morale is negatively affected by the impact of land invasion in some areas. Firstly, the safety of troops

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staying at military facilities are under threat if security of the facilities cannot be fully secured; secondly, the working conditions are negatively affected when there is, for example, no water and electricity at the military base.

On the impact of military training, the SA National Defence Force, Special Forces brigade house the Elite Force of the country's military. The lack of water and electricity at one of their main training facility has a direct bearing on their quality of training that they can receive. To produce optimal soldiers, optimal training base management and living conditions are required. The impact on safeguarding of military equipment and hardware, the cable theft that has left the Special Forces School without electricity for more than two years, has also resulted in four vehicle Reserve pipe located in the same area being without electricity.

This unit houses a large number of SA National Defence Force, Reserve military vehicle that can be used in case of emergency or military need. Those vehicles need to be stored in the correct climate and without electricity supply the system put in place to ensure that vehicles are appropriately stored are not functioning. This impacts the self-life of this vehicle and the operational readiness of the SA National Defence

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Force. Lastly, hon Chair, it must also be noted that land invasions pose danger to those individual forming part of those in invasions. Therefore, we are concerned about the safety of our communities and municipalities must come on board as it is not the role of the SA National Defence Force neither it is the role of the Department of Defence.

The use and storage of weapons and ammunition at military bases poses a danger to surrounding communities, especially, where such weapons are used in training or stored for a long period of time. It is, for example, very dangerous to have community living next to the borders or the fence of the military bases where they store explosive explosives in their storage facilities. I thank you, hon Chair.

Mr S J F MARAIS: Chair the DoD, Department of Defence and the Defence Force are in a dire situation with the ever decreasing budget and the exacerbated decline of our defence capabilities to defend our territorial integrity and protect our citizens. The deterioration is notable in a state of our assets and equipment including our military bases and institutions like the 3 Military Hospital.

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Our defence force is a broken entity and its bases and institution are no different. It is unlikely that our defence force will be in a position to effectively repel any military threat considering its vulnerabilities and rapid deterioration of our defence readiness.

Our military bases and institutions are under serious threat to not be able to support our soldiers on the frontlines and provide important auxiliary services like treatment of the wounded and secure continuous replenishment of armoured vehicles, spare parts, ammunitions etc.

Our military bases are poorly maintained with dilapidated buildings, infrastructure, fences and terrain the most evident, over grim grass and wheat everywhere, inhabitable building and broken fences have become the norm. The consistent stalemate and the blame shifting between the Department of Defence and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, DPWI, on who is responsible for the dilapidation is unacceptable.

The DPWI does not know the importance of our strategic military infrastructure and to prioritise them and must these

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strategic functions be evolved to the department of the defence work formation.

Concerning is the non-renewable of the critical contracts for the maintenance and repair of the environmental controlled warehouses of the army, which systems are to keep armoured vehicles and critical spare parts rust and corrosion free for immediate deployment at all times. This dilapidation takes away our ability of rapid deployment to protect our integrity.

Our neighbour bases are below standards to maintain the minimum defence capability. None of our frigates, sub-marines and neighbour helicopters are serviceable. Optimum capacity utilisation and adequate funding of our 3 Military Hospitals could have been strategic assets. They are expensive to maintain and resource, they are totally underutilised and have become unaffordable. One Military Hospital alone requires R2 billion to have it running again. Funds we must prioritise to the dilapidated equipment.

Our air force facility infrastructure and equipment are equally in a state of disarray. Air Force Base Waterkloof is facing dolomite instability which can render this base operationally unsafe.

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Others like Air Force Base Makhado are facing threats like effects to its sustainable strategic value. This is embarrassing and exposes us to the exploitation by our adversaries. No one is seemingly held accountable for the decay despite assurances by the Minister and the secretary of Defence.

Interventions are required to support the mandate of the Defence Force and the good start will be to redesign or restructure a smaller but more efficient Defence Force, reprioritise some strategies and expenditure to achieve its objectives, underutilised properties and land must be sold with revenue to be ring-fenced for the maintenance and acquisition of strategic equipment and assets, transfer the three hospitals to the provincial departments of health with continuous support to service members, retirees and veterans at provincial health facility, implement consequence management consistently and without fear or favour.

The Defence Force needs this turnaround now because tomorrow might be too late to solvate what is left of our Defence Force. The consequences of facing the threats of invasion similar to that as in Ukraine with our current defence

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capabilities are just too vast to contemplate. I thank you Chair.

Ms H O MHKALIPHI: Chair, it is Mkhaliphi. I am debating on behalf of hon Mafanya.

Chairperson, if this Parliament was to be brutally honest with itself, the we would come to no other conclusion than the naked fact that those who lead the military are clueless, incompetent and that their conduct is almost treasonous.

The state of neglect of key fundamentals in military operations, the lack of vision on where the military ought to be now and in the future and the underlying problems of corruption makes SANDF, SA National Defence Force, and its management questionable.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): Pause hon Mkhaliphi. Hon Mike Masutha, I am not going to call you again for disturbing members. Please proceed hon Mkhaliphi.

Ms H O MHKALIPHI: The blame has to lie with both the operational and political leadership of the military. This is

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an institution that cannot even maintain its own aircraft, vehicles and other facilities of importance.

Last year, the Defence Force Service Commission highlighted a number of challenges relating to the security of our military bases. They indicated amongst other things that security fences within military bases and units and other borders are falling apart. Budget constraints hamper the upgrading, maintenance and the repair of security systems. Unauthorised occupation and the subletting of military accommodation for married and single quarters are compromising military security.

Security systems cannot be repaired or maintained due to expired contracts and this is a sign of incompetence both on the military leadership and treasurer's side which has confused and frustrated the renewal contracts for key services to SANDF.

Chairperson, an unauthorised occupation and subletting of the military accommodation comprises military bases. This is a major security breach allowed by those running our military.

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The commission also reported the increasing levels of crime and theft being reported at some units and the fact that suggestions, complaints and concerns raised in a debrief session remain unattended to and unresolved.

There is no amount of budget constraints that should expose our country to the kind of security risk that our military bases are currently exposed to. There is no military base that should be robbed by criminals. The fact that criminals do not think twice before invading and robbing military bases says a lot that needs to be said about the capacity of the Defence Force to defend the country against external invasion.

The ANC has destroyed everything it has touched for almost three decades. There is a lack of coordination especially on the intelligence between the SANDF, the state security agency, the Department of Home Affairs and SAPS.

The July unrest in both Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng are a typical example of the response and turnaround times it took for the army to bring about stability to the situation.

There's a need for security personnel to be adequately armed with weapons, ammunition, torches, bullet proof gear and

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electronic and night vision equipment to be standardised and made available to operation corona military bases.

Regarding the military vehicles, the Defence Force Service Commission found that there is a lack of available and serviceable duty busses and military vehicles across all units and bases and protracted procurement processes and systems cause a delay in the maintenance and repairs of military vehicles.

Our troops are not adequately armed to protect military bases and facilities. The danger thereof is the theft of assault rifles and military hardware parts that criminals steal for sales and scrap metals.

The Special Forces School has been without water and electricity for more than 15 months following cable theft in the area.

The inability of intergovernmental departments to engage each other on matters of security concerns of the Department of Defence present the country with serious security threats especially where national key points are compromised.

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The SANDF has been making use of the retail infantry fighting vehicles since 1976. These are no longer equipped for the challenges the military faces today.

Our contention thereof is that there is a need to be a complete overhaul of the leadership of the SANDF both operationally and politically. The current leadership has left the country exposed to all manners of threat. Thank you Chair.

Mr N SINGH: Thank you very much. Hon Chairperson, ensuring the safety of our people and the country, and protecting them from approaching threats, rests in the hands of our military.

However, in recent years, we have seen a gradual decline of the environment that our military operates in. This issue should be of great concern to our people, as it could compromise the territorial integrity of the state.

We have heard the cries of the national defence force regarding the negative impact that budget cuts, as well as the collapse of their infrastructure, has had on their morale.

This compromises the sovereign capabilities of the country and results in a weakened national defence force, which is not fully capacitated to counter military aggression. There is a huge need to strengthen the capabilities of military

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operations from the base level-up, and that can only be done through increased support and resources to the military.

Their infrastructure needs to be improved and capacity strengthened. I trust that, sometime as we consider the budget, we will exercise the option that Parliament has, to make suggestions to review of the budgeted amounts in terms of the Act that authorises to do so. The military is our last line of defence. For it to be so sorely lacking, opens the country to huge risk on a daily basis. Chairperson, we cannot continue to jeopardise the lives of South Africans, and here I want to forge to say, not only in terms of lives being lost, we need also to protect the economy.

We have heard the hon state President talking about the woes that are taking place at Eskom. We are aware of load shedding and we have heard that there are possible issues of sabotage. Why can't we use members of the defence force to guard some of the power stations to prevent the kind of sabotage that is taking place? We need to also protect the economy, not only protecting lives, or lives are important and cannot be returned? The media has exposed us to just how much of a security risk the country faces and reflects the need for regulation to be initiated.

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Porous borders, poor infrastructure and weakened morale chips away at the defence force's mandate, which is to safeguard the country and our territorial integrity, as I have said, also to protect the economy of the country. Our military is suffering, and this is incredibly dangerous. The IFP urges that the government should seize control and strengthen the capability and the environment that our military operates in, be it their bases, or through having much stricter regulations. The military requires improved technology, equipment and human capital.

We have seen how lawlessness and lack of social order has thrown our entire country upside down, and a repeat of that without a strong military system, would jeopardise everything we have worked for. The country needs security and stability. A nonfunctional or below-par functional military will not assist such efforts. Interventions must be actioned now. Hon Chairperson, we know that there are defence ships that are lying in Hout Bay, in your area where you are coming from, Simon's Town that would cost hundreds of millions. Their batteries are not even charged, and those striker ships are not functional.

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We need to look into the simple things, hon Chairperson, and I suppose that you being there, you can go and have inspection in local. But all in all, we have the manpower, we need the tools, and we need to ensure that we create a conducive environment within which the military can operate, so we can sleep well at night, and we know that they will be there whenever they are required. Thank you very much, Chairperson.

Dr P J GROENEWALD: Thank you, hon Chair. Hon Chair, the focus of this debate is the protection of the territorial integrity of our military basis. Now, I've heard what the hon member from the ANC said, and he referred to the invasion of military land. I want to start to say that, this problem of illegal invasion of land is actually an echo of many communities all around South Africa, and private property owners, with the problem of illegal invasion of the land.

Now, I agree, it is a threat to the security of the SA National Defence Force, SANDF, and I also agree that, it poses a danger for the inhabitants to illegally invade such land.

Yes, there are many hectares of land for the SA National Defence Force, where they practice, where they use medium and heavy calibre ammunition, some of them are not better known,

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they are lying in the field. But, these illegal invaders just continue. The question is, how do we solve them?

Hon Chair, the Commander in Chief of the SA National Defence Force, is the hon President. Now, the question is, what does the President do to prevent this illegal invasion, specifically, when it comes to military, but not only military, but all over the country? Let me then fill and tell you, what the President said in March 2018 when he visited Olievenhoutbosch in Tshwane over a weekend, he said, and he was quoted as having said, President Ramaphosa says that, "no one has the right to invade any land, this is a clear sign of disorder and the violation of the law."

He has called on law enforcement agencies to ensue law and order. Ramaphosa says, those who are trying to occupy the land without permission, will face the full might of the law. Again he is quoted, and I quote, "all those who want to invade land, they will get to know that we are not going to allow that, we will respond to that by saying, you can't." Now, hon Chair, that is what the Commander in Chief of the SANDF says and also the President of the country. The private property owners, and now the SANDF, is under threat. This problem can only be solved if there is a political will to act.

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*Afrikaans:*

Die groot probleem is dat die wet nie toegepas word nie. Ek wil vandag sê, hierdie onwettige grondbesetting moet vierkantig op die skouers van die agb President geplaas word, nie net as die hoof van die land nie, maar ook in terme van die President, waar nie net militêre grond onwettig beset word en 'n bedreiging skep nie, maar ook in terme van private grond en die regte van private grondeienaars wat geskend word.

Ons probleem is strafloosheid. President, doen wat u gesê het, dat u sal optree en dat die onwettige besetters met die volle mag van die reg te doen sal kry. Dankie.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): I now recognise hon Xasa, who disappeared when called upon.

Mr F D XASA: I am sorry, Chair, I disappeared to the other session. Again, I'm sorry.

*IsiXhosa:*

Mandibulise kuwe Sihlalo, ndibulise kumaLungu ePalamente, emva koko, ndifuna ukuba ndicacise lo mcimbi wokuphazanyiswa kwamaziko omkhosi wokhuselo. Thina singumbutho we-ANC sikhokelwa lela xwebhu lwesiCwangciso soPhohliso seSizwe,

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iNDP. Iphupha lethu, okokuqala, lelokuba urhulumente kumanqanaba mabini - mathathu, makangenelele egameni labantu abangenanto xa kuthethwa ngophuhliso. Okwesibini, makangenelele ngeenjongo zokuba ilizwe lethu liphuhle kwaye libheke phambili kungajongwanga zimfuno zabantu abathile.

Ngenxa yaloo nto ke Sihlalo, siphakamisa ukuba umhlaba osendele kufuphi neenkampu zomkhosi wokhuselo mawuhlonitshwe luluntu lonke. Ukuba kukho imbambano ngomhlaba othile, mayilungiswe loo mbambano ngokukhawuleza ngabantu bonke abachaphazelekayo. Bonke abantu abanoxanduva lokuzisa iinkonzo zokuqala kumaziko omkhosi wokhuselo mabenze njalo. Xa ndigqibezela ndingathi umkhosi wokhuselo yenye yezinto esime ngazo apha elizweni. Siyeva ukuba kudala kumana kuhanjelwa kula maziko kubuywe kuxoxwe. Amasebe achaphazelekayo ngokuthe ngqo ngala athetha ngokwabiwa komhlaba, afana neSebe lezokuHlaliswa koLuntu ...

*English:*

... and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs ...

*IsiXhosa:*

... ingakumbi eli lezeMali. Sithi mawuqwalaselwe lo mcimbi womkhosi wokhuselo kwaye uhlonitshwe luluntu. Enkosi.

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Mr W M THRING: Hon Chair, as we consider this debate the ACDP is keenly aware that section 200(2) of the Constitution provides that the primary objective of the Defence Force is to defend and protect the Republic, its territorial integrity and its people in accordance with the Constitution and the principles of International Law, regulate in the use of force. The ACDP is also aware that in order for the Department of Defence and Military Veterans to execute its constitutional mandate uses land, one of its major resources in the preparation of its core function. This land is needed for effective force development and preparation that includes field exercises, weapons testing and open air military operations.

Now, the Department of Defence and Military Veterans controls one of the biggest state land portfolios in the country. This is approximately 400 000 hectares and some of the land that was used by the military is now currently occupied by the people who were forcibly removed from their land at the height of apartheid years. This has inevitably led to land claims in respect of those portions of land and therefore means that the department has to deal with the issue of restitution.

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When an illegal land invasion takes place, the person or persons is not merely a trespasser but becomes an unlawful occupier as contemplated in the Prevention of Illegal Eviction and the Unlawful Occupation of Land, Act 19 of 1998. The implication of this is that such a person may only be evicted in terms of the court order. Evictions other than in terms of the court order constitutes a criminal offence for which the owner could face a prison sentence if convicted. Now, the eviction of persons is regulated by law and the ACDP recognises that this can paralyse the Department of Defence and Military Veterans.

However, evidently this government has made it easy for illegal land invasions to take place but extremely difficult to remedy and also for key water, electricity and transport network of the Department of Defence and Military Veterans to become compromised. The Department of Defence and Military Veterans moving from an offensive military posture to a defensive one and with land being essential to carrying out its constitutional mandate, the ACDP has said that the regulatory environment must be strengthened to make it easy for the Department of Defence and Military Veterans to protect the territorial of its bases because failure to do so would result in a defence force incapable of carrying out its

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mandate to defend and protect the Republic and its territorial integrity and its people. Thank you, Chair.

Mr A M SHAIK EMAM: Hon Chairperson, I am trying to moonlight. Chairperson allow me to start by expressing our heartfelt condolences to the families of the five members of the SA Defence Force who were recently killed in a motor vehicle crash. According to the experts, the SA National Defence Force is in a critical state of decline and is largely incapable of carrying out its constitutional duties. Furthermore, it is said that the army could not afford its main operative systems and was unable to meet standing defence commitments, lack critical mobility and was too poorly equipped and funded to execute the widening spectrum of tasks to the desired level.

Since the new defence policy was finalised in March 2014, the situation remains the same. The ability of the SA National Defence Force to protect its military bases and facilities has come in to question amid a going civilian threat. The special forces school at Murrayhill north of Pretoria is reportedly under siege by shack dwellers who have been stealing electricity cables and illegally connecting water infrastructures. At the same time a military base in Makhada in the Eastern Cape has been without fencing due to theft in

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the area. Reports claim that residents have taken hand grenades and other items from the SA Infantry Battalion in Makhada. The defence force claims that it does not have enough money to replace the perimeter fencing or service its equipment including some of its aircrafts. I hope that Treasury takes note of this and I think my Chairperson on the Standing Committee in Appropriations in one of the platforms. It does not inspire much confidence in the defence force if it cannot protect its own perimeter fence.

Reports claim that soldiers guarding South African bases are not adequately armed and there is no control of who moves in and out of the facilities. Security fence in the military bases and units on the borders are falling apart by the budget constraints hampered the upgrading, maintenance and repair of security systems. The Joint Defence Committee recently had the damning findings for the Defence Force Service Commission the unauthorised occupation and subletting of military accommodation compromised military security. The Defence Force Service Commission recommended a complete review of all security and that will be looking at the gates, doors, locks, burglar proofing, electronic equipment and alarms.

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It has also been recommended that fences and security be urgently upgraded as a military imperative. A proper ... [Inaudible.] ... structure and a security system be prioritized and be implemented to safeguard each facility. Am I running out of time Chairperson? I see you are looking at me. The contracts for the maintenance of the security system are to be renewed as it looked to maintenance and repairs. Hon Chairperson, it is clear that the defence force has two problems. One, is the lack of capacity but very importantly it has a serious problem in terms of the limited funding and I think we need to seriously look at this as to how we are going to actually assist them to empower them. This is because the security of this country, not only internationally but locally depends on an effective SA National Defence Force. Thank you very much.

Ms S J GRAHAM: Hon Chairperson, the Government Immovable Asset Management Act, Giama, as it is commonly referred to, was enacted to provide a uniformed framework for the management of the immovable assets that are held or used by the national or provincial departments. The legislation with which the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure is the custodian requires that the immovable assets that are currently used must be kept operational to function in a manner that support

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efficient service delivery. Giama has clearly articulated guidelines and requirements for the management of the state-owned properties by user departments, such as the Department of Defence and Military Veterans.

This is the existing regulatory framework but then which the use management and maintenance of government's immovable properties exist. It is a sound environment for asset management even within the military context but as with most of what this department does the problem lies in the implementation. In the presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans on 04 May 2022, the Department of Defence and Military Veterans stated that as a result of the declining budgetary allocation, the Department of Defence and Military Veterans was insufficiently resourced to maintain and refurbished defence facilities. They further clarified that this deterioration of facilities and infrastructure could have catastrophic consequences including compromised defence readiness. The reality of this is that military bases such as Hoedspruit Airforce Base in Thaba Tshwane are falling apart due to a lack of maintenance. Not because the personnel do not care enough but because they do not have enough. Our once proud military personnel are now living in appalling conditions surrounded by collapsing

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infrastructure within a decaying environment. These are the people we have to rely upon to protect our country and we thank them like this.

So, an insufficient budget coupled with acknowledged skills shortage and the defence works formation have resulted in the Department Defence and Military Veterans being incapable of fully absorbing the responsibility of asset management. Unfortunately, this gap in capacity is also not being filled by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.

A recent forensic investigation into the 1 Military Hospital debacle revealed that although there were elements of blame that could be apportioned to the Department Defence and Military Veterans the complete failure of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to adapt the repairs and maintenance project, Remp, to the military environment resulted in amongst other findings irregular expenditure on the redesign phase alone over R156,668 974 million. One of the conclusions of the report in respect of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure was that it has abandoned its responsibility of oversight and control. A massive indictment on the department with the vision that reads:

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A trusted choice for innovative asset management and quality infrastructure delivery for sustained economic growth.

While the Department Defence and Military Veterans is responsible for day to day maintenance, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is expected to manage and implement planned maintenance and refurbishment projects. At the briefing of the Joint Standing Committee on Defence last week, it was revealed that of the 54 planned maintenance projects under the auspices of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure R1,12 billion has been spent on consultancy over the last 15 years. There is a projected need for a further R1,4 billion to be spent on consultancy for the same projects over the next four years.

Shockingly, after this expenditure of R2,5 billion over 20 years there is nothing to show for it. It is clear that neither the Department Defence and Military Veterans nor Department of Public Works and Infrastructure has the capacity, skills and possibly the appetite to appropriately implement gear in respect to military installations. The consequential erosion of this critical infrastructure has a direct bearing on our defence capabilities. It is clear that

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the regulatory environment is sufficiently robust. It is the ANC-led government that is not. I thank you.

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Chairperson, I do recognise that there is a lot of dilapidation, there is a lot of ill-maintenance, there are areas where there is dolomitic and so on and so forth. I want to agree that those problems are real.

I also want to say that before 1994, there was in-house ... [Inaudible.] ... within the defence force to maintain their own facilities. And 1994 came and this was transferred ... [Inaudible.] ...

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): Can you just pause, Minister ...

The MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: Thank you, Chair. They have stopped. Post 1994 this responsibility was transferred to the Department of Public Works. Since a few years ago, 2018, around there, the defence restarted rebuilding to rebuild this capacity of in-house maintenance, in the forms of the works. If you go and compare what they are doing there you will find that rehabilitation of buildings, -

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except in the areas where there is dolomite because then they have to retreat.

Hon Marais referred to Waterkloof being dolomitic, yes. And when it was worsening they retreated and we have since come back but the matter is under ... [Inaudible.] ...

The reason the Department of Defence has entered into serious talks with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to take back and to massify its own capability of works is precisely because we want a barracks system that works. We want soldiers in the barracks. Not only is it about moral, it is also about discipline. A soldier who is forced to be away from the barracks is not as disciplined as the one who is at the barracks 24/7. So we need to be looking at that.

Members have also criticised us and mentioned the issue of crime equipment. Yes, we have issues of equipment and we have had some weapons stolen at Littletonarmoury. Yes, there is a case of those who stole it, - because it was also not thieves from outside - it was internal. Yes, there is a police case that has been open and that matter must be dealt with.

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However, we must go back and say, in 1994 we agreed on a not less than 2% of gross domestic product, GDP, that must be given to the defence so that we can maintain a standard that we thought would be in good keeping. That was not done. We also now have to be at 0,7%, and not even 1% of the budget has contributed. That we took that decision many years ago of outsourcing the maintenance part somewhere else, largely informs the reason why defence decides to look after its own installation.

One member says, we are incapable of doing the critical things that we should do. What I do know hon members is that, at the border, we are accused of failing to provide the 22 promised companies to guard our borders and we have stopped at 15. That is the criticism that we will take. But where the members are honest in saying we are failing to protect South Africa, we have failed to train members, I would say no, that is not absolutely true. Members can criticise us that we have trained pilots who are unable, because of certain reasons, to get the required flying hours and we are remedying that. Members can say most of your prime equipment has not been working. In fact, we have started. Ntate [Mr] Marais, we can tell you that even Operation ... [Inaudible.] ... is back on track. We can come back to you that all our armoured vehicles have been

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repaired. Step number two is to look at upgrading the systems within.

Even today during this Africa Aerospace and Defence, AAD, we were talking to people who have the Original Equipment Manufacturers, OEMs, to enable us to do those necessary repairs. Is the morale in the defence force down? It would go down if you cannot adequately look after the members. But that does not say that the brave sons and daughters of this country are not willing to continue to put their lives there. And we appreciate the condolences we received because they died on duty. They died at border patrol. So what do we do?

We have approached the President, we have approached Cabinet, a matter will serve in front of the Security Council that will specifically be looking at the budget of the defence. We have engaged with National Treasury and we will take the matters there.

Are we happy with the situation? We are not happy. Ntate [Mr] Marais says "Look at downsizing defence". But own responsibilities do not say - downsize. The threats around our borders do not suggest that we should downsize.

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We have been forced to stay with the numbers that we have because we were for a number of years even unable to recruit and put in youngsters so that we can release those who are not making it in particular ranks and in the senior posts. That process is back on track. Are we happy with the fact that we are that we are unable to properly evict people around the basis? We also know that the law says if you allow them to sit around your property for more than six-seven days, then you have that issue.

We have been coming up with an idea that for those that have been sitting there without us intervening to engage. We also know that we have land claims against us. There are instances where alternative land was given to communities. You do have other members of those communities settling where they were given alternative land and others who have come back. The example is Lohatla. So, we are engaging as see how we can do it.

We also must remember that in terms of the law, we can take the land. But do you take the land from the people who have nowhere else to go? Or do you engage with people in the public space, in the political space, who go around encouraging

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illegal occupation of the land. That is a question that we must confront.

Should defence be allowing its fences to go down? Should defence be allowing people to jump and still within the military bases? We discussed this and we think that firstly, interact with the communities that you intend doing that. Secondly, make sure that the fence is amended. Also make sure that when you get the funds you prioritise. And therefore, hon members, to ensure that your defence is functional we beginning to look at what is priority on our budget lines? What can we deviate on so that we do the critical stuff?

I have said that most of our vehicles are beginning to be okay. I am very happy that from yesterday we had a Saab JAS 39 Gripen flying nstate [Mr] Maraise. And I am very clear that the engagements on the trips that we have been taking. Even on those who are here ... [Inaudible.] ... we are engaging. I am very clear that the ships will get our next attention. Are we able to fix everything at the same time? No, we are not. But the integrity of South Africa is important for us. One of the arguments that we keep on getting is, how can you prioritise anything else other than the welfare of the soldiers? And we are saying, we agree with you. We must prioritise the soldiers

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and we must prioritise the safety of South Africans. However, unless we get the way with all, we are not going to do so.

I want to argue that with the resuscitation of the defence industry, with what we are trying to do - and hon members, we will come to you with the resuscitation of the defence industry. We will come to you on what we are doing there. We will also come to you on the partnerships we want to get into. Not only for our sakes, but also to begin to have the economy of South Africa to resuscitate and to grow. But our priority at all times must be focused on making sure that men and women who are willing to put their lives down for us as a country are outing you on line, are not jeopardised and they have what they need. We will even go down to look at the quality of goods we are buying. We are looking at the foot we are putting in front of them. We are looking at the size, the tent quality. we are looking at what would make the morale of the soldier go back to what we want. And that means, we must cut off the defence, we must make sure that we prioritise training. We must make sure that as those who are leaving leaves, their posts are filled with competent people.

We have had a session with the leadership of the defence and they were saying, even before you make a person an Officer

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Commanding, OC, make sure that that person has been trained. So that it is not about the human beings and the guns. It is also about leadership and grooming those who will take over from them. If you cannot produce a well-rounded leader of soldiers, the soldiers beneath that fellow or that lady are not going to be what it takes.

Are we failing in keep South Africa safe? I would say we have not failed. And we do not intend to fail. We take the blame for whatever it is that needs to be put in place. But without getting enough resources. Mr Marais, you would know, in the last three-years medium-term years, we have lost an average of R24 billion. We could have done a lot with that money.

Equally, we are looking within the different segments of the Department of Defence. Where do we cut? And when we cut, where do we take the cut? What is our priority? Our priority is to keep South Africa safe. And that means that the morale, the wellbeing must be done.

I am not sure about members - Yes, this position of relook at having the four arms of service. We reduce them down to three. Let us have this when we discuss the review of the defence. I am not sure that we actually would be helping this country if we agree, hon Marais, in cutting the size of the defence? The

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dangers are increasing around our border. And I don't think that we can afford to do that. What we can say now is that the seven companies that are short at the border, we want to augment them with the Border Management Authority, BMA - those patrols there. But we also want to augment them with technology. We want to make sure that the training that the soldiers get enables them to deal with whatever happens.

We are proud of our forces and therefore it pains us that you found them in the position you found them. But we are also cautious in increasing the size of the works formation rapidly it must be able to deliver quality.

I have met young men and women in the works formation, the builders, those that works with iron, those that are electricians and those who are carpenters. And I think that we are getting. Once we are sure, we will then massify and we will be able to take 100% of the blame.

We are in a situation where we are finalising the devolvement of maintenance from public works. We have not come across any piece of legislation that says, legally the defence cannot continue to own its own property, cannot continue to repair and maintain its properties. What we are saying is that when

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we take that over we must make sure that we are not going to increase carelessness and possible wastage in the defence. We must have in place systems that will make sure that people don't do what they want.

We have had bad audits over the years and part of the hesitancy to rush into taking over from public works, is precisely because we must work on curing those defects within the Department of Defence. So that by the time you take over and say I am going to run this ship, you have everything under control. The skills are there and the experience is there. We might be coming back you and say yes, there are challenges around our borders.

The Department of Defence showed me the pictures of our borders as they are now. The problem is that within a few meters of the borderline you have communities settling. You actually don't even have a well-defined no-man's land. Hon members, I want us to go back there so that at least even if you criticise us about internal, things in the barracks, but with the borders, we begin to say, we are now taking over. We will not allow settlement within a kilometre of the borders. So that your patrols are more effective and we can engage our neighbours on how we deal with the issues of the no-man's

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land, because we have been unable to do that. They are on the border, they get heard. Things are easy to be stolen from this side to that side. We are not in control and therefore, we lose.

Is Operational Corona delivering? I would say if you look at the daily statistics you will see how many vehicles, how many stock, how many goods we are stopping at the border and returning. I would say to you the minimum that we are arresting per day on illegal people is 19. It's 27, it's fifty something per day across our borders that we arrest.

I would say yes, we are vulnerable somewhere but there are good stories that we can say to the committees we are doing well. Yes, our situation is dilapidated, but we are working on it. Give us a chance, let National Treasury release the funds, let us be responsible for those funds. Yes, I agree with the hon members on consequence management.

Members have told us that there is no consequence management and we are beginning to deal with that. I am sure before long hon Maraise, you will hear what we are doing. But in the meantime, fix the broken staff, polish that which is good and operate. I want to stop there, Chair. Thank you very much.

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Mr M L SHELEMBE: House Chairperson, the maintenance of safety and security in the military bases is of key importance to the protection of South Africa's borders.

This is required not only to ensure the safety of soldiers within these facilities but also for the safeguarding of weapons and equipment. The lack of military base security, impacts negatively on operational security because if a military base is not adequately secured, equipment can be sabotaged or stolen.

House Chairperson, the DA is incredibly concerned about the unsafe and insecure conditions of the South African military bases. In 2019 alone, weapons were stolen from the 9th South African Infantry Battalion from the guards stationed at the Unit's Weapons Store; The South African Navy's Strategic Communications was affected by copper cable and antennae theft, and, 19 R4 Assault Rifles were stolen from the Lyttleton Tek Military base.

In 2020, our committee visited four Vehicles Reserve Park in the North of Tshwane and was informed of the cable theft which had left the unit and the surrounding military bases without electricity. Water infrastructure had also been damaged by

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surrounding communities, which resulted in no piped water flowing to the base a possible - human rights violation, I am sure you would agree, House Chairperson.

House Chairperson, it is horrifying to know that copper cabling was stolen from within a military base perimeter. Long trenches were dug to expose the cables, which clearly shows the poor quality of security, as the criminals had sufficient time to dig up an entire trench throughout the night. All these thefts and encroachments onto military bases is happening under the watch of the ANC-led government, and they should be ashamed of their failures to protect even our own defence force from criminals.

House Chairperson, the Defence act clearly provides for the limitation of movement in and around military bases. It also provides for a number of sanctions, including imprisonment, where a person contravenes any regulation of the act, or where a person enters a military facility without authorisation. The act is clear, yet we still have blatant acts of vandalism and theft occurring inside facilities that are supposed to be protecting South Africa's borders.

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When the ANC loses its majority in 2024, the DA will ensure that a well enhanced security protocol is developed and put in place around all military bases to ensure that the threat of encroachments and the systematic vandalism of military infrastructure is dealt with once and for all, as the ANC has shown time after time that it is incapable of doing so. I thank you.

Mr T N MMUTLE: Thank you very much hon House Chair of the mini plenary. The problem of encroachment of informal settlement that we are debating about, near the military bases is a complex problem that requires a multi-faceted approach by government at the three spheres of government. For instance, it may be as a result of the historical anomaly of apartheid spatial planning that excluded the majority of our people from the main economic centres.

On the other hand, it may be a result of unavailability of land for the poor people necessitated by the massive private ownership of land. So, in dealing with this matter by informal settlement encroachment, we should be mindful of these historical imperatives.

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The danger however is that military bases are potential targets for any conflict. As we learn from the wars that are taking place in other parts of the world, most of the time the targets for attack are the military establishment. The sooner this matter is addressed the better for the South African National Defence Force, and our people. To avoid future casualties, where the government will then have to take responsibility before such casualties.

I think we are in agreement this time around with hon Marais and the Minister has spoken lengthily to the issue, the department is addressing in terms of relocation of function from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, DPWI to build capacity within the defence force in work's formation and progress has been registered so far.

Yah, I think hon Shelembe is only dreaming for today, so we will allow him to dream. The EFF yet again has cruel to be disingenuous, because part of the challenges rise in this debate in terms of land invasion is a direct result of their irrational call for people to grab land and illegally occupying land.

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For example, one of the subsidiaries of *the Armaments Corporation of South Africa*, Armscor which is Geotech around Tshwane when you pass Atteridgeville, is impacted by this irrational call from the EFF. Therefore, they must not come here and grandstand and talk as if they can do things better whilst they are part and parcel of the disasters that we seek to address.

I think for the first time hon House Chair; I will agree with hon Groenewald on this debate that what we seek to solicit in the main is support to address this matter. We will have to engage... [Interjection.]

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): Hon member, there's a pause. Hon Nothnagel, you are disturbing the member with your unmuted microphone. Proceed hon Mmutle.

Mr T N MMUTLE: Thank you very much, I was just indicating that for the first time, we are agreeing with hon Groenewald and we will engage as the Minister has indicated, the Commander in Chief to look closer into these matters, as the Commander in Chief of the arm forces.

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A number of interventions can be considered in relation to land claims and land invasions around military facilities. The assistance of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform is required to urgently finalise all land claims that involve land being utilised by the South African National Defence Force. This will give the Department of Defence and Military Veterans, DOD, a better opportunity to plan the future use and refurbishment of its current facilities. Better interdepartmental co-operation is required in areas where land invasions affect military bases. This may include the DOD, local municipalities and the law enforcement agencies.

The DOD, should be encouraged to improve its base security. This may require additional funding in the next financial year of 2023-24 fiscal year, ring-fenced for the improvement of security around key military facilities, especially those in high risk areas. The use of relevant technology should be especially considered for that purpose.

And of course the hon Minister went at length in terms of the staff morale. How they plan to turn around the situation so that we've got a military that is fit for purpose, that is efficient and effective in operating in its duties to ensure

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that they safeguard the territorial integrity of the Republic of South Africa.

House Chair, I would like to end this debate on the note that at least there's an advancement and progress made in terms of dealing with issues of defence from a non-partisan point of view, accept the EFF has decided ... when we were debating this important debate to be disingenuous. However, we appreciate the contributions from other parties that seek to ensure that these matters are earnestly resolved and we have a defence force that is capable, that is supported to carry out its mandate. Thank you very much Chair.

The CHAIRPERSON (Mr Q R Dyantyi): Thank you, that concludes the debate and the business of this mini virtual plenary, the mini plenary will now rise. Thank you, hon members.

Debate concluded.

The Mini-plenary rose at 15:13.