**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE WELCOMES PROGRESS WITH VERIFYING MILITARY VETERANS DATABASE**

**Parliament, Friday, 13 November 2020 –** The Joint Standing Committee on Defence has welcomed progress made by the Department of Military Veterans (DMV) to clean the database of military veterans and will hold the department to account on the three months’ commitment to complete the process.

The committee is of the view that the cleaning of the database is critical in the context of shrinking resources, even before resources are diverted to servicing an extended unverified database. “We acknowledge the work the department has done so far, albeit sluggishly, to cleanse the database. We will give the department a further three months and hope to receive a report of the conclusion of the process,” said Mr Cyril Xaba, the Co-Chairperson of the committee.

The collaborative relationship between the DMV and the Department of Home Affairs to validate the names on the database as South Africans is a welcomed development. This collaboration is essential in ensuring a qualitative and credible end product.

The department’s proposal to have an information technology system that safeguards the database upon completion of the clean-up is also welcomed. Despite this, the committee is concerned that the State Information Technology Agency is unable to offer the required technological software, and has urged the department and Sita to urgently work to find the safeguarding software to ensure the database’s validity.

Regarding consequence management against departmental officials implicated in fraudulent and irregular activities in the provision of benefits, the committee has instructed the department to present a detailed report by Tuesday, 17 November 2020, on progress in implementing consequence management. “We must at all times be seen to be strong on consequence management to ensure that money appropriated to the department reaches the intended beneficiaries,” Mr Xaba said.

The committee has committed itself to continuing to work with the department to ensure that military veterans that contributed significantly to the service of our country are accorded the necessary respect and support as per the mandate of the DMV.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CO-CHAIRPERSONS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE, MR CYRIL XABA AND MR MAMAGASE NCHABELENG**

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