**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**PRAGMATIC SOLUTIONS NEEDED TO ENSURE AVAILABILITY OF SPARES FOR SANDF PRIME MISSION EQUIPMENT**

**Parliament, Friday, 3 March 2023 –** The Joint Standing Committee on Defence has raised concerns about the reactive system for the procurement of the spares required to service prime mission equipment (PME) for the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and has called for pragmatic solutions to ensure that defence platforms are adequate for deployment. The committee held a meeting yesterday with Armscor, the SANDF’s acquisition agency, to assess initiatives to improve PME spares availability.

“While the committee acknowledges the funding shortfall within the SANDF that impacts directly on maintenance of equipment, the committee welcomes the intention by all role-players within the environment to hold a workshop that will streamline solutions to deal with the challenges of spares availability and general maintenance of PME. The committee will in April meet to receive these solutions, which the committee hopes will give a clear way forward,” said Mr Cyril Xaba, the co-Chairperson of the committee.

During the meeting the committee was concerned to hear that Armscor’s Defence Decision Support Institute is not performing analyses of maintenance requirements for selected SANDF PME. The committee is of the view that using specialists within this division would ensure that a proactive approach to systems management is adopted, which is a desirable approach in ensuring capability availability. It would also ensure that Armscor plays a critical and strategic decision support role for end users and ensure proactive planning and implementation. The committee is in agreement with Armscor that procurement of spares should be proactive and that effective planning should be encouraged.

Also, as a result of long lead times required for spares procurement, especially in the context of the financial challenges facing Denel, which is the original equipment manufacturer of a significant portion of SANDF PME, the committee believes it is practical to do proactive spares procurement to eliminate funding challenges.

The contributing effect caused by Denel’s continued challenges was also highlighted by the committee, especially the need to reinvigorate the entity responsible for the development and maintenance of PME. “The continued challenges faced by Denel have a debilitating impact on the SANDF and ensuring that its platforms operate optimally. Urgency is needed in resolving these challenges to enable Denel and by extension the SANDF to effectively deliver on its mandate,” Mr Xaba emphasised.

Despite these challenges, the committee is hopeful that the solutions derived from the engagement between role-players within the defence environment will bear fruit. The committee will urgently schedule a meeting to consider these solutions and to ascertain how the committee can aid those solutions.

Meanwhile, the committee emphasised its concerns regarding the decline in reserve force man days, which the committees believes undermines the reserve force’s strategic intention to augment the regular force. The declining number of man days is also concerning in the context that reserves have proved to be cost effective, while providing specialist skills, thereby making a significant contribution within the SANDF.

The committee has welcomed the intentions to hold a reserve force Indaba 2, which will look into different aspects of the reserve force system. The committee is hopeful that the indaba will find workable solutions, including reskilling of reserve force members, training to ensure combat readiness and ways to rejuvenate the reserves through new intakes. The committee will interact with the Defence Reserve Division following the indaba to assess the proposed solutions to arrest the ongoing decline of the reserve force.

**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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