

#SAPSBudgetSpeech: Defund the VIPs not the police!

By **Andrew Whitfield MP** - DA Shadow Minister of Police

Cries of defund the police which echoed across the United States appear to have reached the ears of the ANC government whose members are today lining up to support outrageous budget cuts to our frail and fading thin blue line.

Criminals across South Africa are celebrating at the news that the budget for the South African Police Service is to be defunded by over R11 billion!

To understand the scale of the budget cut we must understand what we had, what we were promised and what we ultimately received.

In the previous financial year we had R99 Billion and in the medium term budget we were promised R108 Billion for this financial year. This promised amount of R108 Billion is important because it is the projected figure which government knows we actually need for SAPS to meet their targets and reduce the increasing levels of crime in the country. Instead of the budget we were promised, we have received R96 Billion in this financial year which is R11 Billion less than what we need and in real terms is R3 Billion less than what we had.

Now, today I will explain to this house how the ANC is proposing to defund critical crime fighting budgets within the SAPS budget, thereby exposing ordinary South Africans to more violent crime, while cossetted ANC comrades continue to enjoy the very best protection from the SAPS.

In the year 2000 the VIP protection budget was R138 Million. Over the next ten years as the cabinet grew, alongside its sense of self-importance, the VIP protection budget grew to R530 Million by 2010. Just 11 years later in 2021 it is now sitting at a staggering R1.7 Billion.

Over the past twenty one years the budget designed to protect only the elite and nobody else has increased by nearly 1150 %.

To further illustrate the perverse prioritisation of the ANC government, while the overall budget of SAPS has decreased by 3.2% between 2020/21 and 2021/22, the VIP protection budget has received yet another increase, albeit only by 1.56%!

While VIP Protection gets an additional R26 million in this year's budget it is Visible Policing which is the biggest loser with its crime prevention sub programme being cut by R3.8 Billion.

In Detective Services it is the crime investigations sub programme which suffers the most with a cut of R225 million.

So, to be clear, when cutting the SAPS budget it was decided, by the powers that be, to deal the biggest blow to the two biggest crime fighting sub programmes within SAPS, being Crime prevention and crime investigations. These are two of the most critical front line services which SAPS offers and defunding them will play right into the hands of the criminals.

Together these actual crime fighting divisions account for a total cut of R4.1 Billion while the so called VIPs like President Ramaphosa and Honourable Malema will receive a fully funded, uninterrupted service from SAPS's highly trained VIP unit.

Once again the ANC has prioritised VIPs over the people!

It is time to defund the VIPs and take power to the people by supporting community policing and reinforcing our front line officers in our communities.

The recent crime statistics revealed that rural communities continue to bare the brunt of poor police visibility in their areas. Farm murders and farm attacks increased during the last quarter while two of the most rural provinces, KZN and the Eastern Cape, saw the largest spikes in violent crime thereby exposing the complete failure of SAPS' rural safety plan.

There has been an increase in murder by 8.4% to 4 976 for the first three months of this year while attempted murder increased by 8.7% to 4582. SAPS also seems to be losing its battle against gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) with the crime stats show that 58% of GBV dockets have not been finalised for more than year.

To make matters worse, against this backdrop of violent crime thousands of law abiding citizens are being held ransom by a dysfunctional Central Firearms Registry which is collapsing under the weight of an outdated system.

During the oversight visit to the CFR by the portfolio committee last week it was revealed that in the 2020/21 financial year the CFR only received R30 Million and that almost half of that was spent on printing of licenses by the government printing works. Taking the firearm application process online from application to approval and by simplifying the onerous application requirements SAPS could save a lot money and their customers a lot of time and frustration.

Corruption within SAPS is alive and well and IPID remains critically under resourced to fulfil its mandate. By way of example IPID in the Eastern Cape has only one office against a requirement of five offices to service the province effectively. The ideal staff complement for a province of this size is 71 officials and 54 investigators but IPID currently only has 24 officials and 13 investigators. Its case back log is well over 1000 with Cases stretching back two to three years. A culture of corruption within SAPS will thrive as long as there is a culture of impunity supported by a lack of consequence management.

Rising rates of violent crime require drastic action and that is why the DA is proposing that the VIP Protection budget be slashed in half from R1.7 Billion to R850 Million. This saving should be redirected to visible policing through crime prevention and investigations and to the IPID in order to keep our communities safe and our police officers honest.

This budget, in its current form, will place increased pressure on the many hard working police officers who are doing their very best under very difficult circumstances. The budget is a direct threat to the safety of South Africans and to SAPS members and it can therefore not be supported.