

FF Plus: Dr P Groenewald

23 May 2023

Debate on Vote 23 and 26: Defence and Military Veterans

Honourable Minister, maybe we must just look a bit back to the history. In the nineties, we kicked off with a Green Paper, the defence review and all the needs of the SANDF. We had the Arms Procurement process and then, I think you will agree that since 2005, and I actually went and looked at my expenses. In each and every debate we are complaining about the lack of finance for the SANDF. And it's a valid argument to say that we need more money to ensure a functional and well-operational SANDF. And I supported it all over the years.

But Honourable Minister, we must also admit that when we look at the arms procurement scandal, the taxpayers of SA, they are asking questions. Because if you want more money from the taxpayer, the taxpayer says 'What do I get worth for my taxpayer's money?' And unfortunately we must be honest with each other to say: 'No you don't.'

The arms procurement situation, how many of those armaments are really operational at this moment? Our submarines, our frigates, our fighter planes, all of them, with great respect and it is sad to stand as a proud soldier to say that money went down the drain. They're not operational. And then you can't blame the taxpayers of SA when they say 'We don't agree to give more money.'

I am worried when you just say 'We will see that commanders must take responsibility. Why must we see to it? That is natural that a commander must take full responsibility!'

Mqaar agbare Minister, soos ons altyd in Afrikaans sê, daar is ook die klein jakkalsies wat die wingerde verwoes. Ek het vir u die vraag gevra: 'n Brigadier-generaal wat sedert 2017 op spesiale verlof is omdat daar kriminele klagtes teen haar is. 2017!

In April maand hierdie jaar hardloop daar 'n kragopwekker by haar huis, 24/7 in Centurion. Ek het vir u 'n vraag gevra, u het geantwoord. Dit het (die staat of dit is gestaak) het die Weermag R58 000 gekos van 1 April tot 20 April vir daardie brandstof en daardie kragopwekker. Dis die klein jakkalsies wat die publiek sien wat die wingerdboorde verwoes.

I want to come to the veterans. You're a soldier, or you were a soldier, I'm a soldier or I was a soldier, we must have respect for our veterans. And you and I were part of the process when we wrote The Military Veterans Act. And it was a long discussion of who should be seen and defined as a military veteran, and it was about the statutory and the non-statutory forces and we agree, we said we honour all soldiers. Therefore statutory forces are also part of the veterans. You know there were regulations, and we've asked some questions, and it has been changed. It provides for a military veteran in terms of the definition. But now if you go on the website of the Military Veterans Association Department, then it says that there are certain limitations on the pensions for statutory forces. No Honourable Minister, that's unacceptable. I ask the question 'Why and what are these limitations?'

In SA moet ons ons veterane respekteer en almal moet op 'n gelyke basis kwalifiseer. Ek sweet hulle moet 'n middle-toets slaag maar kom ons gee minstens krediet aan alle militêre veterane. I thank you.