

**MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS**



**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR ORAL REPLY**

**QUESTION NO 622**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: 27 OCTOBER 2022**

**REPLY RECOMMENDED BY:  
MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: MP**

## QUESTION FOR ORAL REPLY

## QUESTION NO 622

**Mr T N Mmutle (ANC) to ask the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans:**

Considering that the SA Navy has consistently failed to achieve the target set for itself in terms of sea hours and often notes the lack of availability of naval platforms as the reason, what steps will she put in place to (a) increase the sea hours of the SA Navy and (b) ensure that the Republic's territorial waters are regularly patrolled and efficiently controlled?

**REPLY:**

In order to meet the annual Joint Operations Division requirement of 7 800 sea hours for Force Employment (Op COPPER long range patrols and Op CORONA border safeguarding coastal patrols}, as well as the minimum Force Preparation requirement of 2 200 sea hours, the SA Navy plans for a total of 8 000 sea hours per year. The target was reduced from 10 000 sea hours per year with effect of FY2021/22 due to budget reductions and an insufficient budget allocation to the SA Navy to execute all the planned / scheduled Refits and Midlife Upgrades of the Strategic Defence Package (SOP) vessels (Frigates and Submarines) as well as its Combat Support Ship.

The SA Navy has been consistently for the last Medium Term Strategic Framework, was/is only financially resourced for a total of 6 000 sea hours per year. This includes the earmarked funds appropriated for the execution of the SADC Maritime Security Strategy which averages around R410million per Financial Year. The SA Navy depends on its internal operating budget reprioritisation to make up the difference between 6 000 and 8 000 sea hours, which in turn has a negative effect on the outputs of the other Maritime Defence Programme Sub-Programmes.

The first Multi Mission Inshore Patrol Vessel, the SAS KING SEKHUKUNE I was commissioned on the 15 Jun 22 and is currently conducting coastal patrols as part of it OT&E and is due to commence with an intelligence driven Op CORONA on the EAST Coast of South Africa, the second Multi Mission Inshore Patrol Vessel. The SAS KING SHAKA ZULU was launched on the 14 Oct 22 and is due to be commissioned in the first

half of 2023. This Multi Mission Inshore Patrol Vessels will assist the Republic of South Africa greatly with the patrolling of its Territorial Waters with a specific focus on illegal maritime activities within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the country, this patrols will contribute significantly with regards to more sea hours to the SA Navy's annual achievements.

The achievement of the planned target of 8 000 sea hours remains hugely constrained by the following primary factors:

- **Too Few Vessels Available at the Directed Level of (Operational) Capability:** Due to sustained underfunding and the accumulation of refit backlogs, especially in respect of the four Frigates and three Submarines, too few vessels are at the Directed Level of Capability to execute missions. The fewer vessels that are available to conduct Force Preparation and Force Employment, the fewer are the sea hours that can be achieved. In addition, the Patrol Capability currently vested in the three obsolete and soon to be decommissioned Offshore Patrol Vessels and two partially available obsolete Mine Counter Measures Vessels is diminishing due to them being aged, with numerous and recurring operational defects
- **Underfunded Refits:** Currently, three Frigates and two Submarines have fallen out of their scheduled refit cycles. The estimated refit cost for a Frigate is R700 million and for a Submarine R650 million. The total outstanding refit cost estimate for the SOP vessels is therefore R4, 5 billion excluding annual escalation. In comparison, the SA Navy receives an earmarked allocation of R58, 5 million in the FY2022/23 for SOP Vessel Refit Support. This amount is essential to carry out partial maintenance and repair and to address some operational defects, but does not suffice to see even one of the SOP vessels through a complete refit. It is to be noted that for the FY2022/23, the SA Navy's full cost maintenance and repair requirement is R3,3 billion vs a maintenance and repair allocation of R944 million (28.1% M&R funded).
- **Lack of Ships' Spares:** Depots are largely depleted of essential ships' spares, which hampers maintenance and repair efforts. This can be attributed to the chronic budgetary allocations underfunding and the long lead times for International Original

Equipment Manufacturers spare parts as well reported procurement challenges at ARMSCOR Procurement Centres.

- **ARMSCOR Dockyard Capacity Constraints:** The ARMSCOR Dockyard, as the SA Navy's Refit Authority, is in the process to implement a Renewal Strategy which includes the sourcing of commercial work to supplement its capacity building efforts. This is due to the fact that, as a result of underfunding, the SA Navy cannot provide sufficient work for the Dockyard to execute (refits and major maintenance and repair). The annual transfer payment made by the SA Navy to the ARMSCOR Dockyard into the 2005 Dockyard Transfer Agreement (R299, 2 million for FY2022/23) primarily covers the Dockyard's HR funding, leaving little room for capital investment and infrastructure maintenance and repair. The SA Navy is, however, not in a position to expand its funding contribution towards the ARMSCOR Dockyard. This impacts negatively on the SA Navy's operational capability, including the achievement of sea hour targets, due to vessels not being able to be optimally maintained and repaired.
- **Type of Op CORONA Deployment Requirements:** The Op CORONA coastal patrols are intelligence driven, also linking with Op PHAKISA Initiative 5, "Enhanced and Coordinated Enforcement Programme", including marine resources anti-poaching operations. For the above type of Op CORONA deployments, Joint Operations Divisions from time to time requires the SA Navy Maritime Reaction Squadron (Divers, small boats and landward Reaction Force elements) to deploy instead of a vessel, such as has recently taken place during the Second Quarter of FY2022/23 when there was an MRS deployment to Gansbaai to deal with the rampant poaching of marine resources. If there is not a specific requirement for a large vessel to deploy, no sea hours are achieved for that deployment.

Funding was sourced and approved for urgent system Maintenance, Repairs and Overhaul for the Frigate Integrated Platform Management System as well as the ongoing Refit of the submarine SAS CHARLOTTE MAXEKE, which once this Refit and Repairs and Upgrades are done the Frigates' and Submarines' general deployability will significantly increase.

Honourable members, in addition to these initiatives, we have been engaging with the OEMs as we have been undertaking visits to the defence exhibitions and expos. In **particular**, my recent visits to the Farnborough show during July 2022, as well as this month to the Indo Expo in India, have given me an opportunity to see and discuss with my counterparts support we need to ensure that we have our vessels and systems operating in full capacity.



**(T.R. MODISE)**

**MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS: MP**

**DATE:**

---