**MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NA)**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO: 329**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION 18 FEBRUARY 2022**

**REPLY RECOMMENDED BY**

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

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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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**Mr S J F Marais (DA) to ask the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans:**

(1)

What has she found to be the relevance and importance of the SA Navy

Maritime Silvermine Communication facility in Cape Town to (a) the SA National

Defence Force, (b) the security of the Republic and (c) the (i) maritime and (ii) air

traffic in and around the coast of the Republic;

(2)

(a) on what date will the dilapidated and stolen security fence and

infrastructure be repaired and/or replaced to fully safeguard the base and its

essential services and (b) what is the total cost related to the repair and/or

replacement of the security fence and infrastructure;

(3)

whether the stolen communication infrastructure has been replaced and

secured; if not, on what date is it envisaged that the infrastructure will be replaced

and/or upgraded to meet the required service level it should provide; if so, what is

and/or was the total cost thereof;

(4)

whether she envisages the decommissioning of the base and its facilities; if

not, why not; if so, what are the alternatives for the services provided by the previous

essential service?

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**REPLY:**

Reply 1

1.i. The relevance and importance to the SANDF: It provides Control and

Administrative Node Western Cape for the Defence Signal Network for Chief

Command Management Information Systems (C CMIS} server connectivity,

with Pretoria network infrastructure and Administrator function.

1.ii. Security of the Republic. To Support the People of South Africa: Support to the

people of South Africa means supporting of the population of South Africa by

means of operations other than war, during periods when the responsible state

departments do not have the capacity. The provision of hydrographic services

for use by the SA Navy, South African and international mariners, and for other

mariners in terms of regional and international treaties and agreements

obligations. SA has an international obligation to issue promulgation of radio

navigation warnings, notices for mariners, and tidal and related meteorological

data for mariners in terms of international obligations. The communications

center’s capability is key to fulfilling these strategic mandate and international

obligations.

1.iii. Maritime.

i. The primary objective of this system (Communications Centre) is to

provide the backbone for local, national, and global maritime

communications in support of safety of life at sea, naval and maritime

exercises and operations, both during force preparation and force

employment activities, sufficient for peace, and expandable to war.

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ii. The collective being operationally available 24/7, provide for a number

of communications means and methods, thereby ensuring reliability

of service through area broadcasting and coverage.

iii. Radio Weather Facsimile Service to SA Navy vessels and Mariners

commercial / recreational craft including yachts on behalf of the South

African Weather Service.

iv. Serves as an alternate radio site to Telkom Cape Town Radio for

Maritime Search and Rescue in co-operation with MRCC Cape Town

where the SANDF is tasked through J Ops.

v. The SAN provides the communications link when SAN vessels are

tasked as Search and Rescue platform with SAR on Scene

Commander and Coordinator staff of MRCC onboard.

vi. Naval and Maritime Air communications organisation is designed to

provide communications between:

(1) Headquarters (HQ) including inter-service HQs;

(2) controlling HQs ashore, ships and authorities at sea;

(3) controlling HQs ashore and Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA);

(4) widely separated units at **sea;**

(5) ships and naval authorities at sea with such Army and SAAF

HQs, aircraft and troop formations as the strategically and

tactical situations require; and

(6) Ships in company.

1.iv. Air traffic in and Around the Coast of the Republic. The Maritime Air Radio

Organisation and Station within the Silvermine Bunker provides the primary

communications capability for the SA Airforce (SAAF) amplified as follows:

i. The station's primary role in support of the SA Navy is to provide for

co-ordination and safety of aircraft and helicopters flying over the sea.

These include routine coastal patrols and interactions with ships and

submarines at sea. Vessel activity around the coast is reported

directly to Silvermine for further action by Maritime Patrol Aircraft.

ii. The station is utilized by the SAAF for the co-ordination and safety of

all military flights both nationally and within the Sub-Saharan African

territory where the SAAF is required to operate, typically in peace

keeping missions and disaster relief roles.

iii. The station provides co-ordination and safety of Presidential Flights

on a global basis.

iv. Air Traffic in and around the coast of the Republic.

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v. The station provides for Safety Notices to Airmen (NOTAM) as in-flight

information for military aircraft.

1.b. It is hereby stated that no part of the fence has been stolen. The fence is being

replaced due to its condition and the contractor's material for the remainder of the

fence is on site. The contractor responsible for the work was appointed by the

Department Public Works and the indication from this department is that the work

will be completed by Mar 2020. Correspondence was sent to the department to

receive a new end date but no feedback has been received to date. Notwithstanding,

all building infrastructure are in a sound condition and receives ongoing

maintenance as and when required.

1.c. The cost of the contract for the fence is RM 13 paid to date is RM 10.5.

Reply 2

The vandalism and cable theft at Silvermine Antenna Farm transpired between 2015

and 2017 and was replaced at a cost of R 868 804.10, by Reutech Solutions.

The antenna farm is currently being safeguarded by members of Maritime Reaction

Squadron whilst waiting for completion of the perimeter fence (the antennas are

currently enclosed, awaiting completion of approximately 4 meters of underdig and

thereafter the handing and taking over).

Reply 3

The Naval Communications Centre (NCC) at Silvermine will not be decommissioned

due to its strategic and operational role to South Africa and the SANDF. In addition the

Hydrographic Act 35 of 2019, places an obligation on the SA Navy.

In the event of total communications equipment failure at NCC, all communications

services will be handled by the alternative secondary broadcast station which is

located in Durban.

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