

**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS**  
**Republic of South Africa**

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**Attention: News Editors**  
**30/07/2009**

**MILITARY VETERANS TASK TEAM DISCUSS CHALLENGES**

A national task team announced by the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, to advise her ministry on how to address some of the challenges encountered by the military veterans began its work yesterday during a day long workshop held at the Zebra Lodge in Pretoria.

Under the leadership of her Deputy Minister, Mr Thabang Makwetla, the team also comprises of the Acting Secretary for Defence Tsepe Motumi, President of the South African National Military Veterans Association Kebby Maphatsoe, Chairman of the South African Army Foundation Major General Keith Mokoape and prominent businesswoman Dr Thandi Ndlovu among others. The task team is expected to report and make recommendations to the Minister in a period not exceeding three months.

According to Makwetla, his task team is assigned to help the Department of Defence and Military Veterans to "put together structures and policy on how to govern the affairs of the veterans"

Military veterans are a section of the South African community that have historically been involved in waging an armed conflict as part of efforts to resolve the political conflicts of our past. It also includes those who participated during the first and second world wars and the Korean War. Following the ushering in of a peaceful dispensation in our country, most Veterans welfare has and continues to be a matter of concern. Many still face challenges that range from unemployment, limited skills capabilities, access to special grants and asset poverty.

Currently, they are catered for by the Military Veterans Act 17 of 1999 and through the directorate in the Defence Department. However, following the President's reconfiguration of the department of defence to include the Veterans, the ministry is discussing and envisages a separate budget vote and accounting officer for the Veterans affairs.

This initiative also forms part of efforts to recognise and profile selfless contributions made by many fellow patriots in an effort to bring about the realisation of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous South Africa.

Amongst others, the task team is expected to refine policy, draft guidelines and develop a revised statutory framework in relation to the state's obligation to the veterans and the role that this constituency should or can play in the broader development and reconstruction of our country. The task team accordingly resolved to comprehensively review the definition of what constitutes a military or war veteran with respect to the role that many combatants have played in the fight for freedom.

Other terms of reference include studying and establishing international benchmarks, aligning and integrating government wide programmes on veterans, formulating institutional designs for governing the Veterans affairs and advising on possible improvements in the existing legislation.

In this connection, the task team undertook to consult civil society, other Veterans organisations and interested stakeholders in an effort to deliver inclusive and substantial recommendations to the Minister.

The task team, which will be meeting weekly, also undertook to review the administration of Veterans affairs, education and training opportunities, ceremonial recognitions, social welfare, economic empowerment and reburial of veterans who perished in exile.

End.

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