



STATEMENT ADDRESSING PUBLIC CONCERNS RAISED REGARDING THE PROCESS AND CIRCUMSTANCES IN ACQUIRING OF THE CHARTERED AIRCRAFT FOR THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT'S TRAVEL TO AN OFFICIAL VIST IN JAPAN

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Good morning members of the media and to all in attendance

Let me thank you for honouring our invite to be part of this briefing at an unreasonably short notice. I know that given the late hour at which we made the decision to convene the briefing, many of you would have had to make urgent changes to your schedules and newsroom diary plans for the day. For this I must apologise and once more extend our most sincere appreciation.

The briefing itself is extra ordinary in that I have made a rare decision to appear before you to discuss and set the record straight on an operational matter clearly in the purview of the military command structures. I had felt however that given the uncertainty and need for reassurance of South Africans regarding an important matter of security and political accountability, that it will be the most responsible thing for us as the leadership to address the nation through yourselves. So, as extra ordinary as it is, the necessity determined that we urgently convene this briefing.

This follows recent media reports speculating about the circumstances and processes relating to the acquiring of an aircraft used by the Deputy President of the Republic during his recent official visit to Japan.

As I have indicated before, it is not normal procedure and protocol for us to lay bare the operational planning relating to the movement of the country's political principals undertaken through the SANDF or its Arms of Service.

This is based on our key responsibility, enshrined in the law, to ensure the security of these Principals. Our main responsibility to the country, its people and its leadership, as legislated is national security and our protocols and procedures ensures operational integrity that keeps us all of us safe. However we remain accountable, even within this scope if questions arise relating our failure, or perceptions thereof to effectively execute this mandate.

So, that's why we are here and it is important therefore to remind all of us that we may not be calling similar briefings on each of the normal operational planning and taskings for movement of the political principals.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media, as only you can be well aware, various reports have been published making speculations and raising a number of questions relating to the aircraft acquired for the Deputy President during his recent official visit to Japan.

Upon receiving the news of these reports, I had obviously been gravely concerned and had asked for a briefing and report on the matter through both the Chief of the SANDF, the Chief of the SA Air force and the relevant squadron commanders responsible for such arrangements.

In order to have a proper engagement with yourselves and to address some of the concerns raised in the public, we have decided to share the facts relating to this matter. The facts are the following:

- The air travel and movement of the political Principals (President and Deputy President of the Republic) is a mandated responsibility of the SA Air force and is not handled by the Presidency or the principals.
- A dedicated squadron of the SA Air force is responsible for managing and tasking the movement of the principals, informed by the requirements that are indicated by the offices of the principal

concerned. These requirements may include the number of passengers, nature of destination and length of travel.

- The VVIP squadron of the SAAF maintains and operates its own fleet of aircrafts for purposes of this mandate, but if these are not available for any reason, or not suitable for the specification requirements of a particular travel, a suitable aircraft may be chartered to be operated by the SAAF in execution of this responsibility.
- For the recent visit of the Deputy President, the requirements were received by the SAAF. Two of the important requirements during this flight were that there must be a minimum of fuel stops en route and that there should be adequate rest/sleeping facilities for the Principal.
- For all flight requests the first option is to consider SAAF aircraft. The Boeing 737 (BBJ) of the SAAF, which meets all the requirements to be used for this flight, was however not available as it was being used as a higher priority for Presidential flights over the period.
- The only other aircraft, closest to meeting this requirement, the Falcon 900, but would have been required to make multiple stops and carried less passengers, was also unavailable due to maintenance.
- The other aircrafts in the VVIP squadron did not have either the range or the passenger capacity to do the flight.
- With none of the SAAF aircrafts available or suitable, the next option is to charter an aircraft. This can only be done via one of two options, namely a state charter contract of the National Treasury (RT-61 contract) or via a process of open tenders. The RT-61 National Treasury contract was specifically instituted to ease and speed up the

process and is therefore the first option to use in such a short space of time.

- The RT-61 contract is awarded and managed by National Treasury. The SAAF's only input in this process is to supply a User Requirement Specification (URS).
- Once the contract has been awarded by National Treasury, the SAAF receives a list of contracted companies and aircraft types, listed by registration number and the approved tariff per aircraft type. Each company on this list is awarded a number of points and when an aircraft is chartered from the list, the company with the highest points must be approached first. Only if this company is unable to provide an aircraft may the next company be approached.
- On this specific flight this procedure was followed. The first company on the list was approached, but the aircraft they had on the list could only complete the flight with multiple refueling stops and did not meet the requirement.
- The second company on the list (ExecuJet) was approached and they had the Global Express aircraft available which could complete the flight with only one refueling stop as well as carry the required amount of passengers.
- This aircraft was subsequently chartered via the process as stipulated in the RT-61 contract and handed over to the SAAF.
- The information provided to the SAAF on the RT-61 contract does not include ownership of the aircraft.
- I have however been informed, following interrogation of the ownership issue, that ExecuJet itself doesn't own and operate its own

aircrafts but manages a fleet of aircrafts on behalf of various owners from which they source suitable aircrafts in case they are awarded a contract by on the RT-61 contract.

- We are also informed that ExecuJet exercises a right of non-disclosure of the third parties ownership of the aircrafts they make available on the RT-61 contract.
- These are matters that I have requested that the SAAF verifies and confirms in order for us to assess if any risk or compromise of security and integrity arises as a result of the current arrangements on the RT-61 and to consider various options at our disposal to remedy such risks in consultation with the National Treasury.
- In the medium to long term, the solution to many of these problems is to capacitate the SAAF with a dedicated fleet with enough capacity to meet both the transport and Air Defence capability requirements of the country. The staggered implementation of this plan is already in place and will be done in line with targets of Milestone 1 of the implementation of the Defence Review. I will be providing details of this implementation plan as soon as Cabinet has approved it.

I thank you