

Budget on Debate Vote 8: National Treasury (State Security)

Speech by Dianne Kohler Barnard MP

DA Shadow Minister of State Security

Being made the Minister in charge of State Security seems to me to be a part-time job. Sometimes they last in their position as much as a year, sometimes a few months - but it is commonly accepted that the moment they start to both understand and do the job - and show any inclination to do the right thing, to claw back the hundreds of millions looted via the State security Agency - out they go.

That's just a reality check for our latest Minister, in case she imagines that anything she does will be valued – or indeed that she will be in that position next year after the election. But then again, none of you will.

It took years to complete the High Level Review Panel Report in which we first saw proof of what was an open secret: the looting via the State Security Agency. Then came the Zondo Commission revelations, and...then...nothing. Where is our money? We need it. Our schools, clinics, hospitals, police stations, roads, bridges, sewage systems, and of course we have no electricity – it is all collapsing and not a single cent of those billions has been recovered.

I said it a year ago, and let me say it again: I've laid criminal charges twice against Arthur Fraser. Well, I may as well have gone to watch the Guardians of the Galaxy, because there's more action in that than we've seen against State Capture since the Zondo Commission.

Instead of occupying a correctional services cell, Fraser was saved by our Phala-Phala prince and made the boss of Correctional Services - using that position to release Jacob Zuma. Then, in a move worthy of the longest-running soap opera in the world, when refused a second term, he threw the President under the couch. You can't make this stuff up.

Despite the various methods of looting widely discussed, and even immortalised in black and white in The President's Keepers by Jacques Pauw, still Fraser walks free, and the money has disappeared like service delivery in an ANC-run Metro.

The Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence is invisible. You don't know when we meet, what we discuss, where we go, who we grill. There are attempts made by some in Parliament to force us to reveal agendas, and other details, but the answer is no. This committee never

leaks – which means we are told literal state secrets. Then it is then up to us to decide what to do with them.

But what I can tell you is that this committee has finally come of age, and has drawn a line in the sand. We have clawed in permanent and utterly brilliant staff despite every effort made to stop that happening. Today, Departments that try to slip dangerous moves past us, get sent packing. Departments that ignore our instructions are hauled over the coals, those without top-secret security clearance are turned away at the door and deadlines are demanded.

Neither Crime nor Defence intelligence have regulations – this after 25 years??? That was the responsibility of the many Ministers – some seven in the past few years, every one of whom failed to oversee their creation.

In contrast when we asked the National Intelligence Co-ordinating Committee NICOC – to draw up the long-awaited regulations – they did them. They all come to the JSCI for condonation.

On another positive note we went through the interviews for the Inspector General of Intelligence, and I was particularly pleased that the best person for the job was appointed – one Imtiaz Fazel – and he is doing a sterling job. He steps in where the committee may not.

Politics doesn't enter the room when we do. We work as a team – three of us from the DA – that's me, the Honourable Dirk Stubbe and from the NCOP the Honourable Cathy Labuschagne - together with the ANC – no other parties bother to attend - the security of our country is our united goal.

Equally, we speak as one in our condemnation of for example, the Treasury when it, slashes maintenance budgets by two-thirds then when the Presidential plane can't take off – again. You can't have it both ways. You can't take a penknife to a gun fight. You can't send dedicated personnel into dangerous situations with antiquated equipment. Let's see the big wigs of the Treasury use 3G from last century while the criminal syndicates use 5 and soon 6G. This is the sort of thing our Crime Intelligence, Defence Intelligence and the State Security personnel are having to deal with. This is no secret – it's spoken about openly – and is a crying shame.

At the Zondo Commission, we heard how suitcases stuffed with money walked out the door of the State Security Agency, we all know about the countless millions looted, and we today hear of antiquated equipment across our security cluster. Join the dots!!

Despite the HLRP Report, despite the multi-million rand Zondo Commission, those behind the multi-billion rand looting are free as birds.

That HLRP Report: has it been fully implemented since 2018? I'm sure you can guess the answer to that.

And you wonder why the South African public is sceptical every time a commission is established to form a sub-committee to investigate the possibility of a working group aimed at looking into whether or not corruption is an issue.

Think about it. If the outcomes of these reports and commissions are left untouched long enough, they gather dust. Public and media interest wanes. Parliamentary terms end. MPs leave or are moved to new portfolios – or into Government – and then what?

Mission accomplished.

I see so many dedicated South Africans come before this committee – those in Defence Intelligence never complain although their workload is trebled and their budget slashed. They never, ever complain. The State Security Agency grinds along and does its best despite the Amabhungane judgement; and Crime Intelligence – well it has never been the same since General Jacobs was removed by the last Police Commissioner – indeed it's a shadow of its former self, and will take years to recover - but we can't grill the new National Police Commissioner about it, because as the whole country knows, he doesn't have clearance.

Around the world equivalent agencies are accountable to Congress and the Senate...or various upper houses...yet here nothing. Once a year there is released a report redacted within an inch of its life, and that's it.

I often think that South Africa simply cannot afford this veil of secrecy over specifically the SSA. It goes against the HLRP report's edicts, but nothing has changed, nothing is out there. Except what is leaked in the spy vs spy dirty linen exposés.

That's how we come to be accused of providing arms to Russia...things like that dodge our committee completely. And presumably we as MPs are supposed to believe that not one of the entities we do oversight over, had any knowledge of this business?

I believe a massive amount is done without the knowledge of this committee – hidden from you and hidden from us.

Although there may be one or two in the National Assembly who had knowledge of the Simonstown deal – and so much more, at this stage it's hidden away. However, slowly but surely this committee is making headway.

Our strange, invisible committee is not a nice to have – it's crucial to our nation....and our reputation globally.

We deal with the uncomfortable issues, so you don't have to.