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as "covert procurement does not follow SCM (supply chain management) processes due to the sensitivity of project".

"SSA management identified an urgent need to secure a property to house high-profile individuals linked to the SSA. The current situation relies on rental of secure accommodation which does not create the safe and secure environment to which the SSA must adhere."

The letter further states that: "Properties within the SSA immovable asset register were considered but are not suitable or do not comply with the required standards, norms and specifications specifically required for this project."

The documents indicate that house required must be "upmarket with a minimum of 4 bedrooms, 5 living areas and 2 studies. The property should facilitate parking for a minimum of 6 vehicles."

The house is described on the estate agent's website as a "magnificent family home".

"The luxurious open-plan bar and pool room has an inviting gas fireplace. A beautiful courtyard with a relaxing water feature. Two of the large five en-suite bedrooms open onto the landscaped garden and a sparkling pool. Extras include a pyjama lounge, air conditioning, attention to detail and high ceilings throughout."

Two sources with intimate knowledge of the purchase of the property said the house was specifically bought for the minister and that the letter from SSA seeking approval was just a way of working around it.

The official said: "She just instructed us to buy this house and said we must find funds within our budget for it."

The official said it was unheard of for a minister to negotiate the purchase of a house and personally view the property unless "there is something fishy".

Public works spokesman Thami Mnchunu yesterday told the Sunday Times

Spy fund monies spent on minister's mansion



Security needs were cited to justify a housing upgrade. Picture: Supplied

the department had allocated a house for the minister in January, but "there are maintenance challenges with the current residence such that there are ongoing discussions between the department and the State Security Agency to look at alternative solutions".

"Furthermore, due to the sensitivity of the work of the minister of state security and security measures requirements, part of the solution under consideration between the two departments is to provide the ministry a house that will provide a security of tenure to successive ministers of state security," Mnchunu said.

President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed Letsatsi-Duba in February to replace Bongani Bongo. A source said the minister "went shopping for a new house just days after she was appointed".

A senior official who also signed the authorisation for the purchase of the house recommended that a total of R10-million should be made available to cover "the house procurement, furniture etc."

Mnchunu said public works was not made aware of any procurement plan by the SSA for Letsatsi-Duba.

"The Department of Public Works is the custodian of state immovable assets. However, the minister can assign the custodian function to any other department," he said.

He added that the Department of Public Works would engage with the State Security Agency to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation.

State Security Agency spokesman Dube

yesterday said that following months of engagement with public works to find suitable accommodation, "the minister is considering a number of accommodation options that now include this house".

The State Security Agency "does acquire immovable assets from time to time, in line with its operational needs", he said.

Dube denied that the agency specially bought the house for the minister.

"The current house the minister resides in was allocated to her when she was deputy minister. It has serious maintenance challenges."

"She had initially refused to take occupation but was informed these defects would be addressed while in the house. Sadly, after numerous engagements and efforts to resolve same, these challenges remain."

He added that the cost of security upgrades at Letsatsi-Duba's private residence "would have cost the department an excessive amount which could not be recovered after her term of office".

"There are ongoing discussions between officials of the State Security Agency and public works as to what alternative arrangements can be made in the accommodation for the minister of state security, taking into account all the sensitivities around her work. These measures could not be met in her current residence," he said.

Dube, however, could not confirm or deny that the minister personally viewed the house and met its owner as well as the estate agent.