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Page: 1

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Author: CLIVE NDOU

Trump takes aim at South Africa

Funding to SA suspended over Expropriation Act misunderstanding

CLIVE NDOU

United States President Donald Trump has placed South Africa in the crosshairs of his aggressive foreign policy by suspending all U.S.-funded programmes pending an investigation into the recently promulgated Expropriation Act.

Economic experts, political parties, including the DA, and even AfriForum have reacted with concern to Trump's announcement on his Truth Social platform on Sunday.

Trump accused South Africa of undermining the rights of "certain classes of people" by adopting the Expropriation Act, claiming it amounted to land confiscation and that the government was "treating certain classes of people very badly". However, it appears Trump's advisors have misinterpreted the new Act, which was signed into law by President Cyril Ramaphosa over a week ago.

The Expropriation Act replaces the 1975 expropriation law, which the South African government deemed outdated. The new Act does not grant the government the power to seize property arbitrarily.

Over the weekend, Trump also announced 25% tariffs on exports from Mexico and Canada, prompting both countries to retaliate with tariffs on U.S.-imported goods.

He imposed an additional 10% tariff on existing tariffs for China and threatened the European Union. *The Wall Street Journal* criticised Trump's economic policies in a hard-hitting editorial, calling them "senseless".

Pietermaritzburg and Midlands Chamber of Business CEO Melanie Veness said the impact of Trump's decision would be felt across the country if his threats became a reality. "If President Trump goes ahead and cuts PEPFAR funding, it will have a significantly negative impact on



The horror of war

Residents watch members of the Congolese Red-Cross and the Civilian Protection bury dozens of bodies in a cemetery in Goma yesterday. At least 700 people have been killed and 2 800 injured in intense fighting in Goma, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo's North Kivu province, a UN spokesperson said. Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame are set to attend a summit on the crisis on Saturday. M23 fighters and Rwandan soldiers, who have made substantial gains in eastern DRC, have vowed to march to the capital Kinshasa. **PHOTO: AFP**

the NGO sector, costing jobs and directly harming many of the most vulnerable in our society who rely on the assistance and care provided by those affected NGOs.

"In addition, there will be other economic consequences for South

Africa — we've already seen the impact that the threat has had on the rand and government stocks and bonds," Veness said.

President Cyril Ramaphosa said he is looking forward to engaging with Trump on South Africa's land reform policies.

"South Africa is a constitutional democracy deeply rooted in the rule of law, justice, and equality. The South African government has not confiscated any land," said Presidency spokesperson Vincent Magwenya.

"We look forward to engaging with the Trump administration over our land reform policy and issues of bilateral interest. We are certain that these engagements will lead to a better and more common understanding of these matters," Magwenya added.

Magwenya emphasised that the U.S. remains "a key strategic and trade partner" for South Africa.

International Relations and Co-operation Minister Ronald Lamola expressed confidence that Trump's advisers would use the investigative period to "deepen their understanding" of South Africa's land reform policies.

"We trust President Trump's advisers will leverage this opportunity to attain a thorough understanding of South Africa's policies within the framework of a constitutional democracy. This approach will promote a well-informed viewpoint that values and recognises our nation's dedication to democratic ideals and governance."

"It may become clear that our Expropriation Act is not exceptional, as many countries have similar legislation, commonly referred to as eminent domain in the United States and governed by various Acts in the United Kingdom," Lamola told *Daily Maverick*.

South African economist and political analyst Roelof Botha said the new Act was necessary, given that the previous Expropriation Act was 50 years old and outdated.

"What Mr Trump doesn't realise

is that there has been extensive research around this Bill. It's simply an update of the 1975 Expropriation Act. Over these 50 years, South Africa has changed drastically.

"We have become a democracy and are on the threshold of a new phase of infrastructure development," he said.

Botha said the government would only apply the Act in the interest of the country as a whole.

In cases where land or property is expropriated for public infrastructure projects, owners would be compensated accordingly.

Only in rare circumstances, such as when the owner cannot be traced, would the government expropriate property without compensation.

"We don't have anything to fear at this point in time," he said.

The DA, which has called for amendments to the Act, said it did not support Trump's decision to cut funding to South Africa.

"While the Act does need to be amended to meet the sequencing requirements highlighted by Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson, there are also opportunities to address other concerns raised by the public.

"However, it is not true that the Act allows land to be seized by the state arbitrarily. It requires fair compensation for legitimate expropriations in terms of Section 25 of the Constitution.

"It is unfortunate that individuals have sought to portray this Act

as an amendment to Section 25 to allow for expropriation without compensation," said DA leader John Steenhuisen.

Civil rights organisation AfriForum, which opposes the Expropriation Act, said it agreed with Trump's view that the new law threatens property rights but did not support his decision to cut funding.

"The fact is, ordinary people are already under terrible economic pressure, and this kind of action by the U.S. will harm us most. We cannot be punished twice for having a foolish government," said AfriForum CEO Kallie Kriel.

Trump's post caused the rand to drop to R19 against the dollar yesterday morning, prompting Ramaphosa to issue a statement refuting the U.S. President's claims.

"South Africa is a constitutional democracy deeply rooted in the rule of law, justice, and equality. The South African government has not confiscated any land.

"The recently adopted Expropriation Act is not a confiscation instrument but a constitutionally mandated legal process that ensures public access to land in an equitable and just manner, as guided by the Constitution.

"South Africa, like the United States of America and other countries, has always had expropriation laws that balance the need for public use of land and the protection of property owners' rights," he said.

clive.ndou@witness.co.za

Bridal couple in limbo after lobola negotiators robbed

NTOMBIZETHU NGCOCO

A bridal couple has been left in limbo after their lobola negotiators were robbed of R35 000 at KwaDumbuzi in Pietermaritzburg on Sunday.

The groom, who was parked outside the house, was also robbed of R2 000 and his car, which the thieves allegedly set alight down the road before fleeing on foot.

The dramatic scene unfolded a few minutes after the families entered the home and began introductions.

The robbery has left the bridal couple's families with questions, including how the robbers knew exactly who to approach for the money.

It is alleged that while introductions between the two families were underway at around 12.30 pm on Sunday, two unknown men barged into the lounge where the lobola negotiations were taking place. They reportedly produced firearms and instructed everyone to remain seated.

"They approached the head negotiator and demanded money. He gave it to them. They took the money out, threw the bag away, and said that was not all. They wanted the rest. They went to the other negotiator, who gave them the money, and then they left on foot and headed to the groom's car," said a source close to the family, who asked not to be named.

According to the police report, the thieves then approached the groom, who was seated in his car parked outside the yard.

The source said the thieves attempted to rob the groom of money and fired gunshots into the air. The groom handed over the money he had with him. "We were expecting the groom's family to pay lobola. A few minutes after they entered the house, two men arrived, and we thought they were with the groom's family. They pointed guns at the negotiators and demanded money," said the source.

"They added that they want the criminals to be caught so they can explain how they knew where the money was. "There were three negotiators, and they knew exactly which ones were carrying cash. They went straight to them," said the source.

"We thought we were going to die. I am still shaking. I cried the whole

“We were expecting the groom’s family to pay lobola. A few minutes after they entered the house, two men arrived, and we thought they were with the groom’s family. They pointed guns at the negotiators and demanded money.”

night. We are grateful to God that no one died."

The source said the groom and his family had visited the family three times previously. "They came to see the newborn child. The second time, they came with money for damages and a goat to cleanse the house, as they had impregnated our child. We are confused as to why there is drama and problems now."

University of Johannesburg cultural expert Gugu Mazibuko said this is an unfortunate incident for both families, but the groom still needs to pay lobola. "Both families need to engage, as the groom still needs to pay, even though it won't be the same amount. They need to work together. They were robbed before the main phase had even started."

"Times have changed; they should bring a small amount as a sign and arrange for the rest to be deposited into a bank. This is the safest way, given the surge in crime," said Mazibuko.

Ward councillor Shongumusa Zuma said it is unfortunate that such incidents portray the area in a bad light. He also appealed to the police to conduct a thorough investigation.
• ntombizethu@capitalmedia.co.za

U.S. President Donald Trump. **PHOTO: FILE**



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