

SPECIAL ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE THOKO DIDIZA, MP, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, CONCERNING THE RECENT INVASION OF LAND AND PRIVACY OF THE MBEKI FAMILY

Madame Speaker
Deputy President
Honourable Members
Fellow South Africans

Firstly I wish to thank Madam Speaker for allowing me to address this august house on a matter of public importance which relates to the policy on the privileges of Public Representatives including the President and the Deputy President. I do so not because of the so called question from the Democratic Alliance which has not reached my office nor the question office in this very Parliament as we speak.

Madam Speaker I thought it was necessary to explain to our people and members of this National Assembly the policy guidelines and conventions that have been used with regard to the privileges of public representatives, including the President , Deputy President and the former President and Deputy President.

Madam Speaker It is important for me to go back to this matter of the so called question by Honourable Douglas Gibson to myself on the matter of the Private Residence of the President. During this previous weekend an impression has been created that government did not respond on the question you have raised on this matter and that is why you had to take a dramatic step. Clearly, I had to follow up the matter, since it is the responsibility of the Minister of Public Works to provide security related infrastructure to the house of public representatives where policy determines. Following this enquiry ,I have an e-mail which I received from Mr Michael Plaatjie today confirming that there has not been a question on the President's private residence that has been received by this office. Clearly, honourable Douglas has to check what was done by his office, so that he can indeed apologise for misleading the public as he did by

claiming that a question has been sent for me to answer when it actually has not been.

At the end of last week we all witnessed an unfortunate and a strange behaviour where one of our members of Parliament led the contingent of journalist to the private residence of our Head of State, President Mbeki. This visit followed an enquiry from an individual who posed himself as the Researcher of the Democratic Alliance to the Contractor, requesting information relating to the location of the house of the President that they were building. One of the interesting issues that we may all need to reflect on was what was of interest of the said researcher on this private residence? As it emerged later that Friday and as it went on during the weekend and this morning in the radio, honourable Gibson believed the state was building a private residence of the President and had kept the house under wraps as it is has been stated in one of the Sunday papers the past weekend.

What then does the policy say on these matters with regard to public representatives? The handbook for members of the Executive and Presiding Officers Chapter 4 (1) on residences clearly indicates how the state allocates official residences. Chapter 4(2) further states how the state provides security arrangements for private residences used for official purposes as it is covered in Chapter 2 paragraph 3 which states the following "On assumption of office, members should approach the Minister for Intelligence Services and the Minister for Safety and Security , for a security analysis and arrangements for the provision of appropriate security.

Members and their support staff should, at all times, adhere to the security arrangements and policies, and take precautions to do anything that will compromise security.

The analysis referred to in 3.1 above , will include security of private residences occupied on a regular basis, state-owned residences, private residences, personal security and the offices utilized by the Members.

The Minister of Public Works should be requested to implement , in conjunction with the SAPS, the recommended security arrangements

at privately owned residences in terms of the scheme approved by the Cabinet for this purpose.

In addition to the Hand book for the members of the Executive and Presiding Officers there is a policy that relates to privileges of former Presidents, their Spouses, Widows and Widowers which spells out what are these privileges and what the responsibility of the State is in this regard.

In this policy the state has the following obligations:-

1. Official Residence

The Former President and his or her family may, from the date of resignation from the office, remain in the official residence of his or her choice for up to 60days with retention of all existing privileges they previously enjoyed in the residence.

2. Security

The security services rendered to a Former President will continue after his or her departure from the official residence for as long as and at the level that the Minister of Safety and Security deems necessary.

Security measures at the private residences of former Presidents will be dealt with in terms of the policy adopted by Cabinet on 20 August 2003.

3.4.6 refers:- The Security measures that have been agreed to in the above process shall be implemented as follows:

-the SAPS personnel and related costs shall be provided and funded the SAPS and

-structural additions and amendments shall be provided and maintained and funded by the Department of Public Works and

3.4.7 states that the security situation at the private properties owned and regularly used by the Formers Presidents and their immediate families shall, from time to time, be revisited by the SAPS, based on the findings of a threat analysis. The SAPS shall report its findings to

the Minister of Safety and Security. This may at any time lead to upgrading, downgrading or termination of security measures. If security measures are downgraded or terminated, any permanent structures shall become the property of the owner of the land on which the said structures shall become the property of the owner or the land on which the said structures were erected, who shall have to maintain them.

3.9 of the hand book states that the state the former President may request secure office accommodation, with secure parking facilities. Such accommodation will be provided by the Department and is limited to 120sq metres.

Honourable members, with regard to Members of Parliament, Public works offers accommodation, security and transport to members, as directed by the Parliamentary Villages Management Board Act. No 96 of 1998 .

Clearly, in this regard the state has acted within policy with regard to the Private Residence of Mr and Mrs Mbeki.

THANK YOU