

**SPEECH BY STANLEY ZONDI, PROVINCIAL LEADER OF THE
DA YOUTH IN MPUMALANGA ON THE SUBJECT OF
RETAINING THE SCORPIONS
PRESENTED IN CAPE TOWN ON ... SEPTEMBER 2008**

To begin with may I thank the Chairperson and committee for the invitation to make this presentation to-day – we do appreciate it.

Apparently my sin at Witbank was to refer to the name of Jacob Zuma in my submission.

what we thought was supposed to be a public hearing had turned out to be an ANC rally.
AS a result guys stopped from speaking at what was supposed to be a Public Hearing

Well I am proud that the thoughts expressed a few years ago by Archbishop Desmond Tutu still carry some influence namely "that patriotism is telling the truth to authority"

We, the DA Youth in Mpumalanga totally oppose the disbandment of the Directorate of Special Operations (DSO) - which is more popularly known as the Scorpions.

The DA opposes the integration of the Scorpions and any specialist crime fighting units. Specialised units must not be integrated with the general police as this dilutes the intensity to expose and prevent specific crimes. In fact such talks of disbandment have already stunted the Scorpions ability to completely fulfil its crime fighting operations.

The DA, along with two-thirds of South Africans and ~~over~~^{many} thousands signatories to the 'Save our Scorpions' petition, believe that the dissolution of the Scorpions will weaken the fight against crime. It is therefore inconceivable that a 14 year old democracy will now take this short –sighted decision. Also, the proposed legislation will

give too much power to the SAPS. What makes the current government want to revert to Apartheid era where the SAPS is neither accountable to the courts nor the people... this is certainly not the way the DA would go.

Crime is a big problem in South Africa. The Scorpions have had many successes against serious crime.

We therefore understand that the ANC's drive to disband the Scorpions is nothing more than a blatant example of the governing party putting its own interests and the political interests of ANC colleagues above the interests of the people of South Africa. In fact, to corroborate this perception, Gwede Mantashe admitted earlier this year that the ANC wanted to see the Scorpions closed because it was targeting ANC members!

To castigate the Scorpions with such ease and such speed, makes the DA ask: What is the current government trying to keep hidden? Who feels his misdemeanours will be unearthed? Who is plundering South Africa's resources for his or her own personal gain?

Before you laugh this off, answer this. Why did the governing party allow an unfairly short time for public hearings? In Mpumalanga, which is a predominantly rural province, covering 83 000 square kilometres with a population of 3.6 million people, there was only one miserable public hearing organised. Even larger industrial towns such as Nelspruit, home to 560 000 people and the Mpumalanga Legislature, were overlooked. The single hearing was

in Witbank – in the far east of the province and was stone walled by wabenzis from the ANC Youth League. If this was not sufficient impediment in allowing the people of the country to be heard, we are led to believe that the governing party will disregard messages sent electronically or by cell phone, because such messages did not show that those that sent the messages were willing to make oral representation to parliament. If government want oral representation to parliament, hold sufficient public hearings and send the appropriate members of parliament to the hearings instead of busloads of ANC supporters who do not even know what the Scorpions do.

The government should be constantly strengthening our democracy and promoting more responsive and accountable government. Notwithstanding our Constitution, it would be naive to assume that democracy is entrenched in South Africa. A democracy listens to the needs of its people. It does not belittle the size of those cries. It hears all. A democracy would hear the pleas of the thousands of people who petitioned against the closure of the Scorpions.

As a member of the public and as a Youth leader of the Opposition, I understand that the Scorpions' role is to bring serious crime out into the open and to achieve a high conviction rate for such crimes. We understand that when the Scorpions investigate serious allegations, they have the intelligence, expertise and resources to substantiate serious allegations in organised crime, economic crime and corruption.

Such intelligence and effective preparation of dockets prior to trial cannot be under-estimated. At a time when courts and prosecutors are stretched to their limits, at a time when counsel is prepared to

strike, we need the highly effective Scorpions to speed up the conviction rate.

Whilst there is enormous scope for the SAPS to learn from the successes and failures of the Scorpions, we are all too much aware that an incorporation into the SAPS will also allow a period of idleness, a drop in morale and a loss of skills. Whilst beaurocrats belabour the correct salary structures, incentives and perceived measures to prevent corruption, the master minds behind serious crime will be having a field day.

We therefore fully oppose the clamp down of such an Operation. The Scorpions are a high level specialised unit, known for its integrity, competence and keen crime fighting skills.

For more information:

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