

Press Release

For immediate release



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Media enquiries: Gareth van Onselen, Head of Politics and Governance, IRR cell: 073 179 5957 Email: gareth@irr.org.za

General Media enquiries: Michael Morris Tel: 066 302 1968 Email: michael@irr.org.za
Kelebogile Leepile Tel: 011 432 7221 ext: 2018 Email: kelebogile@irr.org.za

Inside South Africa's 'Secret Police'

Few things in South Africa are more visible and yet more secretive than the VIP Protection Services. We see them everywhere, but who they are, how they operate, how much they cost and what outcomes they are responsible for, generally remain a mystery.

This is the subject of the IRR's latest report, *South Africa's Secret Police: Inside the Multi-Billion Rand, Clandestine VIP Protection Services*.

The study seeks to

- describe how the VIP Protection Services works, is structured, the outcomes it is responsible for and its performance;
- track the enormous rise in expenditure on VIP Protection over the past two decades; and
- demonstrate the degree to which this exceedingly well-funded police force operates in secret and, generally, without accountability.

Author of the report, IRR Head of Politics and Governance Gareth van Onselen, notes that “on all three counts, there is cause for serious concern”.

Van Onselen says: “VIP Protection Services, a complex and secretive machine, now operates on a massive budget. For the 2018/2019 financial year, the Treasury will spend just under R3bn on VIP Protection, and that estimate is deeply conservative.”

The report finds that, under President Zuma, “spending on VIP Protection exploded, and it continues to increase, year on year. Cyril Ramaphosa is set to inherit a behemoth”.

The report, which includes a multitude of comparative and other tables, tracks all public expenditure on VIP Protection across all aspects of the operation (including VIP flights and 21 VIP Squadron) since 2000, when it first appeared as a budget line item.

Van Onselen points out that the various component parts of VIP Protection, some of which fall under SAPS, some under the Defence Force and some under the Intelligence Service, “are not properly reported on and, often, information about its operations is denied or hidden in public documents”.

The report seeks to assemble all available information – from key outcomes and the policy that defines it to its workload, equipment and personnel – to map the full character of the VIP Protection Services, including the “most hidden of all its various component parts”, the Presidential Protection Services.

Finally, the report seeks to document everything we do not know about VIP Protection and “set out the risks inherent to the secretive nature of this very powerful, extremely well-funded but largely clandestine operation”.

Says Van Onselen: “The constitution demands civilian oversight, but, routinely, Parliament is not properly briefed on VIP Protection and the public is none the wiser as to its performance.

“Few things in South Africa are more visible and yet more secretive than the VIP Protection Services. We see them everywhere but who they are, how they operate, how much they cost and the outcomes they are responsible for, generally remain a mystery.

“Hopefully, this document – which is not just a guide to the VIP Protection Services, but an archive of all available information on it – will go some considerable way to shining as much light as possible into the darkness.”

Ends.