

# Long-term foes in KwaZulu-Natal join hands to bleed the taxpayer

IFP and ANC unite to bash media as more claims of profligacy emerge

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**S**WORN enemies in KwaZulu-Natal's coalition government this week closed ranks to defend members of the provincial Cabinet against charges of abuse of public funds.

Despite their resentment of each other, Premier and IFP national chairman Lionel Mtshali and his co-leader, the ANC's S'bu Ndebele, have jointly charged that press reports about wanton expenditure came from a "cabal" who were part of a "sinister plot to derail the security of ministers".

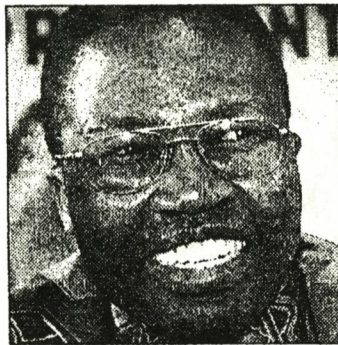
The statement followed last week's Sunday Times exposé that Mtshali flies to work and back at taxpayers' expense.

This week it emerged that Mtshali is also planning to have a helicopter landing pad built at his Durban home.

The helipad is intended to save him the trouble of travelling by car to Durban International and Virginia airports to catch flights to his office in Ulundi and other destinations.

Senior government officials say the money to build the helipad will come from a budget of R2.5-million which has been set aside for the "upgrading of security" at Mtshali's Durban and Ulundi homes.

Mtshali regularly travels in a state-of-the-art jet and helicopter. He commutes between



S'BU NDEBELE

Durban and Ulundi up to four times a week at a cost of at least R12 000 a return trip.

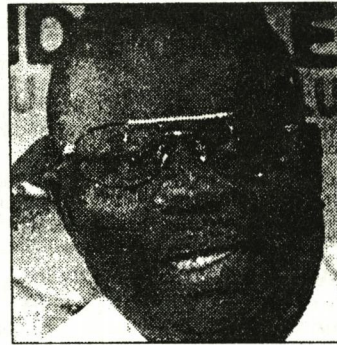
According to officials, the KwaZulu-Natal tender board has allowed normal procedures to be waived so that the upgrading can be done at Mtshali's residences.

The funds have already been transferred from the premier's budget to the Department of Works, which must now give the go-ahead for the construction of the helipad and other security improvements.

Last year the tender board also waived its rules to allow a R340 000 security upgrade at Mtshali's Durban house.

It included the erection of a higher fence, the installation of a security system and 24-hour monitoring of the premises.

The chief director of communications in Mtshali's department, Phumla Nxumalo, said



DUMISANI MAKHAYE

she was not aware of plans to construct the helipad or to improve security arrangements at the houses.

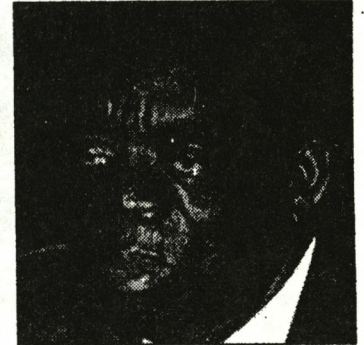
In another development, Public Protector Selby Baqwa has been asked to probe allegations of profligate expenditure by KwaZulu-Natal Cabinet members.

The probe, requested by the Democratic Party, relates mainly to the costs of personal bodyguards, ministerial vehicles, hotel and entertainment expenses and air travel.

Baqwa's spokesman, Nicolette Teichmann, said the office would conduct a preliminary investigation into the merits of the allegations.

"We will then decide whether to embark on a full-blown investigation into the spending patterns of the cabinet," she said.

In a five-page letter to Baqwa,



GIDEON ZULU

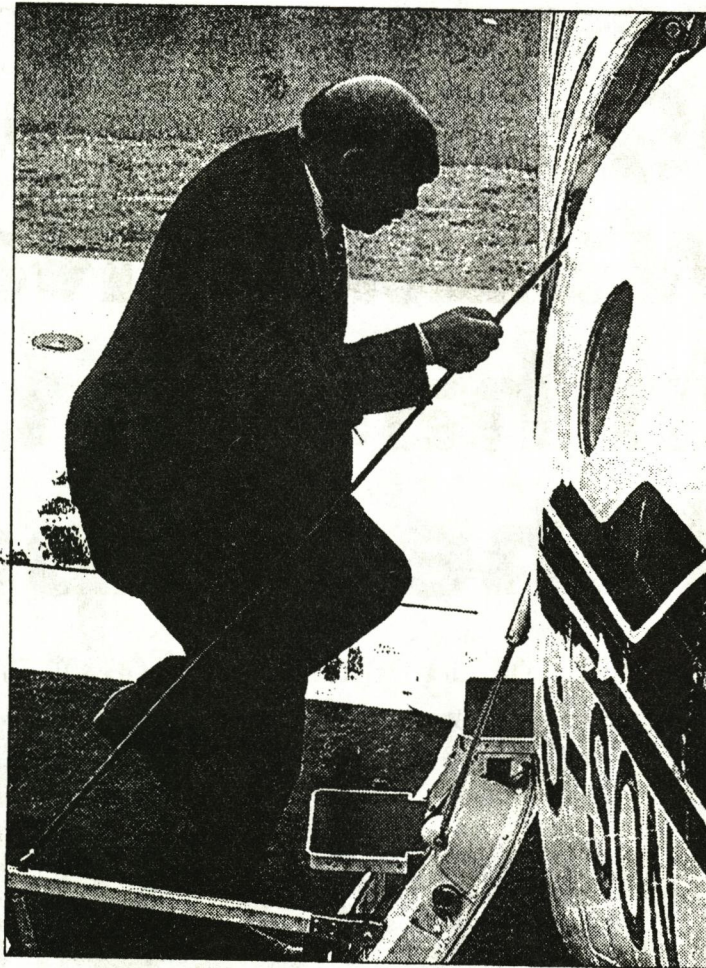
the DP's chief whip in the KwaZulu-Natal parliament, Belinda Scott, listed a litany of overspending, saying her party was "seriously concerned" about the "alarming" expenditure of provincial Cabinet members.

This includes:

- Salaries for bodyguards estimated at R3.5-million last year. The cost and deployment figures for VIP guards were provided by the provincial department of safety and security in September last year.

- Ministerial vehicle expenses. According to the document, taxpayers fork out about R20 000 a month for the premier's official vehicles, with an additional R7 000 a month for his private vehicles. Vehicle costs for the former MEC for Education, Eileen kaNkosi Shandu, were R23 408 a month.





**GRAVY PLANE:** Mtshali boarding an aircraft, a picture he and Ndebele say was taken as part of a sinister plot to derail the security of ministers  
Pictures: RICHARD SHOREY

- Excessive air travel. Figures provided in September last year revealed that trips on the LearJet and helicopter were costing the province R544 833 a month;

It is alleged that Mtshali, and on occasion Ndebele, fly to a destination and require that their ministerial vehicles travel the same route to meet them there.

Scott said that Mtshali flew to Cape Town for the opening of Parliament this year, and his ministerial vehicle was driven there to collect him at the airport;

- Hotel and entertainment expenditure. Scott alleged that in one year, Welfare MEC Prince Gideon Zulu ran up a bill in excess of R1-million at Durban's Royal Hotel for overnight stays with his bodyguards.

The MEC of Works, the Rev Celani Mtetwa, has also been

fingered by the Auditor-General for "excessive expenditure" on hotel accommodation; and

- The cost of official accommodation for members of the Cabinet. This follows reports that the MEC for Housing, Dumisani Makhaye, occupies a house in Umhlanga Rocks which is leased by the Department of Works for R22 500 a month. Taxpayers also picked up a tab of R190 000 for the furnishings.

In terms of the ministerial handbook, the total rent that can be claimed by ministers for their private residences is about R4 000 a month.

Scott said her party was also concerned about the possible write-off of arrear rentals by members of the Cabinet for their official Ulundi residences. It has been alleged that some members owe more than R300 000 each in unpaid rent.