

Govt hides behind Defence Act's secrecy clauses, DA says

According to *defenceWeb*, Opposition Democratic Alliance party Shadow deputy minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, Pieter van Dalen, is asking whether a veil of secrecy has been drawn over maritime safety through the use of secrecy clauses in the Defence Act.

Van Dalen warns the South African Marine Safety Authority (SAMSA) is apparently unable to audit the three Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) patrol vessels SA Navy is to operate, reports *defenceWeb*. SAMSA is mandated to ensure marine safety and to monitor oil pollution off South Africa's coastline. Without an audit, SAMSA says, it is impossible to ascertain South Africa's ability to respond to an oil spill disaster.

"If there's an oil spill today, we'll only have a few hours to react, otherwise it could be a fully-fledged disaster," Sobantu Tilayi, the Chief Operating Officer of SAMSA said, "[w]e have to make sure that the capacity exists to deal with a pollution problem. We need to urgently audit the patrol vessels. But we haven't been able to do so yet," *defenceWeb* reports.

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