

FIRE THIS MAN!

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By GAVIN EVANS

MAGNUS MALAN has done it again.

FW de Klerk's biggest political liability was once more in hot water this week over the auditor-general's revelations that the South African Defence Force's notorious Civil Co-operation Bureau spent millions in taxpayers' money last year — months after Malan announced that CCB operations had been disbanded.

And yesterday the general went further: he announced that the government is planning to indemnify the SADF against future legal suits from former CCB members.

Why does President FW de Klerk tolerate this man in his cabinet?

There are at least five strong reasons why the minister of defence should be cleaning out his office this morning:

1 Evidence to the Harms Commission showed that Malan had been fully aware of the existence of the CCB and its predecessors for over a

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decade — despite his protestation that he only learned about it in November 1989.

In a scathing report on the CCB, Mr Justice Harms noted the the minister "is of course politically responsible for his department, and that includes the CCB". He also slapped the gen-

eral on the wrist for several other failings, including his misuse of parliament to publicise his allegations that assassinated Windhoek advocate Anton Lubowski was a spy.

2 In 1987 Malan denied in parliament that an SADF helicopter had been used to drop pamphlets from the non-existent "Anti-Liberal Alliance" on an End Conscription Campaign fair. A year later, the SADF admitted in papers before the Cape Supreme Court that the helicopter had belonged to the SADF and the army had been involved in an official smear campaign against the ECC.

3 In 1987, following the suicide of cabinet minister John Wiley, questions were asked in parliament about Malan's use of SADF transport for fishing trips with his colleague.

4 In 1983 he publicly denied the SADF was supporting Renamo in Mozambique and refused to admit SADF support for Unita in Angola. A year later it emerged he had misled the public on these points.

The SADF under Malan was involved in the destabilisation of the Southern African subcontinent, at the cost of thousands of lives and untold damage.

5 When the SADF invaded Angola in 1975, Malan — then chief of the Army — was one of those behind the decision to keep this knowledge from the South African public, at a time when it was being widely reported overseas.

So far De Klerk has deliberately chosen to turn a blind eye to the wrongdoings of his defence minister, perhaps not wanting to test his new-found support from the security establishment.

This time, however, Malan has gone too far. Between April and July last year R9-million in cash was paid over to the CCB (nearly R4-million earmarked for unauthorised payments to apparently demoralised CCB members) — despite Malan's assurances that all activities of the secret network had been suspended.

He has misled parliament repeatedly, acting in cynical disregard of the public he is supposed to serve.

De Klerk owes it to the country to give his defence minister the boot.