

Africa to fund rapid response forces

Africa will not rely on funds from former colonial powers to support the establishment of an interim rapid reaction force to respond to coups on the continent, President Jacob Zuma said on Wednesday (19 June).



President Jacob Zuma (Image: GCS)

"Do we want to be controlled by other people or do we want to be independent and stand on our own?" Zuma asked in response to questions in the National Assembly.

He said South Africa remained committed to the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), as adopted at the African Union (AU) summit in Ethiopia last month.

African Christian Democratic Party MP Kenneth Meshoe asked Zuma whether South Africa's volunteering to send troops to the ACIRC would unnecessarily burden the South African taxpayer.

Zuma said the problem with relying on donor funds meant the donor countries, particularly in Europe, had "too much of a say on how the money was used".

The 2011 Libyan civil war was cited as an example of how African countries were curbed from intervening.

"Part of the reason the AU could not go [to Libya] was because the donors said: 'Don't use our money there'. They wanted to give themselves some time to bomb Libya out of existence," Zuma claimed.

Many African countries had already volunteered troops to the ACIRC, which has yet to come into operation.

Zuma said a rapid military force was necessary so the AU could respond urgently to crises, such as recent fighting in countries such as Mali, the Central African Republic, Niger, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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