

Mnangagwa's govt appeases war vets with \$4.6 billion

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IN a bid to appease war veterans, who play a crucial role in Zanu-PF election campaigns, the government has set aside ZW\$4.6 billion [US\$ 5.4 million on street or 7.076 million on auction] to invest in farms, mining and tourism.

Finance and Economic Development minister Mthuli Ncube made the announcement when he presented the 2023 National Budget in Parliament last week.

Ncube said the liberation war fighters' welfare remains of uppermost importance to the government.

"The welfare of the veterans of the liberation war remains a priority, with the 2023 Budget setting aside ZW\$4.6 billion towards their monetary and non-monetary benefits, as well as capitalisation of their investments in mining, tourism and farms," Ncube said.

War veterans have over the years been demanding gratuities for their role in the attainment of Independence.

In 1997, the government paid out unbudgeted lump sums of nearly ZW\$50 000 (US\$4 300 at the time) to war veterans following months of protests. This led to the collapse of the local currency which has never fully recovered.

In May 2022, the Zimbabwean government announced plans to pay one-off rewards and monthly pensions to a new batch of 160 000 war veterans, war collaborators and ex-political prisoners who missed out during the first round of compensation in 1997.

Despite sometimes complaining of being neglected, war veterans have often played a crucial role in

elections.

They have always been used by Zanu-PF as part of the commissariat, especially in rural areas where they have been involved in campaigns.

On many occasions, war veterans have been implicated in the intimidation and harassment of opposition members, especially during the election period.

They led farm invasions during the land reform programme, targeting white farmers, some of whom were killed.

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