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MCHUNU ALLIES GRILLED AT PARLY, MADLANGA

*Chief of Staff tells of how minister
wanted Mogotsi in meeting over
illegal mine tragedy*

MAYIBONGWE MAQHINA and
RAPULA MOATSHE

SENZO Mchunu's chief of staff Cedrick Nkabinde is still in the dark about why his boss specifically wanted controversial North West and ANC-aligned businessman Brown Mogotsi to brief him on the a crisis of illegal miners at Stilfontein.

Continuing his testimony at the parliamentary inquiry probing allegations made by KwaZulu-Natal Police Commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi, Nkabinde said Mchunu had, on August 24, 2024, instructed him to make arrangements for him to go and visit Stilfontein.

The South African government, in particular the police, were under scrutiny over the deaths of about 78 illegal miners trapped in an abandoned mine at Stilfontein last year.

Nkabinde said he only met Mogotsi once when he facilitated the meeting on behalf of Mchunu, who has since been placed on enforced leave by President Cyril Ramaphosa in light of Mkhwanazi's allegations.

"It was at this meeting that the minister provided me with contact details of Mr Mogotsi from North West. The minister instructed that I should contact Mr Mogotsi and ask him to come with local leaders to brief him on the situation before his visit," he said.

A meeting was scheduled for Mogotsi and four of his "comrades" on October 28, 2024, at Mchunu's official residence.

"I facilitated all logistical arrangements for the meeting, which proceeded as scheduled. I did not attend this meeting and therefore was unable to confirm the discussions that were had in that meeting."

Nkabinde said he did not know the rationale for Mchunu to identify Mogotsi to a meeting with local leaders.

He also said it was the first and last time he had met Mogotsi in October 2024.

"It was only for this Stilfontein, this arrangement for this meeting. After all these arrangements for this meeting, I have never seen Mogotsi coming to the minister or even facilitating any meeting for him to come and see the minister."

Nkabinde told the inquiry that Mogotsi had never visited Mchunu's office since last year's meeting.

Mogotsi also faced intense questioning over his claims that Mkhwanazi and Zulu King Misuzulu ka Zwelithini were agents for the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Testifying at the Madlanga Commission of Inquiry, Mogotsi - a self-described contact agent for a crime intelligence unit - alleged he was investigating Mkhwanazi as a potential CIA agent.

He claimed the CIA recruited Mkhwanazi and King Misuzulu to safeguard their interests, particularly regarding the Richards Bay Coal Terminal, adding that he received the information from one of his sources.

However, Advocate Matthew Chaskalson SC, challenged his evidence, suggesting that it was fabricated and that it could be a "misdirection tactic" to divert from the allegations made by Mkhwanazi during his media briefing on July 6.

Mogotsi denied that his testimony was intended to misdirect, saying the outcome of the investigation "will show whether you are correct or not".

Chaskalson pointed out that the Richards Bay Coal Terminal is owned by over 10 mining companies, each with their own export quota, giving them control over coal exports and the ability to choose their buyers.

He also dismissed Mogotsi's claim that the coal terminal's offtake portion is owned by Israeli interests.

"That notion is completely fanciful," he said.

Contrary to Mogotsi's claim, Chaskalson said: "There has never been any suggestion from the government that the coal terminal is going to be shut down. On the contrary, in the period you speak, the government has invested millions of rands on the rail link to Richard Bay."

Chaskalson said if Mogotsi was genuinely investigating a CIA plot with his handler, he would have found the facts about Richards Bay Coal Terminal's ownership structure online in just five minutes.

"You really would not have come with a story, which is self-evidently absurd," he said.



A GENERAL view of a billboard showing heads of state of the G20 countries outside the Nasrec Expo Centre in Johannesburg. Increased security measures have been put in place ahead of the leaders summit at the weekend. These include the deployment of more than 3 500 newly trained police constables across South Africa as part of heightened security measures for the leaders' summit.

NATION

NPA boss Shamila Batohi accuses suspended Director of Public Prosecutions of political motives

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NATIONAL Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) head Shamila Batohi has intimated that some of the high-profile cases that suspended Director of Public Prosecutions Andrew Chauke pursued were politically motivated.

She made reference to the case of the institution of racketeering charges against former KwaZulu-Natal Hawks boss Major-General Johan Booysen and members of the Cato Manor Unit. It is claimed that while there was no evidence linking Booysen and the team to racketeering, Chauke persisted in seeing them prosecuted.

Batohi also referred to the matter regarding the failure to continue with murder and other charges against former Crime Intelligence head Lieutenant-General Richard Mdluli. In this case, she said Chauke protected him from



Advocate Shamila Batohi

being prosecuted while there was strong evidence against Mdluli.

Batohi, however, conceded before the Nkabinde Inquiry into Chauke's fitness to hold office that these events took place before she became the NDDP head.

"I have no personal knowledge of any of these cases. Most of the facts happened before I was here."

Batohi was instrumental in Chauke being suspended by President Cyril Ramaphosa in July and for the president establishing the Nkabinde Inquiry, headed by retired Constitutional Court Justice Bess Nkabinde.

She was the first witness to take yesterday. In her opening remarks, she said giving evidence before the inquiry was not something she relishes.

Batohi said she had known Chauke for a long time and they always had a cordial relationship.

"But as the National Director, I have a duty. I believe a full hearing will be in the interest of Advocate Chauke and the NPA to ensure that a fair decision is reached. The Constitution and the NPA Act require all of us to serve the people in South Africa in good faith. These are not just words. They mean a lot," Batohi

told the Inquiry.

Batohi said decisions made by prosecutors can alter the course of a person's life, as some can be falsely accused, while on the other hand victims might not obtain justice.

Every single prosecutor in the country must adhere to this principle and uphold the rule of law. Any perception that prosecutions are politically motivated to pursue a case without the necessary evidence or abandon a case for ulterior motives goes against the NPA Act, she told the inquiry.

Batohi said this is the context of the current inquiry into Chauke's fitness to hold office. She pointed to the opening remarks this week by Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, on behalf of Chauke, where he said this case dangerously seeks to punish a prosecutor for simply doing his job.

"This can't be further from the truth," she said.

NATION

Singapore seizes record rhino horn haul from South Africa

AFF

IN WHAT has been described as the largest seizure of rhinoceros horns in Singapore to date, 20 pieces of rhinoceros horns weighing 35.7 kilograms from South Africa were found hidden in air cargo bound for Laos.

The haul's total value is estimated at around \$870,000 (R15m).

Disguised as "furniture fittings", the stash was found 10 days ago after a cargo handler "detected a strong odour" coming from a package, Singapore's National Parks Board and air cargo handler SATS said in a joint statement.

Rhinos are protected under the wildlife protection convention CITES, and international trade in their horns

is prohibited. The horns will now be destroyed according to CITES guidelines, the Singapore authorities said.

Rhino horns are considered status symbols and believed to have medicinal properties in parts of Asia. They are also carved into jewellery and household items, including combs, buttons and belt buckles.

The largest previous seizure of rhino horns in Singapore was in October 2022, when 34.7 kg of the forbidden commodity were found in a South African man's bags at Changi Airport.

The smuggler was sentenced to two

years in jail in January last year.

The Switzerland-based International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said in 2022 that poaching and the illegal trade in horns have decreased in recent years but remain grave threats to rhinos.

It said more than 2,700 rhinos were poached in Africa between 2018 and 2021, of which 90 percent were killed in South Africa, mainly in the Kruger National Park.

Home to nearly 80 percent of the world's rhinoceroses, South Africa is a poaching hotspot, driven by demand from Asia.



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CHAMPIONS NEEDS A MOTIVATION
ABOVE AND BEYOND WINNING
| **PAT RILEY**