

# 'It's our country!

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## Gupta outrage from tripartite alliance also sends a message to the 'Big Man', President Zuma

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Not long ago, the Gupta family was sitting pretty with the ANC, but this week the tide in the alliance turned against the politically connected family.

An ANC national executive committee (NEC) source said the outrage from the ANC, Cosatu and the SA Communist Party (SACP) about the illegal landing at the Waterkloof Air Force Base of an Airbus ferrying passengers to the Gupta wedding this week was meant to send a message "to the big man (President Jacob Zuma)", who is a close family friend of the Guptas.

Another source in the alliance said the outrage was spontaneous because the Guptas had become too much. "We have had enough!" Said an ANC senior leader: "It was all about sovereignty. We wanted to send a message: this is not your country."

Various members of Zuma's family are in business with the Guptas. Three of the brothers - Ajay, Atul and Rajesh (also known as Tony) - do business in South Africa, and are said to regularly drop the names of Zuma and other politicians to smooth their way in business.

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Nightmare at Gupta 'airport', a gallery of wedding pics, the Gupta interview and much more at [www.citypress.co.za](http://www.citypress.co.za)

The brothers all have South African IDs and ANC membership. They were prominent participants at Mangaung last December.

There has been sustained resentment in the party about their alleged influence in Zuma's political appointments, but up to now there has been little public outcry against the Guptas from within the party - other than the youth league's criticism in 2011 by the party's now-expelled president, Julius Malema.

ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe, who issued a strongly worded statement on Tuesday night, was ill-tempered when asked by City Press to elaborate, but colleagues said it was a sign of his increasing irritation with the way politicians tried to "stuck up" to the wealthy brothers.

He issued the statement after calling Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, who explained that the jet did not have her permission to land. Tony Gupta had reportedly



Guests and dignitaries (above) sit attentively on their chairs as the proceedings for the Gupta festivities at Sun City get under way. Right: Gwede Mantashe, Zwelinzima Vavi and Jeremy Cronin were among the outspoken critics of the Guptas' political relationships this week || PHOTOS: SUPPLIED, BONGIWE GUMEDE AND LISA HNATOWICZ

told the minister. "I'll go somewhere else", when she refused permission. Cosatu's Zwelinzima Vavi has made a public call for the "real culprits, not just scapegoats from among the officials" to be brought to book about the landing saga.

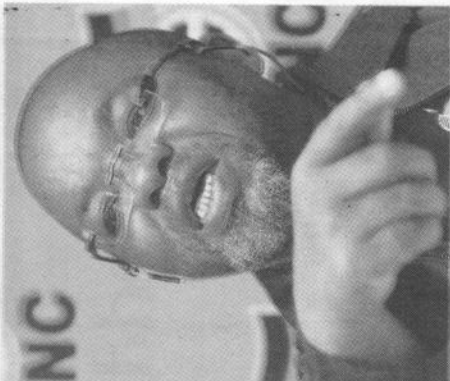
This could be interpreted as a reference to ministers, or even Zuma. SACP deputy general-secretary Jeremy Cronin agreed that lowly officials shouldn't get the blame if they were instructed by "someone higher up". City Press spoke to 14 sources across the alliance and government. The sources were unanimous that this incident was unlikely to be used to marginalise Zuma ahead of next year's general elections, with some saying he was completely innocent in this instance. Most of the sources said the harsh reaction from the alliance was sparked because of the security breach caused by a plane landing at a national key point

without proper authorisation. SACP spokesperson Malesela Maleka said South Africa's sovereignty was important. "Nobody has done (what the Guptas did) before. Any patriotic South African would be angry about what has happened."

Most ministers were invited to the wedding, but a few attended, a sign that the negative public sentiment around the wedding scared them off - or that the Guptas are not that influential in government.

Zuma, due to attend as a guest of honour on Thursday, decided not to go. A state official with knowledge of the inside workings of the ANC said this was a sign of his leadership. International Relations spokesperson Clayson Monyela said that Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane had met with the Indian High Commissioner to South Africa, Virendra Gupta.

On Friday the government revealed that the Indian defence



attaché, Prashant Choudhary, directly approached the air force for clearance.

Monyela said the matter would be taken up through the normal diplomatic channels and the incident was unlikely to jeopardise bilateral relations.

On Friday night, Zuma pleaded that the incident "should not be allowed to impact negatively on the warm and friendly historical relations that exist between" South Africa and India.