

Gupta whistle-blower 'surprised' by inquiry

'Hawks' question him, but unit denies knowledge about it

By SIBONGAKONKE SHOBA

● The whistle-blower who directly implicated Jacob Zuma in a ploy to direct government business to the Gupta family is being investigated in connection with a contract signed 13 years ago.

The Sunday Times can disclose that Themba Maseko, the former head of the Government Communication and Information System, was recently interviewed by people who claimed to be from the Hawks. The interview concerned an IT contract from when he was director-general of the Department of Public Works between 2003 and 2005.

The auditor-general previously investigated the contract and is said to have found that there was no wrongdoing.

Questions have been raised about whether the people who met Maseko at the Hawks headquarters in Pretoria were legitimate officers or were sent to intimidate him ahead of the state-capture inquiry.

Hawks spokesman Hangwani Mulaudzi said he was not aware of the case and did not know the individuals who had met Maseko.

According to a case number seen by the Sunday Times, the case was opened in



Themba Maseko

February last year. 11 months after Maseko told the Sunday Times that Zuma had asked him to help the Gupta brothers in 2010.

Maseko is expected to testify before Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo's commission investigating state capture, and to implicate Zuma.

Maseko is set to tell Zondo about a call he received from Zuma, pleading with him to meet the Guptas in Saxonwold.

This week, Maseko refused to discuss the matter. He said he was surprised to be contacted about a contract from 13 years before. "My focus right now is my coming testimony to the Zondo inquiry," he said.

Public Works Director-General Sam Vukela said the department was aware of the Hawks' investigation because officers had approached his office for information. He could not remember the exact date he was approached by the Hawks.

According to insiders, the Hawks are investigating a payment made to a company providing IT services to the department.

Maseko told the Sunday Times in March 2016 that he had received several requests for a meeting from the Guptas.

He said that on the day he agreed to meet the Guptas at their Saxonwold home, he received a call from Zuma.

"As I am driving out of the GCIS building [in Pretoria], I got a call from a PA from Mahamba Ndlophu, saying: 'Ubaba ufuna ukuthuluma nawe [The president wants to talk to you]. He came on the line. He greeted me [and] said: 'Kuna labafana bakwaGupta badinga uncedo lwakho. Ngicela ubancede [The Gupta brothers need your help. Please help them].'"

Maseko said he told Zuma he was already on his way to Saxonwold and Zuma responded: "Kulungile ke baba [It's fine then]."

This is the account that could link Zuma directly to lobbying for the Guptas.

The Sunday Times understands that Maseko was made aware of the contract case on May 23 this year when an investigator called him requesting a meeting.

The meeting took place six days later. He was told a contract awarded 13 years ago was being investigated.

Last month, Maseko made a statement after a follow-up meeting with the Hawks investigators at their headquarters in Pretoria.

It is not clear who the complainant is. Public works officials have denied opening a case. Additional reporting by Mzilikazi wa Afrika