

Clear pattern in Guptas operation

Similarity in three witnesses' testimony

By **Ranjeni Munusamy**

The Guptas were in the know about everything that moved in government, brother Ajay was the guy with the swagger and the threats, and the Hawks were there to do the mop up operation.

These are the common threads in the testimony of the three material witnesses at the state capture commission of inquiry so far.

Although former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas, former ANC MP Vytjie Mentor and former government spokesperson Themba Maseko had different interactions over different time periods with the Guptas, there are commonalities in their revelation of how the state capture operation was executed.

Jonas, Mentor and Maseko were also all stunned by the type of government information Ajay had access to.

Evidence leader Advocate Vincent Maleka told Judge Raymond Zondo on Wednesday that the commission's legal team would argue that there was a "pattern of behaviour from the Hawks" unit in dealing with the state capture cases.

This was after Maseko related how the police unit presented him with an "unwelcome distraction" earlier this year as he was preparing to appear before the commission.

Maseko met with members of the unit thinking they wanted to see him in relation to the case against Ajay Gupta and former president Jacob Zuma. He had earlier given the Hawks an affidavit in relation to an attempt by the Gupta brother to strong-arm him into directing government funds to the family's media companies.

Instead of discussing this case, the Hawks ambushed Maseko about his alleged involvement in the granting of an IT contract in 2005 when he was the director-general of the department of public works.

Maseko said when this story was published by the Sunday Times in July, Lebeya told him he had checked the police records and found no trace of such an investigation.

Maseko said some months before, he had been given the impression that the Hawks were intending to charge Ajay Gupta and Zuma in connection with his case.

"They later said that my matter is no longer being followed through... it's no longer happening, I should relax," Maseko said.

In her testimony, Mentor said she had been asked by a member of the Hawks anti-corruption unit, Captain Mandla Mtolo to remove Zuma's name from her sworn statement as he said her incrimination of the former president in her complaint had held up the investigation.

Mentor attempted to lay charges against the Guptas



Former ANC MP, Vytjie Mentor, on her third and last day of giving her testimony at the state capture commission. /MASI LOSI

and Zuma in connection with an alleged offer of the post of public enterprises minister if she followed Ajay's order to cease the South African Airways' Mumbai route. This investigation was also not pursued.

On Friday Jonas testified about being presented with a false statement by a senior members of the Hawks in order to "kill" the investigation into his case.

This related to the alleged

offer by Gupta to make him finance minister, as well as a R600-million bribe. Jonas said Gupta threatened to kill him if he revealed their discussion.

Maseko testified on Wednesday that the approach by the Gupta family was "inappropriate". "They were asking me to break the laws of the land," Maseko said.

He said Gupta also "threatened" him that he would be "dealt with" if he did not follow his orders.