Scopa hits back at Jeremy Cronin, says it won't be 'threatened, hindered'

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Deputy Minister of Public Works Jeremy Cronin. File picture: Kopano Tlape/GCIS.

PARLIAMENT – Parliament's watchdog on public accounts on Tuesday said it would not be "threatened or hindered in its work", in response to an apparent threat of legal action against MPs made by Deputy Public Works Minister Jeremy Cronin.

In a statement, the standing committee on public accounts (Scopa) said Cronin has made "unprecedented and empty threats" against the committee, accusing it of tarnishing the image of Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi.

"It is unprecedented that a member of the executive 'place on record' a threat to take Parliament to court for doing its work. This unprecedented threat can only be an attempt to cover up for the malfeasance committed," Scopa chairman Themba Godi said.

"The Department of Public Works remains a department under siege from corrupt employees working in cahoots with external interests. Scopa will relentlessly pursue these crooks."

Nxesi has been criticised by Scopa for the seemingly irregular secondment of Boitumelo "Cox" Mokgoro as chief financial officer of the department from the Independent Development Trust through Honey Cloud Enterprises, of which Mokgoro is a sole director and employee.

A provisional report by the Public Service Commission (PSC) to Scopa had found that the appointment was irregular and not done within the prescripts of the law. It was later pointed out to Scopa it did not have the power to task the PSC to investigate Mokgoro's appointment but that this needed to be done via a decision by the National Assembly.

Godi said while Scopa would seek clarity from the office of the speaker on how the PSC report into Mokgoro's appointment would be "regularised", both Nxesi and Mokgoro should "still account for the apparently irregular appointment of Mr Mokgoro and his company, Honey Cloud at Public Works".

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