

SIU boss blames 'sinister, corrupt' officials for PP probe

By GRAEME HOSKEN

● Special Investigating Unit (SIU) head Andy Mothibi has lashed out at an anonymous complaint to the public protector, claiming it was a sinister move by corrupt officials in a state-capture fightback campaign.

The complaint, which Mothibi and a senior department of public works & infrastructure manager claim targets senior officials trying to root out corruption, was made to public protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane in March. Her spokesman, Oupa Segalwe, said it had been allocated to an investigator.

The complaint calls on Mkhwebane to investigate senior government officials and probe how the SIU came to investigate allegations of corruption in the department.

The document also contains allegations against former public works minister Thulas Nxesi, his former deputy Jeremy Cronin, and dozens of senior former and current managers. The allegations centre on irregular appointments of senior department officials and the authorisation of R200m in irregular expenditure. It also claims that the SIU was paid about R400m to conduct investigations "with nothing to show for it".

Mothibi yesterday described the dossier as "a state-capture fightback".

"The claims are rubbish made by people playing games. I believe the allegations stem from a growing fear of a new investigation we have launched into day-to-day maintenance projects, which are the cash cow for these corrupt people," he said.

"Already dodgy lease agreements, which have proved incredibly lucrative for corrupt people, are under investigation. Our investigators are probing 75 big building lease agreements, 22 prestige building leases and 48 capital projects."

Mothibi said the SIU was breaking its si-



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Jeremy Cronin

Former deputy public works minister

lence about the complaint because of the seriousness of the allegations.

"We will not relent in our fight against corruption. The allegations that we wilfully misspent money and that I benefited from the R400m paid by the department for us to investigate corruption is wrong," he said.

"We can account through invoices for every rand paid to us. There are 20 civil litigation cases currently before court which are set to secure the department over R500m from corruption and fraud. Our investigators are probing other corruption cases amounting to over R500m."

Cronin said yesterday the complaint was "part of the broader Jacob Zuma-network fightback campaign, being waged in the face of investigations into things which they have done". He said if there were irregularities, these needed to be investigated.

"People who were suspended by then minister Nxesi, and who were returned ... are part of this fightback campaign and are leading it from within the department," Cronin said.

"In the past couple of months there have been concerted efforts by those involved to ramp up this fightback campaign."

In a letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa last week, current and former public works officials said that officials perceived as obstacles to state capture were targeted for removal, forced to resign, threatened, harassed and falsely accused.

Mothibi said Mkhwebane had yet to approach him or his office.

Imtiaz Fazel, the department's deputy director-general, said the department wanted law enforcement bodies to investigate "so the public can know the truth".

He said the department's R50bn budget was a lucrative target and the anticorruption turnaround strategy was stopping potential looters from reaching it.