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NKANDLA POOL SAGA

Nhleko slams fiery Mbalula

SIHLE MLAMBO, KAMOGELO MOICHELA
AND WILLEM PHUNGULA

FORMER police minister Nathi Nhleko, one of the ministers who presided over the R200 million Nkandla upgrades and the fire pool saga, has slammed Fikile Mbalula, describing him as the worst secretary-general in the ANC's 112-year history.

In a leaked voice note shared widely on social media yesterday morning, Nhleko reportedly slammed Mbalula for a lack of strategic and tactical leadership, while also describing him as immature.

Mbalula said this week that the ANC had lied to Parliament to protect former president Jacob Zuma, who is now leading the newly-formed uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MK).

"We defended former president Zuma, even going to Parliament and saying that a swimming pool is a fire pool. The minister of police (Nhleko) was sober, it is difficult to explain lies, people have lost their careers because of that thing," Mbalula said.

"It went to the Constitutional Court and Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng issued a



IN THIS May 2015 picture, then-Police Minister Nathi Nhleko during the media briefing at Imbizo Media Centre in Cape Town. | NTSWE MOKOENA

scathing judgment against Zuma, but the ANC stood by him. Today, he says he can't stand by the president (Cyril Ramaphosa), who has no judgment against him."

Former public protector Thuli Madonsela found in 2014 that Zuma and his family unduly benefited from the upgrades, and said Zuma should pay back a portion of the cost.

The Constitutional Court later con-

firmed Zuma had to repay over R7.8 million for upgrades at his private home.

In July 2015, at the height of the Nkandla upgrades saga, Nhleko produced a report which found that the culvert, chicken run, cattle kraal, swimming pool, amphitheatre and visitors' centre all formed part of security upgrades to Zuma's home.

He also said more money had to be spent on the Nkandla security upgrades as they had been compromised after they were leaked in the media during the saga. The report was released after Madonsela's scathing "Secure In Comfort" report.

Nhleko, who was fired from the Cabinet by President Cyril Ramaphosa in February 2018, was scathing in his assessment of Mbalula and continued to defend his role in the Nkandla saga.

Nhleko reportedly said that Mbalula was making things worse for the ANC and decried that there was a leadership vacuum since Zuma sent the governing party into a tailspin when he announced on December 16 that he would be joining the MK Party.

"You can't have someone with lead-

ership responsibility behave in a way that he is behaving. It is making it worse," he is reported to have said.

"If he says I was lying, he must say who gave instructions to lie on behalf of the ANC. If he cannot do that, he is in trouble because you will discover there is no such person because there was no such."

"In fact, the investigation I ran was scientific and backed up with reports by different experts in the field of engineering, construction, security and cultural experts. If you say I lied, you must say here is proof that what I said is not true," the voice in the recording continued.

Nhleko said he believed that God had turned His back on the ANC as problems continue to bedevil the party.

Following the widely circulated voice, Nhleko spoke to the *Daily News* yesterday, putting context to what he said in the voice note, but added that "Unkulunkulu usidunu ... siyi-ANC" meaning God has turned His back on the ANC.

He said he still stands by what he said in 2015 when he said it was a firepool, not the swimming pool. He

said that Mbalula was wrong to say the ANC lied to defend Zuma since there was no ANC instruction, adding that when he said it was a fire pool he was not speaking on behalf of the party and there was no instruction.

Nhleko further explained that when he was appointed minister of police in 2014 he found an ad hoc committee report with recommendations that the minister of police must make determinations whether what had been built in Nkandla was indeed security renovations at the then-president's home.

"It was not me who said it was a fire pool. It was a proposal by the building engineer Oberholzer who was with the construction companies that were hired by Public Works. He was the one who said a fire pool was needed so when I said it was a fire pool I was not lying to defend Zuma as Mbalula suggested. I was telling the public the truth as per the engineer's report so Mbalula was out of order," said Nhleko.

ANC chairperson Gwede Mantashe said Mbalula got carried away by TV cameras and media presence and should not have reopened the Nkandla saga.