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Zondo Commission asks Jacob Zuma for his version of events implicating him in state capture

Former president Jacob Zuma has been requested by the commission of inquiry into state capture to give his version of events in response to allegations made against him by former ANC MP Vytjie Mentor and former government communications head Themba Maseko in their testimonies given in August.

Zuma had previously submitted that he did not find that either testimony implicated him directly, and was therefore not going to make an application to give evidence or cross-examine the two.

Mentor's testimony placed Zuma at the home of the Gupta family when eldest brother Ajay offered her the post of public enterprises minister in late 2010. Although he was not in the actual room when this offer was made, said Mentor, Zuma appeared from elsewhere in the house when she grew agitated by Ajay's proposition.

She told the commission that she immediately made him aware of what had just transpired, but to her dismay, the former president did not seem surprised at this. Zuma has been quoted in media reports as saying Mentor's account was not true.

Maseko, on the other hand, told the commission that a short while prior to meeting with Ajay Gupta to discuss his entry into the media industry, Zuma phoned him and told him to "help them out" implying, according to Maseko, that the Guptas would be needing help from him. At the meeting with Ajay, also in late 2010, Maseko was allegedly instructed by the businessman to re-direct all of the R600-million media buying budget of government to the family's newspaper, the *New Age*.

Maseko refused, and was fired months later, in February 2011 by then minister in the presidency, the late Collins Chabane, at the instruction of Zuma.

"There are some areas I would like him to deal with," said Zondo. "For example, the evidence by Ms Mentor that while she was at the Gupta residence, she got agitated and the former president emerged from one of the rooms, they spoke and he walked her to the car.

"Also, the evidence by Mr Maseko that he got a call from the former president on the afternoon on which he was leaving his office to attend a meeting with Mr Ajay Gupta.

"I have invited the lawyers for the former president to indicate my wish that he could put his version in regard to those aspects in an affidavit to assist the commission."

Recent media reports quote Zuma as having questioned whether indeed there was reason to believe the state has or had been captured. He was addressing students at the Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape.

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