



14 January 2020

Zondo Commission – Gupta guests' landing at Waterkloof in the spotlight again

Lieutenant Colonel Christine Anderson, the official in charge of movements at Waterkloof air force base at the time of the landing of the private Indian aircraft carrying guests of the Gupta family, took the stand before the commission of inquiry into state capture on Tuesday. She revealed that Bruce Koloane, then chief of state protocol, gave a last-minute order for military aircraft to be used to transport the Guptas' guests from Waterkloof to Sun City for the wedding of Vela Gupta in April 2013.

Anderson told the commission that she was called by Koloane on the morning of the landing of a Jet Airways aircraft travelling from India, to make six helicopters and two fixed-wing aircraft available to take some of the 200-plus passengers to Sun City. The initial arrangement, made with Koloane in previous engagements with Anderson, had been that all passengers would be transported by road using cars and buses. The military aircraft in question had been scheduled to land at Waterkloof on the same day, but arrived two hours before their arranged time, causing some disruption to procedures for the morning.

Former president Jacob Zuma was also scheduled to fly from Waterkloof to Sun City, so Anderson was preoccupied with keeping the presidential jet's parking bay vacant in all the chaos.

Anderson explained to Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo that all arrivals and departures from the base have to be prepared for two hours ahead, so the arrival of the aircraft at 06h00, and not the scheduled 08h00, caused some confusion, but luckily ground staff were present to help direct them. Although this was out of the norm, it did not occur to Anderson that something was amiss until the later call. The Jet Airways plane itself landed around 08h00.

Prior to this, Anderson said, there had been pressure from Koloane to make the landing happen, with the understanding that Zuma knew of it.

Prior to the landing, she had met with Koloane and Ashuk Chawla, a Gupta associate, for a tour of the base and logistical arrangements for the landing. She was under the impression at the time that Chawla was a protocol officer at the Department of International Relations. Anderson only learned later that he was not a government employee.

She met with the two men on 22 April to discuss the arrival and departure procedure for the aircraft, and this was followed by the issuing of the flight clearance the next day, again in response to pressure from Koloane.

Soon after the landing, Chawla met the delegation, and there was no opportunity for Anderson to verify if indeed there were ministers among them, as Koloane had expressed previously. Anderson's team started the process of handling immigration and luggage requirements associated with the passengers, also moving them to the lounge area that had been cleared out for the large contingent, at Chawla's request.

The brief that she had received from Koloane, she said, was that there were ministers among the passengers, and thus the usual protocol for receiving dignitaries had to be observed. When Zondo pressed her for answers on when she became aware that there was something amiss, Anderson could only share that because the said ministers were never introduced on arrival, she assumed that there were no ministers aboard.

She also had no time to report her concerns to her seniors, as the situation on the ground was hectic, with functions such as immigration and luggage handling needing her attention. A later phone call from the then army chief raised concern in Anderson that the morning's events were outside of protocol.

Useful links:

[Zondo Commission website](#)

Corruption Watch's [Zondo Commission update page](#)

[South African Air Force](#)