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Zondo Commission – Nhleko was out to get Ipid’s Sesoko and McBride

“No matter how much we tried to explain these issues, it was clear that the decision had already been made that we must be removed.” This is the evidence of the head of investigations for the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (Ipid) Matthews Sesoko to the commission of inquiry into state capture on Wednesday. He was describing the distress suffered by himself and the directorate’s former executive director Robert McBride after they stood up against the purging of senior Hawks officials.

Sesoko’s testimony on the disciplinary processes enforced against the two, along with former Limpopo Ipid head Innocent Khuba, follows that of McBride earlier this year. Like McBride, he believes the police minister under whose tenure the alleged purging happened, Nathi Nhleko, was simply out to get them because they opposed the unlawful removal of former Hawks head Anwa Dramat and his Gauteng counterpart Shadrack Sibiya.

The case of the illegal rendition of two Zimbabwean nationals that the two faced in 2012 was at the centre of the purging, with Nhleko accusing the Ipid trio of having doctored an investigation report to reverse a recommendation made in an earlier one that the Hawks pair be criminally charged. The renditions happened in 2010, after the two men were apprehended in South Africa on the request of Zimbabwean authorities. They were accused of murder in their home country, and once deported met their death, allegedly at the hands of these authorities.

The case found its way in the domain of Ipid when in 2011 then police minister Nathi Mthethwa requested the directorate – through its head at the time Francois Beukman – to look into it. He would later ask, after having scheduled a meeting with Sesoko and Beukman, that Ipid put a hold on the investigation, without explaining his reasons. It later surfaced after Beukman’s departure, while Ipid was under Koekie Mbeki, who then gave the unusual order for Khuba and not Sesoko, to oversee it, despite the latter having been senior to Khuba and having since been appointed permanently to the post of head of investigations. A further instruction from Mbeki to Khuba was for all communication on the case to be limited to only herself and Advocate Anthony Mosing of the National Prosecuting Authority.

Progress reports were prepared over the course of time by Khuba and duly forwarded to Mosing. A strange pattern for Sesoko was that for every development in the case that implicated Dramat and Sibiya, information would be leaked to the media, without anyone being held accountable. Khuba prepared a final report in January 2014, and included recommendations that Dramat and Sibiya be charged, albeit with a signature attached that Khuba has claimed in testimony in previous processes relating to the matter, was forged.

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