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Zondo commission – Agrizzi lied to inquiry, says Frolick

ANC MP Cedrick Frolick has refuted the evidence of former Bosasa COO Angelo Agrizzi during an appearance before the commission of inquiry into state capture on Friday. Agrizzi testified early last year that Frolick received cash from Bosasa in order to help the company by facilitating a meeting with then chairperson of the correctional services portfolio committee, Vincent Smith.

Frolick admitted to attending a 2010 meeting mentioned by Agrizzi at the Bosasa offices in Johannesburg, but told the commission that this was for himself and fellow MP Butana Khompela to view youth facilities run by Bosasa on the property, on the invitation of the late CEO Gavin Watson. He also said Agrizzi had not been at that meeting, despite the latter's assertion that he was. Furthermore, Agrizzi's allegation that the purpose of the meeting was for Watson to ask Frolick to help get Smith to meet with Bosasa officials to discuss ways he and the company could work together, was false, said Frolick.

Bosasa was at the time dogged by negative publicity, and sought to get Smith on their side to help influence a positive narrative in favour of the company. An initial attempt in Parliament, suggested by Frolick, had failed when Smith ignored a delegation of Agrizzi and Gibson Njenje, at the time a director of the company. Frolick was then in the sports and recreation committee, but knew Watson personally. Bosasa was at the time contracted to the department of correctional services for several contracts worth a total of around R1-billion, and Watson did not want to lose these.

Frolick told the commission that the only reason he had gone to Bosasa on the day in question was because as a close friend, he accompanied Khompela as he often did, as the latter has a disability and often requires assistance getting around. In Agrizzi's version, however, Frolick was there to discuss ways to win over Smith, and for the cash bribe he would receive in return for this favour. Agrizzi's version was put to Frolick that at some point during the meeting, Watson left the room and went to his vault – where he allegedly kept cash – and returned with some for Frolick. According to Frolick, however, not only was Agrizzi not present on the day in question, but there was also no exchange of cash. He was, however, willing to help facilitate a meeting with Smith.

Frolick also disputed a second meeting, which according to Agrizzi happened at the home of Gavin's brother Valence Watson in Port Elizabeth. Agrizzi said on this occasion, he and Frolick were visiting, and he had handed Valence a small bag with cash inside for the latter to hand over to Frolick, on Gavin's instruction. Frolick argued that if he was to receive a cash bribe on the day, why would it not come from Agrizzi? Why would it go through Valence's hands as well before being given to him? In his affidavit, Agrizzi mentions that he and Frolick remarked over the décor in the lounge of Valence's house, as well as his well-kept home gym.

"After the meeting that took place at Bosasa, I returned to Cape Town and it was during that period that I had an interaction with Mr Smith. This thing of a meeting in Port Elizabeth at Mr Valence

Watson's house, I don't know where it fits in, and since Mr Agrizzi kept such a meticulous record of the furniture and the gym in the house, then surely he must know the date of this meeting in Port Elizabeth."

Smith was arrested earlier in the week in relation to corruption charges linked to Bosasa. He appeared before the commission last month to answer to allegations that Agrizzi helped pay for his daughter's university tuition, in return for his political influence in Parliament.

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