



22 January 2019

Zondo Commission: correctional services dept in Bosasa's pocket, says Agrizzi

Former Bosasa COO Angelo Agrizzi says not only is the Department of Correctional Services captured, but the members of Parliament charged with overseeing its affairs have long been in the pocket of Bosasa, one of its biggest contractors. The department also has a history of recklessly flouting procurement regulations because there are always benefits for both sides.

Agrizzi is currently in the witness chair at the Zondo commission of inquiry into state capture, and so far has not held back in dropping bombs on corrupt politicians and public officials. According to him, tender specifications for the department's contracts would be drawn up and prepared by Bosasa before bidding opportunities were even made public. One of Bosasa's areas of trade is catering services for prisons across the country. The company now trades under a new name, Africa Global Operations.

ANC MP Vincent Smith was approached for the first time by Agrizzi in Parliament around 2011 – at the instruction of Bosasa CEO Gavin Watson – to try to bring him on board in terms of favouring Bosasa in his capacity as chairperson of the portfolio committee on correctional services. Because there had been numerous media reports about alleged tender corruption involving Bosasa, Smith was not interested in engaging Agrizzi. "He was vehemently opposed to Bosasa, he wanted nothing to do with Bosasa."

The commission chair, Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, asked why Bosasa wanted to meet with Smith. "I wanted to explain to him what the company was about and do a presentation. I thought I could swing his mind into looking at us more favourably. I wanted him to work with us," explained Agrizzi.

A meeting was eventually convened where Watson and Smith, as well as two other MPs who sat on the portfolio committee, Vuselelo Magagula and Winnie Ngwenya, were present. Sesinyi Seopela, a man described by Agrizzi as a middleman or distributor for Bosasa, was also there. "Mr Smith gave an impression that he had formed a relationship with Gavin Watson, and that there would be a relationship going forward between correctional services and Bosasa and the portfolio committee."

Magagula and Ngwenya were also to get monthly bribes to help the cause.

It was decided that everyone present would ensure decisions favouring Bosasa, and that "all the negative media coverage on Bosasa would not preclude any further tenders, or business or extensions going forward and in return they would get benefits."

This agreement initiated the monthly cash benefits, with Smith receiving payments of R45 000 a month, Magagula R30 000 and Ngwenya R20 000 per month. All payments were made in Gauteng, either to each individual or to Smith for distribution to the other two. Smith would later get further

benefits of a security upgrade at his home, following a crime incident, as well as payment towards his daughter Brumilda's tuition fees at a university in the UK.

When Magagula and Ngwenya left the committee, their payments were stopped, and Smith's increased to R100 000 per month at his request. Smith would meet with Agrizzi and Watson on a regular basis to discuss the goings on in the department, and in some cases to intervene whenever Bosasa had problems with Zac Modise, the current national commissioner for correctional services.

Smith admitted late in 2018 that he had received a loan from Agrizzi of R671 000, a statement refuted by Agrizzi during his testimony. He claimed that Smith was paid by Bosasa only. In fact, he explained, Smith had offered him his shares in a hospital at Waterfall Park in return for cash. This, however, was after Agrizzi had left Bosasa.

Useful links:

[Zondo Commission website](#)

[Department of Correctional Services](#)

[Parliament of South Africa](#)