



**5 February 2019**

### **Zondo Commission – Bosasa employees and service providers threatened journalists**

An assortment of witnesses appeared before the commission of inquiry into state capture on Tuesday, all giving evidence relating to Bosasa.

First up was Adriaan Basson, editor-in-chief of News24, who testified about threats that he alleges were made against him by people claiming to be Bosasa employees – this happened during a period when he wrote investigative stories about the company’s dealings with government. Basson first received an e-mail from someone at Bosasa when he was working for the *Mail & Guardian* as an investigative reporter.

His mission, he told the commission, was to prove that the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) – with which Bosasa had contracts valued at over R1-billion – was engaged in irregular conduct relating to the contracts. Forensic experts were called in to verify if indeed the e-mail Basson had received had been from Bosasa, and this was confirmed. Among the documents attached to the e-mail were some detailed specifications for a DCS tender that was later awarded to Bosasa.

The threats to Basson’s safety came soon after an article exposing this discovery. He would get phone calls at all hours of the day and night. One particularly disturbing call came in early 2009 from a woman called Benedicta Dube, who identified herself to Basson as a colleague in the media. Although she had initially said she was calling to warn Basson that he was treading on dangerous territory exposing Bosasa, he believed that she was merely trying to intimidate him, as she conveyed detail after detail of personal information to him, including his identity number, home address, his place of birth, the names and occupations of his close friends, and so on. He would later learn that she was at the time in the public relations field, and his Bosasa contact confirmed that she was on the company’s payroll.

Around the same time, Bosasa had been the subject of a Special Investigating Unit (SIU) probe, with the DCS contracts at the centre of it.

The second witness of the day, Greg Lawrence, shared details of cash payments he would make to Bosasa while employed by a business partner of the company, Greg Lacon-Allin. Lawrence had, in a previous position at Grantham Integrated Food Services, been a colleague of former Bosasa COO Angelo Agrizzi. According to Lawrence, it was Agrizzi who engineered his dismissal from the company in the mid-1990s, and as a result there has always been bad blood between them.

Their paths would meet again in 2012, when Lacon-Allin suggested to Lawrence that their company, Equal Trade 4, supply cash received from the sale of their food and alcohol products to Bosasa, instead of banking it and incurring hefty cash deposit costs. Lawrence told the commission that his division of Equal Trade dealt with clients from the SADC region, who mostly preferred to pay for goods in cash.

At any given time, he was having to bank amounts of either R1-million or R2-million, with costs of just under 2% for each transaction. He noted that the deposit fees incurred for these transactions were some of the largest costs for the company. Lacon-Allin’s plan seemed like a viable solution to this increasingly troublesome cost problem, and so arrangements were made for Lawrence to make regular deliveries of cash at Bosasa head offices in Krugersdorp, or at agreed-upon locations. He would always make the delivery to one contact, whose name he has since forgotten.

As part of his evidence, Lawrence submitted a number of videos which he recorded on some of the delivery occasions – links are at the bottom of this article.

### **Investigators doing their jobs**

The rest of the day's evidence was from two of the commission's investigators, who corroborated some of the evidence of Agrizzi and Richard le Roux, the Bosasa employee who used to work in its special projects unit. Le Roux testified last week that part of the work he did with his team was to install security features at the homes of ministers Gwede Mantashe and Nomvula Mokonyane, deputy minister of correctional services Thabang Makwetla, and Pretoria chief magistrate Desmond Nair.

Investigator Themba Mlambo testified that on one of his information gathering tasks, he went with Le Roux to four of the properties where, Le Roux claimed, he had installed security features. The pair visited the homes of Mokonyane, Makwetla, Nair, and MP Vincent Smith.

Le Roux pointed out to him that the cameras installed at the homes of Smith and Makwetla were no longer there, but the ones at the homes of Mokonyane and Nair were the same ones that had been installed by them. The electric fences that were included in the projects were still there at all properties visited. The visits were carried out last month.

Frank Dutton, another investigator, handled the portion of Agrizzi's evidence that claimed that he and Bosasa CEO Gavin Watson met with former South African Airways chairperson Dudu Myeni at the Sheraton hotel in Pretoria in 2015. The purpose of the meeting, Agrizzi had said, was for Myeni to show the two men documents relating to the progress of an investigation into Bosasa through the Anti-Corruption Task Team (ACTT) – a formation of officials from the Hawks, the National Prosecuting Authority, South African Police Service and SIU. Agrizzi testified that he photographed the documents without Myeni's knowledge, despite her request that he only take notes of their contents. This he managed by moving out of her view, and to save himself time.

Among the physical evidence that Agrizzi had handed to the commission was a set of photographs of the said documents, and upon close inspection, in the background of the photographs, was what looked like the carpeted floor of the area of the hotel in which they met. Dutton took the photographs to the hotel to enquire if the carpet shown in the photos is the same one they have fitted in the rooms.

A signed affidavit from the hotel's general manager confirmed this. Furthermore, the affidavit confirmed that Myeni was indeed a guest at the time that Agrizzi's photographs were taken, and that her stay was paid for by the Jacob Zuma Foundation, through a travel agent based in KwaZulu-Natal.

The photographs of the documents were shown to officials General Moodley and state prosecutor Marijke de Kock, who both confirmed that they were authentic ACTT documents.

The commission resumes on Monday 11 February.

Watch videos submitted by Lawrence below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTytkLQZipM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdzKYojFvFk>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkP\\_f3fCVg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkP_f3fCVg)

### **Useful links:**

[Zondo Commission website](#)

[Department of Correctional Services](#)

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