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Zondo Commission – Watson made others do his dirty work so they would be implicated, not him

On his second day of testimony at the Zondo commission of inquiry into state capture, former Bosasa auditor Peet Venter told the commission that the firm's CEO Gavin Watson asked him numerous times to do illegal things. On one occasion, he mentioned, he was made to deliver cash to former correctional services CFO Patrick Gillingham. Venter said he was due to meet with Gillingham regarding his pension pay-out and Watson was aware of this meeting. He asked Venter to go to the Bosasa offices and collect a parcel from Watson's daughter – then Venter was instructed to give the parcel to Gillingham.

The commission heard that Venter knew through Agrizzi and Van Tonder that they were sometimes asked by Watson to make cash deliveries to various people, but Venter maintained that the delivery to Gillingham was the first and the only one for him. When asked if there was any discussion between him and Gillingham about the parcel, he responded that Gillingham "was very vague".

Venter said the reason he no longer wanted to participate in these deliveries was because Agrizzi told him that Watson sent people to do everything for him to keep his own hands clean.

"Watson did not have a telephone or computer in his office but he would tell people to do things for him ... he instructed me to pay Hlaudi Motsoeneng's legal fees and to also pay money to the foundation of Andile Ramaphosa. The reason I knew this was illegal was because he was not paying them through his personal account but through his various companies," Venter told the commission.

The notion of Watson exonerating himself was later proved when Venter met with him. During the meeting, Venter remarked that any further illegal transactions would destroy Watson, as Venter had already seen the strong evidence that Agrizzi and Van Tonder had collected against him. But Watson assured Venter that he would get through this because it was Van Tonder and Agrizzi who signed off all the documents – so if they leaked information they would also be implicated.

Venter said he told Watson about the statements made by Agrizzi and Van Tonder and that they had documents of his illegal dealings regarding tax, with which they planned to expose him to Sars. Watson downplayed all this, added Venter, and said that he knows a senior official named "Gorbi" at Sars who would help him with the issue.

Venter said he last spoke to Watson in September 2018 when Watson, Joe Gumede and Papa Leshabane wanted Venter to do an interview with television show Carte Blanche and discredit Agrizzi. He was asked to explain the flow diagram that Agrizzi had created, showing the latter's plan for destroying Watson – this would show the world that Agrizzi was also not clean, Venter testified.

He stated that he agreed to do the interview as he was promised that afterwards "they will re-appoint me as their tax consultant". However, he's no longer interested in that offer.

Agrizzi will be back on the witness stand before the commission tomorrow.

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