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Zondo Commission – McBride tells of systematic weakening of Ipid under state capture

The crime intelligence component of South Africa's law enforcement network was primarily used to frustrate the work of the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (Ipid) for years, the commission of inquiry into state capture heard from former Ipid head Robert McBride on Thursday. His contract with Ipid recently ended, and the decision by police minister Bheki Cele to not renew it – which was followed by a court process in which McBride fought to retain his post – is currently under judicial review.

Finally giving his long-awaited testimony after a postponement in February and another earlier this week, McBride said his personal experience with the interference of oversight bodies, of which Ipid is one, goes back to the beginning of his tenure. The very nature of Ipid – established to provide oversight of the long-standing South African Police Service (Saps) – would naturally be met with resistance from within the police service. It is up to the person heading it up to either succumb to the external pressures or to fight for its independence.

McBride used the example of the [Constitutional Court ruling](#) regarding the independence of the national director of public prosecutions (NDPP) – brought forward by Corruption Watch in 2015 – which stated that the NDPP's independence was vital to the proper functioning of the institution. The case related to former NDPP Mxolisi Nxasana's removal from office in May 2015 at the alleged persuasion of former president Jacob Zuma, with a R17.5-million golden handshake, following Nxasana's movement on several high-profile cases involving senior politicians.

McBride told the inquiry of a pattern that became clear to him – that Ipid investigations against divisions within Saps to which his office receive resistance often relate to procurement, maladministration and sometimes criminality. From this he deduced that his fight was against part of what he and several colleagues in the sector called a "silent coup", now characterised as state capture.

He believes that there was an attack on anti-corruption bodies, which included the removal of their heads by either suspension or spurious disciplinary actions. They would then be replaced by people who would not carry out the tasks diligently, because they were actually advancing a particular agenda outside of the mandates of the institutions affected.

The narrative, said McBride, was the same across departments: it would be communicated that since the removal of so-and-so, referring to the targeted leader, the institution has performed much better. In the case of Ipid, McBride's successor Israel Kgamanyane, who was appointed on an acting basis while McBride was on suspension, told Parliament that Ipid was performing better under his watch than had been the case during McBride's tenure, the latter revealed.

McBride further spoke of how the weakening of and interference in the work of oversight bodies was systematic and impacted on the productivity, for instance, of Ipid. In some cases, he said, people with

specialised skills such as financial management were redeployed to head up investigations at provincial level – the restructuring was meant to render Ipid dysfunctional.

Key investigations suddenly stagnated when crime intelligence members were appointed to Ipid during McBride's absence, and subsequently left Ipid on his return, only to help facilitate the obstruction of investigations support from other institutions meant to support Ipid's mandate, as required by law.

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