

ANNEXURE 'R'

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News

NPA goes after SA's top cops

By George Matlala | 6th November 2022



National police commissioner General Fannie Masemola Masemola has stressed the importance of partnership policing between the police and community policing structures in the fight against crime.

A penchant for the expensive Louis Vuitton label seems to be the Achilles heel for the men presiding over the SA's police service.

This is after national police commissioner Fannie Masemola and KZN commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi have been accused of accepting lavish gifts from a service provider.

Sunday World has it on good authority that Masemola, who pipped two lieutenant-generals for the top job in March, is caught in a storm over allegations that he failed to declare an expensive gift from a client that was awarded a multi-million rand tender by the SAPS.

In a case that resembles that of former top cop Jackie Selebi over a decade ago, Masemola, and another former national commissioner, Mkhwanazi, were last week slapped with subpoenas by the Investigating Directorate (ID) to explain why they failed to declare Louis Vuitton handbags they received from controversial Durban businessman and SAPS supplier Inbanatan Kistiah.

The ID, headed by Andrea Johnson, wants Masemola and Mkhwanazi, who is currently SAPS commissioner in KwaZulu Natal, to explain why they did not declare their expensive gifts. It is believed that Masemola has since reported sick as the NPA seeks answers.

Information has emerged that Kistiah's company, Brainwave, trading as I-View Integrated Systems, received a windfall of R6.7-million for 200 hi-tech vests for ballistic testing in 2016.

The ID alleges that Masemola, Mkhwanazi and a colleague accompanied Kistiah to an exhibition in Germany in 2016 where the vests were tested. The two returned home with luxurious bags, while their colleague was snubbed and has since turned witness.

Mkhwanazi, who was at the time divisional commissioner for human resource development, is said to have recommended to then acting police commissioner Kgomotso Phahlane that 1 000 more vests be bought from I-View, which stocked them from Indian manufacturer MKU. Masemola was Phahlane's deputy.

Sunday Times reported at the time that the vests were bought at R33 402 each, while vests bought locally by police cost between R6 000 and R8 000.

ID and SAPS insiders said the probe into Masemola and Mkhwanazi was initiated by suspended deputy national commissioner of asset and legal management Francinah Vuma and referred to former ID boss Hermoine Cronje.

"Remember, when you get a gift of more than R350 you must declare it. Cronje wanted Masemola and Mkhwanazi to be arrested," a source close to Vuma said.

Another senior cop in the SAPS crime intelligence said the gifts were considered to be "gratification" for having awarded the vests contract to Kistiah.

"Masemola and Mkhwanazi are being asked if they declared the gifts," the spook said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Kistiah is embroiled in two other controversial matters related to contracts he was awarded under questionable circumstances from the SAPS during Phahlane's tenure.

In September, Phahlane and Kistiah were arrested in connection with a R54-million tender related to monitoring of social media of #FeesMustFall protests, which was awarded I-View. Kistiah is also at the centre of allegations of an attempted illegal procurement of a spy equipment called the "Grabber", which was to be used at the 2017 ANC elective conference.

The listening device was to be procured for R45-million from I-View. The deal fell through.

In May last year, former inspector-general of intelligence Setlhomamaru Dintwe testified before the Zondo Commission into state capture that Bo Mbindwane, then former police minister Fikile Mbalula's adviser, championed the purchase of the eavesdropping device.

Mbindwane accused Dintwe of fabricating events around the failed Grabber procurement attempt. But Zondo found that the evidence presented by Mbindwane was hard to believe.

The ID spokesperson Sindi Seboka refused to be drawn into the investigation into Masemola and Mkhwanazi. "We do not comment on ongoing investigations," she said.

SAPS spokesperson Athlenda Mathe referred questions to the ID. "If there is such an investigation by the ID, they are in a better position to respond," she said.

Calls and text messages to Masemola and Mkhwanazi failed to solicit comment.

Selebi, South Africa's first black national police commissioner, was in 2010 convicted of taking bribes from drug trafficker Glenn Agliotti, who testified of offering him all-expense-paid shopping trips for designer clothing, including Canali neckties and Louis Vuitton shoes.

Selebi's secretary received a Gucci handbag as a gift, while Selebi himself was given Louis Vuitton shoes from Hong Kong.

President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed Masemola with much fanfare in March after being put forward by a panel comprising Ramaphosa's national security adviser Sydney Mufamadi, minister of basic education Angie Motshekga, minister of police Bheki Cele, retired former commissioner of police George Fivaz, director-general in the presidency Phindile Baleni, then director-general of the national treasury Dondo Mogajane and director-general of state security Thembisile Majola.

Integrity was one of the competencies the panel said they looked for.