

BAE denies it paid for Modise's cars
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BAE Systems plc did not give former South African defence minister Joe Modise two motor vehicles, and funding of the Umkhonto we Sizwe Veterans' Association (MKMVA) was all above board, a representative for the company said on Wednesday night.

Phil Soucy, speaking from London, was responding to allegations by Democratic Alliance MP Raenette Taljaard about BAE's role in South Africa's multi-billion rand arms deal. South Africa has ordered 24 Hawk LIFT and 28 Gripen multi/swing-role fighters from BAE Systems and Saab.

Soucy said the claim that the company had given Modise two vehicles was not true.

"This allegation was thoroughly investigated by law enforcement authorities including the London metropolitan police, and was found to be false," said Soucy.

Asked if BAE had paid for Modise to go to the United Kingdom, Soucy replied, "Not as far as I know."

He said as far as the funding of MKMVA was concerned, BAE Systems saw that as part of their social responsibility programme.

"We wanted to support the effort to provide training for (ex) fighters of the liberation (struggle). To assist in incorporating them into civilian society. The money was deposited into First National Bank in Pretoria and is administered by a group of trustees called the Airborne Trust. The funds are audited by KPMG," said Soucy.

He said none of the funds were under the control of MKMVA.

"BAE did it to be a good corporate citizen, to become involved in a project that was going to work towards the benefit of the country. And to demonstrate that we wish to be good corporate citizens doing business in South Africa."

When asked if BAE was aware that Modise had connections with a company called Conlog Holdings which might have benefited from off-set programmes flowing from the arms deal, Soucy said once Modise's name cropped up on a list of likely projects the company was dropped.

"Conlog was on the very first list of projects that could have been candidates for our off-set programmes. When we found out Mr Modise was a shareholder in Conlog it came off the list."

He said another list was made of all Modise's known business interests, with instructions that none of those companies could be considered for the off-set programme either. - Sapa