

**Thales may join Zuma in the dock
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DURBAN – Former deputy president Jacob Zuma appeared briefly in the Durban Magistrate's Court yesterday charged with two counts of corruption, amid speculation that he may be joined in the dock by a subsidiary of French arms company Thales.

Thousands of supporters gathered outside the court singing songs and wearing T-shirts bearing the now familiar slogans "100% Zuma" and "innocent until proven guilty". Hundreds of police kept a watchful eye on the crowd which toyi-toyed up and down Somtseu Road outside the court, while two police helicopters circled overhead.

Zuma was accompanied during his court appearance by family members and KwaZulu-Natal provincial government officials, including finance and economic affairs MEC Zweli Mkhize, transport, community safety and liaison MEC Bheki Cele and local government and housing MEC Mike Mabuyakhulu.

The prosecution of a former deputy head of state is a rare event worldwide, and the case will signify a new vigilance in SA's approach to corruption.

State prosecutor Anton Steynberg yesterday "could not rule out the possibility" that further arrests may follow that of Zuma.

He would not say who was likely to be charged, commenting only that this would "depend on the investigation".

However, speculation yesterday pointed to one of Thales' local subsidiaries, following the Schabir Shaik trial's acceptance of the admissibility of the infamous encrypted fax linking Zuma, Thales executives and Shaik in bribery.

Shaik was Zuma's financial adviser.

Thales International (Thint), a Thales subsidiary in SA, was withdrawn from the Shaik trial charge sheet at the last moment after an agreement between Thint executive Alain Thetard and the Scorpions, a unit within the National Prosecuting Authority, that he would testify for the state.

However, Thetard did not make himself available to testify in the trial, and submitted several contradictory statements to the Scorpions.

Yesterday Zuma, who remains African National Congress (ANC) deputy president, was charged formally with two counts of corruption and receiving a benefit. He was granted R1000 bail on condition that he not does interfere with a list of witnesses offered by the state, the majority of whom gave evidence during the Shaik trial.

In the light of Zuma's international commitments, the state refrained from calling for the confiscation of his passport, provided that the defence counsel supplied written travel itineraries to the National Prosecuting Authority.

Defence advocate Mahomed Patel countered that the state should finalise “the extensive witness list as soon as possible”.

Steynberg said investigations in the Shaik trial had concluded in October 2002, leaving the Scorpions to update three years’ worth of financial statements and forensic auditing.

Auditing firm KPMG compiled a comprehensive forensic audit for the Shaik trial, which showed the financial links between Zuma and his adviser.

Damaging evidence involved the paper trail of payments for Zuma’s traditional village development at Nkandla, northern KwaZulu-Natal.

Women wearing ANC shirts sobbed as Zuma, wearing a black suit and red tie, entered the courtroom and supporters crammed inside yelled “Down with Mbeki” in Zulu when he left after hearing the charges.

Zuma, surrounded by supporters and bodyguards, walked out to the fence around the court to greet and wave at the throngs of supporters before leaving.

He did not address the crowd. The case was postponed in the magistrate’s court until October 11 for further investigation — ironically the same date on which the case against Shaik began in the Durban High Court last year.