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**Fakie to Allow Access to Arms Deal Details**

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Auditor-General Shauket Fakie has dropped his opposition to an attempt by a losing bidder in the arms deal to gain access to documents relating to the controversial acquisition programme.

As a result, the contents of some of the documents may become public for the first time, shedding light on previously confidential aspects of the arms deal, which has been embroiled in allegations of corruption and irregularities.

Richard Young (left), whose company C©I© Systems lost out on a R150m contract to supply combat technology for SA Navy corvettes, applied in court under the Promotion of Access to Information Act for access to the documents. They relate to the arms deal and the outcome of a probe into the arms procurement process by a joint investigating team appointed by Parliament.

Young won his case and Fakie sought leave to appeal. However, he dropped the application yesterday a day before it was to be heard after weeks of negotiation between Young's lawyers and lawyers representing the investigating team. This team consisted of

Fakie, former public protector Selby Baqwa and national director of public prosecutions Bulelani Ngcuka.

There appears to be only one condition from Fakie's lawyers that certain of the documents not be made public.

Young is particularly interested in the drafts of the report by the joint investigating team before they were sent to the defence department and a cabinet committee to be revised, believing they contain important and potentially embarrassing information.

He said yesterday there was initially a misunderstanding about which records he wanted. "We do not want to see the entire record of the joint investigation, which is some 77 000 pages. The application was for the reduced record with specific reference to the corvette deal."

Young admitted that he was already in possession of some of the documents, but these could not be used in court as they were not official records.

"My verification process will be to correlate what they give me against what I have already got," he said.

Young is considering court action after the corvette deal was awarded to French company Detexis, a sister company of African Defence Systems, in which Schabir Shaik, brother of the defence department's former head of acquisitions, Chippy, has a stake.

Young claims irregularities and political interference in the selection process led to the failure of his bid.

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