

Arms Deal Leak : Who Blew the Whistle?

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Auditor General Shauket Fakie's hunt for arms deal leaks has taken a new turn with his investigators seemingly intent on discovering who blew the original whistle to the then Heath special investigating unit.

It was to the special investigating unit, at the time headed by Judge Willem Heath, that whistle-blowers first turned when they sought to divulge information on crooked aspects of the R50-billion-plus arms deal. Pan Africanist Congress MP Patricia de Lille publicly said she had handed information to Heath, but others preferred to remain anonymous.

After receiving much information Heath in October 2000 formally asked the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Development for a proclamation enabling him to investigate the arms deal. He was turned down and excluded from the joint investigation led by Fakie, Public Protector Selby Baqwa and National Director of Public Prosecutions Bulelani Ngcuka.

From the beginning Heath refused to reveal his sources - and he incurred the wrath of the Cabinet by refusing to hand over information to the president's office that could have identified them.

Now a probe launched by Fakie may well grant the executive its wish - there seems to be an attempt to uncover who blew the original whistle.

Fakie last week confirmed he oversaw a probe to establish who among arms deal investigators had leaked to the Mail & Guardian, and that there was a separate probe, affecting the special investigating unit, about further leaks.

This week businessman Richard Young, the man who is perhaps the principle known whistle-blower in the arms debacle, told the M&G he was questioned last Friday by two PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) auditors acting on behalf of Fakie. The pair were ostensibly probing who leaked information to the media, but were seemingly also on the scrounge to establish who the original whistle-blowers were.

PwC was originally contracted by Fakie to conduct an audit of the arms deal.

It now appears that PwC is the main investigator in Fakie's public quest to find leaks.

Fakie last week refused to say which outside parties assisted him in his hunt for sources. This week Young, managing director of C©~I©~ - a company that lost out on lucrative arms deal contracts - told the M&G he had been questioned by Lionel van Tonder and Charles de Chermont, both from PwC.

They began their questioning by asking if he was the source of confidential information given to the M&G, or who the source might have been.

Young said the pair asked whether he had been given confidential information by members of Heath's unit.

Then - in a new twist - the pair demanded to know whether Young had supplied any information to Heath or his unit - a question that seems to indicate Fakie's probe now also targeted original whistleblowers. Young told the M&G that this was the one question to which he answered: "Yes."

Next up, the duo asked Young to give them the source of the confidential documents he referred to in evidence he provided last year at public hearings into the arms deal.

Young told the M&G he had done everything that could possibly be done to ensure he acted within the law when quoting from these documents.

He had also during those hearings - and with the permission of his source - told Fakie's office who had handed him the documents. He had also given one of Fakie's investigators the originals of the documents he had received, which were in digital form.

The documents were given to the investigator in the strictest confidence - not to be shown to anyone else in his office - but, said Young, the investigator was later forced to hand over the documents to others in the joint investigating team. Young obtained prior written authorisation from the Ministry of Defence to quote from the documents relating to his testimony. Young said he had self-evidently done nothing illegal. However, he was irked that the agreement concerning the handing over of the documents had been reneged upon.

At the time of going to press Fakie's office had failed to comment.

With acknowledgements to Paul Kirk and Mail & Guardian.

http://www.armsdeal-vpo.co.za/articles06/who_blew.html