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Zondo commission – Gupta naturalisation claim another ruse by Mngoma, says Gigaba

The allegation that Malusi Gigaba facilitated the early naturalisation of some members of the Gupta family while he was minister of home affairs is a lie, as are many others told to the state capture commission by his estranged wife Noma Mngoma.

Gigaba said this when he appeared before the commission on Monday afternoon to answer to more of Mngoma's allegations. He repeated a statement he made at his last appearance on Thursday that Mngoma is motivated by her bitterness, stemming from an unsuccessful attempt to extort more benefits out of the pair's divorce settlement.

"Chairperson, you're dealing with a lie. Again Ms Mngoma projects herself as this important person with whom I consulted on everything, or who I briefed on everything," said Gigaba in response to a question about his reaction to being appointed minister of home affairs in May 2014.

Mngoma has previously told the commission that Gigaba viewed the move by former president Jacob Zuma as a demotion from the more sought-after public enterprises portfolio, which he had held since November 2010. She further alleged that Gigaba was removed from his previous post because he stopped doing the bidding of the Gupta family within the state-owned entities space, and was therefore deemed redundant by them.

Gigaba questioned the logic behind him interfering in the naturalisation process on behalf of the family if, as in Mngoma's version, he was no longer on good terms with them.

He said the facts of the case – for which he has previously had to explain himself before Parliament – speak for themselves. Gigaba said when he re-joined the Department of Home Affairs as minister, the process of naturalisation for five members of the family was already under way.

"The issue of the naturalisation ... it did not need me, it certainly was not influenced by me. I found it already under way in the department."

It was only when their application was declined, owing to a breach of the rules by one of the five while the application was pending, that he got wind of the matter. The family member in question had travelled out of South Africa, which is not allowed for a person whose application for naturalisation is pending.

On investigation, Gigaba learned that he had been misled by officials within the department regarding the details of the case. The five members had been grouped together for their application to be considered as one, and when the breach by the one individual happened, it scuppered the chances for the other four, on the grounds that one of the group was ineligible for naturalisation. The family then appealed.

“There was an allegation that their appeal had been directed at my office, until the letter emerged which indicated that their appeal had been directed at an assistant director or deputy director in the department, and not in my office.” The department then made a submission to his office.

When asked by Parliament later if the appeal had gone through due diligence, he affirmed this. It was only later that Gigaba learned that he had been misled, and due diligence had not been followed.

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