

## **A Two-Pronged Attack**

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The "CIA spy" attack on Thuli Madonsela has created a diplomatic headache for South Africa.

"We categorically reject the baseless and offensive accusations from the Deputy Minister (of Defence and Military Veterans) and will lodge a complaint through diplomatic channels," US ambassador Patrick Gaspard tweeted yesterday.

Gaspard said suggestions that Madonsela was a CIA agent were "offensive". Kebby Maphatsoe, the Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, however, yesterday persisted with his attacks on Madonsela.

This despite the growing storm over his comments and the ANC having distanced itself from his utterances. Maphatsoe told a press conference at the ANC's Luthuli House headquarters in Johannesburg that Madonsela's conduct was that of a foreign agent seeking to cause instability in the country.

"We are going to summon every MKMVA member in the Luthuli House detachment to defend the ANC. We vow to lay down our lives in protection of the ANC and democracy. We appeal to advocate Madonsela to show maturity, less fondness for publicity stunts," Maphatsoe said.

"If Madonsela feels more powerful and above the Constitution, she should tell the country who her handlers are," he said.

The spokesperson for the public protector, Oupa Segwale, reacted strongly to Maphatsoe's accusations and said that Madonsela was concerned about the comments that were attributed to the deputy minister.

"She has decided not to comment fully on this matter at this stage except to say that she wrote to Mr Maphatsoe yesterday, requesting him to confirm if he indeed made those comments and if so, provide her with incontrovertible evidence within 72 hours of receipt of the letter to support the claims." Segwale said

The public protector also expected Maphatsoe to issue a retraction and a public apology within the said period, Segwale said.

"Failing which Madonsela would invoke the contempt of the public protector powers in terms of Sections 9 and 11 of the Public Protector Act 23 of 1994," he said.

The special adviser to Maphatsoe, Ike Moroe, denied that Madonsela was accused of being a CIA spy, instead that she "operated like a CIA agent".

"Maphatsoe had simply made reference to the possibility of Madonsela being a CIA agent as a plot to destabilise the ANC and the country."

The ANC has distanced itself from Maphatsoe's remarks. Spokesperson, Zizi Kodwa said the exchange was "extremely unfortunate" and that the ANC had no information at its disposal to comment further on the matter.

"As the ANC we reaffirm our support and confidence in the institutions established to promote and safeguard our democracy, notably the office of the public protector," Kodwa said.

"It is our unwavering belief that those who lead these important institutions should be able to conduct their work unhindered and without any fear or favour," he said.

Meanwhile, the ANC's alliance partner, the South African Communist Party (SACP), also joined the MKMVA in its onslaught against Madonsela.

It believed the security upgrade at President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla home was a "setup" to dent his image and that right-wing forces in the country were on the rampage using anything to disrupt and destabilise the ANC government.

SACP's Moses Mabhida and regional secretary Themba Mthembu said at a briefing in Durban yesterday that the onslaught on Zuma was an indication that people were out to get him.

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