

Kona won't resign from SAA

By [Nicky Smith](#)

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Suspended South African Airways (SAA) acting chief executive Vuyisile Kona says he will not resign, as it is up to the board to prove its allegations against him.



Kona - who was appointed acting CEO in December after being named executive chairman in October - was placed on "precautionary suspension" on Monday (11 February) by SAA's board, as a result of "certain allegations".

"They must prove whatever they are saying," he said on Tuesday (12 February). "I could have walked at the end of January but (decided) to stay to keep stability and credibility at the airline."

Kona said he was not clear on what the allegations against him were.

"The airline is in need of leadership. Anyone can resign, it is the easiest thing to do, but these actions are not helping with the leadership problem," Kona said.

"If I resign, what example do I set for 11,000 people? It is easy to pack your bags and leave. The board must proceed with what they have," he said.

SAA spokesman Tlali Tlali said the allegation "amounts to contraventions of the Public Finance Management Act in relation to the procurement of certain service providers". An investigation would be conducted by an "external and independent law firm".

Three CEOs since 2009

The Democratic Alliance (DA) demanded that Public Enterprises Minister Malusi Gigaba explain the reasons for Kona's suspension.

DA spokeswoman on public enterprises Natasha Michael said it was a matter of concern that this is SAA's third CEO since 2009".

"The manner in which Kona has parted ways with the airline is equally troubling. The reasons for his ousting appear to be clouded in uncertainty, with no substantive explanation from either the board or Gigaba," Michael said.

Department of Public Enterprises spokesman Mayihlome Tshwete said the decision to suspend Kona had "not been taken lightly" and had been done to secure SAA's long-term interests.

"The board listed a host of concerns which are now being investigated. It would be unfair to Kona to put these matters into the public domain before the investigation has been concluded," he said on Tuesday (12 February).

The "nature of these concerns would have to be quite serious" to warrant the action taken by the board, Tshwete said.

A new, permanent chief executive would be appointed by the end of next month. Mango's Nico Bezuidenhout is currently overseeing SAA's operations.

The South African Transport Workers Union (Satawu) said it welcomed Kona's suspension.

"The acting CEO has a dark cloud hovering above his integrity, honesty, managerial competencies and all other aspects one expects from a CEO for a state-owned, public-funded company," Satawu spokesman Vincent Masoga said.

Kona had been negotiating possible recognition by SAA of the National Transport Movement - a breakaway from Satawu - and Masoga alleged that Kona had a "tolerance of thuggery, ill-discipline and general lawlessness by the employees who have pretend (sic) to be shop stewards".

He said Kona had sidelined "senior managers on their roles" and had appointed "cronies into strategic positions".

Masoga further alleged that Kona "had a propensity to convene secretive private caucuses with antagonistic sections of workers, worker leaders, managers, politicians and business people".

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