

Arms Deal Commission resignation was unexpected - Zuma

The resignation of Judge Francis Legodi from the Arms Deal Commission was unexpected, President Jacob Zuma said on Thursday.



(Image: GCIS)

"It is a worry I must say. I did not expect it - particularly at this time. I think in terms of the report, the commission would very soon be beginning its hearings. I think it is unfortunate," said Zuma in an interview, broadcast on the SABC 24-hour news channel.

The Presidency announced earlier on Thursday that the President had received the resignation of Judge Legodi, who was a member of the Commission of Inquiry into allegations of Fraud, Corruption, Impropropriety or Irregularity in the Strategic Defence Procurement Packages, commonly referred to as the Arms Deal.

Zuma appointed the Commission on 4 November 2011. Judge Willie Seriti of the Supreme Court of Appeal was appointed to chair the Commission.

The commission has seen several resignations that included that of law researcher Kate Painting and senior investigator Norman Moabi.

Zuma said on Thursday night that he had had an audience with the Judge and the rest of the members of the commission.

"The judge said he had made up his mind for personal reasons and it was clear that he has made up his mind. I'm hoping that the remaining commissioners will be able to do the job," said Zuma.

Public hearings of the commission are due to kick off in Pretoria on 5 August and are set to run until 31 January next year.

The President has given the commission two years to complete its work and a further six months to hand in its report to him.

Completed in 1999 the arms deal cost South Africa up to R38bn at the time and involved companies from Sweden, Britain, France and Germany among others and it is estimated that up to R1.1bn in bribes was paid.

On whether he would appoint a whole new commission, Zuma said this "has not been decided on yet".

The SABC's new 24-hour news channel was launched at 6pm. It is broadcast on DStv's 404 channel.

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