

Bell Pottinger walks away from the Guptas

By [Natasha Marrian](#) and [Genevieve Quintal](#)

18 Apr 2017

UK-based public relations firm Bell Pottinger announced on Wednesday that it was cutting ties with Gupta-owned Oakbay, saying its ability to be an effective advocate for the company had been compromised.

The company was hired by the Gupta family in 2016 at the height of the debate on state capture, when former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas announced that members of the family had offered him the post of finance minister.

The company said the decision was mutually agreed on with Oakbay. This was confirmed by Gupta family lawyer Gert van der Merwe.

The decision was taken after the release of a report by the South African Communist Party entitled Bell Pottinger - PR support for the Gupta family.



Ajay, left, and Atul Gupta. Picture: Martin Rhodes, [Business Live](#)

The report contained details of the work done by the company on behalf of the family that it said included a "deflection campaign" using social media. It claimed that President Jacob Zuma asked the company to help his son Duduzane Zuma with his reputation.

"Using a series of underhanded tactics, Bell Pottinger have sought to divert the public outcry over the Guptas and refocus

the attention upon other examples of state interference and capture, notably by 'white capital'," the report said.

It also listed names of Twitter personalities and handles it said were used to peddle this narrative. The PR company claimed the report contained "wholly untrue" statements about the firm and its work for Oakbay.

Bell Pottinger said that since the release of this report, a concerted social media campaign had been waged against it. Certain partners and staff had received personally abusive and threatening comments.

"For the last year, we have been working to help Oakbay defend itself from attacks on its reputation, correcting misrepresentations and defending it and its owners from politically motivated attack.

"In recent times, the tactics of Oakbay's detractors have changed; Bell Pottinger has been targeted and [has] become the story. Unfortunately, in this regard, they have had some success and we have to accept that this has compromised our ability to be an effective advocate for our client," the company said.

It defended Oakbay, saying that there was no evidence of wrongdoing in the time it had done work for the company.

Source: Business Day

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>