

Commission members haven't read millions of papers

More than three million pages of documents crucial to the arms deal inquiry are lying unread at the Hawks' headquarters in Pretoria, according to a report.



City Press reported on Sunday (11 August) that the papers are stored in three shipping containers. The documents were collected during investigations by the Hawks' predecessors, the Scorpions.

According to City Press, Fanyana Mdumbe, the commission's head of legal research, informed evidence leaders in February - a month before the commission was scheduled to start its hearings - that the documents in the containers had not been read because it was "overwhelmed" by the quantity of information.

According to the newspaper, only about 1.3m pages, which relate to the Scorpions' investigation of corruption charges against President Jacob Zuma and his former financial adviser Schabir Shaik, had been digitally scanned onto a hard drive that was provided to the commission. The documents are yet to be declassified and indexed.

A commission team, led by its chair Judge Willie Seriti, visited the Hawks' headquarters late last year. They were shown the shipping container that housed the Zuma-Shaik documents.

The team saw the remaining 3.4m pages, in two other containers. These however remained unsorted and did not exist in digital format.

Terry Crawford-Browne, the banker whose Constitutional Court case was widely believed to have forced Zuma to appoint the commission, said it was worrying that the commission had not tried to sort through the evidence.

"It simply confirms they're wallowing in so much paper that they haven't a clue how to tackle the issue," he told City Press.

Zuma appointed the Seriti Commission of Inquiry in 2011 to investigate alleged corruption in the 1999 multi-billion rand arms deal. One of the three commissioners, Judge Francis Legodi, resigned on the eve of the start of the public hearings last month.

The public hearings, that were scheduled to get underway in Pretoria last week, were postponed for two weeks.

Source: Sapa via I-Net Bridge

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