

## Crawford-Browne Writes To Zuma On Arms Inquiry

Written by Rudi Prinsloo  
Sunday, 21 June 2009 09:06 -

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Arms deal lobbyist Terry Crawford-Browne has written to President Jacob Zuma asking again for a judicial inquiry into the multi-million dollar deal that at one time had Zuma implicated in a corruption investigation.

However, the president's office said on Friday that although Zuma had not yet responded to Crawford-Browne's request, their position previously was that any new information should be given to the police.

"The president will have to look at it, but last year the position was that if there was any wrongdoing, anyone who has information must pass that information on to the authorities, like the police, so that they can investigate and charge," said presidential spokesman Thabo Masebe.

However, Crawford-Browne, who is the chairman of Economists Allied for Arms Reduction, said they had already tried that and it was "brushed under the carpet".

Zuma's long-running battle against the corruption charges came to an end this year when the National Prosecuting Authority abandoned its case against him citing interference during the investigation.

Crawford-Browne said he had decided to give the new president a chance, given that he was the person with the powers to appoint a judicial inquiry, before taking his request to the Constitutional Court.

"He's a new president, I thought, let's try and resolve this outside the court and bring the facts to his attention," said Crawford-Browne.

"We'll give him this time to respond, and if he doesn't then we will make a decision."

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and his fellow Nobel peace prize winner former president FW de Klerk and Independent Democrats leader Patricia de Lille were among those calling for an inquiry.

De Lille was first to raise questions in Parliament about potential bribery in the large deal brokered to upgrade South Africa's defence capacity.

In his letter, opened with "in the spirit of reconciliation and goodwill", Crawford-Browne wrote that "more than ten years have now elapsed since the arms deal scandal first erupted" and civil society leaders had been pleading with government to investigate allegations that foreign armament companies were bribing South African companies to secure contracts.

"Had those concerns been heeded, our country could have avoided the severe strains that the arms deal has inflicted upon our constitutional democracy," he continued.

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He provided an overview of foreign investigations into arms deal corruption allegations and also questioned the promises of job creation as a spin-off of the deal.

"Accordingly, I am writing to petition that you appoint a judicial investigation into the arms deal in terms of section 84 (2)(f) of the Constitution."

He said an affordability study in 1999 advised that the deal was risky and could lead the government into "mounting economic, fiscal and financial difficulties".

He said he had loan agreements which gave effect to the BAE Hawk and BAE/Saab Gripen fighter aircraft contracts which were allegedly in violation of the Public Finance Management Act because they were not referred to the National Assembly for approval.

"The need for litigation against you in a representative capacity as President of South Africa would fall away, should you agree to appoint a judicial commission of inquiry with terms of reference upon which you decide."

He suggested that instead of the inquiry being a "witch hunt", it should focus on how South Africa was "pressured into the arms deal by foreign governments".

Crawford-Browne wrote a second letter on May 27 requesting an urgent reply.

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