

Mataka used media funds on the Zambian

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Former Zambia Daily Mail deputy managing director, Davis Mataka was given money from the Public Media Support Fund for the purchase of office equipment and allowances for officers tasked to publish the Zambian Newspaper, a witness has told the court.

Evans Milimo, who is former Zambia Daily Mail managing director told the magistrate's court that former Information Permanent Secretary Sam Phiri sought services from the Zambia Daily Mail for the printing of a supplement newspaper, The Zambian.

This is in a matter in which Phiri, Mataka, and consultant Ngande Mwanajiti are charged with diverting KR195, 000 from the Ministry of Information.

Milimo, now a farmer, said he was surprised to discover that the supplement talked about by Phiri was in fact a stand alone newspaper and more than K195 million was paid to the Zambia Daily Mail for services rendered to the ministry.

He said Mataka was already in talks with Phiri over the project evident in a number of editorial meetings which Mataka missed but sent word to him that he was meeting the then permanent secretary.

Milimo told principal resident magistrate Aridah Chuulu that sometime in May 2011, Phiri called him to his office and informed him that the Ministry of Information, which was the major shareholder of the newspaper would give the news paper KR175,000 to enable it print some supplements which the government was going to come up with.

"He explained to me that each time Zambia Daily Mail printed these supplements, the cost of production would be deducted from the K175 million" Milimo said.

Milimo said the ministry went to the newspaper as a client asking for services which it would pay for.

This was because the newspaper had purchased a new printing machine to boost its revenue through commercial services.

"He also informed me that my former deputy Davies Mataka had also been given authority and funds to buy office equipment and also to draw allowances for some officers who were given some tasks," he said.

Milimo said after the meeting with Phiri he drew up a memorandum of understanding to the director of finance at Zambia Daily Mail, Bryson Mumba informing him about the development with instructions for him to keep records relating to the

project.

He said it, however, turned out that the supplement that Phiri talked about was the *Zambian newspaper* which targeted various achievements that the government had scored in the social and economic sectors.

He was surprised that the supplement was a standalone newspaper when Phiri had told him that the publication would be inserted in the *Zambia Daily Mail*.

Milimo said in cross-examination that there was nothing that he would have done about the supplement being a standalone newspaper because his hands were tied especially that the client was the shareholder of *Zambia Daily Mail*.

He said when the K175,000 finished, he wrote to Phiri tabulating to him how the money had been utilised and requested for further funding for the continued printing of the newspaper which money was given through cash.

The matter comes up for continued trial on Friday, 17 May 2013.

Meanwhile, principal resident magistrate Obbister Musukwa has asked lawyers representing former Information and Broadcasting Services minister Ronnie Shikapwasha, Hobday Kabwe to avail himself to the court today to enable his client and his co-accused persons take plea.

Musukwa said yesterday when the matter came up for plea that the trio could not be allowed to take plea in the absence of one defence counsel because the court was not satisfied with conflicting explanations given.

Shikapwasha is jointly charged with his former permanent secretary, Sam Phiri and Journalist, Chanda Chimba III with several counts relating to the diversion of public funds in 2011.

Major Charles Lisita representing other accused persons had informed the court that his colleague would not be able to attend court proceedings because he was in another court and asked the court for further guidance.

The state quickly chipped in and told the court that they had agreed that plea be taken even in his absence but the court said it was advisable that Kabwe appear before the court to offer an explanation himself.

The matter was adjourned to today for possible plea and setting up of trial dates.

Source: [allAfrica](#)