

Lesetja Mothiba appointed as new Acting National Police Commissioner

Police Minister Fikile Mbalula has announced the appointment of Lesetja Mothiba as the new Acting National Police Commissioner.



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The Minister made the announcement at a media briefing on Thursday night in Cape Town shortly after the Presidency released a statement on the decision by President Jacob Zuma to relieve Lieutenant General Khomotso Phahlane from his position as Acting National Commissioner.

“...President Jacob Zuma, exercising his prerogative, has relieved Lieutenant General Phahlane from his position as Acting National Police Commissioner. We wish to thank the President for his wisdom and decisive action in this regard,” the Presidency said in a statement.

The acting tenure of Lieutenant-General Phahlane came to an end on Thursday, 1 June 2017. The President thanked Phahlane for leading the police during his acting tenure.

Mothiba is currently the SA Police Service Divisional Head of the Management Intervention Unit.

Phahlane to give reasons he should not be suspended

Minister Mbalula said there were clearly serious allegations of misconduct on the part of Phahlane, which also impacts on his fitness to hold office as the Acting National Police Commissioner.

He said the allegations, which are currently being investigated by the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID), raise questions of conduct that would be inconsistent with expectations of someone in the SA Police Service leadership.

"I am duty bound to make it clear that Lieutenant-General Phahlane has a right to be presumed innocent until proven otherwise. The allegations levelled are yet to be tested in a court of law.

"It is also evident from the public statements from IPID, an institution this government holds in serious esteem for its importance for our democracy and protection of citizens and human rights, that there will be continuing legal processes between IPID and Lieutenant-General Phahlane in court.

"There clearly are [perceptions of] discomfort with regards to perceived interference risk, which leads itself to potential national security risk, should IPID be impeded in doing its constitutional duty lawfully (sic)," he said.

The Minister said it is his belief that Lieutenant-General Phahlane and the rule of law would be better served if he is afforded adequate time and personal freedom to focus on these personal allegations against him, without the added burdens of the office of the Acting National Police Commissioner.

"It is in this spirit that I informed President Jacob Zuma that the General's continued holding of office negatively impacts on the Ministry and department for which I am responsible.

"The current National Police Commissioner General Riah Phiyega's contractual term of office comes to an end on 10 June 2017, and the President, in accordance with his prerogative, will be considering the appointment of the new National Police Commissioner shortly.

"In the meantime, an Interim Acting National Police Commissioner, Lieutenant- General Mothiba, has been appointed by the President.

"Ordinarily, Lieutenant-General Phahlane would then revert to his position of Forensic Services Divisional Commissioner. I have made a determination that the enormous task I am soon to set out for the Forensic Services towards the full professionalization of the police to achieve the best outcomes in the fight against crime and to secure our national security integrity require that the police are fully focused on the job at hand. The scourge of crimes against women and children is extremely important and cannot be left to hope.

"With these priorities, it is clear to me that the initial reasoning over Lieutenant-General Phahlane's undesirableness [to] stay as Acting National Police Commissioner equally arises in his original role.

"Accordingly, Lieutenant-General Phahlane has been requested by myself to furnish me with cogent and reasonable reasons I should not suspend him from his position as Forensic Services Divisional Commissioner with immediate effect."

Minister Mbalula said government has committed itself to being proactive in matters of corruption and in defence of the Constitution, the independence of IPID, the judiciary, the National Prosecuting Authority, Chapter Nine institutions and others.

"Where there is even a perception of threat to our Constitution, we are duty bound to act to protect it where we can.

"I am concerned about the allegations of misconduct of IPID. Equally these allegations are serious and they too, give rise

to national security risk and risk to the integrity of the IPID's independence. IPID is required to perform its duties with the utmost integrity and in doing so, utilize trustworthy and corruption proof methods."

Mothiba reacts to his interim appointment

Meanwhile, Mothiba thanked the President for giving him the opportunity to serve.

"Firstly, I would like to thank the honourable President for appointing me interim Acting National Police Commissioner.

"I would like to mention that I will be meeting with the Minister so that the Minister can give me marching orders.

"We all know that last week, the Minister tabled his budget vote speech [in Parliament]. So the plan is there. My role is to fight crime. That is what I am here for - to fight crime and to provide service to the people of this country."

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