

SAA Head And His Team To Be Investigated: Board

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

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An independent investigation will be conducted into SA Airway's CEO Khaya Ngqula and his executive team, the SAA board of directors said on Tuesday.

This decision followed an "extraordinary meeting" attended by the State, as the SAA shareholder, and the board of directors.

"At the meeting, the decision of the Board of SAA to commission an independent investigation into allegations surrounding SAA's CEO Khaya Ngqula and the executive team was endorsed," said the Board in a statement.

The Board said it would submit terms of reference for the independent investigation to the state for approval. It said the investigation was being undertaken as a matter of urgency.

"The Board will take the necessary measures to ensure that due process is followed during the investigation; as well as in respect of any required remedial, risk mitigation and disciplinary measures as a consequence of the findings of the investigation."

Further details would be made public "in due course", said the Board.

Earlier this month, the Sunday Times published reports that Servair, a consortium co-owned by Vusi Sithole, a business partner of Ngqula and his wife, Mbali Gasi, was the preferred bidder to supply about 180,000 weekly in-flight meals on SAA's domestic routes.

The paper said the government was investigating Ngqula and the airline for "serious allegations" following the airline's preference of French company Servair as their catering company.

SAA spokeswoman Robyn Chalmers told Sapa at the time that the R3.5 billion SAA catering deal had not been finalised.

"In terms of the Airchefs tender, the Servair consortium has been recommended as preferred bidder following a competitive bidding process. It is important to note that the contract has not been finalised," she said.

The Sunday Times reported that Sithole denied that his association with Gasa had landed his consortium the contract.

"The tendering process was open and it has taken us and our French partners two years to secure this deal," he told the paper.

The Sunday Times reported that Sithole sponsored the inaugural Africa Open Golf Challenge, the rights to which belong to Ngqula's wife, to the tune of R1.2 million. Gasa is also a director of one of Sithole's companies, Netlife Golf Consortium.

Asked if Ngqula had declared his interests to SAA and if the company was made aware of

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Gasa's involvement with Servair bosses, Chalmers said: "Because of SA's relatively small business environment, and the fact that there may on occasion be indirect links between some businesspeople, it is critical to ensure that tender processes are competitive and vigorous, and that business interests are declared."