

No evidence Jacob Zuma was poisoned

Although former state security minister David Mahlobo said Zuma was treated in Russia, the NPA could find no proof in agency files

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The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) has declined to prosecute anyone over the alleged poisoning of former president Jacob Zuma, saying that there was no evidence of such an act against him.

"There is no evidence that Mr Zuma was poisoned," acting KwaZulu-Natal director of public prosecutions, advocate Elaine Zungu said in a letter to the Hawks. In fact, Zuma had not provided a statement detailing the alleged poisoning attempt on his life at all. "So I am unable to even refer to him as 'the complainant'", she said.

David Mahlobo, who was the state security minister when the allegation came to the fore, said in 2017 that Zuma had been poisoned, and had received treatment in Russia. He declined to reveal what the poison was.

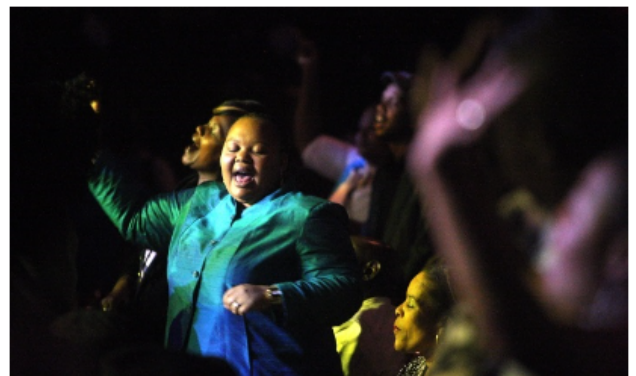
On Thursday, Mahlobo did not respond to requests for comment. But former national director of public prosecutions Shaun Abrahams maintains there was "evidence in the docket that the former president was poisoned, and that evidence warranted investigation".

According to Zungu, State Security Agency reports on the alleged attempts on Zuma's life "contain no evidence at all that Mr Zuma was poisoned, let alone by whom".

Zuma's spokesperson, Vukile Mathabela, did not respond to requests for comment.

Zungu's decision not to prosecute comes after lawyers for Zuma's former wife, Nompumelelo Ntuli-Zuma, pushed the state to make a call on whether she would be formally charged over the alleged 2014 poisoning of her husband.

Ntuli-Zuma, who was named in the plot to kill her husband, and her three children were banished from Zuma's Nkandla homestead by Mahlobo. She said at the time that her husband had accused her of working with foreign intelligence agencies.



Nompumelelo Ntuli Zuma. Picture: VELI NHLAPO/SOWETAN

"I denied from the outset that I had ever made any contact with any US intelligence group and discussed this matter at length with my husband," she said in an affidavit.

Ntuli-Zuma's lawyer, Ulrich Roux, told Business Day on Thursday that he had seen the formal withdrawal of criminal charges against the former first lady. His client was weighing her options. Roux said it was a travesty of justice that his client was a victim of what he called "politically motivated trumped-up" charges.

"My client should never even have been mentioned in these allegations and it is a shame that it took the Saps [SA Police Service] more than four and a half years to determine that there is not a shred of evidence linking her to this alleged crime, which it now turns out never even existed."

Zuma, who was the head of the ANC intelligence wing during SA's struggle for freedom, has during much of his presidency justified many of his decisions with so-called intelligence reports. Some of them were openly questioned by, among others, President Cyril Ramaphosa and former finance minister Nhlanhla Nene.

During his testimony at the Zondo commission of inquiry into state capture, Zuma claimed to have information that two unnamed foreign intelligence agencies, working with the intelligence structures that existed during apartheid, were intent on "assassinating his character" and murdering him.

After he had named his former tourism minister Derek Hanekom as a "known enemy agent" in a tweet, Hanekom successfully sued Zuma for defamation. Zuma is also facing legal action from former defence minister Siphwe Nyanda, named by Zuma as an apartheid spy when he appeared before the Zondo commission .