

African News Agency, the State Security Agency and the Zondo Commission

NewsWatch: On Monday, 25 January 2021, the Zondo Commission heard that the African News Agency (ANA) was used by the State Security Agency (SSA) to plant news stories. ANA, however, has responded saying the company was never a front for the SSA, nor was it set up as a propaganda vehicle for the ruling party.



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On Monday, 25 January 2021, the Zondo Commission heard that African News Agency was used by the State Security Agency (SSA) to plant news stories. The African News Agency (ANA), founded in 2015, is described as [Africa's first global news, text, picture, video content syndication service](#).

The [Daily Maverick reports](#) that the Zondo Commission heard claims that ANA was used as a vehicle by South Africa's intelligence agency to counter negative stories about former president Jacob Zuma.

Part of Dr Sydney Mufamadi's startling testimony before the State Capture inquiry was that the State Security Agency paid ANA R20m around 2015/16 for "services rendered". This was part of a media project aimed at "countering negative local and international perceptions of the country, Zuma and the SSA".

“ [ICYMI] Sydney Mufumadi says his panel investigating SSA heard evidence that:

SSA allocated R2,5mill a month in cash payments to fmr President Zuma in 2015/2016 and increased this to R4,5million a month in 2016/2017

Money was given to Minister Mahlobo to give to Zuma— Karyn Maughan (@karynmaughan) [January 25, 2021](#) ”

One day later, Tuesday, 26 January 2021, the CEO of ANA, Vasantha Angamuthu, says that it [the ANA] is definitely not a front for the SSA. It was just paid to carry news stories for the SSA.

“ .@AfriNewsAgency CEO Vasantha Angamuthu says the media organisation was not a front for the State Security

Agency nor was it set up to be a propaganda vehicle for the @MYANC.<https://t.co/FBjBtzJGKc>— IOL News (@IOL)

January 26, 2021 ”

[IOL reports](#) that the African News Agency (ANA) may have been contracted to do some work for the State Security Agency (SSA), but the company was never a front for the SSA, nor was it set up as a propaganda vehicle for the ruling party.

Angamuthu responded to allegations made on social media after former minister Sydney Mafumadi's testimony at the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into allegations of state capture.

“ Without any irony, Angamuthu includes: "...in 2016/17 ANA had a contract with SSA to provide multi-media training for SSA analysts & interns across Africa, & to use its platforms, in particular African Independent newspaper, to carry positive stories about SA & the SA government" <https://t.co/datOgesFo9>— Pauli Van Wyk (@PaulivW) [January 26, 2021](#) ”

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