

Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis (CPRA) –Pretoria



CPRA Daily Briefings

Week 27

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The **CPRA Daily Briefings** are held weekday mornings in the CPRA Pretoria's Situation Room and the Briefing Notes are the minutes of this meeting during which each regional expert of the Programme reports on the latest human security developments in his/her region, followed by general discussions around the table. An intern then compiles a summary of the meeting, which is reviewed by the respective researchers, and a senior researcher edits the report and provides quality control before returning it to the intern to prepare it for dispatch to the mailing list to which you have subscribed.

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**Today's Briefings
Compilation**
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Summary of Briefings

Southern Africa

South Africa: President Zuma's communist coat-tails

The South African Communist Party (SACP) held its annual conference this weekend in KwaZulu-Natal, where the top six officials were elected uncontested. Blade Nzimande, who was appointed as the Minister of Higher Education following President Jacob Zuma's ascension to power, will serve another five years as the party's general secretary. Thus, at the end of his term he will have been the general secretary for a solid 19 years. Gwede Mantashe was nominated for the position of chairman, but he declined since giving equal attention to both the ANC and the SACP has proven daunting. As is the norm at SACP national conferences, a number of constitutional amendments were proposed. This time there was a proposal that a new position, that of a second deputy general secretary, be created given the fact that with both the General Secretary and his Deputy, Jeremy Cronin, occupying full-time posts in government, inadequate attention was being paid to the running of the organisation. Solomon Maphila will occupy the new deputy post. This is unlikely to appease the many critics of the SACP from within its alliance partner Cosatu, as its primary concern is the fact that the existence of senior SACP officials in government has diluted the party's objectivity and willingness to speak up for the poor and marginalised. In response, Nzimande has been vocal in arguing that the SACP's presence within government is necessary to 'radicalise' the national democratic revolution, which he sees as the guiding ideology of the alliance.

President Zuma's presidency has seen a change in the fortunes of the SACP, which had been largely ignored as a political force by Thabo Mbeki. The current presence of eight SACP members in the national cabinet is the most representation that the party has had in history. The SACP has very little public support and would be unlikely to make it into parliament if it had to rely on votes. It was SACP support for President Zuma as ANC president in the run-up to the ANC 52nd National Congress in Polokwane in 2007 that resulted it being richly rewarded with representation in the national cabinet. With its claimed membership of 160 000, the SACP has limited influence at the ANC National Conference in Mangaung as compared to Cosatu, nevertheless, it provides a useful distraction for President Zuma against unionists who see little evidence that SACP representation in government has yielded any benefits for the working class. Nzimande's support for President Zuma was palpably demonstrated in his speech and the songs sung in support of President Zuma by delegates. Nzimande's failure to attend his own party's gala dinner was also widely interpreted as a snub to Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, who gave the keynote speech and is generally seen as the most likely challenger to President Zuma for president of the ANC.

Nzimande's allegiance to President Zuma in the run-up to the Polokwane national conference was questioned by many SACP members, who could see little benefit in propelling a person so deeply compromised into the highest echelons of power. This resulted in many of the most intellectually coherent leaders being purged from the party by Nzimande, who does not like any dissent. With Nzimande's taste for luxury German sedans and expensive hotels, and the lavish lifestyles of some of its leaders in government, many people have questioned the extent to which the SACP leadership is truly concerned with the well-being of the poor and the working class. As Deputy President Motlanthe stated in his speech at the SACP's fundraiser dinner, the SACP has been integral in supplying the intellectual knowledge behind the decisions taken by the ANC during a large part of its history. Since Polokwane, membership figures have increased threefold. This has been seen as a consequence of focussing on increasing its size rather than on the need for the political education of its members.

Scepticism as Police Minister is ‘cleared’ of wrongdoing

Following media revelations three months ago that Minister of Police Nathi Mthethwa had personally benefited from the misuse of the South African Police Service’s (SAPS) Secret Service Account (SSA), he referred the case to the Auditor-General (AG) for investigation. Last Friday the AG announced that indeed SSA funds had been misused to benefit the Minister, but that there was no evidence of wrongdoing on the Minister’s part. This is not too surprising, as the AG does not have the expertise, capability or authority to investigate whether corruption had taken place. The AG would most likely have cleared disgraced former police chief Jackie Selebi had it been the body responsible for investigating corruption allegations against him.

Despite the AG’s report, a central question remains, namely, why did SAPS Crime Intelligence Head Richard Mdluli and his Chief Financial Officer, Solly Lazarus, allegedly steal over R195 000 from the SSA solely to benefit the Minister of Police? Following the Minister’s claim that he was now ‘vindicated’, the official opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) stated that it was ‘impossible to believe’ that the Minister would not know who was paying for the expensive renovations to his private property. The Minister also back-tracked on his earlier statement that no public funds were being used to renovate his house, when he subsequently stated that he knew the state was paying but that he assumed it was all in order. Given what the public knows about political interference and corruption involving Mdluli, most people remain sceptical about the AG’s findings.

The link between the Police Minister and Mdluli goes back to 2009 when, shortly after President Zuma was sworn into power, he directly interfered with the operational authority of the then Acting National Commissioner Tim Williams by instructing that Mdluli be appointed as Head of the Crime Intelligence Division. This was with complete disregard for SAPS policy and procedures governing the appointment of divisional commissioners. Following Mdluli’s arrest on murder and corruption charges, it was alleged by various police officials that the Minister had ordered then acting SAPS National Commissioner Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi to halt all investigations into Mdluli and insisted that he be reinstated. This was done, but the ensuing public outcry and legal action taken against the Minister by the NGO ‘Freedom Under Law’ spurred Mkhwanazi to re-suspend Mdluli.

For this matter to be dealt with properly, it is necessary that a full and forensic criminal investigation take place. Ideally, the Special Investigation Unit, or another body totally independent of the Minister of Police and reporting directly to a parliamentary committee, would be responsible for this investigation. It would need to have the authority to subpoena witnesses, obtain affidavits under oath, unearth private financial transactions and access cellphone records to uncover why senior SAPS officials went out of their way to break the law so to financially benefit the Minister of Police. Only if such an investigation clears the Minister will his credibility in the eyes of all South Africans be restored.

The End