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Zondo Commission: Agrizzi describes blatant bribery to keep government officials loyal to Bosasa

Day two of testimony from former Bosasa executive Angelo Agrizzi started off on a charged note, with video evidence that showed CEO Gavin Watson and two of his directors packing and arranging stacks of money while inside a vault at the company offices. The video, said Agrizzi, was taken by then Bosasa chief financial officer (CFO) Andries van Tonder in 2017, after the two had discussed obtaining evidence of the common practice at the company. Agrizzi had left the company the previous year, but had stayed in contact and in association with senior management, he said.

Agrizzi told commission chairperson deputy chief justice Raymond Zondo that the scenes were familiar to him, as they showed what would typically happen at Bosasa whenever the company needed to facilitate bribery to public officials on their payroll. A safe in Watson's office, referred to as "Gavin's Safe", would be refilled weekly, and sometimes more frequently, with money that would have been obtained from a supplier outside the company. It was often Van Tonder who would go out to pick up boxes full of cash, place them in another vault in the office of company secretary Natasha Olivier, and then move them to Gavin's safe after a cooling off period.

Along with Watson, the video shows Bosasa chairman Joe Gumedde and Papa Leshabane, a man Agrizzi described as the company spokesperson. Leshabane walks out of the room with two bags that Agrizzi described as the kind that was typically used for holding bribery money. The three other men remain behind, and Gumedde can be heard telling Watson that he needs R10 000 for purchasing gate remotes for the cargo gates at OR Tambo Airport, as well as a panic button apparatus for the police. Agrizzi said the figure seemed too much for the function that Gumedde described. He had testified the previous day that the company won a tender with the Airports Company of South Africa to provide security for the multi-storey parkade at OR Tambo.

Once Gumedde and Leshabane have left the room, Watson can be heard on the video counting stacks of cash placed on a desk before him, and then confirming at the end of this that the amount is R1-million. In a conversation with Van Tonder, he mentions the name Patrick, and tells the CFO of an arrangement where Angelo [Agrizzi] and Brian Biebuyck would handle him (Patrick). The Patrick referred to, said Agrizzi, was the former CFO of the Department of Correctional Services, Patrick Gillingham. The two men can be heard discussing that Gillingham is to receive R110 000. By handling him Watson was referring to the process of meeting with him to encourage him to stay loyal to the company. Biebuyck was Bosasa's lawyer.

Bosasa won a contract in 2004 with the department, to provide catering services for prisons. In 2012 the *Mail & Guardian* reported that Gillingham was suspended pending an internal investigation within the department, probing allegations that he received cash bribes, cars and payments towards a house, from Bosasa. He resigned before the investigation was completed.

A moment of laughter broke out in the gallery when Agrizzi described the exact amount that Watson held in his hands at some point in the video. From having spent many years packaging money for the company, he said, he could easily identify the amount by the way in which they were apportioned with elastic bands.

Today's proceedings had to be stopped in the afternoon due to security issues in the building that are related to the commission's work, but resumed again in due course.

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