

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024034570460 A First 1989 commission of inquiry into the illegal sale of trucks and motor vehicles, commissioned by President Robert Mugabe and headed by former Judge President Wilson Sandura, exposes the extent of corruption by government officials. The report, while in some cases pointing out wrongdoing by senior officials, finds mitigating circumstances that might have been designed to ensure the accused were not brought to justice. The Chronicle headed by Geoff Nyarota, broke the story in 1988 which became known as the "Willowgate scandal" in which senior officials were accused of using a government facility to purchase vehicles from Willowvale Motor Industries and resell them for profit. The Sandura commission's first inquiry rocked the government at the time. The Zimbabweanewsline.com will in the next few weeks make available the details of the report. Our last reported focused on current Speaker of Parliament Jacob Mudenda. This week we look at Oppah Muchinguri Kashiri (born Oppah Chamu Zvipange Muchinguri who is the current Minister of Defence in the Cabinet of Zimbabwe. She has also served as Minister of Higher Education and Minister of Women's Affairs. Allegations The allegation against this Deputy Minister was that in May 1988 she purchased a motor vehicle from Willowvale and resold it shortly thereafter at a price exceeding the controlled price. The motor vehicle in question was a Toyota Cressida Sedan, Registration No.477-519H, 1988 model. Evidence The commission heard evidence from the following witnesses: G. Long, N. Davis, K.Jarvis, J.Magura and O.Muchinguri. In addition, the Commission received an affidavit from A.Mawere who is presently working in the United States of America. Muchinguri's evidence is as follows:- When she became a Member of Parliament in October 1987 she did not own a motor vehicle. She approached the speaker of the House of Assembly, informed him that she wanted to purchase a motor vehicle and sought his assistance. He referred her to the Secretary for Industry and Technology. She saw him and sometime in December, 1987, she was informed by the Ministry of Industry and Technology that her name had been placed on a list of persons to be allocated new vehicles. In January, 1988 she was appointed a deputy Minister and a C.M.E.D motor vehicle was allocated to her for her use. The need to purchase a motor vehicle, therefore, fell away. However, in May, 1988, she was informed that a new Toyota Cressida motor vehicle had been allocated to her and was ready for collection from Willowvale. Because she no longer needed the motor vehicle she phoned Willowvale and spoke to a person called Magura. Magura advised her that if she no longer needed the vehicle she could assign it to another person. Accordingly, she contacted her friend, Mawere, who needed a motor vehicle. Mawere went to Willowvale, paid cash for the motor vehicle and collected it. The vehicle was collected in Muchinguri's name. She did not know what happened to the motor vehicle thereafter and she received no benefit from the transaction. Contrary to what the Deputy Minister said, Magura denied that he had been contacted by her. He also denied that he had advised her that she could assign the motor vehicle to another person, though he admitted seeing Mawere when he came to Willowvale to pay for the motor vehicle. In his Affidavit Mawere admits purchasing the motor vehicle from Willowvale but states that shortly thereafter he had to leave for the United States. Before leaving he took the motor vehicle to a company called Executive Cars and sold to that company for about \$30 000. He himself had paid \$29 908, 80 for it. After the sale, he left the country. In their evidence, Long and Davies said that they acted as agents for Executive cars and sold the motor vehicle to African Distillers for \$95 000. The proprietors of Executive Cars are out of the country at the moment and the commission has not, therefore, been able to question them. In addition, Mawere is in the United States. In the circumstances, the Commission cannot determine whether or not it was Deputy Minister or Mawere or both who sold the motor vehicle for \$95000 and benefited financially. Further, we cannot say whether or not the actual seller of the motor vehicle was Executive Cars. What we can say, however, is that it was improper for the Deputy Minister to assign the motor vehicle to another person other than a Member of Parliament. We feel that as she no longer required the car she should have informed the Speaker of the House of Assembly or Secretary for Industry and Technology who would have reallocated the motor vehicle to another Member of Parliament or to else who might have deserved the allocation.