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Ramaphosa criticises US for alleging SA supplied Russia with arms without giving evidence

Рамафоса критикує США за звинувачення в тому, що ПАР постачала зброю росії, не надавши доказів

Посол США в Південній Африці Р. Бригеті заявив, що Америка переконана, що Південна Африка постачала зброю армії володимира путіна. І це незважаючи на заяви про неприєднану позицію щодо вторгнення росії в Україну. Ці твердження загрожують викликати дипломатичні суперечки після того, як деякі законодавці США вже висловили побоювання з приводу тісних зв'язків країни з росією, особливо у зв'язку із спільними військово-морськими навчаннями, в яких брала участь Південна Африка з росією та Китаєм у водах ПАР, які збіглися з роковинами російського вторгнення в Україну. Президент Південно-Африканської Республіки Матамела Сиріл Рамафоса розкритикував посла США за оприлюднення тверджень без надання доказів і опублікував заяву, в якій висловив розчарування з приводу того, що США оприлюднили звинувачення: «Зауваження посла підривають дух співробітництва та партнерства, який характеризував нещодавні зустрічі між урядовцями США та офіційною делегацією Південної Африки на чолі зі спеціальним радником президента з національної безпеки доктором Сіднесом Муфумаді».

<https://www.news24.com/citypress/politics/ramaphosa-criticises-us-for-alleging-sa-supplied-russia-with-arms-without-producing-evidence-20230511>

President Cyril Ramaphosa has criticised the US ambassador to South Africa for going public with allegations that South Africa supplied arms to Russia without supplying evidence. On Thursday morning, US ambassador to South Africa Reuben Brigety said America was convinced that South Africa had supplied arms to Vladimir Putin's army.

This despite claiming it was taking a non-aligned stance on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Brigety had said South Africa provided ammunition to Russia through a Russian ship that docked at the Simon's Town naval base in Cape Town in December.

These claims threaten to cause a diplomatic tiff after some of the US legislators had already expressed misgivings about the country's close ties to Russia.

They specifically raised concern about the joint naval exercises that South Africa participated in with Russia and China in SA waters that coincided with the anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The presidency said it was public knowledge that a Russian vessel known as Lady R docked in South Africa. It said in a statement:

Allegations have since been made about the purpose of the voyage. While no evidence has been provided to date to support these allegations, the government has undertaken to institute an independent inquiry to be led by a retired judge.

During the president's question-and-answer session in the National Assembly on Thursday afternoon, DA leader John Steenhuisen asked Ramaphosa to confirm the news reports about the arms supply.

Steenhuisen said it would be inconceivable to think that the president was not briefed about the matter. Ramaphosa responded that the allegations were still fresh and the matter was still being looked into.

Later on Thursday, the presidency issued a statement in which Ramaphosa expressed his disappointment at the US going public with the allegations: “The presidency has noted with concern remarks attributed to the United States Ambassador to South Africa, Reuben E Brigety, alleging the supply by South Africa of weapons to Russia.

The ambassador’s remarks undermine the spirit of cooperation and partnership that characterised the recent engagements between US government officials and a South African official delegation led by National Security Special Adviser to the President Dr Sydney Mufumadi.”

The presidency said in recent engagements between the South African delegation and US officials, the Lady R matter was discussed and there was agreement that an investigation would be allowed to run its course and that the US intelligence services would provide whatever evidence in its possession.

It is, therefore, disappointing that the US ambassador has adopted a counter-productive public posture that undermines the understanding reached on the matter and the very positive and constructive engagements between the two delegations.

South Africa is currently embroiled in a dilemma after it said it was taking a neutral stance on the war in Ukraine but has been seen to be largely supportive of Russia.

The country currently has to decide whether it will allow Russian president Vladimir Putin to visit the country as part of the BRICS summit after the International Criminal Court (ICC) released a warrant for his arrest.

In an interview last week, Justice Minister Ronald Lamola said South Africa was doing its best to handle Putin’s visit, which was being complicated by the ICC’s warrant for his arrest for war crimes emanating from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

“We need to manage the process with caution and care because if you look closely, that will put us in deep trouble either way. The US and the EU are our biggest investors – contributing almost 60% to the economy – while both China’s and Russia’s contributions are not at the point where we can say dumping the Western world could help [us]. The issue is a delicate one.”

He said it would be difficult to arrest Putin, a sitting president, without straining relations and putting the country in danger: “If Putin does come for the BRICS summit in August, we don’t expect him to arrive with a normal plane with a few protection [details].

He would be accompanied by more military forces than before. So, where would we start to arrest him?”