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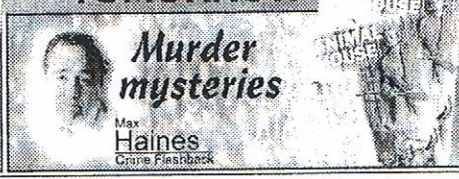
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INSIDE

TODAY

TOMORROW

SATURDAY



Commander accused of bidding for Head of Government post

He wanted it all Tarakinikini says

JOSEPHINE PRASAD

CONTROVERSIAL military man Lieutenant-Colonel Filipo Tarakinikini says Army Commander, Commodore Frank Bainimarama wanted to remain Head of State after the political crisis of 2000.

In his latest letter to Commodore Bainimarama, Lt-Col Tarakinikini claims that "I was the one who told you to immediately relinquish the executive authority of Head of State that you insisted on holding onto, back to where it rightly belongs - in the Bose Levu Vakaturaga".

"As I tried to tell you this was necessary in order to help break the deadlock in negotiations to secure the release of hostages."

Lt-Col Tarakinikini wrote to Commodore Bainimarama after the military instructed him to return to Fiji from New York or be charged with desertion.

The career military officer was

told he faced extradition if he did not return.

Lt-Col Tarakinikini has been ordered home to answer to allegations that he was involved in the overthrow of the Mahendra Chaudhry led People's Coalition Government in 2000 and was instrumental in instigating the November military mutiny the same year.

Lt-Col Tarakinikini has challenged Commodore Bainimarama to come out publicly to state allegations against him and provide the supporting concrete evidence and not hearsay and rumours that I have been investigated on in the past.

"I hereby formally request a copy of the board of inquiry report by Lt-Col Jackson Evans that you use as the foundation of baseless allegations against me," he said.

Lt-Col Tarakinikini warned the Commander that if he did not receive the report his lawyers would obtain it



Counter charge ... Bainimarama wanted it all, Tarakinikini claims

through the courts.

The former May 2000 failed coup military spokesman said with all respect, the Commander's response to his resignation aims to cast doubt on him and "is evasive and manipulative in avoiding issues".

"It says nothing of substance and is silent on issues I raised as some of the reasons prompting my resignation. Section 194 (2) b of the Constitution provides me the absolute right to resign from the force. I exercised this right in my letter of resignation dated February 27.

"My resignation was formally accepted once received by you. Therefore, it is effective no later than March 18 2002 as that is the date of your reply," he said.

Lt-Col Tarakinikini said some need to understand military command properly as in military law, command responsibility is total and one cannot continue to pass the "buck of command failure" to those soldiers and officers under command.

Lt-Col Tarakinikini said the recent record for power abuse, human rights abuse and command failure will forever remain in Fiji darkest memories.

"The CRW was under direct command of someone and not me ... the fact that outsiders used them is only an example of the failure of command. This and other serious failures remain uncorrected.

"No amount of denial and cover up investigations will absolve responsibility for that failure from where it truly belongs and all professional officers and soldiers know this," he said.

Lt-Col Tarakinikini said a proper Public Commission of Inquiry will bring out these facts and identify who are the ones that have really failed the nation.

"If this scenario occurred in other democratic state under similar set of laws and constitution, resignations would have handed in long ago if not demanded to make way for proper public commission of inquiry to be convened," he said.

The military yesterday refused to comment saying the matter was an internal one.

Chaudhry's \$49,000 in court costs

SAINIANA WAQAINABETE and ELENA RAKOTO

THE Fiji Labour Party is seeking \$49,000 in court costs from the Fiji Government to cover costs for their counsels and displacements and have sought clarifications on the formation of a multi-party concept.

And the case was deferred yesterday because the State could not provide hard copies of affidavits submitted for the case.

The deputy Solicitor-General, William Calachini, who represented the State said the affidavits in their possession were faxed copies and did not have "as yet the original copies of the affidavits that were needed".

Labour lawyer Ganga Shanker sought clarifications from the courts in respect to the High Court decision last month on how the multi-party government should be formed.

A High Court decision last month directed that the Fiji Labour Party is entitled



Legal billing ... Chaudhry's Labour lawyers are seeking \$49,000.

to be part of Government. However, Government had decided it would be appealing the decision. Lautoka High Court Judge, Justice Anthony Gates yesterday said he was awaiting the affidavits from the State counsel before a decision is reached on any payments and any other agreements.

Of the sum Labour is seeking, \$AU20,000 to cover the Australian counsel costs, \$10,000 for instructing solicitors and \$19,000 for displacements.

Mr Calachini yesterday questioned the appropriateness of moving the court hearings from Suva to Lautoka.

While calling for justification of awarding costs, he however agreed that indemnity costs should be allowed.

Mr Calachini said that though the affidavits had been received by fax, "its hard copy had not found its way".

Justice Gates requested for a second sworn affidavit to be served on April 23.

He commented that constitutional cases of this sort "tend to gather emotions as with the Chandrika Prasad case so they had to be attended to carefully".

It is understood the two parties had reached some agreements but these were not disclosed.

The case has been adjourned to April 24 at the High Court in Lautoka.



Murder charge ... Mataiasi Nakakai, 40, who is alleged to have stabbed his wife, Adi Seva Kaka, to death in the bathroom of the family home at Vatukoula. - Story: Page 3

WEATHER

Suva Cloudy
Lautoka Cloudy
Nadi Cloudy
Coral Coast Cloudy
Labasa Cloudy
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ODD SPOT

Protecting driving examiners from attacks
French driving students may soon have to wait 24 hours before finding out test results because too many candidates are attacking examiners who fail them on the spot. Some learner drivers who fail their driving test are venting their frustration by threatening examiners with death or rape, often at gunpoint, and attacking their cars, a transport ministry official in charge of driving tests said. "Deaths at gunpoint are not rare," a transport ministry official said.

FIRST WORD

Shame on Savva
COMMISSIONER of Police Isikia Savva should be ashamed of himself for ordering Woman Police Constable Salote Kikau to withdraw from the Miss Tebara beauty pageant.
- Letter Page 6

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