

Kasiryе Gwanga probed over burnt bulldozer

By Meddie Musisi

The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and the Police are investigating allegations that senior presidential advisor Brig. Kasiryе Gwanga set ablaze a bulldozer that was reportedly being used to level a piece of land, of which he claims ownership.

The prime piece of land is located in the upscale suburb of Lubowa hill, overlooking Lake Victoria, in Naziba zone II, Ndejje division, Makindye Ssabagabo municipality, Entebbe Expressway.

Kasiryе Gwanga is alleged to have set the bulldozer ablaze on Saturday. The plot is a few kilometres from Lubowa Police Post and close to Quality Supermarket.

A team of UPDF officers headed by an officer at the rank of major and Police detectives from Lubowa Police Post yesterday spent over six hours interviewing local leaders and residents in the area, where the plot of land is located.

The Police team was headed by the officer in charge of Lubowa Police Post, Assistant Superintendent of Police Benjamin Atuwulira.

The bulldozer, which was extensively damaged by the fire, was removed from the scene of crime and taken to Lubowa Police Post.

The head of the UPDF team, who preferred anonymity, told *New Vision* that they were sent by their superiors to establish what exactly happened after Police and UPDF authorities received a complaint.

"We are here to find out the truth about the allegations that our officer was involved in the burning of someone's grader that was found levelling this land," the major said.

Residents interviewed by *New Vision* gave conflicting accounts of the incident that went viral on social

media over the weekend.

Some claimed that they saw Brig. Kasiryе Gwanga firing several bullets into the bulldozer's fuel tank, but others argued that it was a mob that set the bulldozer ablaze.

One resident who identified himself only as Tumusime, said he saw Kasiryе Gwanga firing bullets after pouring petrol on the bulldozer. But another resident, Gerald Tuhimbisibwe, said Kasiryе arrived after a mob had set the bulldozer ablaze.

The area's LC1 chairperson, Kenneth Kiwuuwa, said his area has been invaded by land fraudsters who are taking advantage of undeveloped land that they grab and sell to unsuspecting buyers.

"I was not around when the tractor was set on fire, so I cannot tell who did it, but we have a problem of land fraudsters," Kiwuuwa complained.

According to Kiwuuwa, the plot where the bulldozer was set ablaze does not belong to Brig. Kasiryе Gwanga. He says the plot belongs to businesswoman Ruth Opoka.

Kiwuuwa explained that Kasiryе Gwanga, instead, owns the plot next to that of Opoka.

Opoka was one of the people interviewed by the UPDF and Police detectives yesterday.

Kiwuuwa said as far as he knew, there was no dispute relating to Kasiryе's plot of land. He says the dispute is over Opoka's plot. He told *New Vision* that about three weeks ago, some people contacted him, claiming ownership of Opoka's plot of land. But the claimants have since not shown up again.

Kiwuuwa suspected that Kasiryе could have intervened to help Opoka ward off alleged land grabbers.

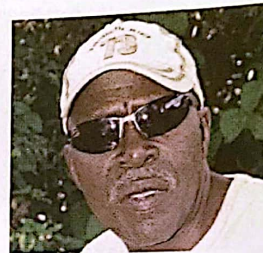
Kiwuuwa further explained that the land disputes in the area have been caused by the original landlord — a



Police and UPDF officers at the scene of crime in Lubowa on Entebbe Road after inspecting an earth moving machine allegedly burnt by Brig. Kasiryе Gwanga. Photo by Meddie Musisi

ON THE GROUND

Brig. Kasiryе Gwanga, in response to the allegations, said: "When we came out of the bush, we came with our guns. My gun is still loaded and I still know how to use it. I am putting those who want to grab my land on notice."



Brig. Kasiryе Gwanga

group of members of the Buganda royal family calling themselves the Daudi Chwa family. He said they have been selling pieces of land in a manner that has created rival claimants.

During the weekly Police briefing, Police spokesperson Asan Kasingye confirmed that Kasiryе Gwanga is under investigation. He said they want Kasiryе to record a statement to explain his role in the incident.

"We shall ask him (Kasiryе Gwanga) to record a statement to explain the allegations," Kasingye added.

However Kampala Metropolitan Police spokesperson, Emilian

Kayima, speaking at the same briefing, said there was a problem in establishing what exactly took place. He said eyewitnesses did not want to record statements relating to the incident.

Kasiryе Gwanga speaks out
In an interview with *New Vision's* sister paper, *Bukedde*, Kasiryе Gwanga confirmed that he had set the bulldozer ablaze.

He charged that he will not look on as some people grab his land. He further vowed not to allow land grabbers get away with it.

"When we came out of the bush,

we came with our guns. My gun is still loaded and I still know how to use it. I am putting those who want to grab my land on notice," Kasiryе told the *Bukedde* reporter.

Brig. Kasiryе Gwanga said he was tipped off by one resident that land grabbers were levelling his plot. He explained that when he arrived, the driver of the bulldozer fled.

In anger, he explained, he fired bullets in the air that sent the people around scampering for dear life. He said he ordered his people to pour fuel on the bulldozer and set it ablaze.

Kasiryе said he had received reports that there were two members of the Buganda royal family who are claiming ownership of his land. He warned that they are playing with fire.

He challenged anyone who claims to be the owner to come forward with documentary evidence.

Kasiryе said the plot of land in question was purchased by his wife, who placed it under his custodianship.

(Additional reporting by Simon Masaba and Joan Murungi)