

The evidence against govt officials in Shs60b BoU heist

Court hears how internal control failures at the ministry allegedly paved the way for the BoU heist.

BY JULIET KIGONGO

The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has outlined detailed evidence implicating nine senior Ministry of Finance officials in the alleged Shs60 billion Bank of Uganda (BoU) heist, as the case was committed to the High Court for trial.

During committal proceedings yesterday before the Anti-Corruption Court in Kampala, the prosecution said the Government of Uganda (GoU) has outstanding loan obligations with the International Development Association (IDA) under the World Bank and the African Development Fund (ADF) under the African Development Bank.

According to the indictment, on October 16, 2024, the director of banking at BoU wrote to the Director of the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) requesting investigations into suspected fraudulent transactions.

The transactions involved \$6,134,137.75 (Shs22 billion) meant for IDA but allegedly diverted to Roadway Company Limited in Tokyo, Japan, and \$8,596,824.26 (Shs31 billion) meant for ADF but instead paid to MJS International in London, United Kingdom. The alleged transactions occurred on September 12 and September 30, 2024.

On October 24, 2024, police commenced investigations and sought a Special Forensic and IT Audit by the Auditor General.

The Accountant General, Mr Lawrence Semakula, is the first accused. The DPP contends that Mr Semakula failed to act on a BoU inquiry report regarding an earlier diversion involving \$6,674,320.75 (Shs24 billion) in what is referred to as the "Poland case." Instead of initiating investigations, he allegedly instructed officials "to file" the matter.

He is further accused of failing to implement agreed control measures de-



The implicated Ministry of Finance officials in the dock at the Anti-Corruption Court in Kampala recently. PHOTO/FILE

spite attending meetings where system weaknesses were identified.

The second accused, Ms Jennifer Muhuruzi, the commissioner for Treasury Services, was allegedly responsible for approving loan repayments.

Prosecutors say she failed to act on the BoU inquiry report that exposed the earlier diversion, allowing further fraudulent transactions to go undetected.

The DPP alleges she acted in concert with Mr Semakula and Mr Pedson Twesigomwe, the third accused.

Mr Twesigomwe is the assistant commissioner in the Asset Management Department and head of the Quality Assurance Unit. The DPP alleges he fraudulently altered or selectively received altered emails and that his computer contained doctored reconciliation statements.

The indictment states that Mr Twesigomwe, together with Ms Judith Ashaba (A7) and Ms Bettina Nayebare (A8), authored false reconciliation reports indicating IDA Sielska 17A-60-1291 Poznan, Poland as the payee in-

stead of IDA Washington. They allegedly failed to raise red flags despite receiving BoU payment notifications.

Mr Tony Yawe, the fourth accused and a senior IT officer (IFMS Administrator), allegedly used his administrator-level access and encryption keys to insert Linux scripts altering payee details in three disputed transactions — the Poland, Japan and UK files.

RECOVERY EFFORTS

Upon discovery of the fraud, BoU initiated recovery efforts. The prosecution says \$8,205,103.81 out of \$8,596,824.26 (Shs31 billion) fraudulently paid to MJS International in London was recovered. However, \$391,720.45 (Shs1.4 billion) remains unrecovered. The \$6,134,137.75 (Shs22 billion) allegedly paid to Roadway Company Limited in Japan has also not been recovered.

The fifth accused, Mr Paul Lumala Nkalubo, a systems IT officer, was allegedly the sole email administrator with full access to the ministry's email server. The prosecution says he created user accounts, email groups and changed passwords, giving him control over email communications linked to the transactions.

Ms Deborah Kusiima (A6) is accused of creating a bank statement depicting Roadway Company Limited as the payee.

Ms Judith Ashaba (A7), an accountant, and Ms Bettina Nayebare (A8), a research assistant, were allegedly part of the reconciliation team and participated in preparing false reports for the Poland transaction.

The ninth accused, Mr Mark Kasiiku, an IT officer, allegedly had his username used in inserting Linux scripts to alter payee details in the ADF transaction to MJS International in the United Kingdom.

The High Court is expected to fix a hearing date, with the DPP set to open the case when trial commences.