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Former member of the MK Butterfly Unit, Cde Brigadier General Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, pays tribute to fallen fellow Struggle hero, Prof Zandisile Michael Nazo

Former member of the MK Butterfly Unit, Cde Brigadier General Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has paid tribute to his colleague, Prof Zandisile Nazo, who passed away last week.

Described as a fearless leader, visionary and strategist, Prof Nazo had the distinction of becoming Mthatha's first black paediatrician. At the time of his demise, he was head of the paediatric unit at Nelson Mandela Central Hospital (NMCH) and also headed the medicine faculty at Walter Sisulu University.

In paying tribute, Dr Dhlomo said he was very proud to have served with Prof Nazo in the highly organised and sophisticated machinery that was Umkhonto weSizwe's Butterfly Unit. He also expressed pride at being politically nurtured alongside Prof Nazo at the then University of Natal's Allan Taylor Residence; a political home and school to Dr Nkosazane Dlamini Zuma; Dr Zweli Mkhize; Dr Joe Phaahla; Dr Elias Motsoaledi; Dr VJ Ramlakan; Dr. Ayanda Ntsaluba; Lulamile Xhante; Zwelakhe Nyanda; Mbuso Ndaba and a host of other gallant freedom fighters.

Dr Dhlomo said that that campus did not just produce Doctors who were only interested to uplift themselves once qualified, but it also churned out cadres in the ilk of Professor Zandisile Michael Nazo, whom he described as "a very brilliant and brave cadre who grew up to be the Eastern Cape first black paediatrician."

The Allan Taylor campus was where Operation Butterfly was 'head quartered'. Durban then got to be referred to as the 'bomb city' because of the operations that were planned and executed from there. Dr Nazo was recruited to the underground structures by Dr Veejay Ramlakan, the former Surgeon General of the South African Military Health Services. Dr Nazo played a crucial role as part of the core of the leadership that built and supported underground structures of Umkhonto Wesizwe.

"He was responsible for the logistics; hiring of cars; acquisition of safe houses for Butterfly Unit operatives and together with Cde Ray Belle, took care of the health needs of those comrades. "There were many instances where he literally saved lives as it would be recalled that for any person presenting with symptoms of Malaria; authorities had to be notified. Dr Nazo and Cde Ray Belle went to an extent of putting up drips in the safe houses and even took those severely affected comrades secretly to some of the Durban hospitals for treatment, risking arrest," said Dr Dhlomo, as he reminisced.

Nazo started his career as a medical professional at Livingstone Hospital in Nelson Mandela Bay in 1988. He was motivated to become a paediatrician while working at King Edward VIII Hospital, after witnessing scores of children succumb to diarrhoea due to the lack of potable water in areas such as Inanda.

He moved to Mthatha General Hospital in 1989 before his appointment as a senior lecturer at then University of Transkei in 1992.

Nazo worked at his own private practice between 1996 and 2000, but continued to work as a consultant for the hospital and the tertiary institution. He returned as a full-time specialist in charge of the neo-natal unit and the ICU from 2004.

Four years later, he was promoted to chief specialist and took up a post as head of department at NMCH and subsequently Unitra.

His funeral service will be held at the Quigney Baptist Church in East London on Saturday from 9am.

Issued on behalf of Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo.

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