

Africom bosses trial postponed

The trial of Africom Holdings bosses and Global Satellite Systems directors facing espionage charges after they were allegedly found in possession of radio equipment failed to kick off last Wednesday and was postponed to February 13.

Africom acting chief executive Simba Mangwende, non-executive director Farai Rwodzi and director of Global Satellite Systems Oliver Chiku were back at Harare Magistrates' Court last week.

But their trial failed to start as the court was seized with other matters.

The trio briefly appeared before Harare magistrate Anita Tshuma and prosecutor Michael Reza submitted the defence intended to make an application for separation of trial. However, the lawyers objected saying they had abandoned the application.

The three men, clad in designer suits, were in the company of lawyers Lewis Uriri, Innocent Musimbe and Nikita Madya.

Initially the men were charged with espionage, but the State dropped the charges and the reasons are yet to be given.

The businessmen are being charged with contravening Section 33 (i) of the Postal and Telecommunications Act, which makes it an offence for one to illegally possess, control or work a radio station.

The State alleges the trio connived and installed communication equipment at a location that was not disclosed in court papers and connected it to the Africom main network system without authority from the Posts and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (Potraz).

It is alleged Chiku, who is connected to a Canadian firm, Juch Tech, invited the company's representatives to Zimbabwe where he allegedly organised a meeting with Rwodzi.

They allegedly discussed the installation of satellite dishes and other equipment capable of transmitting Internet voice over the Internet protocol.

The two allegedly agreed and Rwodzi referred Chiku and Juch Tech representatives to Mangwende, who then instructed Africom engineers to install the equipment without authority from Potraz.