

## **Mahamoud Adam Bechir and Nouracham Niam / United States (South Africa account)**

**Case ID:**

ARW-223

**Jurisdiction of Origin of Public Official or Entity Allegedly Involved:**

Chad

**Position of Public Official(s) (yrs in office):**

Ambassador to South Africa (current); former Ambassador to Canada and the United States (Bechir); Wife of Ambassador (Niam)

**Jurisdiction of Asset Recovery:**

United States

**Jurisdiction of Asset Recovery ? Description:**

Undertaking Recovery Effort, Location of Recovery Effort, Alleged Asset Location/Asset Location

**Asset Recovery Start:**

2014

**Asset Recovery End:**

Ongoing

**UNCAC Offenses Implicated:**

Art.16

Art.18

Art.23

**Legal Basis for Asset Recovery:**

Non-Conviction Based Asset Forfeiture

**Contributing Factors in Asset Recovery:**

Ongoing Case

**Status of Asset Recovery :**

Ongoing

**Stage in Asset Recovery Chain:**

Before Court of First Instance

**Case Summary:**

According to the US Department of Justice Press Release, in November 2014, a civil asset forfeiture case was brought under the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative against alleged bribery proceeds belonging to Mr. Bechir. The US government alleges that Mr. Bechir "agreed to use his position to influence the award of oil development rights in Chad in exchange for \$2 million and other valuable interests from Griffiths Energy International Inc., a Canadian company. In order to conceal the bribe, Bechir and his wife, Nouracham Niam, 44, allegedly entered into a series of agreements with Griffiths Energy that provided for the payment of a \$2 million consulting fee if the company secured the oil rights in Chad. After securing these oil rights in February 2011, Griffiths Energy allegedly transferred \$2 million to an account located in Washington, D.C. held by a shell company created by Niam. In 2013, Griffiths Energy pleaded guilty in Canadian court to bribing Bechir.

The complaint further alleges that, after commingling the bribe payment with other funds and laundering these funds through U.S. bank accounts and real property, Bechir transferred \$1,474,517 of the criminal proceeds traceable to the bribe payment to his account in South Africa, where he is now serving Chad's Ambassador to South Africa. The current action seeks forfeiture of \$106,488.31, which is the current balance of Bechir's accounts in South Africa. Those funds have been seized pursuant to the complaint unsealed today. The Department of Justice is also seeking additional assets from Bechir and Niam." (Source: US Department of Justice Press Release, "Department of Justice Seeks Recovery of Approximately \$100,000 in Bribes Paid to Former Chad Ambassador," November 7, 2014, at <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/departments-justice-seeks-recovery-approxim...>)

In May 2015, Mr. Bechir filed an Amended Answer to the complaint, admitting that Griffiths Energy paid \$2 million to Niam's company but that he had no sufficient knowledge to form a belief as to the truth of the bribery allegations. As of October 28, 2015, the case was ongoing. (Source: US v. All Funds up to and including \$1,474,517 in Interbank accounts held by or for the benefit of Nedbank, Ltd, Case No. 1:14-cv-1178 (D.D.C.), Amended Answer filed May 20, 2015 Court Docket Report as of June 23, 2016.)

**Disposition of Criminal Case(s):**

NA

**Jurisdiction of Asset Recovery: Investigative Agency:**

Federal Bureau of Investigation





**Jurisdiction of Asset Recovery: Prosecuting Authority/Civil Attorney(s):**

Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, Department Justice, Criminal Division's Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section

**Jurisdiction of Asset Recovery: Courts Involved:**

US District Court for the District of Columbia

**Documents:**

<b>Attachment</b>	<b>Size</b>
 Bechir_US_DOJ_PR_Nov_7_2014.pdf	103.93 KB
 Bechir_US_Complaint_Jul_8_2014.pdf	294.73 KB
 Bechir_US_DDC_Verified_CLaim_Dec_11_2014.pdf	136.44 KB
 Bechir_US_Amended Answer_May 20 2015.pdf	36.29 KB

**Other Sources:**

US Department of Justice Press Release, "Department of Justice Seeks Recovery of Approximately \$100,000 in Bribes Paid to Former Chad Ambassador," November 7, 2014, at <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/departments-justice-seeks-recovery-approxim...>)

US v. All Funds up to and including \$1,474,517 in Interbank accounts held by or for the benefit of Nedbank, Ltd, Case No. 1:14-cv-1178 (D.D.C.), Verified Complaint for Forfeiture in

rem filed July 8, 2014, Amended Answer (Bechir) filed May 20, 2015 and Court Docket Report as of June 23, 2016.

See also, Wall Street Journal Blog, "U.S. Seeks Bribes Paid by Griffiths Energy," November 7, 2014, at <http://blogs.wsj.com/riskandcompliance/2014/11/07/u-s-seeks-bribes-paid-...> The Globe and Mail, "Read the letter from Mahamoud Adam Bechir," Published Wednesday, Jan. 30 2013, at <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/international-business...>