

From: SMART Core
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2011 05:45:48
To: Fernandez, Alberto M (Malabo)
Subject: TEODORIN ASKS FOR USG HELP IN CLEARING HIS NAME
UNCLASSIFIED



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Date/DTG: Mar 21, 2011 / 211645Z MAR 11
From: AMEMBASSY MALABO
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Reference: A) 10 MALABO 618
Pass Line: DEPARTMENT FOR AF FO, AF/C, INL
Subject: TEODORIN ASKS FOR USG HELP IN CLEARING HIS NAME

1. (SBU) This is an action message, please see para 7.
2. (SBU) Ambassador Fernandez was called in on March 21 by an agitated Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue ("Teodorin"), President Obiang's eldest son and putative heir. Holding a copy of a March 13, 2011 article in "Newsweek" by Philip Shenon titled "Dirty Dictator Loot," Teodorin said "I am an innocent victim of a media feeding frenzy." The Minister said that he humbly and urgently asked for the help of the U.S. Government in clearing his name from false accusations of kleptocracy that have been bandied about by the media and some irresponsible Western NGOs. He was horrified that a "Newsweek" article supposedly about the Qaddafi family focused more on him.
3. (SBU) "Unlike the Libyans, we are and have always been your friends, we have always been pro-American." Teodorin noted that he had fully cooperated with the Justice Department in the 2006 Riggs Bank scandal investigation and that DOJ had only been able to secure the conviction of money launderer and embezzler Simon Kareri and his wife because of his personal help. "I provided the audiotape that sent that man to prison, I was the person whom he had stolen from and yet one would think from reading the press that we were the thieves."
4. (SBU) The Minister noted that he has extensive business holdings inside and outside of Equatorial Guinea that do finance a lavish lifestyle, but that is different from his government job. "I have never stolen money from our country's treasury, I have never taken money from the oil companies." He noted that the USG can easily check with the local oil industry as it is entirely American run. He noted that his companies had profited handsomely from winning government contracts in road building and construction in the

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booming infrastructure business but that no one wanted to hear the truth, "I expected more fairness from the Americans."

5. (SBU) Nguema noticed that the "Newsweek" article, like so many others, mentioned his house in Malibu (and his Gulfstream V jet) falsely asserting that they had been purchased with stolen funds. He said that he was ready to receive a team from the Justice and State Departments at any time and have them go over his books to see where the money came from. "I will let them see contracts, they can be authorized to talk to the French bankers at Societe Generale (SGBGE), money going in and out, the whole paper trail, whatever they want" to show that these items were purchased through entirely legitimate revenue sources.

6. (SBU) The Minister said that he was being treated very unfairly with a totally bogus story about the second most expensive yacht in the world received as if it was fact. "If I had as much money as they say, as one would need to buy such a thing, I would really have those Hollywood starlets all over me." He expressed frustration that his numerous acts of public and private charity inside Equatorial Guinea, including distributing toys to all the children in the country at Christmas time had gotten zero coverage outside the country (reftel). He noted that his office is always thronged with poor and needy people seeking his help, for a scholarship or a medical operation, and he doesn't turn them away.

7. (SBU) Comment and request: Post needs to respond to this unusual request in some fashion and asks for Department guidance about whether such a step - a DOJ/State visit with Teodorin to discuss his finances is advisable, or even possible. We have no way of judging the actual level, if any, of Teodorin's corruption and note that at least some of the repetitive media and NGO coverage is extremely tendentious. It is certainly true that Teodorin has nothing directly to do with the oil industry, the country's main source of wealth. And as the IMF recently advised us, much of the corruption in Equatorial Guinea is indeed not outright theft or looting of the country's treasury but rather in murkier transactions such as sweetheart deals, influence peddling, construction contracts and finder's fees - all of which are legal in Equatorial Guinea. Given the fact that he doesn't have anything to do with oil, and has never (as even the opposition admits) been involved with human rights abuses, Teodorin's international notoriety is rather remarkable. Although he was left shaking his head and laughing at different times during the conversation, he clearly sees the issue as no laughing matter. End comment.

Signature:

FERNANDEZ

Drafted By:

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MALABO:Fernandez, Alberto M (Malabo)**Attachments:**

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Action Post:

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Exhibit 4

Page 44

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