



AFRICA

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Nigeria drops Dick Cheney bribery charges

Nigeria has dropped charges against former US Vice-President Dick Cheney over a 1990s bribery scandal, anti-corruption officials say.

The case focused on bribes paid by engineering firm KBR while it was a subsidiary of Halliburton, a firm headed by Mr Cheney at the time.

Nigerian officials said Halliburton agreed an out-of-court deal worth \$250m (£160m). The firm has not commented.

Mr Cheney, who became vice-president in 2001, has always denied wrongdoing.

Femi Babafemi, of Nigeria's anti-corruption agency EFCC, said Halliburton had agreed to pay \$250m "in lieu of prosecution".

He said \$130m of the money would be repatriated from foreign bank accounts.

AFP news agency reported that the money in foreign accounts was part of the bribery scheme, but had been frozen before it had reached Nigeria.

Halliburton, which split from KBR in 2007, has not commented on the deal but has insisted it has done nothing wrong.

'No suggestion of impropriety'

According to earlier cases brought in the US, KBR executives paid more than \$180m to Nigerian officials between 1994 and 2004 to secure about \$6bn contracts for building a liquefied natural gas plant.

KBR was fined \$402m by US authorities after pleaded guilty to conspiracy and corruption charges last year.

In a separate civil case in the US, Halliburton and KBR agreed to pay \$177m in forfeited profits, without admitting any wrongdoing.

The EFCC had been conducting its own investigations and last week filed 16 charges.

Its indictment named Mr Cheney, who was boss of Halliburton before becoming vice-president to George W Bush in 2001, as well as the firm's chief executive David Lesar, and two other executives.

It also filed charges against Halliburton as a company and four associated businesses.

Last week Mr Cheney's lawyer, Terence O'Donnell, said US investigators had "found no suggestion of any impropriety by Dick Cheney in his role of CEO of Halliburton".

"Any suggestion of misconduct on his part, made now, years later, is entirely baseless," Mr O'Donnell said.

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