



THE COMMON LAW IS THE WILL OF *Mankind* ISSUING FROM THE *Life* OF THE *People*

SEARCH THE SITE

SEARCH

Home » Briefing Room » Justice News

Printer Friendly

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, August 7, 2014

**U.S. Forfeits Over \$480 Million Stolen by Former Nigerian Dictator in Largest Forfeiture Ever Obtained Through a Kleptocracy Action**

The Department of Justice has forfeited more than \$480 million in corruption proceeds hidden in bank accounts around the world by former Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha and his co-conspirators.

Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division and Assistant Director in Charge Valerie Parlave of the FBI’s Washington Field Office made the announcement after a judgment was entered on Aug. 6, 2014, by U.S. District Judge John D. Bates of the District of Columbia.

“Rather than serve his county, General Abacha used his public office in Nigeria to loot millions of dollars, engaging in brazen acts of kleptocracy,” said Assistant Attorney General Caldwell. “With this judgment, we have forfeited \$480 million in corruption proceeds that can be used for the benefit of the Nigerian people. Through the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, the Department of Justice’s Criminal Division denies kleptocrats like Abacha the fruits of their crimes, and protects the U.S. financial system from money laundering. In coordination with our partners in Jersey, France and the United Kingdom, we are helping to end this chapter of corruption and flagrant abuse of office.”

“We remain steadfast in protecting the U.S. banking system from becoming a tool for dictators to hide their criminal proceeds,” said Assistant Director in Charge Parlave. “This court order bolsters the FBI’s ability to combat international corruption and money laundering by seizing the assets of those involved. I want to thank the special agents, financial analysts and prosecutors whose hard work over the years resulted in today’s announcement.”

The forfeited assets represent the proceeds of corruption during and after the military regime of General Abacha, who assumed the office of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria through a military coup on Nov. 17, 1993, and held that position until his death on June 8, 1998. The complaint alleges that General Abacha, his son Mohammed Sani Abacha, their associate Abubakar Atiku Bagudu and others embezzled, misappropriated and extorted billions of dollars from the government of Nigeria and others, then laundered their criminal proceeds through U.S. financial institutions and the purchase of bonds backed by the United States.

The judgment is the result of a civil forfeiture complaint the department filed in November 2013 against more than \$625 million in the largest kleptocracy forfeiture action brought in the department’s history. The forfeiture judgment includes approximately \$303 million in two bank accounts in the Bailiwick of Jersey, \$144 million in two bank accounts in France, and three bank accounts in the United Kingdom and Ireland with an expected value of at least \$27 million. The ultimate disposition of the funds will follow the execution of the judgment in each of these jurisdictions. Claims to an additional approximately \$148 million in four investment portfolios in the United Kingdom are pending.

As alleged in the complaint, General Abacha and others systematically embezzled billions of dollars in public funds from the Central Bank of Nigeria on the false pretense that the funds were necessary for national security. The conspirators withdrew the funds in cash and then moved the money overseas through U.S. financial institutions. General Abacha and his finance minister also allegedly caused the government of Nigeria to purchase Nigerian government bonds at vastly inflated prices from a company controlled by Bagudu and Mohammed Abacha, generating an illegal windfall of more than \$282 million. In addition, General Abacha and his associates allegedly extorted more than \$11 million from a French company and its Nigerian affiliate in connection with payments on government contracts. Funds involved in each of these schemes were allegedly laundered through the United States.



JUSTICE.GOV *en ESPAÑOL*

**DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE  
ACTION CENTER**

- [Report a Crime](#)
- [Get a Job](#)
- [Locate a Prison, Inmate, or Sex Offender](#)
- [Apply for a Grant](#)
- [Submit a Complaint](#)
- [Report Waste, Fraud, Abuse or Misconduct to the Inspector General](#)
- [Find Sales of Seized Property](#)
- [Find Help and Information for Crime Victims](#)
- [Register, Apply for Permits, or Request Records](#)
- [Identify Our Most Wanted Fugitives](#)
- [Find a Form](#)
- [Report and Identify Missing Persons](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

This case was brought under the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative by a team of dedicated prosecutors in the Criminal Division’s Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section, working in partnership with federal law enforcement agencies to forfeit the proceeds of foreign official corruption and, where appropriate, to use those recovered assets to benefit the people harmed by these acts of corruption and abuse of office. Individuals with information about possible proceeds of foreign corruption located in or laundered through the United States should contact federal law enforcement or send an email to [kleptocracy@usdoj.gov](mailto:kleptocracy@usdoj.gov).

The investigation was conducted by the FBI. The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Elizabeth Aloï and Assistant Deputy Chief Daniel Claman of the Criminal Division’s Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section, with substantial support from the Criminal Division’s Office of International Affairs. The department appreciates the extensive assistance provided by the governments of Jersey, France and the United Kingdom in this investigation.

14-835


Criminal Division



**STAY CONNECTED**

✉ Sign up for E-Mail Updates

📡 Subscribe to News Feeds





Facebook    Twitter    YouTube

**U.S. DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE** | 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530-0001

**ABOUT**

- The Attorney General
- Budget & Performance
- Strategic Plans

**AGENCIES**

**BUSINESS & GRANTS**

- Business Opportunities
- Small & Disadvantaged Business
- Grants

**RESOURCES**

- Forms
- Publications
- Case Highlights
- Legislative Histories
- Information for Victims in Large Cases

**NEWS**

- Justice News
- The Justice Blog
- Videos
- Photo Gallery

**CAREERS**

- Legal Careers
- Interns, Recent Graduates, and Fellows
- Diversity Policy
- Veteran Recruitment

**CONTACT**

**JUSTICE.GOV**

- Site Map
- A to Z Index
- Archive
- Accessibility
- FOIA
- No FEAR Act
- Information Quality
- Privacy Policy
- Legal Policies & Disclaimers

- For Employees
- Office of the Inspector General
- Government Resources
- USA.gov
- BusinessUSA