

Nigeria to Charge Dick Cheney in Pipeline Bribery Case

by Elisha Bala-Gbogbo via stele - Bloomberg *Friday, Dec 3 2010, 6:19pm*

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Nigeria will file charges against former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and officials from five foreign companies including Halliburton Co. over a \$180 million bribery scandal, a prosecutor at the anti-graft agency said.

Indictments will be lodged in a Nigerian court "in the next three days," Godwin Obla, prosecuting counsel at the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, said in an interview today at his office in Abuja, the capital. An arrest warrant for Cheney "will be issued and transmitted through Interpol," the world's biggest international police organization, he said.

Peter Long, Cheney's spokesman, said he couldn't immediately comment when contacted today and said he would respond later to an e-mailed request for comment.

Obla said charges will be filed against current and former chief executive officers of Halliburton, including Cheney, who was CEO from 1995 to 2000, and its former unit KBR Inc., based in Houston, Texas; Technip SA, Europe's second-largest oilfield-services provider; Eni SpA, Italy's biggest oil company; and Saipem Construction Co., a unit of Eni. Obla didn't identify the former officials whom he said held office when the alleged bribes were paid.

Last week, Nigeria arrested at least 23 officials from companies including Halliburton, Saipem, Technip and a former subsidiary of Panalpina Welttransport Holding AG in connection with alleged illegal payments to Nigerian officials. Those detained were all freed on bail on Nov. 29.

Liquefied Natural Gas

Authorities in the West African nation are probing Halliburton, Saipem and Technip for the alleged payment of \$180 million in bribes to win a \$6 billion liquefied natural-gas contract. Panalpina is being investigated for illegal payments it allegedly made to Nigerian customs officials on behalf of Royal Dutch Shell Plc.

"Eni confirms its availability to cooperate with the local authorities in the ongoing investigations, as it has done in the past with Italian and U.S. authorities," Gianni Di Giovanni, spokesman for the company, said in an e-mailed statement today.

Christophe B elorgeot, who is listed on Technip's website as a spokesman for the company, didn't answer his phone when called today. No one answered the phone at Halliburton's Nigerian office when called for comment. A person who answered a call to Halliburton's Houston office said no one was available to comment. Teresa Wong, Halliburton's spokeswoman, didn't immediately respond to an e-mail seeking comment. Heather Browne, a spokeswoman for KBR, said by e-mail the company has no comment.

Bush's Running Mate

Cheney, 69, left Halliburton in 2000 to become U.S. President George W. Bush's running mate and

then vice president. He formed the company's KBR Inc. unit after acquiring Dresser Industries Inc. in 1998.

The plans to file charges against Cheney were reported earlier today in the Lagos-based Guardian newspaper. Femi Babafemi, a spokesman for the commission, confirmed the plans to file charges when contacted by phone today in Abuja. He wouldn't comment any further.

Nigeria charged a former aide of President Olusegun Obasanjo with six counts of money-laundering on Oct. 13 in connection with the alleged payment of bribes.

KBR and Halliburton agreed to pay \$579 million in February 2009 for bribery payments in Nigeria that stretched from 1994 to 2004.

'All Potential Claims'

Technip took a charge of 245 million euros (\$342 million) related to its stake in TSJK and discussed "resolution of all potential claims" with the U.S. Justice Department and the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Paris-based company said on Feb. 12. TSJK was a group of international companies comprising Technip, Snamprogetti SpA, a unit of Eni, KBR and JGC Corp. of Japan.

Panalpina, Royal Dutch Shell and five oil-services companies agreed to pay \$236.5 million to resolve a U.S. probe of overseas bribery, the Justice Department said on Nov. 4. The bribes were paid to expedite the import of goods and equipment, avoid customs duties on imported goods, extend drilling contracts and lower tax assessments, according to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Nigeria is Africa's biggest crude producer and the fifth biggest source of U.S. oil imports.

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