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JUSTICE NEWS

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**Department of Justice Seeks to Recover More Than \$70.8 Million in Proceeds of Corruption from Government Minister of Equatorial Guinea**

WASHINGTON – The U.S. government has filed civil forfeiture complaints against approximately \$70.8 million in real and personal property, which the government alleges is the proceeds of foreign corruption offenses and was laundered in the United States, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Justice Department's Criminal Division and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton.

An amended civil forfeiture complaint has been unsealed in U.S. District Court in the Central District of California and a separate civil forfeiture complaint was filed today in the District of Columbia. According to the complaints, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangué (Nguema) used his position and influence as a government minister for Equatorial Guinea to acquire criminal proceeds through corruption and money laundering, in violation of both Equatoguinean and U.S. law. According to the complaints, Nguema is the son of Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mbasogo (Obiang), the president of Equatorial Guinea.

"The complaints announced today allege that, on a modest government salary, Minister Nguema amassed wealth of over \$100 million," said Assistant Attorney General Breuer. "While his people struggled, he lived the high life – purchasing a Gulfstream jet, a Malibu mansion and nearly \$2 million in Michael Jackson memorabilia. Alleging that these extravagant items are the proceeds of foreign official corruption, the Department of Justice is seeking to seize them through coordinated forfeiture actions. Through our Kleptocracy Initiative, we are sending the message loud and clear: the United States will not be a hiding place for the ill-gotten riches of the world's corrupt leaders."

"This investigation was initiated by ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in an effort to identify Teodoro Nguema Obiang's assets in the United States after he was suspected of obtaining his wealth from alleged illicit activities such as the misappropriation of public funds, theft, extortion and embezzlement of the nation's natural resources," said ICE Director Morton. "ICE HSI will continue to work with our law enforcement partners both here and abroad to hold these individuals accountable by denying them the enjoyment of their ill-gotten gains."

According to the complaints, despite an official government salary of less than \$100,000 per year, Nguema amassed more than \$100 million during a period in which he and an inner circle of individuals who hold critical positions of political and economic power in Equatorial Guinea were the near-exclusive beneficiaries of the extraction and sale of that country's natural resources. Under Equatoguinean law, the natural resources belong to the people of Equatorial Guinea. The complaints allege that Nguema used intermediaries and corporate entities to acquire numerous assets in the United States, including more than \$1.8 million worth of Michael Jackson memorabilia, a \$38.5 million Gulfstream G-V jet, a \$30 million house in Malibu, Calif., and a 2011 Ferrari automobile valued at more than \$530,000.

The cases are being handled by Senior Trial Attorney Janet C. Hudson and Trial Attorney Woo Lee of the Criminal Division's Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section. The investigation was conducted by ICE HSI Foreign Corruption Investigations Group and the HSI Asset Identification and Removal Group in Miami, with the assistance of the HSI Office of the Special Agent in Charge for Los Angeles.

The cases originated as part of the Justice Department's Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, which targets and recovers the proceeds of foreign official corruption that have been laundered into or through the United States. As part of the initiative, the Justice Department will seek to forfeit and recover stolen funds for the benefit of the people of the country from which it was taken.

In 2003, ICE HSI established the Foreign Corruption Investigations Group in Miami to target corrupt foreign officials around the world that attempt to utilize U.S. financial institutions to launder illicit funds. The group conducts investigations into the laundering of proceeds emanating from foreign public corruption, bribery or embezzlement. The objective is to prevent foreign derived ill-gotten gains from entering the U.S. financial infrastructure, to seize identified assets in the United States and recover these funds on behalf of those affected by foreign official corruption.

Individuals with information about possible proceeds of foreign corruption in the United States, or funds laundered through institutions in the United States, should contact ICE HSI at 866-DHS-2ICE, [Eginfo1@ICE.DHS.GOV](mailto:Eginfo1@ICE.DHS.GOV) or 802-872-6199 if calling from outside the United States.

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Criminal Division