

**Department of Justice**  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Gabonese-French Dual Citizen Sentenced to 24 Months Imprisonment for Bribing African Officials**

A dual citizen of Gabon and France was sentenced to 24 months in prison for his role in a conspiracy to pay bribes to senior government officials across Africa, in violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA).

Acting Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Blanco of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, Acting U.S. Attorney Bridget Rohde of the Eastern District of New York, Assistant Director in Charge William F. Sweeney Jr. of the FBI's New York Field Office and Acting Special Agent in Charge Ronald L. Whitsett of Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation (IRS-CI)'s New York office made the announcement.

Samuel Mebiame, 43, who resided in Paris prior to his arrest, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Nicholas G. Garaufis of the Eastern District of New York. Mebiame pleaded guilty on Dec. 9, 2016, to one count of conspiracy to violate the FCPA.

According to admissions made at his plea hearing, Mebiame formed a conspiracy to provide improper benefits to government officials in multiple countries in Africa. Mebiame admitted that the improper benefits he provided were intended to influence the performance of official governmental duties, and that he took steps to further the conspiracy while physically in New York. Based on court documents, Mebiame worked as a "fixer" on behalf of a joint venture company owned by New-York-based hedge fund Och-Ziff Capital Management Group LLC (Och-Ziff) and its business partner, a Turks and Caicos Islands-registered corporate entity controlled by a co-conspirator. In that role, Mebiame traveled extensively across Africa, Europe and the U.S. and routinely made bribe payments to senior government officials in Africa. Mebiame's plea documents indicated that at least five senior officials in three countries, Niger, Chad and Guinea, received corrupt payments and various illicit benefits from Mebiame. The officials, each of whom could influence the award of mining, oil and mineral concessions in their countries, received either cash payments, luxury vehicles or extravagant travel including the private rental of an Airbus jet. The bribes paid by Mebiame to the officials were often masked through additional intermediaries or attorneys.

According to court documents, in Niger, Mebiame paid more than \$3 million in bribes to a high-ranking government official both directly and through intermediary agents who were selected by the Nigerien official. Mebiame also made payments for luxury cars for that foreign official and directed a \$100,000 donation to a charity run by a government official. In return, Mebiame obtained licenses for uranium concessions for the joint venture from the government of Niger. Similarly, in Chad, Mebiame bribed a high-ranking government official with cash payments and luxury foreign travel for the official and the official's wife. In return, Mebiame obtained uranium concessions for the joint venture, including rights to an asset which had been stripped by the Chadian government, at Mebiame's urging, from a French-owned company. In Guinea, during a time when the conspirators were seeking to establish a state-owned mining company there, Mebiame made corrupt payments to gain special access to senior Guinean government officials. Mebiame provided the officials with cash and other benefits, including an S-Class Mercedes Benz vehicle and the use of private planes, in exchange for special access and confidential information.

Mebiame's plea documents indicate that Mebiame repeatedly traveled to the United States between 2007 and 2015, the period of the criminal acts, and used facilities in both New York and Florida to further the conspiracy. Among other activities undertaken by Mebiame cited in court papers, he met with co-conspirators in New York, received funds from co-conspirators to U.S. bank accounts he controlled, and had telephone calls and email correspondence about the scheme.

Following Mebiame's arrest in Brooklyn last August, as part of the government's broader investigation, Och-Ziff was charged in September 2016 with violations of the FCPA's anti-bribery, books and records,

and accounting controls provisions for conduct in Libya and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and conduct in Chad and Niger connected to Mebiame and his co-conspirators' conduct. Och-Ziff entered into a deferred prosecution agreement in connection with those charges. An Och-Ziff subsidiary company, OZ Africa Management GP LLC pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal information related to the payment of extensive bribes in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The FBI's New York Field Office and IRS-CI New York investigated the case. Trial Attorney James P. McDonald and Assistant Chief Leo R. Tsao of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys James P. Loonam, Jonathan P. Lax and David Pitluck of the Eastern District of New York are prosecuting the case. The Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs provided significant assistance in this matter. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's Boston Regional Office provided significant cooperation.

The Criminal Division's Fraud Section is responsible for investigating and prosecuting all FCPA matters. Additional information about the Justice Department's FCPA enforcement efforts can be found at [www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa](http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa).