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## We expect Malabu corruption trial in Italy to drag for months, Shell tells staff

October 12, 2018 Oladeinde Olawoyin



Shell and Eni photo used to illustrate the story. [Photo credit: THISDAYLIVE]

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Malabu scandal.

The two men, Emeka Obi, a Nigerian consultant in England, and Gianluca Di Nardo, an Italian, stood as middlemen in connecting parties and ensured the transfer of the funds through international bank accounts in the oil deal, prosecutors alleged. They were convicted last month in Italy.

The controversial deal, struck in 2011 under former president Goodluck Jonathan, saw the Nigerian government stand as a negotiator in the controversial sale of OPL 245 oil block in offshore Nigerian waters.

Two international oil and gas giants, Royal Dutch Shell and Italian Agip-Eni, paid out about \$1.1 billion to Dan Etete, a former Nigerian petroleum minister who had previously been convicted of money laundering in France. The payout

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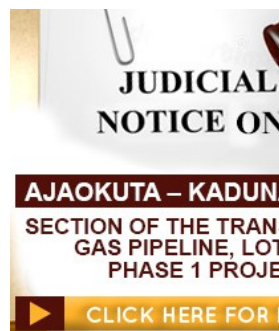
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would later become a subject of cross-border investigation spanning over six countries.

Eni CEO Claudio Descalzi and four ex-Shell managers, including former Shell Foundation Chairman Malcolm Brinded, are on trial in one of the largest cases in the history of the oil and gas industry. All the accused have denied wrongdoing.

Last month, Messrs Obi and Di Nardo were found guilty and sentenced four years each while another £100 pounds was confiscated in connection with the case.

The pair had opted for a quick trial for their roles in the deal.

But in a company-wide internal memo seen by Reuters on Thursday, Shell said it expects the landmark **corruption trial** to last many months, warning staff of continued critical media coverage in the \$1.3 billion case.

The oil giant also distanced itself from the two convicted 'middlemen'.



"I would like to be clear that neither individual worked on behalf of Shell and Shell was not a party to their fast-track trial," said Shell's Legal Director, Donny Ching.

"At this point, it is difficult to read anything into this verdict as far as the outcome of the trial in Milan involving Shell and its former employees is concerned," the memo, dated September 20, said. "I would therefore ask you not to engage in speculation on this."

The Legal Director encouraged employees to study an internal web page that the Anglo-Dutch company set up for the case before responding to questions from relatives and friends.

"We do not yet know how long the trial will last but expect this to be many months, continuing into next year," read the memo, provided to Reuters by John Donovan, who runs the independent royaldutchshellplc.com website. A Shell spokesman confirmed the authenticity of the document.

The oil major added that it expects to see continued and 'critical' media coverage around the issue.

"As a result, I appreciate that you may find yourself having to respond to questions from relatives and friends. You can find more information about the case, which may also help with those discussions, on the OPL 245 intranet web page."

"Based on our review of the evidence available to us, we maintain there is no basis on which to convict Shell or its former employees. We will vigorously defend our position and believe that the trial judges will conclude that there is no case for us to answer."

Since 2012 when it first denied all allegations to PREMIUM TIMES, Shell had insisted that it only paid the Nigerian government for the OPL 245 oil block and did not know Mr Etete was the recipient or that he was an ex-convict.



But for the first time in 2017, Shell told the New York Times it had dealt with Mr Etete who awarded



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the OPL 245 oil block to his own secretly owned company, Malabu, while serving as petroleum minister from 1995-1998. But the oil company denied wrongdoing.

Several Nigerian government officials are believed to have received several million dollars in bribes for the enabling roles they played.



Mr Jonathan, under whose watch the deal was struck, has also denied wrongdoing. The former president is not on trial over the long-running case.

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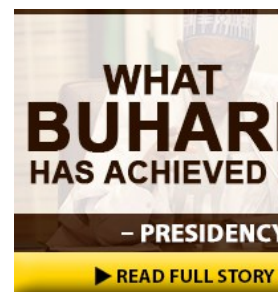

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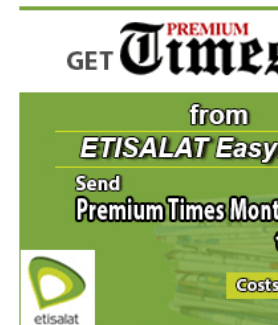


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