

U.N. probes sex abuse allegations in Congo

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations is investigating 150 allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeepers in Congo, a disturbing sign that efforts to rid the so-called "blue helmets" of such misconduct in recent years haven't worked, officials said Monday.

The allegations include pedophilia, rape and soliciting prostitutes, all claims that have been made against peacekeepers working under the U.N. mandate in the past, said Jane Holl Lute, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

"It is important that those missions be above reproach and adhere to a standard of condition which not only we have a right to expect, but the people in these circumstances them-

selves have a right to expect," Holl Lute said.

The allegations in Congo started coming to light in the spring, and there is enough evidence in many of the cases for formal investigations, she said. Investigators are now checking the 15 other U.N. missions around the world to see how widespread the problem is.

In recent years, the United Nations has tried to put more emphasis on training peacekeepers beforehand and re-emphasizing codes of conduct.

But Holl Lute said those changes have not kept pace with the massive growth in peacekeeping missions, and their complexity — where soldiers often are deployed in highly

volatile, lawless areas rather than manning clearly delineated truce lines.

Officials have refused to give details about specific cases, but at least three people in Congo have been sent home for further investigation.

She said U.N. leaders were now determined to get tougher. So-called "personnel conduct officers" have been sent to the missions in Congo, Burundi, Ivory Coast and Haiti.

Several investigative teams have been deployed to Congo, including one that arrived Monday. Another is on its way to study long-term proposals.

The United Nations has also named

Jordan's Prince Zeid Al Hussein a special adviser on sexual exploitation with the hope that he can talk to governments and make sure they pursue claims against their soldiers.

"I'm talking to governments so we have a collective response to assist the secretary-general and the U.N. by ensuring that these cases don't arise in the future," Zeid told The Associated Press.

The United Nations hopes Zeid's background will give him the power he needs in an extremely difficult task. He is one of the few U.N. ambassadors with peacekeeping experience, from Bosnia in 1994 and 1995. In addition, Jordan is among the top troop suppliers for U.N. missions.

Black empowerment in South Africa stirring union anger

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — In the new democratic South Africa, the government has sought to empower Blacks by giving them a larger stake in the economy through lucrative deals that seek to uplift those often impoverished by apartheid.

In theory, the strategy of Black Economic Empowerment would give hope to millions of poor Blacks. In practice, however, critics claim it has merely benefited a handful of the politically well-connected.

Resentment over that practice has flared with the announcement of the latest "Black Empowerment" deal: A billion-dollar agreement that would give a chunk of South Africa's telephone monopoly to a former ruling party official.

Unions, business groups and opposition parties immediately said cronyism and aggrandizement were at work. A consortium led by the

former head of the department that regulates the telecommunications industry announced last week that it was buying a 15.1 percent share of Telkom SA, South Africa's telephone monopoly.

The stake, valued at 7 billion rand (US \$1.18 billion) last week, will be sold to the consortium at the discounted price of 6.6 billion rand (US \$1.11 billion), a price determined during the negotiations.

Unions have accused Andile Ngcaba, the consortium leader, of laying the groundwork for the deal while he was still director general of the Communications Department. For critics, the deal was further evidence that the Black Economic Empowerment program mainly benefits prominent Blacks with strong ties to the governing African National Congress.

Then — further infuriating the unions — a state body that invests money from enti-

ties such as the government employees pension fund acquired the stake Tuesday and agreed to hold it for six months while the consortium obtains private financing for the purchase.

Telkom, which posted a record 4.59 billion rand (US \$771 million) profit for the year, announced plans in July to lay off 4,000 workers over the next three years to cut costs.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions said allowing the Public Investment Commissioners to buy and hold the stake for the consortium amounted to the workers financing their own job losses.

"The government is using workers' pensions money to oil the wheels of an already discredited deal," union spokesman Patrick Craven said.

The proposed sale has also been criticized by the South African Chamber of Business, which has said it is con-

cerned about former public officials being involved in public enterprises.

"There is an uneasy feeling in business about the close links between individuals involved in this deal and the highest office in the land, that of the presidency," its chairman, James Lennox, was quoted as saying by the financial daily Business Day.

"ANC sanctioned greed," Business Day itself said in a front-page editorial, calling the deal "arguably the least mass-empowering and most individual-enriching exercise in the redistribution of wealth imaginable in a developing country with a majority of extremely poor people."

Until 11 months ago, Ngcaba, 48, headed the Communications Department,

which regulates the telecommunications industry. He is now chairman of Dimension Data Holdings PLC, Africa's biggest computer services company. Craven said the union is demanding that the government, which must approve the sale, reject the consortium.

"Is this not a typical example of a government policy maker throwing a javelin into the private sector and then picking it up before it has landed, as a businessman?" Craven asked.

Ngcaba denies any conflict of interest or wrongdoing, and says the application to purchase the stake from the US-Malaysian Thintana group was a "commercially run and a competitive process."

"There were a number of other bidding entities," he said.

The government has passed laws that force mining companies to sell 26 percent of their assets to Blacks by 2014, and has similar agreements with banks, insurers and oil companies.

Unions and opposition parties argue that stakes in such deals should be sold to consortiums with greater participation by ordinary people or sold as individual shares in plans that give those disadvantaged by apartheid the first chance to buy.

But the exercise of selling them, said Patricia de Lille, the leader of the opposition Independent Democrats, "has been the transfer of wealth from one elite to another."

Curry

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Kissimee, was shot to death by a White mob at Wednesday noon after he had been seen kissing a White woman named Belle Mann with whom he had been keeping company for the past two years."

On April 1, 1916, the Birmingham Voice published a story with a Cedar Bluff, Miss. dateline. It noted that Jeff Brown was lynched after he tried to board a moving freight train. The paper explained, "He started on the run to board the moving train. On the sidewalk was the daughter of a White farmer. Brown accidentally brushed against her and she screamed. A gang quickly formed and ran after him, jerking him off the moving train. He was beaten into insensibility and then hung to a tree. The sheriff has made no attempt to find out who the members of the mob were. Picture cards of the body are being sold on the streets at five cents apiece."

In 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old boy, was murdered in Mississippi for allegedly whistling at a White woman. He was beaten, shot in the head and thrown into the Tallahatchie River. The two White defendants who later admitted killing Till were

acquitted by an all-White jury.

Three years later, in Monroe, N.C., two Black boys — Fuzzy Simpson, age 7, and Hanover Thompson, age 9 — were invited to join a group of five White children, including two girls. One of the girls remembered that she had played with Hanover when his mother worked as a maid in her family's house. Overjoyed at being reunited with her old playmate, she kissed him on the cheek. According to Randall Kennedy, who recounts the incident in his book, "Interracial Intimacies," when the girl innocently told her mother, the two boys were arrested and convicted of attempted rape. The Juvenile Court sentenced Fuzzy to 12 years in jail and Hanover to 14. Because of a public outcry, President Eisenhower persuaded the governor to intervene.

Generally, America has never been comfortable at the sight a Black male with a White female. So when Nicollette Sheridan shed her towel and jumped into the arms of Terrell Owens, she exposed much more than her body.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service.

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but I am more concerned about those ministers — probably in greater numbers — who may have done radio and television ads supporting George Bush, who gave their church directories to his campaign, and who held social events to drum up voter turnout, all according to instructions prepared by the Bush campaign earlier in the year. This entre into the Black church community was paved by the faith-based programs, but it was supplemented by a dedicated plan of attack on Black churches by the Republican campaign.

Now I don't know who received money for their assistance to the Republican Party. But I have heard that money flowed and things were done to receive it. It may all come out in the records of the Federal Election Commission, but the Republicans are so smart that it may not. In any case, we have two models working here.

One model is that the Democrats flood the Black communities with people who don't know Blacks, asking them to register, then return to ask them to vote. Meanwhile, the ministers and other Black leaders who should be doing this work are on the sidelines of the action. Moreover, the Democratic Party and their friends raise more money than ever before, but none of it goes to a Black church program. Then, 30 days out, the Kerry campaign panics, calls in Rev. Jesse Jackson, to try to pull out the

Black vote, calls out the president of Black America, Bill Clinton (whom he knows can pull out the Black vote), and he accompanies them into Black churches asking for votes.

He also invites some Black ministers to come on conference calls to talk to our Black president, Bill Clinton, but Black leaders are not allowed to speak. Regardless, the effort is very little and very late.

The other model is that Karl Rove cultivates Black preachers with money from the White House earmarked for faith-based institutions, provides foreign trips to some ministers, invites some to the White House, and when election time comes, turns them loose to support the president. And they respond with what amounts to serious Republican penetration into the heart of the institutional structure of the Black community, creating a jumping off point for successive Republican administrations to tear away the cultural fabric of our community and patch it on to their political Right-wing agenda.

As we think about what happened in this election cycle and seek repair, one thing that must be understood is that the Black church infrastructure is now the subject of serious competition. And the stakes of how that turns out are awesome.

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