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Trial of finance officials in bribery case starts

By Edward Anyoli

The trial of two former finance ministry officials accused of soliciting a sh1b bribe from an investor starts today at the Anti- Corruption Court in Kololo, Kampala.

Senior state attorney Tom Walugembe yesterday told Justice Lawrence Gidudu that prosecution is ready to adduce evidence against John Charles Ogol and Geoffrey Turyamuhika.

Among other pieces of evidence prosecution intends to use during the trial are correspondences from President Yoweri Museveni, finance ministry, Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited (UETCL), energy ministry and Guangzhou Dongsong, the Chinese investor.

Prosecution has also retrieved information from Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) showing how Ogol, as public servant, acquired seven vehicles in 2016. He is alleged to have acquired four of the vehicles in one day.

According to documents submitted to court in July, which prosecution intends to rely on as evidence to prosecute the two, is a voice recorder.

"The voice recorder, which was ...ed by the complainant to record the ...roceedings on the fateful day while ...gol and Turyamuhika were receiving a bribe from him was forwarded to the ICT Directorate of the Police for forensic analysis. The recording shall be tendered in as evidence," the summary of evidence which is now part of court record reads.



Ogol and Turyamuhika after they were released on bail recently

The prosecution is also in possession of telephone records and text messages allegedly retrieved from Turyamuhika's mobile phone which he sent to Hassan Sserunjoji (a complainant), reportedly asking for 'facilitation'.

The prosecution has also obtained a digital forensics report of the mobile phones and the voice recorder together with its transcription, detailing how the alleged negotiations for the bribe happened.

"The prosecution shall contend that the accused persons have no lawful defence and pray that they are convicted as indicted," Walugembe said

Charges

Ogol, 57 and Turyamuhika, 37, were charged on April 7, 2017 with soliciting $300,000 (sh1b) to expedite the process of financing construction of a power sub-station in Tororo district.

Prosecution alleges that Ogol and Turyamuhika corruptly solicited $300,000 (sh1b), but allegedly received $16,600 (sh59m) as part payment.

Walugembe said Ogol and Turyamuhika on January 30, 2017, while employed as public officials in the finance ministry as principal finance officer and senior economist respectively, solicited gratification of sh1b.

It is alleged by prosecution that Ogol on March 27, 2017 accepted a gratification of $16,600 (about sh59m). They denied the charges.

Demand for sh1b

The prosecution alleges that Ogol and Turyamuhika agreed to waive taxes on the investor's goods and allegedly demanded sh1b to facilitate the process.

The prosecution said the accused demanded a part payment of $50,000 (about sh180m) with the extra $250,000 (sh800m) supposed to be paid later in exchange for not paying taxes.

President contacted

It was alleged that following undue pressure from the accused, President Museveni was contacted for help.

Upon reporting to the President, the investor was advised to report to Police. The investor complied by reporting to the Special Investigations Division (SID) of the Police.

According prosecution, the SID commandant then contacted the State House comptroller and $50,000 (sh1.5b) was arranged to be used a

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