

Halliburton May Pay \$500 million to Keep Cheney out of Prison: Report

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Oilfield services company Halliburton is in negotiations with the Nigerian government to keep its former CEO, Dick Cheney, out of prison, according to a news report.

Sources inside Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission [told GlobalPost](#) this week that a settlement keeping the charges against Cheney out of court could cost as much as \$500 million.

Nigeria [filed charges](#) against Cheney this week in an investigation of alleged bribery estimated at \$180 million. Prosecutors named both Halliburton and KBR in the charges, as well as three European oil and engineering companies — Technip SA, EniSpa, and Saipem Construction.

The charges allege that engineering contractor KBR, until 2007 a subsidiary of Halliburton, was among companies that paid bribes to secure a \$6 billion contract for a natural gas plant. KBR [pleaded guilty](#) to the same bribes in a US court in 2009, and agreed to pay a \$382 million fine. The Nigerian charges appear to stem from the US case — though, in that trial, Cheney was never directly charged.

It's not clear from the GlobalPost report if the \$500 million figure refers to the amount Halliburton will have to pay, or whether that amount would cover all the companies that have been charged.

Further complicating the issue is that the negotiations appear to be an out-of-court settlement, because Nigerian law doesn't recognize plea bargaining.

The idea that an out-of-court settlement could be used in a criminal case angered anti-corruption activist Adetokunbo Mumuni, who told GlobalPost, "There cannot be an out of court settlement. In a purely criminal matter like this, the full letters of the law should apply. Whoever is involved should be taken through the entire process to determine their guilt or not."

The legal vagueness surrounding the reported negotiations will likely fuel accusations that Halliburton and the other accused companies are attempting to bribe their way out of a bribery prosecution.

But the willingness of Nigerian officials to quote a dollar figure in the midst of negotiations could also fuel speculation that the Nigerian charges are an attempt to shake down the companies for cash.

“The issue should not be so much about the former US vice president, it should be to what extent the law will be properly applied,” Mumuni told GlobalPost.

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