Guinea to Probe Sable Mining After Global Witness Report

Guinea said it will examine Sable Mining Ltd.'s activities in the West African nation as President Alpha Conde denied allegations by advocacy group Global Witness that the London-based company supported his presidential election campaign in 2010.

Mines Minister Abdoulaye Magassouba and Minister of Justice Cheick Sako said in separate e-mailed statements that they will probe Sable's licenses in Guinea.

"My department will fully support the justice system so that clear light can be shed on the activities of Sable Mining in Guinea," Magassouba said on Saturday.

Global Witness alleged that Sable forged a relationship with Conde's son in 2010 and helped with campaign logistics during the presidential elections that year. Two years later, Sable was awarded mining rights to the Mount Nimba iron-ore project and subsequently obtained an authorization to export through neighboring Liberia, denied to some other mining companies, which meant the company could use an existing railway line.

Conde Denial

The allegations were contained in a May 12 report on Sable's activities in Africa. London-based Global Witness said there was no evidence of wrongdoing by Alpha Conde.

Conde on Sunday denied that his son was involved with Sable, telling reporters in the capital, Conakry, that they had "nothing to hide."

Sable Chief Executive Officers Andrew Groves and former Chairman Phil Edmonds told Global Witness that if any bribery occurred in Guinea, it was without their knowledge, according to the report. Jim Cochran, Sable chairman since 2014, was cited by Global Witness as saying the company obeys the law wherever it operates and that questions from the advocacy group had "prompted a further internal review of all these matters, many of which were subject to review a number of years ago." Further detail on that review wasn't given in the report.

Groves and Edmonds "strenuously" deny any wrongdoing, Sable said in an e-mailed statement.

"The Global Witness report appears to have been based primarily on uncorroborated discussions with three former business partners (or their associates) of Mr Groves and Mr Edmonds," Sable said.

Sable said it's "happy to engage" with inquiries made by the Guinean authorities.