

## **“AN AIRPLANE FOR THE PRESIDENT”**

*by Luca Chianca*

### **SIGFRIDO RANUCCI, IN THE STUDIO**

Good evening. What role did former Premier Matteo Renzi play in saving the party newspaper? And what of the businessman who stepped in to take it over and who's losing 400 euros a month but is happy? We'll look at all that, but only following our highly anticipated investigation into Eni. These are not easy topics to tackle. Just ask our correspondents, who were arrested a few weeks ago while they were in the Congo. They were following the trail of an alleged kickback.

### **LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

When these events were taking place, Vincenzo Armanca was a top-level executive for Eni in Central Africa. He says he knows the whole story, which is why he has become the chief witness for the Milanese magistrates who are investigating the biggest kickback in history. We met with him in a gorgeous restaurant looking out over Via della Pinciana in Rome. He asked us to conceal his likeness. He maintains that 50 million euros came back into the available assets of former Chief Executive Officer, Paolo Scaroni.

### **VINCENZO ARMANCA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

There was a portion in cash—this was explained to me by Victor, a person from the Nigerian secret services—which had been delivered, in cash, to Roberto Casula, and they had proof of this. And all that cash, according to his source—according to his sources—had been flown out on a plane that belonged to Eni. I checked this out myself, and there was no Eni plane in Abuja at that time; there was the plane that we rent from Fabio Ottonello for all of the sub-Saharan region.

### **LUCA CHIANCA**

Who is Fabio Ottonello?

### **VINCENZO ARMANCA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

Fabio Ottonello is, was, the honorary Consul in Congo-Brazzaville, the French Congo, a big... a service provider for Eni, with a company called Diamond. He married one of the daughters of the current president, Sassou Nguesso.

### **LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Eni is one of the principal oil companies operating in the Congo. In Pointe Noire, its presence is clear to see. Two offices, a hospital, a school and, along the beachfront, the Petrolie Club, where employees can go to relax.

It is in this fenced-in area here, however, that Mrs. Ingoba, the Congolese wife of Eni executive Descalzi, was responsible for finding and negotiating the sale of parcels of land where a real-estate complex with an ocean view is now being built.

It is also here in Pointe Noire that Fabio Ottonello does business. Of his many businesses, one is an airline.

### **LUCA CHIANCA**

Armanna says that part of the portion of the kickback earmarked for the Italians, from this agreement in Nigeria, was transported on one of your flights.

### **SIGFRIDO RANUCCI, IN THE STUDIO**

A few hours after this interview, our Luca Chianca and Paolo Palermo were arrested by the Congolese security services and locked up in a room two-meters square, for 2 days and two nights without being able to sleep. Before they were released, their computers, cell phones, video cameras, and the footage they had filmed were confiscated. All of their material is still down there. But this interview is being broadcast nonetheless, because there are memories that cannot be erased or confiscated. Well, Pointe Noire was only the final stop on a trail that our correspondents had been following—the trail of an alleged kickback paid out of the one-billion dollars used by Eni to purchase an oilfield in Nigeria, called OPL 245. According to Eni executive—former executive—Vincenzo Armanna, 50 million were returned to the available assets of Paolo Scaroni. The Public Prosecutor's Office in Milan has requested a probable cause hearing for the former Eni top executive, for the current chief executive, Claudio Descalzi, and for the fixer, Luigi Bisignani. The charge is “participation in international corruption.” It is hypothesized that their clandestine interests were being represented by Emeka Obi, a Nigerian middleman behind whom the former Nigerian oil minister was also hiding—a man named Dan Etete, who had previously been awarded a piece of ocean with an oilfield underneath it, which he had then resold it to Eni and Shell, taking a large slice of the pie for himself. Marvelous. Of course, these men couldn't come without a large supporting cast of characters: the Russian middleman Agaev; two English former secret agents; and the diplomat, Italian vice-consul Gianfranco Falcioni. This spy story is told to us by our very own Luca Chianca.

### **LUCA CHIANCA**

What was your role in the negotiations?

### **VINCENZO ARMANNA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

I was the project leader. Basically, I was the person responsible for compliance with all of Eni's procedures and, at the same time, I was responsible for aligning all of our counterparties. Obi was a part of it from the beginning, and subsequently there were other parties as well.

### **LUCA CHIANCA**

Who did Obi represent?

### **VINCENZO ARMANNA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

Dan Etete introduced him to us, the Italians, as though it had been we who had requested that this person be involved in the mediation. The subsequent

justification was that Dan Etete could not open checking accounts. I later came to understand that he was... that he came directly from the CEO, Paolo Scaroni, and that legitimized his intrusions into our negotiating team.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

It is in Geneva that the middlemen held the first of the meetings that were to lead to Eni's purchase of a Nigerian oil block, for which it paid over 1-billion dollars. In this residential neighborhood lives one of the key figures in this story, the attorney Granier-Deferre, long-time consultant and friend of Dan Etete, the Nigerian former minister. We talked to a person who knows him well.

**GENEVA ATTORNEY**

Granier-Deferre and Etete have been doing business together since the '90s. They were previously involved in another international corruption case, the case of Bonny Island, also in Nigeria, in which Eni paid over 350 million in the United States to escape the legal proceedings and avoid a conviction.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Granier-Deferre was already embroiled in another trial in France, this one for international money laundering—revolving, yet again, around former minister Dan Etete.

**GENEVA ATTORNEY**

It was Granier-Deferre who introduced the Russian middleman Agaev to the Nigerian former minister Etete. That was the initial contact which gave rise to the entire negotiation for the OPL 245 oilfield.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Wasn't it strange for a Russian to be taking part in this negotiation?

**GENEVA ATTORNEY**

It seemed strange to everyone, including former minister Etete, but the Russian had very strong ties to men from Shell.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The Anglo-Dutch company Shell had already gotten its hands on the Nigerian oil block. However, due to a legal dispute, it still had not taken possession of it. That was when Eni stepped into the negotiations.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Did Dan Etete know someone inside Eni?

**GENEVA ATTORNEY**

Inside Eni he knew Descalzi, who was then the number two in the company. Former minister Etete didn't want middlemen. He wanted to speak directly to the oil companies but, in the end, Emeka Obi became the middleman who negotiated with Eni.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The Russian Agaev and Obi—the middlemen—met a number of times with former minister Etete's consultant, Granier-Deferre. It was, in fact, during the search of his home in Geneva that documents were found that would appear to

indicate the managers destined to receive a portion of the kickbacks, their identities concealed by two abbreviations: M1 and M2.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Good afternoon, Mr. Deferre. I'm an Italian reporter. Could you explain this document to me, please? What does "Management" mean? Who are M1 and M2? Are they Shell or Eni? Please, Mr. Deferre, answer me.

**GENEVA ATTORNEY**

This is a document written by Deferre.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Who are M1 and M2?

**GENEVA ATTORNEY**

I would guess either Shell or Eni.

**TAPPED PHONE CONVERSATION RECORDED ON FEBRUARY 17, 2016, AT 7:53 P.M.**

**BEN VAN BEURDEN – CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SHELL**

They've gone through both our rooms.

**SIMON HENRY – FORMER CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, SHELL**

Yes, I know.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Confirmation that kickbacks have been paid comes from Shell's company officers, surreptitiously recorded by the Milan Public Prosecutor's Office, just hours after a raid on their Dutch offices. On the phone, Shell's Chief Executive Officer, Ben Van Beurden, and his close associate, Simon Henry. Shell had given its legal team the task of conducting a more in-depth investigation of the circumstances surrounding the purchase of the Nigerian oil block by Eni, and some problematic emails had come to light.

**BEN VAN BEURDEN – CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SHELL**

There was apparently some loose chatter between people from the team, particularly the people that we hired from MI6, who must have said things like, "Well, Bondo who gets a pay-off here," and whatever.

**SIMON HENRY – FORMER CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, SHELL**

And that was from the time of the Eni payment?

**BEN VAN BEURDEN – CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SHELL**

There were some really unhelpful emails in there.

**SIGFRIDO RANUCCI, IN THE STUDIO**

Well, the emails they're talking about were written by two former agents in the British secret service, who followed the entire negotiation for Shell. We have come into possession of their report, a confidential report, in which they wrote: "Eni told us that the reason for their interest in the oilfield was a request made directly by Berlusconi, following an agreement with the Russian government."

This would explain the presence of the Russian middleman Agaev, a man who is well-respected and close to—said to be close to—President Putin. Berlusconi, through his lawyer Niccolò Ghedini, told us, “I had no role in this negotiation.” The English spies insist, saying: look, that Nigerian oilfield is part of a broader strategy for the control of energy sources. Putin was afraid that the Chinese might enter the negotiations and he preferred us, the Italians. He trusts us, in part because the biggest deals between Eni and Russia bear the signature of Paolo Scaroni, under the management of the Berlusconi government. So, we’ve seen that a lot of different interests were revolving around this Nigerian oilfield. It’s a big juicy pie, and when the pie is that tempting, there has to be a spot at the table for the fixer.

***From "The Negotiation" - December 13, 2015  
by Luca Chianca***

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

We met Luigi Bisignani back in 2015. He, too, had put himself forward as a middleman for the Nigerian deal.

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

Well, my role was an early one, because I had asked Dr. Scaroni, who I’ve known for many years, if he was interested in contacting a company, a Nigerian investment bank that could help Eni with a significant legal dispute they were involved in over an oil well.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

What relationship did you have with Bisignani when all of this was happening?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

My relationship with Bisignani falls outside of all this. I've known him for many years. That aside, only in November of 2010 did I discover that he was involved in this affair, and it was not a pleasant discovery for me.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

The rapport between Obi, Di Nardo and Bisignani was excellent.

**VINCENZO ARMANNA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

The doubts that had been growing inside the company concerning Emeka Obi were very strong ones: a single person, who didn't represent any of the Nigerians, who was responsible for handling a transaction worth over a billion directly through his own checking accounts was untenable, indefensible, unbelievable.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Bisignani was in touch with Di Nardo, an Italian businessman who lives in Switzerland. Their call was surreptitiously recorded at a time when they were afraid of being cut out of the mediation for the purchase of the Nigerian oil

block, because rumors were circulating that Eni wanted to change its strategy and negotiate directly with the government.

**TAPPED PHONE CONVERSATION RECORDED ON OCTOBER 13, 2010, AT 10:36 A.M.**

**GIANLUCA DI NARDO**

They've gone completely over our heads. They're going directly to him... they've screwed us.

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

Excuse me, but who are you talking about?

**GIANLUCA DI NARDO**

Ah, the number 3, and the number 2 has confirmed. Look, you have to call the number 2 and tell him, 'Look, this isn't OK. This isn't how it's done.' We're not going to get a thing now... nothing. Eh? Do you understand?

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

I can't believe it.

**GIANLUCA DI NARDO**

But you know who's doing this? It's the other one... it's the number 1... We're fucked! They're making him an offer directly, not through our guy.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Bisignani, himself, explained to whom he was referring to the magistrates: the number one was Paolo Scaroni, the then-Chief Executive Officer of Eni; the number two was Claudio Descalzi, while the number three was Roberto Casula, Eni's man in Nigeria, whose job was to sign the papers with the Nigerian middleman Obi, but when something went wrong, Bisignani called Descalzi directly.

**TAPPED PHONE CONVERSATION RECORDED ON OCTOBER 13, 2010, AT 7:20 P.M.**

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

I've been getting a signal from over there that's quite disturbing: that you sent them directly to him, and not through our guy. If that's how it is, then it's like we didn't do shit.

**CLAUDIO DESCALZI**

Why?

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

Well, because... you had to give him the thing, not give it directly to that other guy.

**CLAUDIO DESCALZI**

No, I'll give it to him.

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

Ah, perfect. You'll give it directly to him.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The following day, Descalzi reassured Luigi Bisignani.

**TAPPED PHONE CONVERSATION RECORDED ON OCTOBER 14, 2010, AT 1:25 P.M.**

**CLAUDIO DESCALZI**

I placed a call down there, right away. So, nobody knows anything about us.

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

Of course.

**CLAUDIO DESCALZI**

In any case, I'm not going to go forward with the offer until you and I have come to an agreement.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

What was Descalzi's role in all of this?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

Descalzi was between a rock and a hard place. Scaroni was the rock. And Descalzi couldn't say no to Scaroni.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

What exactly did Bisignani say to you when you met?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

He told me, "Be careful, by obstructing Obi, you're obstructing Paolo Scaroni, and you run the risk of being fired."

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

So, according to the reconstruction of events by the former Eni executive, Obi also represented the clandestine interests of Paolo Scaroni, and perhaps also those of Bisignani and Di Nardo, in addition to those of the Nigerian former minister Dan Etete.

His official role emerged only when the negotiation moved forward without middlemen. Obi sued Dan Etete, asking for payment of a whopping 200-million dollars for the work he did during the year-long negotiation with Eni.

*From "The Negotiation" - December 13, 2015*

*by Luca Chianca*

**LUCA CHIANCA**

So, Obi sued and he won. The English judge, from the English court, awarded him 110-million dollars. That's your money too, isn't it?

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

That's what my lawyers say but, unfortunately, not only did I never see a single lira or euro, but if you take a look—considering how well you check documents—you'll see that on page 66 of the rogatory commission prepared by the Milan Public Prosecutor's Office, it says, "It is clear, and it stands to reason, that Bisignani never received a single euro."

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Di Nardo paid, though. He was the person that you introduced to Scaroni to put Eni into contact with Obi. As a matter of fact, he paid Obi's legal fees, at the English trial. That's no small amount of money.

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

I don't believe that Doctor Scaroni and Doctor Descalzi ever saw De Nardo, who was simply a partner in Obi's company—Venture Energy, I think it was called—which had, moreover, done great things in Nigeria, including the privatization of the telephone network, so it wasn't actually... It was an investment bank. That is what investment banks do.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Actually, Obi's business was an offshore company based in the British Virgin Islands, wasn't it?

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

That's what you know. The reality is that it was an investment bank just like any other investment bank, and if its name had been Mediobanca or Morgan Stanley, it probably wouldn't have changed anything.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

From the papers documenting the agreement between Eni and Obi, it is clear that it is not an investment bank, but an offshore company. In any case, coming back to the 110 million dollars awarded to Obi by the London judge, they were seized by the Milan Public Prosecutor's Office. However, before the seizure, Obi was still able to transfer over 21 million francs into the checking accounts of one of the companies belonging to Bisignani's associate, Di Nardo, which has its headquarters in this building in Lugano.

**GIANLUCA DI NARDO, ON THE TELEPHONE**

Hello?

**LUCA CHIANCA**

This is Chianca, from Report. Is this Doctor Di Nardo?

**GIANLUCA DI NARDO, ON THE TELEPHONE**

It is.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Listen. You and Bisignani were cut out of the negotiations, but in 2014 Obi put over 21 million euros into one of your accounts. I wanted to know why you were entitled to take that money and if it was money that was also supposed to go to other people.

**GIANLUCA DI NARDO, ON THE TELEPHONE**

Thank you, good-bye.

**APRIL 3, 2014, SENATE INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEE HEARING  
MASSIMO MANTOVANI - ENI LEGAL OFFICE**

We didn't use any type of middleman. We dealt exclusively with the Nigerian state. The payments were not formally made as it is said they were, and as it

was said they were in the question earlier, the payments were made—and we made sure of this—into an account belonging to the Nigerian Treasury, in order to be certain that the payments were being made there.

**LUCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Eni did not pay in Nigeria, but in London, into an account at a branch of JP Morgan. A few days later, someone attempted to transfer that billion into an account at Lugano's Banca Svizzera Italiana. And that account can be traced to the former vice-consul in Nigeria, Gianfranco Falcioni.

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

Gianfranco Falcioni is an institution in Nigeria.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

What relationship did he have with Eni?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

One of supplier.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The former vice-consul supplies Eni and Shell with technology for oil transport. His family has investments in Italy as well, in Gavi, in the province of Alessandria. In this valley, his wife runs a magnificent wine-growing and wine-producing business.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

I'm looking for Falcioni, Doctor Falcioni.

**MAGDA PEDRINI**

He's not here, I'm sorry. He's abroad.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

I wanted to know who asked your husband to open the account in Switzerland.

**MAGDA PEDRINI**

That is a question you should not be asking and besides, he's not here.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Ma'am, I just want to understand the relationship he had with Eni.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The former vice-consul signed this agreement between Dan Etete's company, Malabu, and Petrol Service, which can be traced to Falcioni himself. For 50 million dollars, Falcioni was to have funneled the entire billion dollars paid by Eni from JP Morgan into his own account, so as to then transfer it to Dan Etete. In Mendrisio, near Lugano, we find the head office of the fiduciary Falcioni turned to.

**MARCO CARLO MACCHI – EMMGI FINANZIARIA**

I set up the company and entrusted it to Mr. Falcioni, and everything he did, he did.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Who asked him to perform that transaction? I mean, was it Eni who asked...?

**MARCO CARLO MACCHI – EMMGI FINANZIARIA**

I don't know.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

When that billion dollars arrived, I just want to know why it was refused.

**MARCO CARLO MACCHI – EMMGI FINANZIARIA**

Because Falcioni had decided, all on his own, to perform this transaction and, besides, the bank hadn't finished its due diligence yet, so it couldn't accept it.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

But was that because it had judged it to be suspicious?

**MARCO CARLO MACCHI – EMMGI FINANZIARIA**

Too much money, a sum like that, would have caused a shock to the bank.

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

I don't believe that Falcioni offered his services to resolve the problem. I believe that Falcioni was asked to come in and resolve the problem. Somebody dragged him into it and said, "Now, this thing here, you're going to do it."

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Who did that?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

Someone he couldn't say no to.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Why would he have put himself at their disposal?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

Because they probably would have thrown him out of somewhere else or he wouldn't have become honorary consul, I have no idea. But it was definitely a very aggressive action that made him undertake to perform this transaction.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The transaction fell through, because the Swiss realized that the billion was meant to go to Dan Etete, and the Nigerian former minister actually stood accused of criminal activity at that time. The bank wrote to vice-consul Falcioni: "BSI cannot have dealings or relationships with people who have been convicted of these types of crimes." Falcioni informed the then-executive of Eni, Vincenzo Armanna.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Falcioni wrote you an email and he told you that your fees, your commissions, were going to be transferred to Lebanon.

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

Not “yours,” it says “ours,” because they are his, not mine.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

But, in writing to you, it seems as though he’s addressing himself to you. “Ours” seem like “yours,” doesn’t it?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA - FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

But, in Falcioni’s eyes, I’m a representative of Eni.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

At the end of the day, the billion dollars paid out by Eni and intended for the Nigerian former minister returned to London, to JP Morgan.

**BARNABY PACE – GLOBAL WITNESS**

The role of JP Morgan worries us, if we consider the fact that a Swiss bank and a Lebanese bank refused the money because it considered the transaction to be dubious and too risky.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

JP Morgan was supposed to check to see whom that money was going to?

**BARNABY PACE – GLOBAL WITNESS**

Yes, JP Morgan has an obligation to the British financial authorities. It’s supposed to notify the authorities who deal with combating money-laundering.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

JP Morgan responded to our request for an interview by saying that they cannot issue statements on this topic.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Most of the money was sent from here, from London—from the City of London. What does that have to do with the new approach we see from Shell and the security services?

**TED JEORY - JOURNALIST, FINANCE UNCOVERED**

We can't rule out that the information from the two former secret agents who were working for Shell may have come via the foreign affairs office in England. So when the wire transfer arrived, in August of 2011, we can't rule out that the foreign affairs office and the anti-money laundering authorities may already have been completely apprised of the origin of the money and of how the deal had been concluded. The question is, why did they let that money through?

*From "The Negotiation" - December 13, 2015*

*by Luca Chianca*

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

In the end, approximately 800-million dollars ended up in two Nigerian bank accounts belonging to Dan Etete's company, Malabu; from there, it was shared out among different companies: one in Abuja; another in Kano, in the north of the country; and three in Lagos. To figure out who was behind these companies, in 2015 we hired a colleague of ours, Nicolas, and he is the one who was able to

use his cell phone to make videos around Lagos. This is the headquarters of Imperial Union, which received 34 million dollars.

**NICHOLAS IBEKWE – JOURNALIST, PREMIUM TIMES**

Is this a school? Haven't you ever heard of Imperial Union?

**SECURITY OFFICER**

No.

**NICHOLAS IBEKWE – JOURNALIST, PREMIUM TIMES**

Excuse me, ma'am. I'm looking for Imperial Union. It's said to be at this address.

**WOMAN**

What is it, a school?

**NICHOLAS IBEKWE – JOURNALIST, PREMIUM TIMES**

No, it's a company. You've never heard that name before?

**WOMAN**

No.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Group Construction received a whopping 157-million dollars, and it should be here, on this street, at number 165. Nicholas asks the security guard.

**NICHOLAS IBEKWE – JOURNALIST, PREMIUM TIMES**

What is the last building number on this street?

**SECURITY OFFICER**

The last number on this street is 51.

**NICHOLAS IBEKWE – JOURNALIST, PREMIUM TIMES**

It's not 165?

**SECURITY OFFICER**

No, not 165. The last number is 51.

**NICHOLAS IBEKWE – JOURNALIST, PREMIUM TIMES**

Have you ever heard of "A Group Construction"?

**SECURITY OFFICER**

No, there's no company, no office. I don't know of any "Group Construction".

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

This street should be home to Novel Property and Development, which received 30-million dollars.

**NICHOLAS IBEKWE – JOURNALIST, PREMIUM TIMES**

At this address, I found a real estate agency.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

So, then, these are fake companies? With counterfeit addresses? What sort of companies are they?

**NICHOLAS IBEKWE – JOURNALIST, PREMIUM TIMES**

Yes, yes, many of them are companies with fake addresses. Over the last few weeks I went to look at all of those addresses, and they don't exist.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Meanwhile, Kano, in the northern part of the country, should, according to our information, be home to the headquarters of a company called Megatech, which received the huge sum of 180-million dollars. However, by looking online, we discovered that it is a part of the Monument group—a discovery that leads us to this building in London, opposite Hyde Park.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

According to our information, Monument has an apartment here, correct?

**DOORMAN**

Who are you?

**LUCA CHIANCA**

I'm a journalist.

**DOORMAN**

What do you want?

**LUCA CHIANCA**

I want to meet the owner of Monument.

**DOORMAN**

Why?

**LUCA CHIANCA**

It has to do with a negotiation concerning oil.

**DOORMAN**

I've known this family for thirty years. This is no way to behave, showing up here like this.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Is it a Nigerian family?

**DOORMAN**

I'm not going to answer you and, in any case, you should know that all of this is being recorded. There are video cameras everywhere.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

A few days ago the chairman of the Nigerian Financial Crimes Commission arrived in London. He is investigating the oil companies and the individuals involved in this deal.

**IBRAHIM MAGU - CHAIRMAN OF THE NIGERIAN ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRIMES COMMISSION**

You don't think Eni and Shell knew what kind of people they were dealing with? They didn't realize that Dan Etete hadn't even paid the government-taxes on oil extraction operations? They didn't worry about the fact that one of Etete's principal partners was the former Nigerian ambassador to the United States?

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Debra Laprevotte is a former FBI special agent. She spent over a year following the trickles of money generated by the billion paid out by Eni. We met with her in her office, in Washington.

**DEBRA LAPREVOTTE – FORMER FBI SPECIAL AGENT**

Most of the money was withdrawn in cash. People would show up at the back door of Nigerian banks, saying, "I'm here to make a withdrawal." That cash wound up in the pockets of the people who had helped with the sale of OPL 245.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

And that is how 466-million dollars in cash vanished. Nonetheless, the FBI has been able to reconstruct the movements of the rest of it. 10 million went into the pocket of Bajo Ojo, the former justice minister. And it was while investigating the accounts of former Eni executive Armanna that the magistrates discovered a payment of 1.2 million dollars, received from none other than Bajo Ojo. The "reason for payment" reads "Armanna inheritance".

**LUCA CHIANCA**

According to the Public Prosecutor's Office, that's your cut of the kickback.

**VINCENZO ARMANNA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

The transaction between Bajo Ojo and I was for the purchase of gold; he handled the recovery of 200-thousand dollars of inheritance from Giuseppe Armanna.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Your father?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

My father. Only that it was a transaction made in Kenya and I didn't know how I could physically go down and recover it, because I couldn't pick it up in cash.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

But the Public Prosecutor has mentioned an inheritance of 50-thousand euros.

**VINCENZO ARMANNA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

No, that's the property inheritance.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

You mean to say that your father had business interests there? In Africa?

**VINCENZO ARMANNA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

Yes, absolutely. He had a very close friend, whom he'd gone to university with, who had made a business deal in Kenya.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The money paid out by Eni traveled all over the world—not only Nigeria, but also Europe, Brazil, Singapore. Odd outlays? Over 7-million dollars went to the French Treasury following Dan Etete's conviction for money laundering, 94-thousand dollars for a safari in New Zealand. There's another 100-million for which it was impossible to figure out who the actual beneficiary was. Then there are the 57-million dollars that ended up in the United States.

**JACK BLUM – LAWYER AND ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING EXPERT**

The money may have been paid to the government, but then it ended up at a company, which was the vehicle for distributing the money to all of those involved. For anyone who knows anything about combating money laundering, this is a way to move the money and conceal the final destinations of these sums.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Over 50-million dollars went to purchase an airplane from an aircraft manufacturer in Oklahoma City.

**DEBRA LAPREVOTTE – FORMER FBI SPECIAL AGENT**

From what I've been able to figure out, it was a Bombardier aircraft, which is a plane worth 50-million dollars, which was used for his personal travel.

**JACK BLUM – LAWYER AND ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING EXPERT**

The plane is registered to an anonymous company based in the British Virgin Islands, and it was purchased by a company registered on the Isle of Man, where company information is inaccessible.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

It's a perfect example of money laundering.

**JACK BLUM – LAWYER AND ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING EXPERT**

It's a perfect example of how the money could be laundered.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

On Long Island, 70 km from New York City, money from Eni was used to buy three Cadillacs.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

We're here looking for the Cadillacs purchased by some Nigerians.

**MAN**

I have no idea. The dealership moved to Texas 4 years ago.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

They sold Cadillacs?

**MAN**

They had a lot of them.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Did they have other expensive cars, too?

**MAN**

Yes, and they customized them however you wanted.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

And now there are clothes here.

**MAN**

Now all we do here is rent out clothing.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The three Cadillacs they purchased, with a total value of over 400-thousand dollars, were Escalades, equipped with every imaginable extra. This time, however, it did not go the Nigerians' way. The luxury cars never made it to their destination. Lacking the proper export documents, they were seized by U.S. customs.

Then there are the 2-million that went to a film production company in California and, lastly, 5-million ended up here, at this tech company outside Washington.

**JACK BLUM – LAWYER AND ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING EXPERT**

There are individuals who received large sums of money in cash. Here, for example, are 50-thousand dollars that were withdrawn in three tranches by a woman who has no obvious ties to the company that does business in Nigeria.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

This FBI document shows the trail of additional suspicious payments. One company in particular catches our eye. It is called Little Italy, and its registered office is located in this beautiful residential district close to most of the embassies in Washington, but the owner is a Nigerian woman.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Are you Ovoke Urhioke?

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

Yes.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Do you work at the Nigerian embassy here in Washington?

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

What do you want?

**LUCA CHIANCA**

What do you do?

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

These things are none of your business. Why are you asking me these questions?

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Because we're following a payment made by Eni in Nigeria and, while following the money, we've discovered that 400-thousand dollars of it probably ended up here, at Little Italy, which is at this address.

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

This is a private residence.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

You have a company registered at your house and you don't know who it belongs to?

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

The people you're looking for aren't here. They're in Nigeria. I live here, and they just use this address for mail, and anyway I think that the company was closed down a year ago.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

But do you know who the real owner is or not?

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

Of course.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Can you tell me that person's name?

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

If you don't know it, I can't tell you. I can't do that. All I can tell you is that the information you have is false. The company has nothing to do with oil.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

The company registration on file at the Chamber of Commerce gives the owner's name as Benedicta Urhioke. We don't know if she's her sister, but we found this wedding photo that links the owner of Little Italy, the former president of Nigeria Jonathan Goodluck—who is a part of the investigation—and the Gitto family, an Italian family in the construction business, with important operations in Nigeria.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Do you know the Italian Gitto family?

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

Of course, because they worked in Nigeria.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Is Little Italy connected to Gitto Construction?

**OVOKE URHIOKE**

Completely different. There are no connections.

**DEBRA LAPREVOTTE – FORMER FBI SPECIAL AGENT**

It's interesting that Nigerians would have a company called Little Italy that is in some way connected to the sale of the OPL 245 oilfield. But I can't talk about that. I can't talk about it. I disclosed the information to the FBI and I can't share it.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Is it possible that Eni didn't know where this money would end up?

**DEBRA LAPREVOTTE – FORMER FBI SPECIAL AGENT**

That I don't know. What we do know, from information that came to us from Italy, is that the original price of OPL 245 was lower. An agreement was made to push the price up to one-billion-one-hundred, in order to include the money for the kickback intended for the Italian officials.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

And, according to former executive Vincenzo Armanna, 50-million euros came back into the available assets of Chief Executive Officer Paolo Scaroni.

**VINCENZO ARMANNA – FORMER ENI EXECUTIVE**

There was a portion in cash—this was explained to me by Victor, a person from the Nigerian secret services—which had been delivered, in cash, to Roberto Casula, and they had proof of this. All of that cash, according to his source—according to his sources—had been flown out on a plane that belonged to Eni. I checked this out myself, and there was no Eni plane in Abuja at that time; there was the plane that we rent from Fabio Ottonello for all of the sub-Saharan region.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Eni is one of the principal oil companies operating in the Congo. In Pointe Noire, its presence is clear to see.

And it is also here, in Pointe Noire, that Fabio Ottonello does business. Until not long ago, he was also this African country's honorary consul. That may have been thanks to his family ties to President Sassou Nguesso, who has been in power for over 30 years. In 2003, Ottonello married Cendrine Sassou Nguesso, the president's daughter, whom he divorced just 3 years ago. Of his many businesses, one is an airline.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

I imagine that you also have contracts with Eni, correct?

**FABIO OTTONELLO - BUSINESSMAN**

A few small contracts.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Then there's your airline.

**FABIO OTTONELLO - BUSINESSMAN**

The one you see there, yes, that little airplane there.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Then you acquired another two, plus some helicopters.

**FABIO OTTONELLO - BUSINESSMAN**

Yes, we developed the business a bit at a time, given that it was going well.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Thanks to Eni?

**FABIO OTTONELLO - BUSINESSMAN**

That opportunity is there, so...

**LUCA CHIANCA**

It would be stupid not to take advantage of it.

**FABIO OTTONELLO - BUSINESSMAN**

But, I mean, it's not necessarily only Eni.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Armana says that part of the portion of the kickback earmarked for the Italians, from this agreement in Nigeria, was transported on one of your flights...

**FABIO OTTONELLO - BUSINESSMAN**

As far as I know, that's absolutely impossible but, as you know, everyone is free to say what they want to say. I rent out the airplane, but I have absolutely no information indicating that there have been transport runs of that sort.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

He talked about money that may have been—money that was—entrusted to Casula, and then from Casula, who was Eni's man in Nigeria, it was put on an Emeraude flight.

**FABIO OTTONELLO - BUSINESSMAN**

To tell the truth, I have no knowledge of any flight of such a sort taking place. Quite the contrary.

**LUCA CHIANCA**

Armanna talked about a man from the Nigerian secret services, whom he said gave him this information.

**FABIO OTTONELLO - BUSINESSMAN**

Interesting, in the sense that this Mr. Armanna is a well-connected person, if he knows all of these important people.

**LUCA CHIANCA, OFF-CAMERA**

Less than two hours after this interview, we had gone from talking about the Nigerian secret services to being arrested by the Congolese secret services. Before we were released, they confiscated our video cameras and the footage we had filmed. Ottonello denies having had a role in our arrest. But a member of the Point Noire police force states the contrary.

**ALESSIA MARZI**

Who reported Luca and Paolo to the police?

**ON THE TELEPHONE, INSIDE SOURCE, CONGOLESE POLICE**

It was a compatriot of yours, by the name of Ottonello.

**ALESSIA MARZI**

The people you talked to, were they part of the police?

**INSIDE SOURCE, CONGOLESE POLICE**

They're with the secret services.

**SIGFRIDO RANUCCI, IN THE STUDIO**

Well, we'll see whether, eventually, someone wants to get to the bottom of this story. Meanwhile, Eni has written us to reaffirm that, "with regard to the license for the oilfield, we negotiated directly with the Nigerian government and paid into their account." If that money then escaped in a thousand different trickles which somebody pocketed, that's not Eni's problem. Eni also reaffirmed, "We did not negotiate with middlemen." All right, well... let us consider that the facts that, according to a court in London, there was a negotiation, and that, thanks to a report made to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Milan by two organizations, "Global Witness" and "Re: Common," 110-million dollars were frozen in a Swiss bank account. Given all of these facts, well then, if there was no mediation, why did Scaroni's deputy, Descalzi, say this to fixer Luigi Bisignani in a surreptitiously recorded conversation? Let's hear it one more time...

**CLAUDIO DESCALZI**

*I placed a call down there, right away. So, nobody knows anything about us.*

**LUIGI BISIGNANI**

*Of course.*

**CLAUDIO DESCALZI**

*In any case, I'm not going to go forward with the offer until you and I have come to an agreement.*

**SIGFRIDO RANUCCI, IN THE STUDIO**

Well, the meaning is clear, at least in the eyes of the Public Prosecutor's Office, and it doesn't look good. Today, Descalzi is the number-one of the most important company in which the Italian State is a stakeholder. And he was reconfirmed in his position after the request for a probable cause hearing, on the same day that our correspondents were enjoying their stay with the Congolese prison system.

Now, of course, it's easy to judge from here, in this studio; but then, when you go to negotiate with certain African governments, where you find a guy who's been awarded a piece of ocean and he sells it back to you, a guy who's already been convicted of international money laundering, you have to be flexible, otherwise you lose out on opportunities. Things work like that the world over, to some extent, until the sins come to light. And when, in September of 2014, the government began talking about notices of judicial investigation, this is what happened:

**CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES OF THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT, SEPTEMBER 16, 2014**

**MATTEO RENZI – PRIME MINISTER**

*"In recent hours, a company—Italy's top company, the 22nd company in the world, a company that employs thousands and tens of thousands of men and women who are working to prove that an Italian company can achieve great results, an Italian company has been hit by a scoop, by a notice of judicial investigation, by an investigation. I say here, in Parliament, in front of all of you, that we will wait for the investigations and respect the resulting rulings. But we will not allow any scoop to create problems for or jeopardize thousands of jobs, and we will not allow notices of judicial investigation, regardless of how much media buzz surrounds them, to be allowed to change the company policy of this country. If this is a turning point for you, then it's time to turn. But this is a fact of life, if we are to make Italy into a civil country."*

Ultimately, the prime minister also defended his choice regarding Descalzi in a tweet. We should give him credit for his constancy.