

Gaddafi Gone, Sights Are Set On 'Kleptocrat' President Of Equatorial Guinea

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(GIN) - Allegations of corruption and the massive looting of state funds are being leveled at another African leader who, with his son, faces charges in France and the U.S.

The U.S. Justice Dept. this week filed suit against Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangué, eldest son of President Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, West Africa. The long-awaited suit seeks forfeiture of \$70.8 million obtained through corruption and money laundering, it was alleged.



The suits, filed in Washington and California, were a laundry list of some of the world's most extravagant items including a Gulfstream jet, a \$30 million mansion in Malibu, California, racing boats, almost \$2 million in Michael Jackson memorabilia and a Ferrari.

Last month, the French government took aim at President Obiang Mbasogo, seizing 11 supercars from his Parisian residence at 42 Avenue Foch, just down the street from the Arc de Triomphe.

The West African president is said to be the target of investigations into the use of state funds to buy private property in France.

Despite the grinding poverty experienced by most of his people, the billionaire Nguema remains popular among African leaders such as South African President Jacob Zuma.

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Zuma, who hosted Nguema last week at a state visit complete with 21 gun salute and honor guard, seized the moment to endorse a UNESCO-Obiang prize for life science that has been the subject of dispute.

Asst. Attorney General Lanny Breuer was quoted to say that the extravagant items appeared to be the proceeds of foreign official corruption, and the Department of Justice was seeking to seize them. "The United States will not be a hiding place for the ill-gotten riches of the world's corrupt leaders," he said.

Nguema has ruled Equatorial Guinea since 1979 when he overthrew his uncle and had him executed. His government has been described by several human rights groups as among the worst abusers of human rights in Africa.{jcomments on}