

## Mobil in Nigeria Partner in Oppression

**T**he Mobil Oil Corporation is the second largest producer of crude oil in Nigeria, trailing only the Shell Oil Company as a dominant force in the Nigerian economy.

Nigeria depends on oil for over 90 percent of its export earnings and 85 percent of all government revenue. Mobil describes itself as a "partner for progress" in Nigeria, but its close financial, security and political ties to the military dictatorship demonstrate that Mobil is really a *partner in oppression*.

### Financing the Dictatorship

Mobil is a strategically important business partner with the military government through its joint ventures with the state oil company. Of the 700,000 barrels of oil currently produced by Mobil Nigeria every day, 420,000 barrels, or 60 percent, go directly to the regime. Mobil's share is the remaining 40 percent, or 280,000 barrels per day.

During 1997 Mobil generated over \$8 million *a day* for the dictatorship -- nearly \$3 billion annually. This money sustains the dictatorship in the face of overwhelming popular opposition. Mobil is also a major supplier of petroleum products inside Nigeria, operating over 200 gas stations across the country.

The company has launched a multi-billion dollar expansion of its Nigerian operations, including construction of a high volume natural gas processing plant.

### Ties to the Security Forces

The Shell Oil Company has been rocked by revelations that it arms and pays

the salaries of Nigerian army and police forces sent to crush peaceful opposition to Shell's environmental destruction. Shell charges that Mobil and other Western oil companies also provide guns and ammunition to the security forces, a charge Mobil representatives deny.

The Africa Fund has been unable to independently confirm or deny Shell's allegations. But Mobil admits that it too pays salaries and expenses for a special government security force detailed to guard the oil companies. Corporate funding for any unit of the dictatorship's security forces raise important human rights and political concerns.

### Undermining the Democracy Movement

In June 1993 the Nigerian military annulled elections intended to restore elected civilian government. A few months later the current Nigerian dictator, General Sani Abacha, seized power and launched a bloody crackdown on the Nigerian democracy movement.

In July 1994 Nigerian oil workers responded to the arrest of the winner of the 1993 vote, Moshood Abiola, with a heroic 12-week strike for democracy. While European oil companies were forced to cut back production, Mobil and another major U.S. company, Chevron, undermined the strike by flying in foreign strikebreakers and actually increasing production. Although Mobil denies strike-breaking, oil workers union leader Milton Dabibi charged in November 1995 that, "*Chevron and Mobil stabbed us in the back during the strikes. They are the main cause of our failure.*"



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Dabibi was arrested shortly after he made this statement and was imprisoned without charge or trial. He and oil workers union leader Frank Kokori were finally released in June 1998 after an international campaign for their release.

### **A Killing Silence On Human Rights Abuses**

The Africa Fund is unaware of any public or private statements from Mobil to the Nigerian military government about the deteriorating human rights situation in the country.

The company argues that it does not "interfere" in the internal affairs of other countries, but the record shows quite the opposite. Mobil routinely lobbies the Nigerian government on a full range of economic and political matters related to the company's commercial interests.

It is only on human rights issues that the company maintains a killing silence -- even when oppression strikes Mobil operations and Mobil employees as it did during the 1994 strike.

In February 1998, Mobil executives refused a request by concerned shareholders to work for the release of Milton Dabibi, oil-workers union leader Frank Kokori and other imprisoned Nigerian labor leaders. Later that month, an oil industry newsletter reported that Mobil had rejected a request by Shell to join an industry-wide effort for the release of the labor leaders.

It was only under pressure from shareholders and after an emotional confrontation between corporate executives and Frank Kokori's daughter at the company's annual shareholder meeting in May 1998 that Mobil head Lucio Noto reversed his position and promised to raise human rights concerns with the Nigerian regime. Noto is scheduled to visit Nigeria in the fall of 1998 and is expected to meet the new military ruler General Abdulsalam Abubakar.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

In company publications and regular 'advertorials' in *The New York Times* and other major newspapers, Mobil promotes it-

self as a good corporate citizen in Nigeria -- spending some \$5 million a year on community development projects.

But in 1997 Mobil's share of Nigerian crude oil sales totaled almost \$2 billion, a figure that excludes earnings from the company's lucrative Nigerian retail operations. In a country where military corruption has left 40 percent of Nigerian children malnourished, Mobil returns a fraction of a penny in charitable and development giving to Nigerian people for every dollar it extracts.

The harm caused by Mobil's economic support for the dictatorship far outweighs the good done by corporate philanthropy.

### **Environmental Destruction**

Company literature declares that "commitment to the environment...is a mainstay of our Nigeria operations." But on January 11, 1998 Mobil was responsible for the worst oil spill in Nigerian history, when over 40,000 barrels of crude oil poured into coastal waters from a ruptured offshore pipeline.

The spill affected 22 communities and over 500,000 people -- poisoning drinking water, damaging fishing grounds and farms and fouling an estimated 90 percent of Nigeria's coastline. Over 200 people were treated for drinking contaminated water in the days following the disaster.

Nigerian environmental monitors charge that the spill was the result of aging and poorly maintained pipelines and that clean-up operations were hampered by a shortage of equipment and an uncoordinated emergency response.

Residents of the most affected communities occupied local Mobil production facilities and halted operations for three days to protest the slow company response. Months later many of the affected communities are still waiting for proper clean up and compensation.

### **Lobbying For the Generals**

In November 1995, following the execution of environmentalist and anti-Shell



campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa, President Clinton announced his support for international oil sanctions against Nigeria.

But during a 1997 meeting with The Africa Fund, a state department official acknowledged that lobbying by the oil companies had weakened support for Nigerian sanctions in Washington.

In January 1996 Mobil ran a small 'advertorial' in *The New York Times* opposing sanctions as a tool of U.S. foreign policy. Mobil ran the same anti-sanctions ad full page in the Nigerian press -- sending a clear message of support to Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha.

In 1997 Mobil ran ads endorsing Abacha's fraudulent democratization scheme, a cynical plan to put a democratic veneer on continuing military rule. In the wake of Abacha's death in June 1998 the company "advertorially" called for the repeal of existing U.S. diplomatic sanc-

tions — even though the new dictator, Abdulsalami Abubakar, has to date failed to release all political prisoners and continues to use such repressive decrees as those allowing for detention without charge or trial.

The company's support for military rule stands in sharp contrast to the views of Nigerian church and human rights leaders, who have sharply criticized Abubakar's recently announced program for elections and have called for continuing U.S. economic and political pressure on Abubakar to abide by his promises to release prisoners and respect human rights and keep to his timetable for the restoration of elected civilian government.

As a member of the powerful and secretive U.S. Corporate Council on Africa, Mobil actively campaigns for a U.S. policy that puts corporate profits ahead of Black lives in Nigeria.

## Talking Points on Mobil's Involvement in Nigeria

### **•MOBIL BEARS GREAT MORAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN NIGERIA AND MUST WITHDRAW.**

Mobil operations in Nigeria produce over \$8 million a day for the military dictatorship. Without these dollars the regime would not be able to survive. Mobil and the other major Western oil companies operate in business partnerships with the military regime and therefore bear direct responsibility for the suffering of the Nigerian people. It is wrong for Mobil to do business with the brutal Nigerian dictatorship just as it was wrong for Mobil to do business in racist South Africa. Human lives are more important than corporate profits.

### **•MOBIL MUST IMMEDIATELY CUT ITS TIES TO THE DICTATOR'S SECURITY FORCES.**

In January 1998, the State Department charged that in Nigeria "all branches of the security forces committed serious human rights abuses." Yet Mobil directly pays salaries and expenses for armed and uniformed Nigerian security forces assigned to protect Mobil facilities. This is direct complicity with the repressive apparatus of the regime and cannot be reconciled with Mobil's claims of political neutrality and corporate good citizenship in Nigeria.

### **•MOBIL MUST CANCEL ITS NIGERIA EXPANSION PLAN.**

At a time when Nigerian democracy leaders are calling for international sanctions against the regime, Mobil has commenced a vast expansion of its Nigerian operations. New investment will only strengthen Mobil's ties to Abacha, signal continued Western corporate support for his regime and will add millions of dollars into his coffers. Mobil should condition any future expansion program on the restoration of democracy and respect for human rights.

### **•CORPORATE LOBBYING FOR THE MILITARY MUST STOP.**

Corporate lobbying against sanctions has blocked effective U.S. action against Nigeria and encouraged the generals to ignore international condemnation of human rights abuses. Mobil must stop placing anti-sanctions ads in the Nigerian press, halt its lobbying campaign in Washington and speak out publicly against repression. Mobil's highly visible support for the regime is making the company a target for religious, trade union and investor action for democracy and justice in Nigeria.



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## Communities Express Concern over Mobil Oil Spillage

**T**he Delta Oil Producing Communities Association (DOPCA), made up of 64 oil producing communities in Delta State, has expressed concern over the Mobil Oil spill which is now causing serious ecological damage along the shores of the riverine communities of Odimodi, Ogulagha and Ugborodo.

Addressing the oil producing communities which comprises Ijaws, Urhobos, Itsekiris and the Isokos at their general meeting held at Petroleum Training Institute (PTI) conference centre, the chairman of the body, Chief Gana Manuwa called on Mobil to expedite action on the issue of compensation in order to alleviate the suffering of the victims.

He said: "We are greatly concerned and worried about the current Mobil oil spill which is causing ecological damage along the sea shores, affecting marine and aquatic life in the affected riverine communities."

DOPCA, therefore called on Mobil, FEPA and all NGOs to rally round the nation to ensure that relief materials are rushed to

*By Isaac Williams*

them," Chief Manuwa stated.

Chief Manuwa who spoke on a wide range of issues lamented the scanty presence of PTF in the state, especially in Warri where, according to him "ramshackle jobs have been going on for the past eight months against the protest of the people."

He also expressed surprise over what has happened to the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) inspection teams which are supposed to go round their projects and send progress report to the head office for their commendation or condemnation.

On the frequent clashes between host communities, contractors and oil companies, Chief Manuwa decried such, saying, "a situation where communities impose arbitrary charges on host contractors, under the canopy of community development does not augur well for unity."

He urged his people to eschew violence as a way of solving problems arising from their operation, since dialogue can solve most problems in the oil communities.

DOPCA also called for a

total reactivation of OMPA DEC saying: "since the removal of Horsefall's administration, nothing has happened in Niger-Delta developmentally because Prof. Eric Opia's administration has offered nothing to the people." It therefore called for the decentralisation of OMPADEC at the state level as well as the immediate take-off of the commission.

Although the body commended the various training programmes by SPDC, it expressed dissatisfaction over the diversion of their wards' chances by top management who circumvent laid down procedure to satisfy their kith and kin to the detriment of the oil producing communities.

"We are now seizing this opportunity to call on oil and non-oil companies that it is difficult for us to continue to withstand this indefinitely." Therefore the group urged oil companies to fashion out a deliberate policy of giving host communities 75 per cent of all new employments and more development in oil producing areas.

*Written by Michael Fleshman, Human Rights Coordinator. Edited and produced by Aisha Satterwhite, Director of Publications.*

*Founded in 1966 by The American Committee on Africa, The Africa Fund works for a positive U.S. policy toward Africa and supports African human rights, democracy and development. The Africa Fund's Chairman is Tilden LeMelle and the Executive Director is Jennifer Davis. For more information, please contact our office or visit our website.*