

## Timor-Leste thinks Norway should take responsibility for alleged fraud

**“Everyone can make mistakes. That we understand, as long as you take responsibility for the failure and implement the necessary measures,” said a senior source in the Timor-Leste government structure.**

*By Carl Alfred Dahl, Aftenposten Updated: August 25. 2014 3:20 p.m.*

The Foreign Ministry, along with Timor-Leste, is now examining how Norway could send a convicted fraudster as an advisor to the impoverished country.

Last Sunday *Aftenposten* wrote about attorney Bobby Boye, the notorious scammer from Nigeria who was employed by the Ministry of Finance in Norway and sent to Timor-Leste to help the poor nation secure tax revenues from oil and gas resources. Now Boye sits under house arrest in New Jersey in the United States, charged with having defrauded Timor-Leste for \$3.51 million, equivalent to just over 20 million kroner.

Boye denies the charges. The Ministry admitted yesterday that they did not do a thorough enough background check of Boye before he was hired.

### **Takes advantage of his position**

Timor-Leste is one of the world's newest countries, established in 2002 after many years of war and Indonesian occupation.

A senior source in the country's government structure told *Aftenposten* that they have learned a lot about managing a country in the last decade.

“Over time, we have unfortunately experienced that some countries and individuals take advantage of their positions. Fortunately, we have large petroleum resources, but unfortunately this creates a motivation for oil companies, governments and individuals to take advantage of us. We need to be more assertive when it comes to who we accept to employ.”

### **Several attempts to be tapped**

Anonymity gives the source the ability to express himself ever so slightly less diplomatically than usual.

How does this case relate to the relationship with Norway?

“We are grateful for all that Norway has done for us. Everyone can make mistakes. That we understand, as long as you take responsibility for the failure and implement the necessary measures.”

Do you think Norway has liability in this case?

“We've learned a lot over the last decade, after several attempts to be exploited. This is one example we had not expected. Some countries are exploiting us, but this does not include Norway,” says the source.

Norway's foreign ministry said that its central control unit assists Timor-Leste in the investigation.

## **Amazing that it is possible**

Øyvind Halleraker, Conservative foreign policy spokesman and Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, would not comment on responsibilities until the matter has been fully investigated.

“We must accept when the verdict may be coming. However, I agree that in Timor-Leste there are such things we must learn from. It is almost unbelievable that this could happen. Only if one is brash enough, it is possible to get to most places. It probably means that we must be more vigilant,” he said.

He hopes the case will not damage relations between the two countries.

“We have had a very positive and promising cooperation. Norway has provided assistance in relevant areas,” he said.

*Aftenposten* Sunday could reveal that Nigerian lawyer Bobby Boye (51) has committed fraud since the late 1990s, lying on his C.V., forgery, theft and money laundering.

In 2010 he was hired by the Ministry of Finance in Norway and sent to Timor-Leste as part of the Oil for Development assistance program.

According to the FBI, he ensured that contracts for \$3.51 million went to the law firm Opus & Best in New York, which Boye himself owned and controlled.

The FBI believes that Boye has spent money on four properties, three luxury cars (a Rolls-Royce, a Bentley and a Range Rover) and two watches.

Bobby Boye is under house arrest pending his trial and denies having done what he is accused of.

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## **Found one error in every four CVs checked**

### **The Ministry of Finance was outwitted by big scammer Bobby Boye's CV.**

*By Jeanette Sjoberg, Aftenposten. Updated: August 25. 2014*

“It should be natural to make an ID check of candidates for highly paid positions in Norway,” says Robert Leite, who through the company Meditor AS works with background checks on job candidates.

Last Sunday, *Aftenposten* wrote about the Nigerian lawyer Bobby Boye, who had an impressive resume that was partially confirmed. Nevertheless, he was hired by the Norwegian Ministry of Finance.

He had also been convicted of forgery, theft and money laundering and used multiple identities. And he claimed to have a bachelor's degree in law from the prestigious Cambridge University. This was not true, as *Aftenposten* verified with the student registry at St. John's College, Cambridge.

"It happens occasionally that some claim to have studied here when they have not done so," writes the librarian at the campus, Fiona Colbert, in an e-mail to *Aftenposten*.

## **Errors of time are the most common**

The companies SEMAC and Meditor are two Norwegian companies that conduct background checks before hiring for hundreds of Norwegian enterprises.

“We find fault in every fourth check that we do. Duration of employment may be entered incorrectly, or the wrong title, contents and responsibilities. 10-15 percent of the errors we find are severe, for example, that candidates claim to have an education degree that they do not have,” says Robert Leite, CEO of Meditor.

## **The public sector is lagging behind**

He says the oil and gas industry, financial industry and recruitment industry are diligent in the procedures for background checks, while the public sector is lagging behind. He believes it is possible to avoid being deceived by false CVs.

“Background checks are still not very widespread in Norway. But it is very easy to check whether education is true. Simply contact the appropriate schools. To check a person's ID should also be quite natural for companies which are hiring people for a million-kroner (\$150,000) salary. It is difficult, of course, check whether there are gaps in their CV, and what they do not provide,” says Leite.

## **Time-consuming to check**

CEO Hans Erling Stausland of SEMAC explains inadequate background checks because they are time consuming for businesses and require expertise. He speaks on a general basis, and cannot say anything about what may have been lacking in this case.

“In a recruitment process, they will need to get a person in place, and the personal impression the recruiter gets of the candidate sometimes overshadows the need for a background check. Therefore, enterprises should build up this expertise for an objective, independent component of their own organization or for an external party unrelated to the job to conduct such checks,” says Stausland.

On the basis of the checks they do for corporate clients, in the end 14 percent of those checked are not hired because of negative findings.

## **Low skills = most cheating**

“Statistically, we see that those with high competence in work experience and education have lower deviation of specified information than those with low skills. Those with management experience and high education are often only checked whether formal qualifications are true, they are not safety-checked in other areas such as theft, substance abuse, violence and difficult personality. It reluctant for many,” says Stausland.

One of the most famous examples here in Norway, was when government health official Liv Løberg was revealed to have lied on her CV.

She had, among other things, indicated an MBA degree from a prestigious London University and work as a nurse and anesthesiologist in Stockholm that proved not to be true.

DNB, Telenor and Statoil are among the companies that have adopted comprehensive background checks on anyone applying for a job, simply because job seekers have been noted roughly lying on their CVs.

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