

Top law firm denies Obiang jet deal link

One of the world's leading law firms has been forced to address allegations that it advised on a deal for the son of Equatorial Guinea's dictator to purchase a \$38m private jet, according to a report in [The Guardian](#). Clifford Chance said it had not acted for Teodorín Obiang in the deal to acquire the jet in 2006, but that it had advised a third party on the sale. It also said it advised Obiang personally when US law enforcement accused him of corruption and attempted to seize his assets in 2011. It said it would not accept him as a client today. There is no suggestion of criminal wrongdoing by Clifford Chance. However, notes the report, **the firm's statement comes amid increasing focus on the role of 'professional enablers', such as lawyers, bankers and accountants, who wittingly or unwittingly provide services to corrupt figures.** Last year Obiang was convicted of corruption and embezzlement by a French court, which gave him a three-year suspended sentence and seized assets worth €107m, including a mansion near the Champs-Élysées. Obiang has appealed to the UN, claiming that he has diplomatic immunity from prosecution. Clifford Chance, which reported revenues of £1.6bn and profits of £626m last year, issued its statement after *Private Eye* published the allegations. In the statement, Clifford Chance's general counsel, Chris Perrin, said the firm had acted for an entity that lent funds to the seller of the jet, rather than for Obiang as purchaser. It acknowledged acting for him when the US attempted to seize his wealth, but said it would not do so now. 'At the time, we saw that as an access-to-justice issue, and we therefore agreed to advise him on that one limited issue,' said Perrin. 'We ceased to act on it many years ago.'