**Nepotism allegations threaten U.N. mission in Congo**

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The U.N.'s top official in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Alan Doss of Britain, tried to use his influence to improperly secure a job for his daughter at the U.N. Development Program, according to the confidential preliminary findings of the U.N.'s internal investigations division.

The U.N. Office of Internal Oversight reached the determination six months after revelations surfaced that Doss wrote an email to a senior colleague pressing the case for his daughter,Rebecca Doss. A U.N. contract employee, who bit a U.N. security officer during a scuffle after he was passed over for the job, accused the U.N. of practicing nepotism. The employee, Nicola Baroncini of Italy, was charged at the time with assault, but claimed he was beaten by U.N. security.

The revelation dealt a blow to Doss, a veteran U.N. official who is struggling to head off a major crisis in Congo. Congolese President Joseph Kabila this week ordered the U.N. to pull out of the country, raising concerns that the country's transition could be jeopardized. The U.N. Security Council will travel to Congo this week to try to negotiate a phased withdrawal of more than 20,000 U.N. peacekeepers.

Doss declined, through his former spokesman, to comment, saying that the matter has not been entirely resolved and that he has not had a chance to fully review the findings. U.N. spokesmanFarhan Haq also declined to comment on the U.N.'s initial findings, saying that no "final report has been issued" on the matter. "There is a draft investigative detail, provided only to Mr. Doss for his comment before a report is finalized. Once finalized, the report will be sent to the secretary-general."

Following the leak of Doss's email, the U.N. launched two internal investigations into the hiring of Doss's daughter by the U.N. Development Program. The second probe, conducted by the UNDP's internal auditor, found no fault in its procedures for hiring Doss's daughter. That report did not examine Doss's role.

The development agency's probe reasoned that Rebecca Doss and Baroncini had been initially been passed over for the job by two other candidates, Violeta Maximova and Verona Miyanda, indicating that there was no favoritism. Maximova declined the offer in favor of a job working with former U.S. President Bill Clinton on Haiti. Miyanda, the second choice, also turned down the job. It was then offered to Doss.

The nepotism case came to light last October after Baroncini, who was temporarily serving in the post that was ultimately given to Doss, learned he would be dismissed. U.N. officials called in U.N. security to escort him from UNDP's headquarters. He scuffled with the officers, biting one U.N. security officer in the arm before he was subdued. Baroncini, who was charged with assault, is facing a hearing on April 22. A source familiar with the case said his lawyers are discussing a possible plea deal with the Manhattan district attorney's office.

In the email in question, Doss, a long-time UNDP employee, wrote to ask a senior colleague at the development agency, Ligia Elizondo, not to bar his daughter from employment because he was still technically a UNDP employee. The agency's regulations only allow relatives of staff members to be hired in extraordinary circumstances. Doss, who had left UNDP to run the U.N. mission in Congo, noted that he would soon be leaving UNDP.

"I have asked for some flexibility, which would allow a very long serving and faithful UNDP staff member a little lee-way before he rides off into the sunset," Doss wrote in the email, which was first published by Inner City Press. "Becky is very excited about the prospect of going to work for you so I hope that it will work out. With my warm regards and thanks."

Dear Ligia,

This is just to inform that I have advised UNDP in writing that I will transfer to DPKO effective 1 July 2009. I have also spoken to Martin and advised him that I cannot transfer before that date because the new DPKO contractual arrangements only come into effect on the 1 July. He informed me that the ‘deadline' for the ALD contracts is 15 May so the period of overlap would only be 6 weeks (assuming Rebecca's ALD would come into force on the 14th May at the latest). I have asked for some flexibility, which would allow a very long serving and faithful UNDP staff member a little lee-way before he rides off into the sunset.

Becky is very excited about the prospect of going to work for you so I hope that it will work out. With my warm regards and thanks,

Alan.

Alan Doss

Special Representative of the Secretary-General United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo