Tony Blair Being Paid by Emirates to Advise Colombia on Mining

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The former prime minister has earned up to $150m since leaving office by advising the UEA and numerous other governments.

A new report released Sunday has revealed questionable details about Tony Blair's contracts with the Colombian government.

According to revelations by Britain's Telegraph newspaper, the Colombian government hired Mr. Blair to advise it on how it will spend US$3 billion earned in mining deals. However, Colombia is not paying for Blair's contract, which is funded by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The Colombian government has admitted the UAE is funding the consultancy, “to support the implementation” of the new rules on how money from mining deals is distributed in Colombia.

The contract was agreed after Colombia introduced a law in 2011 under which fees and royalties from the mining industry were sent back to central government.

Before, about 80 percent of such mining “royalties” were kept by local and regional administrative authorities.

It is not clear if Mr Blair had any involvement in the framing of the new legislation, as his work with the Colombian government began in 2009 as an adviser to Mr Santos.

In 2014, the Colombian government began efforts to increase commercial ties and investments with the UAE, and after Sunday's revelations the Santos administration defended its contract with Blair.

However, Colombia’s chief senior prosecutor Fanny Gonzalez has sent a letter to the Colombian presidency demanding explanations on the contracts, and sources from the Prosecutor's Office told magazine Semana that

they are preparing an investigation on the contracts and Blair's firm.

Blair is also the official Middle East envoy for the Madrid Quartet trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a group made up by the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and Russia. This has raised questions about a possible conflict of interest.

Chris Doyle, director of the Council for Arab-British Understanding, explained to The Telegraph that the UAE has specific interests in the region which could conflict with resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

“The UAE is supposed to be a leading donor government on the issue of Gaza and the West Bank, so what does Tony Blair put first, his role as Quartet envoy or his role as a businessman when dealing with them?,” he asked.

The Telegraph also revealed that Blair would be quitting his role as the Quartet envoy in the following weeks, after the newspaper revealed his ties with the UAE.

Through his company Tony Blair Associates (TBA), the former prime minister has received between US$75 million and US$150 million since he left Downing Street, providing consultancy to numerous governments.