



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on January 15, 2010

UN Cuts Back on Fraud Investigations

The United Nations, which has faced massive fraud cases in recent years, has cut back on its fraud investigations. These fraud cases typically involve theft or other misuse of funds.

Four years ago, in response to some huge fraud allegations involving hundreds of companies and billions of dollars, the Procurement Task Force was created as a special anti-corruption unit by the United Nations. Last year, much of this work was transferred back to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (which had responsibility for fraud investigation when the Oil-for-Food Program scandal broke several year ago).



Over the past year, not a single big fraud or corruption case has been completed. The Office of Internal Oversight Services has declined to even investigate over 95 percent of its referrals, and 80 percent of pending cases have remained essentially dormant. The Office has not even had a director for its investigative divisions for the last 30 months. Five major fraud investigations that were ongoing in 2008 have stopped now.

The proliferation of egregious United Nations fraud is widely known. One million dollars a day, for example, was mysteriously vanishing from a UN safe in Afghanistan according to a 2008 investigation. More than \$200 million in contracts for peacekeeping in Africa were almost entirely awarded, for no obvious reason, to Russian firms. UN funding that was supposed to be used to establish a woman's radio station in Baghdad was used instead to pay off personal obligations for a UN staffer.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services has accomplished almost nothing: It has claimed four criminal convictions, out of the vast amount of reported fraud. Sometimes this office has simply said that it has no power to act. So is the absence of a robust fraud investigation system a "problem" that could be solved by a more proactive and powerful United Nations?

It is hard to see how giving more jurisdictional authority, more staff and resources, and more overall power could help anything. The United Nations is, essentially, an abrogation of national sovereignty by America and other nations to an entrenched bureaucracy that is beholden to dictatorships, democracies that dislike America, and whichever political party happens to control the U.S. Presidency. Most of its work is hidden and the diplomatic immunity which is granted to its staff allows the bureaucracy to operate with impunity within our country (making criminal actions against Americans in Afghanistan working for the UN a nightmare of complications for even the best and most honorable prosecutors.)

The cure for the long-standing, endemic fraud in the United Nations is very similar to the cure for the long-standing, endemic fraud in huge federal bureaucracies: End the source of unaccountable authority, massive and murky spending without reference to revenues, nebulous and broad authority, and supposed oversight by individuals who cannot be selected or removed by those they purport to govern. Fraud, abuse and worse will exist in the United Nations as long as the United Nations exists.



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