

South Africa Denies World Cup Bribe



Johannesburg, June 4 (RHC)-- South Africa has "categorically denied" the allegation that the country had paid a USD 10-million bribe to FIFA to secure the right to host the 2010 World Cup.

Fikile Mbalula, the South African sports minister, dismissed the claim during a Wednesday press conference in the city of Johannesburg after US officials alleged that the country paid the bribe to garner support for its World Cup bid from former FIFA Vice-President Jack Warner and several other members of the North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF).

The South African minister added that the money was above board and intended to help the development of football in the Caribbean.

"The South African government and local organizing committee has not paid any bribe to anyone to secure the rights to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup. We will approach the United States authorities through the diplomatic channels to share with us the indictment and any information that they have to enable us to study the facts carefully and to take appropriate action," Mbalula said.

He emphasized that a payment had been made to an approved program above board "does not equate to bribery," adding: "Those that allege should prove the allegations."

The remarks came amid a scandal that engulfed FIFA last week when US prosecutors indicted 14 people. U.S. and Swiss authorities launched a raid on a gathering of senior FIFA members in Zurich, arresting seven of them in connection with racketeering and money laundering.

According to the U.S. Justice Department, the 14 took bribes and kickbacks which are estimated to be over USD 150 million during a 24-year period. A separate probe has been launched in Switzerland into the granting of the 2018 and 2022 World Cup events respectively to Russia and Qatar.

Meanwhile, Mbalula, stressed that South Africa will “never be part of the vested interests.” He said: “We have fought colonialism and defeated it and we still fight imperialism and we will fight it whenever it manifests itself.”

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