



STATEMENT BY THE MINORITY NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY GROUP IN
PARLIAMENT ON DRUG TRAFFICKING SCANDALS IN GHANA.

26TH NOVEMBER, 2014

INTRODUCTION:

On the 16th November, 2014, many Ghanaians across the world got wind of a major arrest and scandal at the Heathrow Airport in the United Kingdom regarding the carrying of narcotics weighing 12 kilograms, worth about £3.5million or \$5million through the Kotoka International Airport (K.I.A).

The Narcotics Control Board (NACOB) has confirmed that one young lady was arrested on the 10th November, 2014. Many days after the arrest, the Government of Ghana was forced to admit the scandal. The lady has many aliases, many passports and presumably used the VVIP lounge at the KIA to board her fateful flight out of this country.

The arrest of Nayele Ametefe, also known as Ruby Adu-Gyamfi, Ruby Appiah or Angel said to be a holder of Austrian and Ghanaian passports among others is the latest in the string of arrests of persons going abroad with narcotic drugs from Ghana. This arrest raises critical issues and questions.

In his 2011 State of the Nation Address, President JEA Mills stated on pages 25 and 26 of that address thus. "In the wake of startling revelations about the unacceptable extent to which Ghana is used as a major link in the drug trade, I have decided that a full scale investigation into the disappearance of cocaine from the police vault as well as the 77 parcels of cocaine which entered Ghana's territorial waters aboard the MV Benjamin Vessel and mysteriously got missing should be re-opened..... We will not relent in our fight against narcotics trade and I believe that the majority of Ghanaians are not happy not to be waking up to daily stories of cocaine here, cocaine there and cocaine everywhere. We will continue to make Ghana an unattractive destination for the narcotics trade and will collaborate fully with cross-border and other foreign operatives to flush out the drug barons and their couriers".

MAJOR CASES AT K.I.A AND TEMA PORT:

We recall that in the past few years very high-profile cases involving Ghanaians in respect of carrying narcotics through K.I.A to other countries in Europe and to the United States of America have been reported.

- A. For instance, on April 19, 2012 seven drug suspects were arrested by the FBI and US authorities for allegedly importing 3.7 kilograms of heroin into the United States.

- B. In September 2012, the biggest cannabis haul from Ghana with the street market value of £4.3 million was seized at the Heathrow Airport. It was the biggest seizure at Heathrow in recent years.
- C. Within days, on September 25, 2012 British officials announced that they had intercepted a consignment of cocaine weighing 7.8 kg concealed in plantains. That was when the NACOB Executive Secretary, Mr. Akraasi Sarpong, said he will bear responsibility for security lapses at the KIA leading to the smuggling of narcotics from Ghana. He even said he was contemplating handing in his resignation letter. Indeed, the then National Security Coordinator, Col.(Rtd) Gbevlo Larrey stated in an interview with the media that Akraasi Sarpong “will not resign today, he will not resign tomorrow” even after it was conceded that NACOB officials had vacated the Airport during the export of the consignment at the Aviance cargo at KIA and that “the men and systems” put in place had failed.
- D. The mother of all scandals was to follow when the Managing Director of Sohini Security Services Limited, Solomon Adelaquaye who was responsible for aspects of security details at KIA was arrested on May 9, 2013 for drug trafficking and got indicted at the New York District Court on a charge of conspiracy to import heroin into the United States. The head of the security company at the KIA and other Airports, had agreed to allow 3,000 kilograms of cocaine valued at \$25,000 per kilogram to be delivered to the United States in multiple shipments of 25 Kilograms each.
- E. It is not far-fetched to conclude that the reality is that security at our entry points is very loose and this led to the bringing into Ghana by two Nigerians in January, 2013 cocaine estimated to be 200 kilograms at the street value of \$12million concealed in a 40-footer container from Bolivia.
- F. Indeed Fatimatu Abdulai of the Procurement unit of NACOB was arrested in October, 2011 and during interrogation was said to have admitted the offence of aiding suspected drug dealers to import and export narcotic drugs through the KIA. She mentioned some NACOB officials and personnel of other security agencies as

accomplices who compromised their positions and allowed drug couriers safe passage after receiving various sums of money from them.

THE NAYELE AMETEFEH AFFAIR

1. The Nayele Ametefeh affair is not only a sordid matter but one that is still surrounded in mystery. The saga seems to be thickening. Thus far there have been several contradictory reports. Soon after the news broke out of the arrest of the character in question there appeared to be a mad rush to clean up the act. That explains why the Ghana's High Commission to the UK, Ambassador Victor Smith spoke on several radio channels and stated his concern and discomfort and was indeed frantic in having access to the narcotics lady in prison custody while complaining that the UK authorities failed to inform him of the arrest. The question remains, how many Ghanaians who have been arrested have been visited by our ambassadors and high commissioners.
2. Next was the statement by the Narcotics Control Board hurriedly scripted and signed by the Deputy Executive Secretary Mr. Richard Nii Lante Blankson which categorically stated among other things that Nayele Ametefe also known as Ruby Adu-Gyamfi, alias Ruby Appiah or, as many do attest to, also as Ruby Mahama aka Angel "was arrested on the 10th of November, 2014 through the collaborative effort of the Narcotics Control Board and its British partners". This statement, laughable as it was, stood for some time in spite of the doubts raised by all men and women of conscience.
3. Then the British High Commission in Ghana waded in with a disclaimer given the repugnance of the statement by NACOB. Their statement was crisp and came without any prevarication. According to them they expected NACOB to have arrested the 'Angel' woman "in Accra and not to have permitted her to board a flight (to London) in order to traffic in drugs". Continuing, the Brits strongly asserted that they (UK authorities), had no prior information on the "intentions of Ms. Nayele Ametefe before flying from Accra to London on 9/10 November 2014". In other words, nobody gave them any hint.
4. Enter Dr. Omani Boamah at this stage who in a face-saving volte-face then denied the version of NACOB. Surprisingly, the Minister shifted the burden of proof onto the British authorities when he said UK should show proof that Nayele Ametefeh travelled on a diplomatic passport. Why not ask the Ghana Immigration Officers at KIA? Before Dr. Omani Boamah's intrusion the Executive Secretary of NACOB Mr.

Akrasi Sarpong had stated that he did not author NACOB's statement and insisted that whoever authored that statement should be held accountable.

5. The next move was for government to dissolve the governing board of NACOB. It is important to observe how the Daily Graphic, the national daily disingenuously put the dissolution of NACOB Board in the belly of a story relating to the creation of a new Power Ministry (ref. to page 16 of Daily Graphic, Monday November 24, 2014). Are all these parts of the jigsaw of official complicity?
6. The resort to propaganda by NACOB should be distressing to Ghana. It takes time and painstaking effort to build and nurture trust between and among countries in the fight against narcotics, money laundering, the financing of terrorism, illegal bunkering, human trafficking etc... Now, with this singular bungling of such bad case NACOB has succeeded in shredding the reputation of Ghana into pieces.
7. We are now being told that the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI) has caused the arrest of three persons, including an Assistant Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, for facilitating the narcotic transaction.
8. The officers of National Security and Foreign Affairs are alleged to have secured the VVIP lounge for Miss Ametefeh and two other ladies, escorted them to the Aircraft to evade search and detection.

RHETORICS AND EMPTY ASSURANCES

This embarrassing episode cannot be swept under the carpet. This Government, through the late President Mills stated on the 19th February 2009 in the State of the Nation address that it was making "a firm commitment to stamp out drug trafficking through and from the country." The Government said it was aiming "to create a more potent drug enforcement agency to arrest and prosecute offenders."

Throughout the nearly six years of the NDC government, we have been fed with promises, rhetorics and empty assurances about fighting the drug menace and strengthening institutions and drug enforcement agencies.

The good people of Ghana should be the best judges regarding the assurances and what has been happening in the past five years;

1. President John Mahama on Thursday, February 21, 2013 delivering his State of the Nation address claimed that he is "firmly committed in ensuring that Ghana is absolutely insulated from the illicit drug trade"(page 24).
2. President Mahama repeated an earlier promise made by the late President Mills by stating that the Government "will pursue programme for legislative conversion of the Narcotics Control Board (NACOB) into an autonomous Commission".

3. According to President Mahama, his Government “will also continue to strengthen the inter-agency coordination mechanism involving NACOB, the Custom Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority, the Police, the BNI, the Food and Drugs Authority, Aviation Security and Immigration Service and ensure increased international cooperation, especially for surveillance”.
4. These same assurances are repeated in the President’s state of the Nation address on 26th February, 2014 in which he states. “high on the government’s priority is the fight against the trafficking in and use of illicit drugs”. He claims again that “a draft Narcotic Control Commission Bill” has been initiated.

In the 2015 Budget Statement and Economic policy of the Government, what the government says is that the Narcotics Control Board “will organize sensitization programmes for MMDA’s and schools as well as TV and Radio talk shows. The Board will organise special operations for interdiction, running of informants, strengthen Inter-Agency collaboration and continue to monitor and control precursor chemicals.”

On the face of it these are noble declarations. The difficulty has been how to translate these pontifications into concrete, practical terms. Action, they say, speaks louder than words.

There are Questions begging for answers.

1. Why has NACOB the mandated agency thus far maintained a stony silence and allowed the ministry responsible for information to misinform the country?
2. What has happened to the 2006 Operation Westbridge Collaboration between Ghana and the United Kingdom which in 2010 the Guardian newspaper of UK stated had become beset by corruption?
3. Why did government resort to the knee-jerk reaction of dissolving the Board of NACOB whilst leaving the field operatives?
4. Who wrote the false statement which was signed by the Deputy Executive Secretary about the collaboration between NACOB and the UK security agents which turned out to be, as has become usual of this government, a mere propaganda gimmick?
5. What has become of those who authored and signed the manipulated information which has turned out to be a choreographed lie?
6. How did it become possible for the cocaine lady to use the VVIP lounge of Kotoka International Airport?
7. By what arrangement was she able to get the cocaine into the plane without being detected by all the security operatives at the airport?

8. If the purpose of NACOB's lie was to ride on the back of a credible partner to prevent any local inquisition into the Nayele Ametefeh cocaine scandal, then the question to ask is whose bidding was NACOB doing, was the Mahama government behind the NACOB's deception?
9. Late yesterday evening, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in an interview stated that Ruby Ametefeh had been interviewed and had made some startling revelations. The question arises, who in what capacity interviewed her and who were present at the interview?
10. The Minister of Foreign Affairs averred that some people – “airport officials” carried the substance which she, Ametefeh, believed to be gold. Who are the people, the airport officials, who carried the substance to her in her first class cabin.
11. The Minister confirmed that two other girls were with Nayele Ametefeh; that all three used the VVIP lounge at KIA. Who are the two other girls. Their identities which would have been captured by the CCTV at the VVIP lounge should be revealed.
12. The Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated that the other two ladies carried 5 kilograms of cocaine. How did the Minister know this? The two ladies, unlike Nayele Ametefeh knew that the substance they were carrying was cocaine and not gold, Minister?
13. The jitters and the convulsion that have afflicted the NDC in this Nayele Ametefeh VVIP cocaine saga is simply frightening even though one would have thought that it is such occasions that require cool heads and not hot-headed bellicosity. The nation watches in wild amazement the philippic responses from government functionaries: a tale of two cabinet Ministers and two deputy ministers. All this is, unfortunately, not comical to a nation in deep financial and economic distress, it is a macabre dance involving who the gods want to destroy by first making mad.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are indeed more questions than answers in this national embarrassment. In this particular case it appears the more you look the less you see.

GOING FORWARD

1. If government wants to be taken seriously on the war against Narcotics, it must act swiftly and decisively by totally overhauling NACOB. We demand nothing less than this.
2. Government should immediately re-engage the UK and USA security agencies to reconstruct the collaboration in the fight against narcotics. Any Ghanaian official

who is caught tampering with the equipment or collaborating with the drug couriers and barons should be decisively dealt with.

3. The Draft Bill to turn NACOB into a Commission prepared in 2008 which has not yet been submitted to Parliament in spite of assurance from the Presidency since 2009 must be presented to Parliament immediately.
4. The position of the Executive Secretary of NACOB which has since 2009 reverted to the hands of politicians instead of being in the hands of professionals and intelligence operatives must go back to the latter to enhance efficiency and curb patronizing attitude of officials.
5. Finally, The unfolding events in the VVIP cocaine saga and the responses from the key government operatives including the Minister of Communications and the Minister of Foreign Affairs call for the intervention of Parliament. In the circumstances, we call for the constitution of a bipartisan parliamentary committee to investigate this Nayele Ametefeh cocaine saga that is causing such haemorrhage to this blessed nation of ours.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media thank you very much indeed for this prompt response to our invitation.

