

Conflicts In Carats

EXHIBIT A:

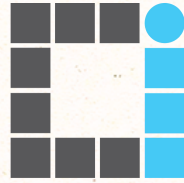
THE NIGERIAN TRIBUNE

19th January, 2003

The insurgents broke through the gate to Alpha's house in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. They had cuts on their faces covered with adhesive strips. The insurgents put cocaine into their bloodstreams through these incisions. They entered Alpha's house and demanded money from his parents. Alpha's father handed over all the money he had in his possession. The fighters then abducted Alpha and his two younger brothers, along with many other young people in the area. They took their captives up a nearby hill where a young combatant named Tommy chopped off the captives' arms with an axe. Alpha and his brother, Amadu, survived the amputations and were taken in by a family that cared for them. Alpha later found out that his other brother, Dawda, died from loss of blood and that the insurgents burned his parents and sister alive in their house.

In the heart of Sierra Leone, amidst the lush landscapes and vibrant cultures, lies this tale of turmoil and bloodshed, with diamonds at its core. As the world grapples with the aftermath of the civil war, Sierra Leone's diamond trade remains shrouded in uncertainty, casting a shadow over the nation's future.

The history of Sierra Leone is etched with the scars of colonialism and strife. Once a settlement for freed slaves, Sierra Leone gained independence from British rule in 1961, only to be plunged into a cycle of political unrest and violence. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) emerged in 1991, spearheading a brutal civil war fuelled by control over the nation's diamond mines. Experts point to the insatiable thirst for diamonds as the driving force behind Sierra Leone's strife.



Control over diamond production serves as a lucrative lifeline for insurgent groups, funding their reign of terror and perpetuating human rights abuses. The illicit diamond trade, tainted by bloodshed and suffering, implicates not only the perpetrators but also those who turn a blind eye, fueling the cycle of violence.

International efforts to stem the flow of these Conflict Diamonds have been met with mixed success. In 2000, the UN Security Council through the Resolution 1306, imposed an embargo on diamonds from Sierra Leone, aiming to curb the trade of blood diamonds. However, the effectiveness of such measures remains uncertain, as smuggling and illicit trading persist, evading detection and accountability.

In the aftermath of the diamond embargo, Sierra Leone's once-thriving diamond economy lay crippled, its potential squandered and its resources left untapped. As the reputation of Sierra Leone's diamonds hung in the balance, the nation grappled with the consequences of decades of conflict and exploitation. Despite the challenges, there remains a glimmer of hope on the horizon, as efforts to rebuild and revitalize the diamond industry gain momentum. With international support and a renewed commitment to transparency and accountability, Sierra Leone has the opportunity to reclaim its rightful place on the world stage, not as a source of conflict diamonds, but as a beacon of hope and resilience in the face of adversity.

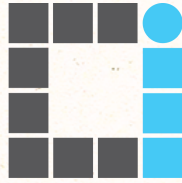


EXHIBIT B:

Francesco Romano II (Francesco): Aldo, look at this - Sierra Leone's diamond mess, or I'd rather say the opportunity to establish - Romano Diamente.

Aldo Giovanni: Well, the name is solid. But the diamonds have been tightly controlled by this damn embargo. So, I am guessing you have a plan.

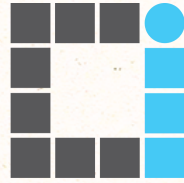
Francesco: You bet I do. First, we need to grease some palms. Write a proposal and pitch it to the Belgians. They hold the key to lifting the embargo by lobbying in the UNSC, particularly since the majority of Sierra Leone's diamonds end up in Antwerp. This has to be done immediately since their membership will most likely be rotated in June this year.

Aldo Giovanni: Consider it done. But how about the locals, especially the ones RUF fed over all these years? They've been digging diamonds for them for a long time, and they're not going to give up on them, just for us.

Francesco: We'll sweet talk them. Offer them better pay, better equipment, whatever it takes to get them on our side. But we're not running a charity. They must follow our rules, which include having all legal procedures performed on these diamonds to certify that they are not conflict diamonds. Get them the list of every single rule required to be complied with.

Aldo Giovanni: I understand, boss. And what do we do with the big boys? You want to muscle them out and take over the kimberlite pipe deposits?

Francesco: Damn right we do. We have the muscle and the intelligence to do it. But I also cannot ignore the alluvial deposits. Those artisanal miners may be small-time, but they are numerous and know the land better than anyone. But before we dive into negotiations, we need a solid strategy. Aldo, I want you to collect all of the information we have on Sierra Leone's diamond industry. Before we take any action, we need to understand the situation.



Aldo Giovanni: It'll be on your table in an hour. I'll gather every detail that we need to understand both our competitors and our opportunities.

Francesco: Good, and while you're at it, begin sketching out a business plan. We need to figure out the logistics: how to extract the diamonds, process them, and get them to market. Most importantly, I need you to get me all the details of the money I'll have to spend and the money I'll make in the next 10 years. Aldo, I want this plan to be rock-solid.

Aldo Giovanni: Don't worry boss. We'll make Sierra Leone's diamonds shine again, but this time, on our terms.