

Panafrican News Agency (PANA) Daily Newswire: Lawsuit delays repatriating \$1.3b stolen Nigerian funds.
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Lagos, Nigeria (PANA) - A British official has said a lawsuit and a court order are delaying the repatriation of the \$1.3 billion which was laundered through banks in the UK by the late former Nigerian military dictator, Sani **Abacha**, the local press reported Tuesday.

"In terms of the **Abacha** money in the UK, when the case came to light, our financial services authority conducted an investigation," the report quoted Simon Regis, head of the UK's central authority for organised crimes and international directorate at the home office, as saying in Abuja Monday.

"A lot of banks were found to have adopted procedures that were less than appropriate. Those procedures were rectified. What we discovered was that at least \$1.3 billion was laundered through the UK," said the official, who is in Nigeria to train officials of the country's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

Regis made the comments on the same day President Olusegun Obasanjo accused some western countries of aiding corruption by holding on to ill-gotten wealth from Africa.

"It is morally reprehensible, unjust, unfair and against all established human values to engage in actions that actually encourage corruption in poor nations to fatten your own country," President Obasanjo said at a forum in Abuja Monday.

"The thief and the receiver of stolen items are guilty of the same offence, especially when the owner has made a good case to establish ownership," he said.

President Obasanjo had earlier singled out for criticism Switzerland, after the country refused to release \$458 million allegedly stolen by the late **Abacha** and stashed away in Swiss banks, even after the European country's Supreme Court has ordered the release of the money.