

CLINTON ARCHIVES REVEAL AIDS FUND CHIEF PUSHED OUT IN 2012

WASHINGTON: A series of recently released emails by former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton contradict the official motive given for Michel Kazatchkine leaving his top post at The Global Fund to Fight AIDS in 2012.

The partially redacted email exchanges between US officials, available on the State Department's website since Friday reveal that the Fund's board had criticized the Frenchman's "poor fiscal management" and unanimously backed his departure.

They also appear to confirm reports that Kazatchkine was pushed out in part over accusations that \$2.8 million were handed out without proper accountability

by the Fund to a campaign launched by the wife of French then-president Nicolas Sarkozy.

The campaign, Born HIV-free, was separate from the Fondation Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, which received no public funds, Bruni-Sarkozy insisted at the time. Kazatchkine's fate was decided during a board meeting for the Geneva-based Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, in the Ghanaian capital Accra in November 2011.

Hillary Clinton, then serving as top US diplomat, was kept abreast of the developments, with the United States exerting much pressure for the

Frenchman to step down.

A high-level panel cited Kazatchkine for "weak management of secretariat operations, a fractured relationship with the Fund's inspector general and insufficient attention to oversight of funds," State Department special advisor John Monahan wrote to Clinton's chief of staff Cheryl Mills. The message came ahead of a planned telephone call between Clinton and Alain Juppe, French then-foreign minister.

On the first day of its meeting, the Fund's board decided to dismiss Kazatchkine by December 31, 2011, wrote then US global AIDS coordinator Eric Goosby.

'Thrown under the bus'

"French and EC (European Commission) representative threw MK under the bus when the board chair presented a letter to the board from the CFO that referred to unapproved funds at 2.8 mil for FLO Fr," Goosby said, referring to Bruni-Sarkozy as first lady of France.

"We had votes anyway after personnel review but this made it unanimous," Monahan said that the "board found MK's performance to be poor, particularly in internal management issues."

In order to circumvent Kazatchkine, the board authorized the appointment of a general manager who would report directly to the board. "MK will have

choice to resign, stay (in newly-defined ED role), or fight in court," Monahan added, using an acronym for executive director. On January 24, 2012, Kazatchkine announced his resignation citing a "matter of principle," insisting it had nothing to do with his links to Bruni-Sarkozy. That position was backed by the Fund's then chairman of the board, Simon Bland.

According to the Fund, the \$2.8 million were distributed in line with usual procedures. Kazatchkine and Bland's offices did not immediately respond to questions for comment, nor did the French Foreign Ministry or Bruni-Sarkozy. — AFP

US REACHES SETTLEMENT WITH 457 HOSPITALS OVER CARDIAC DEVICE

WASHINGTON: The Justice Department said Friday that it had reached settlements totaling more than \$250 million with hundreds of hospitals where doctors implanted cardiac devices in violation of Medicare coverage requirements.

The settlements encompass nearly 500 hospitals in 43 states where cardioverter defibrillators were implanted in Medicare patients too soon after they suffered a heart attack, had heart bypass surgery or angioplasty.

Medicare sets waiting periods of up to 90 days before implanting the \$25,000 devices, which deliver mild electric shocks to restore a normal heart rhythm. Clinical trials have shown the heart often recovers its own rhythm during that time, making the pricey defibrillators unnecessary.

"The settlements announced today demonstrate the Department of Justice's commitment to protect Medicare dollars and federal health benefits," said Wifredo A. Ferrer, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida. "Guided by a panel of leading cardiologists and the review of thousands of patients' charts, the extensive investigation

behind the settlements was heavily influenced by evidence-based medicine."

A 2011 study led by researchers at Duke University of 111,707 patients that received cardioverter defibrillators found that nearly a quarter received no clinical benefit. Those patients were also shown to develop significantly more post-procedural complications, including death.

The settlements, said to be among the largest of their kind, are the result of a federal whistleblower lawsuit filed in Florida 7 years ago by cardiac nurse Leatrice Ford Richards and Thomas Schuhmann, a health care reimbursement consultant.

Under the False Claims Act, the whistleblowers will reap about \$38 million from the settlements. A portion of that will go to Bryan Vroon, their Atlanta-based attorney.

Among the large health-care providers involved, Hospital Corporation of America, headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, agreed to pay \$15.8 million. Ascension Health, of St. Louis, Missouri, settled for \$14.9 million. The Justice Department says it continues to investigate additional hospitals. — AP



IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN MAINTAINING A HEALTHY HEART

29% OF DEATHS IN KUWAIT ATTRIBUTED TO CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

KUWAIT: Professor Andrew Taylor, an expert in Cardiology for Great Ormond Street Hospital, discusses the importance of children maintaining a healthy heart in order for them to live a long and healthy life. "Research has shown that those who have high risk factors going into adulthood are likely to have heart problems in later life. Now is the time to plan for the future," Professor Taylor explains. "The more that you control the risk factors the less likely you are to have associated heart problems such as coronary artery disease in the future."

Research conducted by the World Health Organisation has shown that cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of the death in the world. Coronary artery disease accounts for a large amount of those deaths, with an estimate 29% of all deaths in Kuwait being attributed to coronary artery disease. Coronary artery disease has a series of symptoms and can present differently: Typically coronary artery disease occurs when the lining inside a coronary artery becomes hardened, stiffened and swollen with fatty deposits inside the artery. This limits the blood flow to the heart and a lack of oxygen to certain cells can result in a heart attack, heart muscle damage and heart muscle death.

"The crucial thing is that if you have zero risk factors then you will have a very low risk profile. We can clearly see those with five risk factors have a very high chance of having a heart attack once they reach 50 years of age," Professor Taylor goes

onto clarify, "these are modifiable risk factors. Families and parents need to be aware and educate their children about the future risk to their hearts."

Lack of exercise

The risk factors that are linked to coronary artery disease are high cholesterol, hypertension, high blood sugar, smoking and lack of exercise. These can usually all be avoided, Professor Taylor explains, with a good diet, plenty of exercise and by not smoking. "There are sometimes things that can't be managed because of genetics," he continues "but by educating children about the benefits of a good diet and plenty of exercise from an early age it is hoped that the number of people with coronary artery disease in the future will be lower and lives will be saved." The Cardiorespiratory department at GOSH is one of the world's largest paediatric cardiovascular and respiratory centres. The unit provides a complete spectrum of child heart surgery services for children with congenital and acquired heart disease, as well as specialist activity in tracheal surgery, thoracic surgery, chest wall reconstruction pulmonary hypertension and heart and heart-lung transplantation. In recent years, the department have treated more children with congenital heart disease than ever before, and with excellent results.

Highest standard

Great Ormond Street Hospital in London is recognised as one of the few truly world-class hospitals for



Dr Andrew Taylor

children. As a global leader, GOSH has top clinical and research experts working every day to find new and better ways to treat children. While breakthroughs and medical expertise are essential to the treatment of patients, GOSH also places great emphasis on the support and care provided for children by nurturing an open and supportive atmosphere, ensuring that parents and patients are well informed and closely involved in the treatment process. Children receive the highest standards of care and attention from the expert team of medical and support staff during their stay at GOSH, and are always treated with respect, trust, concern and openness.



CALIFORNIA: In this undated image obtained from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), (L-R) Svante Paabo, Ed Green, Adrian Briggs and Johannes Krause, who were involved in sequencing the Neanderthal genome, pose with a skeleton. Modern humans most likely interbred with Neanderthals, according to landmark genome analysis that shed light May 6, 2010 on how we evolved differently from our prehistoric cousins. "We can now say that, in all probability, there was gene flow from Neanderthals to modern humans," said Richard Green of the University of California, Santa Cruz, one of the leaders of the research. — AFP

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PAGE

248 33 199

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