

Ex-head of Mandela fund kept Campbell diamonds for 13 years

Ractliffe hands uncut gems over to police

By Simon Mundy
in Johannesburg

Jeremy Ractliffe, former head of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, kept uncut diamonds given him by the model Naomi Campbell for nearly 13 years before handing them to police this week, he said yesterday.

In her testimony to the war crimes trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor on Thursday, Ms Campbell said she had received a pouch containing uncut diamonds from two men following a 1997 dinner hosted by Nelson Mandela, at which Mr Taylor was present.

She said she had later given the diamonds to Mr Ractliffe. Prosecutors say Mr Taylor may have received the stones from Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for weapons during that coun-

try's civil war. In a telephone conversation with the Financial Times, Mr Ractliffe said he had given the stones to police on Thursday.

When asked whether this had been prompted by watching Ms Campbell's testimony, he denied it, saying: "When did she give her testimony? I didn't hear Naomi's evidence until 10pm; I only saw it on Sky News later."

He said he had given the stones to the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation - a specialist unit that targets organised crime and corruption.

Mr Ractliffe - chairman of non-profit Jet Education Services - confirmed that Ms Campbell had given him "three small uncut diamonds". He accepted them, fearing it would be illegal for her to take them out of the country, he said.

Ms Campbell suggested they could benefit the fund, he said, "but I told her I would not involve the NMCF in anything

that could possibly be illegal". He added he would be happy to testify at Mr Taylor's trial.

Peter Leon, a lawyer at Webber Wentzel, said: "Unpolished diamonds can only be dealt with by somebody who has a permit - there are very strict laws on diamonds going back to the 19th century."

But he doubted that Mr Ractliffe would be prosecuted. "The legislation was aimed at preventing people from dealing in rough diamonds. What he did was very different, and he has a good reputation."

Founded in 1996, the NMCF is among South Africa's most respected charitable organisations. Wadim Schreiner of Media Tenor, a research firm, said the controversy was unlikely to damage the NMCF's reputation.

Attempts to contact the fund for comment were unsuccessful.

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CURRENCIES

	Aug 6	prev	Aug 6	prev
\$ per €	1.329	1.316	€ per \$	0.752 0.760
\$ per £	1.597	1.583	£ per \$	0.626 0.632
£ per €	0.832	0.831	€ per £	1.202 1.204
¥ per \$	85.1	85.9	¥ per €	113.1 113.0
¥ per £	136.0	136.0	£ index	82.5 82.3
\$ index	82.3	82.6	€ index	94.76 94.39
Sfr per €	1.377	1.378	Sfr per £	1.654 1.659

COMMODITIES

	Aug 6	prev	chg
Oil WTI \$ Sep	80.70	82.01	-1.31
Oil Brent \$ Sep	80.16	81.01	-1.45
Gold \$	1,193.60	1,192.25	1.35

INTEREST RATES

	price	yield	chg
US Gov 10 yr	105.72	2.83	-0.09
UK Gov 10 yr	112.50	3.22	-0.01
Ger Gov 10 yr	104.21	2.51	-0.05
Jpn Gov 10 yr	100.30	1.07	0.02
US Gov 30 yr	106.47	4.00	-0.06
Ger Gov 2 yr	99.55	0.75	0.00
	Aug 6	prev	chg
Fed Funds Eff	0.19	0.19	-
US 3m Bills	0.15	0.15	-
Euro Libor 3m	0.83	0.83	0.00
UK 3m	0.66	0.66	-

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