

Sudanese official admits figures by Russian company on gold deposits ‘may not be 100% accurate’

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August 11, 2015 (KHARTOUM) – The Sudanese presidential assistant Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid brushed aside the fierce skepticism surrounding the government’s recently signed contract with a Russian mining company but acknowledged that the figures announced on gold reserves could well be exaggerated.



Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid

The contract was signed in late July with a company named as ‘Siberian’ for mining concessions in the Red Sea and River Nile states. President Omer Hassan al-Bashir reportedly attended the signing ceremony which was not made public.

Sudan’s minerals minister Ahmed Sadiq al-Karuri announced at the time that the company discovered 46,000 tons of gold reserves in these two sites with a combined market value of \$1.70 trillion.

On top of the mammoth figure, skepticism grew deeper after a Sudanese consultant working for the ministry out of Moscow named Mohamed Ahmed Saboon tendered his resignation because of the contract with the company which he described as “unknown”.

Saboon also described the \$1.70 trillion figure as “science fiction”.

Hamid, who is also the ruling party vice chairman, asserted in a television interview on Tuesday night that the Russian company is reputable and well known adding that its officials were part of a ministerial delegation that flew from Moscow to Khartoum recently.

However he admitted that the gold reserves figures may have been inflated.

"The figures put forward by the company about gold reserves may be 100% or 50% accurate," Hamid said.

The Sudanese official recalled that there were also skeptics when Sudan announced the discovery of oil in the late 90’s.

The chairman of Siberian mining company Vladimir Jakov said in an interview with *al-Sudani* newspaper on Monday that he personally has a 99% stake in the company along with a Sudanese partner whom he declined to name.

Jakov pointed out that he suffered “irreparable” damage from the skeptical talk about the company in terms of his bank dealings and reputation in Russia and abroad.

He said that there is confusion and mix-up between the parent company which he named as Golden Stone Vasilievsky Rudnik Mine Siberian for Mining Company LTD that is based in Russia.

He said that Siberian is the Sudanese subsidiary of the parent company and officially registered in Sudan adding that they spent about \$10 million in geological research.

The pro-government *Sudan Vision* newspaper said that the group was owned by the Russian government till it was sold to the private sector in 1993 after it tumbled due to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

It further said that it was bought by the current investors and Jakov who led the company to become strong again and he was awarded the order of achievement by president Putin in 2004 himself for his role in lifting the company again.