

SPORTS — INVESTIGATION

# From Toulon to Dubai, new suspicions weigh on the boss of African football

JUNE 21, 2019 | BY [YANN FILIPINO](#)

**Targeted by a corruption investigation in France, the president of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), Ahmad Ahmad, was placed under tutelage by Fifa. Documents show that CAF paid at least \$ 369,000 for the purchase of balloons to an *offshore* company based in Dubai, controlled by a contractor from Var and the director of the training center of Rugby club Toulon.**

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**T**he poster is enough to please football lovers. For the opening match of the African Cup of Nations (CAN), Egypt, led by Liverpool superstar Mohamed Salah, faces Friday evening, June 21, Zimbabwe in Cairo. But the big party of African football is spoiled by the torrent of scandals that fall on the organizer of the event, Ahmad Ahmad, Malagasy president of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) for two years and vice-president of the Fifa.

On suspicion of corruption is added the fiasco of the return match of the final of the African Champions League between Esperance Tunis and Wydad Casablanca, May 31, interrupted by Moroccans in an electric atmosphere after the goal of the equalizer was denied by the referee in a

litigious way, and their appeal failed because the VAR, video assistance, was down! President Ahmad had his executive committee vote on the decision to replay the match. To the great fury this time Tunisians, stripped of their title. It must be said that the cancellation of a match due to defective VAR is not provided for in the CAF statutes ...



CAF President Ahmad Ahmad Thursday in Cairo, just before the opening press conference of the Africa Cup of Nations. © Reuters

Unprecedented, the African Confederation announced Thursday, June 20, at the opening press conference of the CAN, the trusteeship of its president: he retains his position, but will be placed for at least six months under control Fifa's secretary general, Fatma Samoura.

As reported by The *New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/sports/fifa-takes-control-of-soccer-in-africa-where-the-sport-is-in-chaos.html>), the operation was orchestrated by FIFA President Gianni Infantino. The case concerning



Mediapart and its German partner *Der Spiegel* have obtained dozens of confidential documents containing unpublished information on the case.

At the heart of the judicial investigation, there are the contracts passed by the CAF to a company named Tactical Steel, based in La Seyne-sur-Mer, near Toulon, whose premises were raided by police. According to our information, the African Confederation has purchased from Tactical Steel, in just one and a half years, at least 4.5 million dollars of football equipment (balls, outfits, accessories), including the outfits of referees who will officiate at from tonight at CAN 2019 in Egypt.

Suspicious include the purchase of 60,000 balloons for Tactical Steel for \$ 2.5 million. At least \$ 369,000 was ultimately paid by CAF to a Dubai-registered company, controlled by Tactical boss Romuald Seillier and Laurent Emmanuelli, director of the training center of the prestigious Toulouse Rugby Club (RCT), four winner of the Top 14 and triple European champion.

Contacted by Mediapart and *Der Spiegel*, Ahmad Ahmad refused to answer us. Romuald Seillier first spoke to us on the phone, then refused to answer our written questions. Laurent Emmanuelli refused to comment and threatened us with legal proceedings. The two partners claim to have committed no irregularities and accuse us of being exploited by the enemies of the CAF president (*read their full answers in the Extend tab*). Romuald Seillier filed a complaint for forgery and use of forged documents according to him "*fabricated*", after one of them was published in the press.

It all began last March with the slingshot of two CAF leaders: the Liberian Musa Bility and Egyptian Secretary General Amr Fahmy, who filed a report targeting Ahmad on FIFA's ethics committee. Less than a month later, the boss of African football turns the two whistleblowers, he accuses today of mismanagement, without delivering specific facts. Amr Fahmy refused to answer us.



The first accusations against Ahmad, unveiled in March by the Algerian magazine *Botola* and the [InsideWorldFootball \(http://www.insideworldfootball.com/2019/03/15/exclusive-lid-lifted-caf-boss-ahmads-empire-corrupt-deals-bought-officials/\)](http://www.insideworldfootball.com/2019/03/15/exclusive-lid-lifted-caf-boss-ahmads-empire-corrupt-deals-bought-officials/) site , for their part are well supported. Confidential documents, also obtained by Mediapart, show that Ahmad largely watered the presidents of African federations to promote his future reelection - a classic at Fifa and its continental confederations.

As of May 2017, two months after his election, Ahmad has voted the payment, each year, of 100 000 dollars to each national federation, including 20 000 euros to cover the personal expenses of their presidents! Some refused. Others, such as the presidents of the Cape Verdean and Tanzanian federations, asked CAF that the funds be paid into their personal bank account. *Ditto* for the boss of the Namibian foot, suspended for corruption by his federation last October for having accepted this money.

Ahmad also invited the presidents of Muslim federations last year to a nice pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, which cost the CAF at least 40,000 euros according to our documents. Ahmad told *France Football* that the fees had been paid by the Saudis and partly "over [his] *personal funds*".

The 69-year-old Malagasy, a former minister and now a senator of his country, is also taking care of his lifestyle. He had CAF purchase luxury cars for the presidency for \$



Laurent Emmanuelli, former professional

474,000, including three Range Rovers at the Confederation headquarters in Cairo, and a Mercedes in Madagascar. CAF *"has the means to allocate quality vehicles to its top managers,"* he said.

rugby player and head of the training center of Rugby club Toulon (RCT). © RCT



President of the CAF since March 2017, Ahmad Ahmad is targeted by an internal investigation of Fifa and a judicial investigation for corruption opened in late May by the public prosecutor of Marseille. © Reuters

Ahmad is also targeted by complaints of sexual harassment filed by four employees of CAF. *"If I love a girl, I woo her, that's all! If she loves me, I go out with her, if she does not love me, everything stops!"*, He denied in *France Football*.

Finally, there is the purchase business at the Var company Tactical Steel, which became overnight the main supplier of CAF. The story begins in December 2017, when the African Confederation begins buying equipment

(jerseys, shoes, bags) for the African Nations Championship (CHAN), which will be played only two months later in Morocco. Given the delay, Adidas and Nike respond that they can not provide. Only Puma agrees, giving the CAF a 60% discount.

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But on December 20, the order is abruptly canceled, without any explanation being given to the German equipment manufacturer. *"I'm left speechless. I feel like an idiot!"* Wrote to CAF the market manager at Puma.

Several confidential e-mails show that the decision was made by President Ahmad himself. After denying any involvement, he admitted to having made that decision. He says he did not act out of favoritism, but because of *"corruption"* in his marketing department and because Puma might not deliver on time.

Ahmad Ahmad then instructs his chief of staff, Loïc Gérard, to find a company to buy the equipment at Adidas. Gérard, who had a sanitation company in La Seyne-sur-Mer, turns to one of his friends and former industrial zone neighbor: Romuald Seillier.

This entrepreneur, who says employ 300 employees, heads the group of metalworking Acti (<http://www.acti-seillier.com/>) , active in particular in the maritime field. *"I work with the army [...], I maintain flagships of the*

*French fleet*" based in the port of Toulon, he says to Mediapart. Another of its companies, Tactical Steel, manufactures weightlifting racks (*our photo below*). In short, Seillier has no experience in providing football equipment. But he accepts the challenge. *"In my life, I have only encountered very difficult challenges,"* he says.



Screenshot of the Tactical Steel website. © Tactical Steel

But to the impossible, no one is obliged. On December 17, Romuald Seillier warns CAF that the equipment is not available at Adidas, as the firm had already said. The CAF therefore had to select other articles, different from those it originally wanted. One wonders why President Ahmad wanted so much to buy at Adidas ...

### *\$ 369,335 transferred to offshore company in Dubai*

The last-minute turnaround was costly to CAF in any case. According to our documents, she bought 26,000 items from Tactical Steel for \$ 1.25 million, while Puma charged \$ 250,000 for 16,000 products.



Romuald Seillier indicates that he has in fact delivered more than 38 000 articles, and that the costs are explained by the logistical challenge imposed by the CAF: he had to charter planes to collect the products in several factories, to flock the jerseys ( what Puma did not do) and then deliver them urgently to Morocco.

Some benefits nevertheless pose a question. An invoice obtained by Mediapart shows that Tactical Steel obtained \$ 54,000 to cover the salaries of the three people who worked *"one week"* in Morocco to distribute the products during the competition - which corresponds to a monthly salary of \$ 72,000 for each one (*our document below*) . Romuald Seillier did not answer precisely, but says he hired *"between three and five people for five weeks"* .

PRO FORMA INVOICE 2018/02/003			
<b>Service for:</b> Confédération Africaine de Football 3 Abdel Khalek Tharwat St., El Hay El Motamayez, P.O.Box 25, 6th October City, Egypt. Tel.: +202 3824 7272 Ext.224 Fax: +202 3824 7274	<b>Bill to:</b> Confédération Africaine de Football 3 Abdel Khalek Tharwat St., El Hay El Motamayez, P.O.Box 25, 6th October City, Egypt. Tel.: +202 3824 7272 Ext.224 Fax: +202 3824 7274	<b>Date:</b> 25/02/2018	
DESCRIPTION	QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
Packaging logistics 3 employees one week on site: 1 Head of Logistic and 2 logisticians *Food and accommodation costs are at the expenses of The Confédération Africaine de Football.	1	54 000,00	54 000,00

© Mediapart / Der Spiegel

At the same time, Romuald Seillier's company obtained from Fifa a license to produce official balloons, which he had manufactured *"by a foreign company"* whose name he refused to name. And in February 2018, one month after CHAN, CAF orders Tactical Steel 60,000 training balls that it wants to offer to 54 African federations, which must be delivered in each country. Total: \$ 2.5 million, of which \$ 1.77 million for balloons and \$ 738,670 in logistics costs. An amount that seems very high, especially since there was, this time, no urgency to deliver the balloons.

At the end of April, Tactical Steel sends the invoices, which the CAF pays half in early May. But at the end of October, Tactical changed plans, asking that the funds be transferred to another company, ES Pro Consulting. Created at the end of February 2018, right after the order of the balloons, it is domiciled at Acti, the boiler company of Romuald Seillier in La Seyne-sur-Mer. It belongs to 50-50 Seillier and Laurent Emmanuelli, former left pillar passed by the French Stadium, ASM Clermont and Rugby club Toulon, where he now manages the recruitment and training center.

This is not the only quirk. Romuald Seillier sends two invoices to CAF on October 21st. The first, of \$ 885,060 for the balance of the balloons, is issued by ES Pro Consulting. But the delivery bill for 738,670 dollars is issued by ES Pro Consulting Limited, registered in Dubai (tax haven known for its opacity) and has a bank account at the Islamic Bank of Abu Dhabi (*our document*).

Office 101, 1st Floor, Yd 164, Jadaf , United Arab Emirates - Portable - Tél.: +33.6.08. [REDACTED] E-Mail: [REDACTED]@esproconsultingltd.com

**Client :**  
 Confédération Africaine de Football  
 3 Abdel Khalek Tharwat St., El Hay El Motamayez  
 P.O.Box 2October City, Egypt

**C.A.F**  
 Confédération Africaine de Football  
 3 Abdel Khalek Tharwat St., El Hay El Motamay  
 P.O.Box 23, 6th October City, Egypt

Dubaï, le 21 octobre 2018

## Facture N° 1018-00211

**Objet de la Facture :**

Shipping Cost for delivery 54 Countries– Training Balls T4/ T5.

N°	Désignation	Un	Quantité	P.U.	% Rem.	Montant H.T.	TVA
1	<b>Shipping cost for delivery 54 countries</b>	U	1	738670.80		738 670.80	
1.1	• Shipping costs includes transport service: shipping of goods by air / Freight / Handling to the airport destination Sous-total Shipping cost for delivery 54 countries					738 670.80	
2	<b>Tax Excl cost excluded</b> Sous-total Tax Excl cost excluded	U					

<b>Total H.T.</b>	738 670.80
<b>Total T.T.C.</b>	738 670.80
<b>Net à payer (USD)</b>	<b>738 670.80</b>

The similarity of the invoices is disturbing: the two companies have the same name, the same header, and also indicate the same contact: the French mobile phone number of Laurent Emmanuelli (*see the comparison below*).



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529 avenue Robert Brun Zi du Camp Laurent - 83500 LA SEYNE SUR MER - Portable - Tél.: 06.08.██████████ E-Mail: ██████████@esproconsulting.com

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**CLIENT :**

Confédération Africaine de Football  
3 Abdel Khalek Tharwat St., El Hay El Motamayez  
P.O.Box 2October City, Egypt

**C.A.F**

Confédération Africaine de Football  
3 Abdel Khalek Tharwat St., El Hay El Motamay  
P.O.Box 23, 6th October City, Egypt

**LA SEYNE SUR MER, le 21 octobre 2018**



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Office 101, 1st Floor, Yd 164, Jadaf , United Arab Emirates - Portable - Tél.: +33.6.08.██████████ E-Mail: ██████████@esproconsultingltd.com

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3 Abdel Khalek Tharwat St., El Hay El Motamayez  
P.O.Box 2October City, Egypt

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P.O.Box 23, 6th October City, Egypt

**Dubai, le 21 octobre 2018**

Invoice headers sent by ES Pro Consulting France (top) and ES Pro Consulting Dubai (bottom). © Mediapart / Der Spiegel



ES Pro Dubai has all the appearances of a mailbox company. Mediapart had checks done at its headquarters in Dubai, a small one-story building near the waterfront (*our photo below*). Employees of the ground floor company confirm that the headquarters of ES Pro is there. According to them, the first floor, where are its offices, is completely empty and closed, and they have not seen any employee of ES Pro for a long time.

ES Pro Dubai received \$ 369,335 from CAF on November 6, 2018, which is half the amount billed. Our documents do not say whether it has received the balance.

Romuald Seillier confirms that ES Pro Dubai has been paid for the delivery of the balloons. According to him, the company has a *"real activity"* of logistics. It justifies its establishment in Dubai because it would be *"impossible"* for a French company to make deliveries in non-French speaking African countries, where the French would be *"not welcomed with open arms"*. He adds that ES Pro Dubai is *"fiscally declared in France"* and employs *"one person"* in Dubai.

Laurent Emmanuelli, director of the training center of the RCT, informed us that he reserved his answers to justice: *"I formally and vigorously deny all the allegations, or even the possible accusations that could be directed against me."*



The building that houses the headquarters of ES Pro Consulting Ltd in Dubai. © Mediapart

Tactical Steel has in any case won other contracts from CAF in 2018, including the equipment of the African *Beach Soccer Championship* in Egypt and those of the women's CAN in Ghana.

For both competitions, there were some failures. During the women's CAN, some of the referees' t-shirts did not arrive. "*The competition is already well under way,*" complains Tactical a CAF employee November 19, two days after the start of the tournament. *Ditto* for part of the equipment of the *beach soccer championship* in Egypt, which was delivered after the tournament. That did not stop CAF from calling Tactical again for the CAN 2019 that kicks off this Friday.



Gianni Infantino, President of Fifa since 2016, was re-elected for a second four-year term at the Fifa Congress on June 5th in Paris. © Reuters

Ahmad Ahmad, vice president of Fifa, has become a huge thorn in his foot for the president of the organization Gianni Infantino, of which he is one of the protected. His case is yet another denial of the promises of the Swiss, who had vowed to clean up the organization after the corruption scandals

that ended the reign of former President Sepp Blatter. Fifa *"has ceased to be toxic, criminal,"* boasted again Infantino June 5 in Paris, at the congress which has re-elected by acclamation.

Ahmad Ahmad took up his first job at FIFA in 2013, when he was only president of the Malagasy Football Federation. A year later, he is caught by the "Qatargate". Mails unveiled by the *Sunday Times* show he has asked for money to ensure his re-election on the right arm of former Qatari Vice President of Fifa Mohammed Bin Hammam, head of the alleged corruption system that allowed Doha to get the World 2022.

This does not prevent Gianni Infantino to take the Malagasy under his wing, by installing him on the committee of associations of Fifa. *"I am fully available to work with you on this noble mission [...], respecting the rules and ethics of this institution,"* he promised.

A scandal broke out, however, a few months later, after the election of Ahmad in March 2017 at the head of the CAF. Infantino used it to defeat the all-powerful Issa Hayatou, one of the last survivors of the Blatter era, who reigned over the African Confederation for twenty-nine years, and had the outrage to not support Infantino in 2016 during his election as head of FIFA.

As revealed by the *Guardian* (<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2017/jun/18/gianni-infantino-fifa-president-ethics-committee-under-investigation-alleged-malpractice>), Infantino and his secretary general Fatma Samoura are very quickly accused of manipulating the election, promising African presidents of African federations to accelerate the payment of Fifa funds if they voted for Ahmad. The chief investigator of the Fifa ethics committee, Cornel Borbely, is seizing the case. He was immediately fired by Gianni Infantino in May 2017, and replaced by a relative of the president who seems to be in charge of burying sensitive files (*read our survey [here \(https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/021118/les-dossiers-noirs-du-nouveau-president-de-la-fifa?onglet=full\)](https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/021118/les-dossiers-noirs-du-nouveau-president-de-la-fifa?onglet=full)*).



Infantino very quickly understood that Africa was essential to establish his power. With 54 associations out of 211, the continent weighs a quarter of the vote at the FIFA Congress. With Ahmad at the head of the CAF, Infantino was there at home. Grateful, the Malagasy was one of the first to decide in favor of his reelection.

On June 4, at the grandstand of the Congress of Fifa in Paris, which granted him a second term of four years, Infantino still seemed to defend his protégé. *"I know there is some turmoil [at CAF], " he told delegates from around the world. I ask you, at this difficult moment, to keep your calm and your spirit of solidarity. Try to find solutions, not problems. "*



Fatma Samoura, Secretary General of Fifa. © Reuters

The placement in custody of Ahmad two days later by the French police, on the scene of his Paris coronation, seems to have finally convince Infantino to let go of his bulky friend. The next day, AFP announced (<https://www.les>



[echos.fr/sport/football/le-patron-du-foot-africain-sort-sans-poursuite-de-s-a-garde-a-vue-1027410](https://www.echos.fr/sport/football/le-patron-du-foot-africain-sort-sans-poursuite-de-s-a-garde-a-vue-1027410)) that the ethics committee of FIFA opened an investigation on Ahmad. According to a source close to the ruling circles of Fifa, the Ethics Committee has been instructed to close the file within two months.

This Thursday, the day before the opening of the African Cup of Nations, the Malagasy was placed for six months under the tutelage of Fatma Samoura, Secretary General of Fifa and trusted woman of Infantino. Samoura has been named " *Fifa's Delegate General for Africa* ", with the mission of ensuring the de facto management of CAF.

Ahmad Ahmad, however, retains his seat as president. He claims to be the victim of a plot and determined to " *continue the restoration of the CAF* ". But he understood that he should now defend himself without the help of the most powerful man in world football. " *If I'm wrong, I'll leave,* " he told *France Football* . *I am leading this fight with my team, I do not want to have contact with Mr. Infantino, not to involve him. It's my business.* "

*If you have information to communicate to us, you can contact us at [enquete@mediapart.fr](mailto:enquete@mediapart.fr) . If you want to send documents via a highly secure platform, you can connect to [frenchleaks.fr](https://www.frenchleaks.fr) (<https://www.frenchleaks.fr>) .*

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## KEYWORDS

AFRICA ▪ AHMAD AHMAD ▪ CAF ▪ DUBAI ▪ FIFA ▪ SOCCER ▪ GIANNI INFANTINO ▪ LAURENT EMMANUELLI ▪ ROMUALD SEILLIER ▪ TACTICAL STEEL ▪ TOULON

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Cette enquête a été réalisée avec l'hebdomadaire allemand *Der Spiegel*, partenaire de Mediapart au sein du réseau [European Investigative Collaborations \(EIC\)](https://eic.network/) (<https://eic.network/>). L'EIC



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a notamment publié les enquêtes sur les armes de la terreur (<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/180316/armes-de-la-terreur-la-faillite-de-leurope>), les *Football Leaks* (<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/dossier/football-leaks-saison-2>), les *Malta Files* (<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/economie/dossier/malta-files-notre-dossier>) les noirs secrets de la Cour pénale internationale (<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/dossier/notre-dossier-les-secrets-de-la-cour>), les *CarLeaks* (<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/economie/010618/automobile-le-scandale-des-pieces-detachees-gagne-le-monde?onglet=full>), l'évasion fiscale du groupe *Kering* (<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/economie/160318/le-systeme-pinault-une-evasion-25-milliards-deuros?onglet=full>), ou les affaires de corruption visant *Airbus* (<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/economie/dossier/dossier-airbus-aux-prises-avec-la-corruption>).

Contacté par Mediapart et *Der Spiegel*, Ahmad Ahmad a refusé de nous répondre. « *Le président de la CAF, M. Ahmad, ne fait l'objet d'aucun contrôle judiciaire ni d'aucune mise en examen. Aussi, son profond respect de la justice le conduit à ne pas réserver ses réponses aux médias* », nous a écrit son porte-parole. Son ancien secrétaire général Amr Fahmy s'est refusé à tout commentaire.

Romuald Seillier first gave us a fifteen-minute phone call and then refused to answer our written questions. Laurent Emmanuelli refused to comment and threatened us with legal proceedings. The two partners claim to have committed no irregularities and accuse us of being exploited by the enemies of the CAF president (*read their full answers in the Extend tab*).