



Summary: The CIO's Business Network

June 2024

Zimbabwe's Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) likely has a secret stream of money, The Sentry has found. Publicly available information suggests that the CIO controls Terrestrial Holdings, a business conglomerate of companies involved in hemp, solar energy, coal mining, tourism, and golf.

While the bulk of the CIO's funds come from the official budget, the agency—which has a dedicated investment branch—has been known to engage in private business ventures as a source of off-budget financing.¹ In the past, CIO joint ventures have been involved in activities as varied as mushroom farming, exporting baby elephants, and diamond mining.

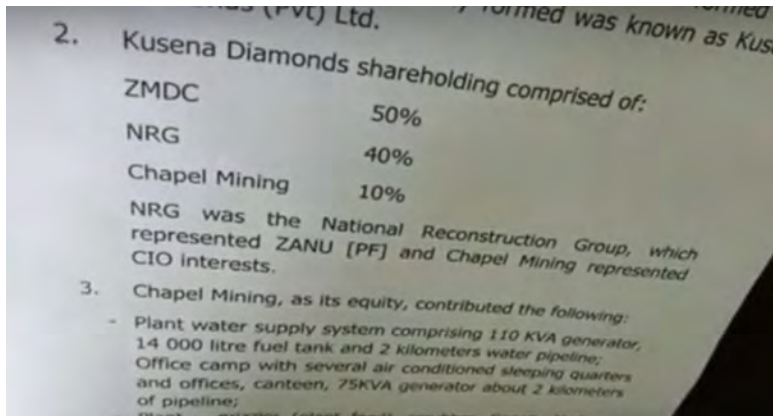
Mapping the network

The Sentry was able to conclude that the CIO likely controls Terrestrial Holdings and Terrestrial Mining by following clues about a past network of CIO companies.

In 2018, former CIO Director General Happyton Bonyongwe gave evidence to a Parliamentary Portfolio Committee about Kusena Diamonds, part-owned by the CIO.^{2, 3, 4, 5} By leaving his speaking notes on show for the cameras, Bonyongwe also inadvertently



revealed the name of the holding company through which the agency owned 10% of Kusena: Chapel Mining.



Screenshot of Happyton Bonyongwe's briefing papers from his evidence session in front of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mines and Energy, April 9, 2018.

The Sentry examined the corporate records for both Kusena and Chapel Mining, together with a series of past CIO joint ventures with a Chinese-Angolan entrepreneur called Sam Pa. These filings provided a list of company directors. By comparing those directors with court records, previous reporting, and other sources, we found they were often drawn from the ranks of the CIO's economics team and finance and administration branches. We then uncovered present-day companies that shared directors with known CIO-controlled firms from the past and that were based at the same office building in Harare: Livingstone House.

In particular, The Sentry found that Terrestrial Mining and Terrestrial Holdings, based on the fifth and seventh floors of Livingstone House, appear to be controlled by the CIO. Terrestrial Mining

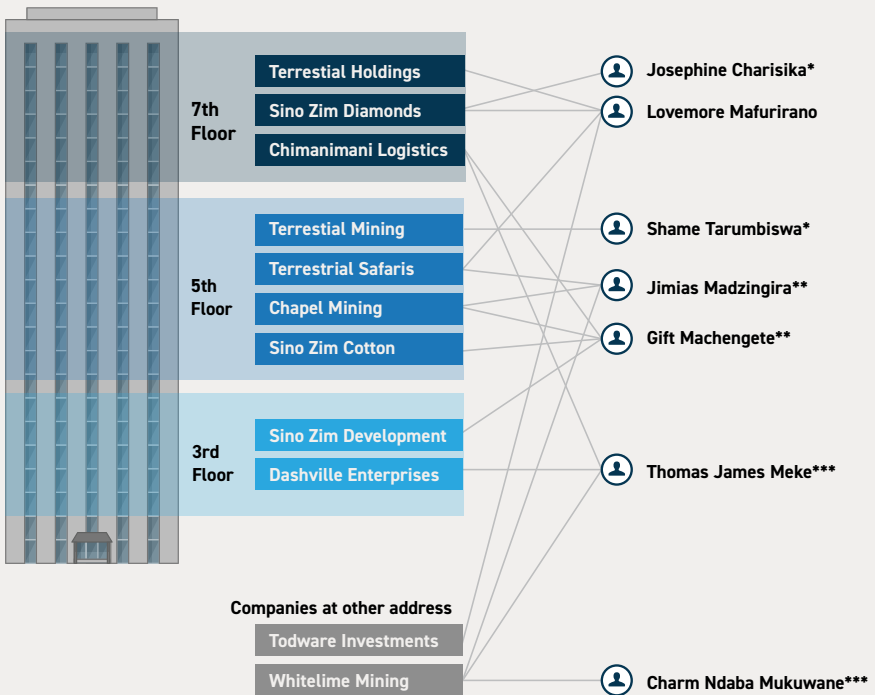
and a sister company, Whitelime Mining, were recently awarded coal mining concessions covering 50,000 hectares near Lake Kariba in western Zimbabwe, an area close to large proposed

CIO-Linked Companies Based at Livingstone House

Terrestrial Holdings is currently based on the seventh floor of Livingstone House, which at various times has housed companies linked to the CIO through their directors.



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Graphic is accurate to the last obtainable corporate record. Link to the CIO identified: *in the leaked CIO address book in the 2000s; **through Zimbabwean official announcements; ***during the reporting of "Mediagate."



and existing coal-fired power plants.^{6, 7, 8, 9, 10} In late 2023 Terrestrial Holdings launched a website, describing itself as a conglomerate with interests in mining gold, coal, and lithium; farming hemp; real estate; telecommunication; solar and thermal energy; transport and logistics; and game range drive services for tourists.¹¹ When approached by The Sentry, Terrestrial Holdings denied being owned by the CIO but declined to reveal its shareholders.

Conclusion

The existence of a CIO business network matters because the agency—which has reportedly engaged in election-related intimidation—requires civilian control, including full financial oversight and transparency, to prevent abuse.^{12, 13, 14} Security forces with their own sources of revenue can more easily go rogue.¹⁵

A full description of how The Sentry carried out this investigation is available in English on our website: www.thesentry.org.



Endnotes

- 1 CIO088 – Charity Madyambudzi and Shadreck Mugabe v. Director General N.O and Deputy Director N.O and Minister Responsible for National Security N.O, HH 185-22 / HC 3670/21, High Court, Harare, 2021 and 2022.
- 2 Evidence session in front of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Mines and Energy, April 9, 2018, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXGkXL2tm0> (58:30-1:08:30).
- 3 Global Witness, “Is ZANU-PF’s Hidden Hand in Zimbabwe’s Diamond Industry Revealed by Secret Document?,” June 25, 2018, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20230603182327/https://www.globalwitness.org/en/blog/zanu-pfs-hidden-hand-zimbabwes-diamond-industry-revealed/>
- 4 Global Witness, “Stones, Seed and Suffrage,” February 21, 2020, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20211218150530/https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-minerals/stones-seed-and-suffrage/>
- 5 Global Witness, “An Inside Job: Zimbabwe: The State, the Security Forces, and a Decade of Disappearing Diamonds,” September 2017, pp. 22-27, available at: https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19226/Inside_job_FINAL_4_web.pdf
- 6 CIO069 - Zimbabwe Registrar of Companies, “Terrestrial Mining,” October 8, 2020.
- 7 CIO075 – Zimbabwe Registrar of Companies, “Whitelime Mining,” March 31, 1995.
- 8 CIO067 – Zimbabwean Government Gazette, “General Notice 2890 of 2021,” October 15, 2021, available at: <https://gazettes.africa/archive/zw/2021/zw-government-gazette-dated-2021-10-15-no-122.pdf>
- 9 CIO068 - Zimbabwean Government Gazette, “General Notice 457 of 2022,” March 11, 2022, available at: <https://gazettes.africa/archive/zw/2022/zw-government-gazette-dated-2022-03-11-no-25.pdf>
- 10 In addition to the existing Hwange power station, there are plans for other coal-fired power plants in the region. See, for example:
Bernard Mpofu, “Chinese Investor Plans a US\$400m Plant for Zim,” The NewsHawks, July 16, 2023, available at: <https://thenewshawks.com/chinese-investor-plans-a-us400m-plant-for-zim/>
- 11 CIO152 – Terrestrial Holdings website, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20240328082215/https://terrestrialholdings.co.zw/>
- 12 Research and Advocacy Unit, Counselling Services Unit, Zimbabwe Human



Rights NGO Forum, Veritas, Heal Zimbabwe, “A Consolidated Report on Pre and Post Organised Violence and Torture during the 2023 Harmonised Elections in Zimbabwe,” November 2023, p.15, available at: <https://researchandadvocacyunit.org/report/a-consolidated-report-on-pre-and-post-organised-violence-and-torture-during-the-2023-harmonised-elections-in-zimbabwe>

- 13 CIO022 & CIO023 – Citizens’ Coalition for Change council candidate, Affidavit, June 23, 2023, on file with The Sentry.
- 14 CIO117-CIO121 – Citizens’ Coalition for Change parliamentary candidate, Victim statement to the police, August 23, 2023, on file with The Sentry.
- 15 See, for example, the situation in Sudan, where the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary militia had off-budget sources of income from gold and a business conglomerate, possibly contributing to its current military campaign against the official Sudanese armed forces. See:
Global Witness, “Exposing the RSF’s Secret Financial Network,” December 9, 2019, available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200305171859/https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/conflict-minerals/exposing-rsfs-secret-financial-network/>

