

War crimes gold: Jersey under fire

by Michael Morris

mmorris@jerseyeveningpost.com

THE Island's authorities have been accused of failing to take action against a Jersey-owned company which allegedly helped to fund the illegal purchase of African gold linked to war crimes.

International pressure group Conflict

Accusation of inaction over alleged illegal purchase

Awareness Project, founded by former UN investigator Kathi Austin, claims that both the States police and Jersey Financial Services Commission have failed to deal with the alle-

gations despite being presented with 'forensic and compelling evidence'.

Swiss company Hussar Ltd, which is owned by a Jersey trust company, is the subject of an

inquiry by Swiss authorities over claims that it funded the purchase of illegally produced gold in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

(Cont on page 2)

Island accused over war crimes gold

(Cont from page 1)

The allegations centre on large amounts of gold that were illegally seized by a Congo rebel group. It is claimed the rebel group then sold the gold across the border in Uganda, with the sale allegedly being facilitated by money from Hussar Ltd. It is alleged that employees of Hussar Ltd then supplied the metal to Swiss gold refiner Argor-Heraeus SA. The firm has previously denied all allegations.

Now, Ms Austin, chief executive of the Conflict Awareness Project, has reportedly told

the BBC that she presented evidence about the alleged crimes to the States police and JFSC but had received no response.

However, the director general of the JFSC, John Harris, said that this was not a matter for the commission, as it was not an area it regulated.

Ms Austin said: 'I visited Jersey. I met the police department, the Financial Crimes Unit. I also met the Financial Services Commission, making the complaint, bringing forward the same evidence the Swiss considered

so egregious that they opened up their federal criminal case.

'For now we haven't had any word.'

Ms Austin said she was frustrated at the lack of progress and added: 'For some reason the Jersey, Channel Islands authorities do not seem to be moving quickly on this case.'

The Swiss authorities are currently investigating the claims, which date back to 2004.

The head of the States police's joint financial crimes unit, Dave Burminhgam, could not be contacted this morning.