



READING COMPREHENSION

Read the following text and do the exercises below.

FIFA CORRUPTION CRISIS: KEY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

FIFA, football's world governing body, has been engulfed by claims of widespread corruption since this summer, when the US Department of Justice indicted several top executives.

FIFA's president, Joseph Blatter, has always denied any wrongdoing but, in September, he was made the subject of a Swiss criminal investigation, launched alongside the US inquiry.

The scandal erupted in May, with a raid on a luxury hotel in Zurich and the arrest of seven FIFA executives, conducted at the behest of the US authorities. The US has indicted a total of 14 current and former FIFA officials and associates on charges of "rampant, systemic and deep-rooted" corruption, following a major inquiry by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Why does this matter?

FIFA is the body responsible for running world football. It has recently been dogged by accusations of corruption, particularly after awarding the 2022 World Cup to the tiny but rich and influential Gulf state of Qatar. In December 2014, FIFA chose not to release its own investigation into corruption, instead releasing an administrative summary which it said exonerated the bidding process.

The World Cup is the most-watched sporting event in the world, larger even than the Olympics. It generates billions of dollars in revenue from corporate sponsors, broadcasting rights and merchandising. These arrests and investigations cast doubt over the transparency and honesty for the process of allocating World Cup tournaments, electing its president and the administration of funds.

Why were the officials accused?

The FBI has been investigating FIFA for the past three years. The investigation was initially sparked by the bidding process for the Russia 2018 and Qatar 2022 World Cups, but was widened to look back at FIFA's dealings over the past 20 years.

The Department of Justice's indictment says that the corruption was planned in the US, even if it was then carried out elsewhere. The use of US banks to transfer money appears to be the key to the investigation.

Mr Blatter consistently denied wrongdoing while several of his close colleagues were indicted by the US. In September, he was named as the subject of a separate criminal investigation launched by Swiss prosecutors.

What is alleged?

Swiss prosecutors have accused Mr Blatter of criminal mismanagement or misappropriation over a TV rights deal and of a "disloyal payment" to European football chief, Michel Platini.

Meanwhile, the US authorities have charged 14 defendants with racketeering and money laundering conspiracies. The 47-count indictment said that the defendants participated "in a 24-year scheme to enrich themselves through the corruption of international soccer".

Much attention has been focused on a \$10m deal that US prosecutors say was a bribe to secure the 2010 World Cup for South Africa. An email obtained by a South African newspaper appears to show that the then-South African President, Thabo Mbeki, and the president of Fifa, Joseph Blatter, agreed to the deal. In the email, FIFA secretary general, Jerome Valke, wrote to a South African minister asking when the transfer could be made and saying that both, Mr Blatter and Mr Mbeki, had discussed the matter previously.

Moreover, Michael Lauber, the Swiss attorney general, has said that he is investigating suspicious activity around FIFA's Swiss bank accounts.

Worksheet

1. The FIFA scandal came out when...

- a. The football's world governing body was charged with corruption.
- b. FIFA's president, Joseph Blatter, was involved in a Swiss criminal investigation.
- c. Seven FIFA executives were arrested in an expensive hotel in Zurich.

- 2. FIFA has recently being accused of corruption, especially after...**
 - a. The bidding process for the Russia 2018 World Cup
 - b. Awarding the 2022 World Cup to Qatar
 - c. Using the US banks to transfer money

- 3. Initially, the investigation began because of...**
 - a. The allocation of World Cup tournaments in Russia for 2018 and in Qatar for 2022
 - b. A bribe to secure the 2010 World Cup for South Africa
 - c. The award of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar

- 4. The investigation of the FBI covers FIFA's dealings...**
 - a. Since last May, with the raid on a luxury hotel in Zurich
 - b. In the past three years
 - c. In the past 20 years

- 5. The corruption was arranged in...**
 - a. The US
 - b. Swiss banks
 - c. US banks