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A Bribe by Any Other Name

Last week, we published a [checklist of 101 different ways that people refer to bribery around the world](#). The idea for the article grew from several interesting conversations we had with foreign practitioners while building our [Regional Risk Spotlight series](#).

In [Kenya](#) for example, Aisha Abdallah, a partner at the Africa Legal Network in Nairobi, told us there was a scandal involving the printing of ballot papers for the Kenyan elections. When the implicated company's officers were charged and convicted in the U.K., it was revealed that employees were using the word "chicken" to refer to bribes in their emails. That euphemism was new even for people working regularly in Kenya, Abdallah said. Now, the case has passed into local compliance lore as the "Chickengate Scandal" and people regularly discuss who is getting how much "chicken."

[Brazilians](#), it seems, are also creative when it comes to discussing bribery. Brazilian authorities, particularly special tax inspectors and police officers, are known for using the Portuguese phrase *leitinho das crianças* which translates as "milk for the kids" when asking for bribes in exchange for not starting tax audits or not issuing traffic tickets, Eloy Rizzo Neto, a partner at Koury Lopez Advogados in Sao Paulo, told us. Other common Portuguese terms for bribe include *bombom* (candy), *café* (coffee) and *pão de queijo* (cheese bread).

Brazilians aren't the only ones using words for food and drinks to ask for bribes. A public official might ask for *chai* (which means "tea" in Hindi and several other languages), *shai bil yasmeen* (Arabic for "jasmine tea"), a *refresco* (Spanish for "soda") or even for an extra *schmear* (Yiddish for "spread") and they don't mean on their bagel and lox.

We also found that there are plenty of codes for bribes that do not involve food at all. Sources told us that more obscure phrases such as *faz-me rir* (Portuguese for "make me laugh"); *hafta* (a word of Persian origin that literally translates to "week" but is typically used to denote payments demanded or paid on a weekly basis); or *krysha* (Russian for "roof") could mask a request for a bribe. Or someone could be more obvious and ask directly for "dirty money" or "payola."

Staying up-to-date on this particular brand of linguistic creativity is crucial for in-house practitioners and outside counsel alike. Our list of 101 words and phrases is a great place for you, your clients or your company to start compiling your own personalized list to use in due diligence and investigations. And if you find any interesting ones, we'd love to hear them!

Warmly,

Nicole Di Schino

Editor-in-Chief