



global witness

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Global Witness uncovers foreign companies' links to Congo violence

European and Asian companies, including Bangkok-based THAISARCO (a subsidiary of British metals group AMC), UK-based Afrimex, and Belgium-based Trademet have been buying minerals from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that are funding armed groups and fuelling conflict, said Global Witness in a report published today.

The 110-page report, entitled '*Faced with a gun, what can you do?*', details how companies are buying from suppliers who trade in minerals from the warring parties. Many mining areas in eastern DRC are controlled by rebels and the national army, who violently exploit civilians to retain access to valuable minerals, including cassiterite (tin ore), coltan and gold. Cassiterite and coltan are used to make mobile phones, computers and other electronics, among other things.

Global Witness wrote to 200 companies and found that most had no controls in place to stop 'conflict minerals' entering their supply chain. It says governments, including the UK and Belgium, are undermining their own development assistance and diplomatic efforts to end the 12-year conflict by failing to crack down on companies based within their borders.

Informed by on-the-ground investigations and interviews in North and South Kivu, the report reveals that despite being on opposing sides, the national Congolese army and rebel groups, in particular the FDLR, regularly cooperate with each other, carving up territory and occasionally sharing the spoils of illegal mining. It warns that the recent integration of another armed group, the CNDP, into the national army will make it easier for the former rebels to get 'in on the act' of exploiting the mines.

"Despite recent political and military developments, including the apparent rapprochement between the DRC and Rwanda, violence against unarmed civilians is continuing and countless lives are lost each day. All the warring parties in the DRC are systematically using forced labour and violent extortion in mining areas," said Patrick Alley, Director of Global Witness.

"It is not good enough for companies to say they buy only from licensed exporters, when they know full well that their middlemen buy from armed groups. The failure of governments to hold companies to account, of Burundi and Rwanda to restrict the trade across their borders, and of donors and diplomats to address explicitly the role of the mineral trade, have all contributed to the continuation of a conflict that has killed millions and displaced many more."

One of the companies featured in the report is THAISARCO, the world's fifth-largest tin-producing company, owned by British metals giant, AMC. THAISARCO's main supplier, Congo-based Panju, sells cassiterite and coltan from mines controlled by the FDLR. Another company is the UK-based Afrimex, already found by the British government in 2008 to be in breach of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises for buying from suppliers who made payments to a rebel group. The British government has yet to take any concrete action on this information.

Global Witness is calling for the following actions:

- Companies trading in minerals from the DRC should carry out thorough due diligence to ensure that they are not funding warring parties;
- The DRC and other governments should cut off warring parties' access to the mines and to international trade routes and external networks;
- Home governments should hold to account their companies for involvement in the illicit mineral trade from DRC.

Patrick Alley: "*Breaking the link between minerals and violence must be an integral part of the solution – not something that is looked into once the peace is achieved.*"

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For more information:

In the UK: Amy Barry +44 (0)7980 664309, +44 (0)207 5616358, abarry@globalwitness.org

In the DRC: Carina Tertsakian, +243 (0) 81 4226556

In the US: Corinna Gilfillan, +1 202 725 8705, cgilfillan@globalwitness.org

Other materials, including full report, photos, first person testimonies and company fact sheet at www.globalwitness.org

Notes:

- Companies trading in minerals from the DRC in 2007 and 2008 include: **Belgium**: Trademet, Traxys, SDE, STI and Speciality Metals; **Thailand**: THAISARCO (owned by British company, AMC); **UK**: Afrimex, AMC; **Malaysia**: Malaysian Smelting Corporation, Berhad; **China**: African Ventures Ltd; **India**: Met Trade India Ltd; **Russia**: Eurosib logistics JSC. *For a fuller list and DRC export statistics, see the full report.*
- The desire to gain or maintain control of natural resources in eastern DRC has been a central factor in the armed conflict, estimated to have claimed several million lives since 1996. Much of the fighting in the east – the most severely affected region – has been centred on the control of rich mineral deposits. Mining areas have changed hands repeatedly in power struggles between the army and rebel groups and between constantly shifting alliances of army and rebel factions. Despite successive peace agreements, the violence continues in North and South Kivu to this day.
- At the time of writing, the most significant rebel group operating in eastern DRC is the *Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), a predominantly Rwandan Hutu armed group, some of whose leaders are alleged to have participated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Despite a joint military operation by the Rwandan and Congolese armies against the FDLR in January 2009, the FDLR remains active, especially in South Kivu.
- Until recently, the other main group was the CNDP – *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* – a Tutsi led group backed by Rwanda, now integrated into the national army. Its de facto military leader is Bosco Ntaganda, wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court.