

Mining as a fuel for war



Photo courtesy of Silicon Geoscience

Aluminium's countless applications in modern civilian life tend to mask its numerous uses in weapons technology, which make it one of a handful of metals classed as "strategic" by the Pentagon, meaning that a top priority of the world's most powerful Governments is to ensure its constant supply at lowest possible cost.

To this end, new bauxite mines, alumina refineries and aluminium smelters are being promoted with enormous hidden pressure in many countries, including Iceland. In India, this entails particularly dire repression of indigenous people as well as huge threats to the environment, especially in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, where some of the biggest mountains are capped with a layer of high quality bauxite. This layer conserves the monsoon rain and releases it in hundreds of perennial streams. Mining the summits of these mountains impairs their water-retaining capacity. Producing one ton of aluminium also consumes over 1,000 tons of water. Toxic red mud waste at Vedanta's new refinery at Lanjigarh has already polluted the Bansadhara river, within a month of starting up.

Discoveries of thermite and duralumin in 1901 and 1908 led swiftly to commercialising aluminium's potential for bombs and aircraft. The 1st and 2nd world wars boosted aluminium sales hugely, as has every war since. Aluminium is at the heart of the military – industrial complex, and defines the scale of modern warfare in a way few people realize.

Thermite bombs exploit the latent explosive power in aluminium, using its high heat of

formation (the temperature at which it is separated from oxygen), to increase the size of explosions. It formed the basis of 70,000 handgrenades used in the 1st world war. Later uses involve the incendiary bombs dropped on German & Japanese cities in the 2nd world war, napalm, daisy-cutters and nuclear missile warheads.

In the 1920s aluminium alloys took humans to the skies, starting with duralumin (used in 1st world war aircraft). After Hitler ordered construction of a massive fleet of aluminium-based warplanes, Britain and America started a programme of rearmament in 1934, aided by a huge dam-construction programme begun in the 1920s – 30s. An unfurnished jumbo jet or military aircraft still consists of about 80% aluminium, though the alloys used in aerospace have become far more sophisticated, especially the lithium range and metals matrix composites (mixtures with oil/plastic derivatives).

Dams and aluminium are closely intertwined. From then till now (NB Iceland's new dams), the real purpose of many of the world's biggest dams is to supply cheap hydro-power for aluminium. "Electricity from the big Western dams helped to win the Second World War," by producing aluminium for arms and aircraft, and later plutonium for the atom bomb [1]. In 1940, President Roosevelt called for 50 000 war-planes to be built.

Henry Kaiser responded to this with his own plea for more aluminium production, and by making incendiary bombs. The 2nd World War initiated a new level of man's inhumanity to man

in the way that civilians became prime targets. From early in the war, a key strategy of both sides was bombing cities. Incendiary bombs and napalm were mostly aluminium-based: 4–8% in napalm, 3–13% in Kaiser's incendiary or "goop" bombs. 41 000 tons of goop bombs were dropped on Japan and Germany by 1944. The Chemical Warfare Service used them "to burn out the heart of Japan", & "save thousands of American lives." [2]

Before the atom bombs were dropped, these chemical bombs had already created carnage beyond calculation among civilians. Half the British bombs dropped on Dresden in 1945 were napalm, authorized by Churchill, and killing about 25 000 civilians. Both bombs became standard in Korea and Vietnam. The latter introduced a fearsome new weapon: the 15 000 lb. BLU-2 or daisy-cutter, whose aluminium-slurry explosive power was invented by a "creationist" (i.e. Christian fundamentalist) named Melville Cook in 1956. This is the weapon used for carpet-bombing vast areas from Korea to Afghanistan.

After 1945, aluminium demand suddenly dropped. Kaiser's brilliance was to gamble on a war in Korea, and his first customer was Boeing. His factories were soon making the B-36 bombers used there. His "bet" on this war paid off, and it marked the start of Eisenhower's "permanent war industry", that has never looked back. US aluminium production more than tripled between 1948 and 1958, ushering in a "golden age" for aluminium companies [3].

A little-known text that

encapsulates this policy is Aluminium for Defence and Prosperity (Dewey Anderson's 1951), which reveals much about the industry that has never been openly admitted since:

"Aluminum has become the most important single bulk material of modern warfare. No fighting is possible, and no war can be carried to a successful conclusion today, without using and destroying vast quantities of aluminum ... "Aluminum is needed in atomic weapons, both in their manufacture and in their delivery." [4]

Aluminium forms part of a nuclear missile's explosion technology and casing, as well as its fuel. "Propellants" fuelling missiles have been based on aluminium powder since the 1950s. From the 1990s, use of exceedingly fine aluminium powder in rocket fuel extended this through nanotechnology, and nanoparticles of aluminium from spent rocket fuel have already introduced serious pollution to outer space, involving the satellite industry.

Aluminium is subsidized in many ways, on account of its importance for "defence". It is anything but a "green metal." And priced far too cheaply. The real cost of its electricity, water, transport systems and pollutants are all "externalised" onto manufacturing regions such as India, even as aluminium plants are closing down fast in Europe. Even the standard Kalashnikov assault rifle has had an aluminium frame since 1961.

Among the costliest items of military hardware are the

Editorial

Mining as fuel for war, is the title and main theme for this issue of The Broken Rifle. War Resisters' International works against war profiteering, supporting local nonviolent campaigns against these corporations. Most of the campaigns that we have worked together with are campaigns targeting well known war profiteers – the arms traders and service suppliers to the military. In this issue we want to take a next step and start to look closer to the connections that the mining industry has with the globalisation of militarism.

WRI sees a need to link the struggles of local communities against the mining industry with the anti-war movement. As you will read in the articles in this issue, the mining industry plays an important role in fuelling local conflicts – especially in Africa as documented in the article by Jan Van Crieckinge – but also the minerals extracted are vital in weapons manufacture, as noted by Felix Padel in his article about aluminium.

This BR also introduces us to one of the main themes of the seminar WRI is planning in India, 27-30 December 2008: "Linking local livelihood struggles and global militarism". The seminar will bring together campaigners and researchers from all over the world to analyse the role of states and multinational corporations in depriving local communities of their sources of livelihood. We aim to learn from the experience of nonviolent resistance at various levels – from the community to the global.

Javier Gárate

The Broken Rifle

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Africa: Conflicts and mining

"Mining-induced displacement ... was one of the most underreported causes of displacement in Africa, and one that was likely to increase, as mineral extraction remained a key economic driver in the whole region," was one of the conclusions of a official report by SADC, the Southern African Development Community, early 2006.

As in many other continents the horrors of land acquisition are experienced by mining-affected communities in a similar manner to – or perhaps even more severely than by – communities affected by the construction of dams and other big projects. When mining contracts are given, the immediate threat to local communities is displacement and land alienation (loss of property rights). These are inevitable features of large-scale mining. In Botswana, the displacement of the San people from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, to open the park to large-scale diamond mining, was one such recent example.

In many countries – especially the more democratic ones – complex formal procedures exist for acquisition of lands and for obtaining mining contracts for exploration, prospecting and extraction. But in reality mining projects are almost always encouraged and the interests of the mining industries count for more than are protecting local communities or natural resources that exist in a mining area. The focus of economic reforms in African countries is reflected in policy changes on labour, land acquisition, forest conservation and environment protection that show in general an increasing disrespect on the part of the state and the armed forces towards the rights of communities. Mining has

also multiplied the exploitation and degradation of women's rights. And rural women are completely lose access to land when the mines come. Testimonies of women from mining areas in Ghana show that displacement and loss of land were the most serious problems affecting their lives.

Prevailing land acquisition mechanisms in African countries give the state overriding powers to encroach on people's lands for any 'public purpose', including mining. In most cases, communities become aware of projects only at the time of eviction, when the bulldozers move in, often supported by a strong police presence. When companies and governments give projections of mining project costs and estimated profits, therefore, it is crucial to analyse these from the perspective of such social and environment costs as: deforestation, pollution and other ecological destruction, people's displacement and loss of access to land, water bodies and forests, loss of livelihoods, exposure to health hazards, violence and abuse the transformation of villages into culturally degraded shanty towns, and the risks of accidents and disasters.

Just to give two examples of mining-induced displacements among so many others: the gold mining in Ghana and the illegal exploitation of diamonds and coltan¹ in the war torn Democratic Republic of Congo.

Dirty gold from Ghana

'No Dirty Gold' was the name



Photo Jeca Taudte – Coltan Processing, Bukavu, South Kivu

of a consumer campaign launched in 2004, by Earthworks/Mineral Policy Center and Oxfam-US, intended to shake up the gold industry and change the way gold is mined, bought and sold. Consumers were asked to sign a pledge at the campaign website (www.nodirtygold.org). Most consumers don't realise that in African countries gold mining is associated with human rights abuses, and even imprisonment and death, along with severe environmental devastation. As part of the campaign, Earthworks and Oxfam-US released the report *Dirty Metals: Mining, Communities and the Environment* which details the massi-

ve pollution, huge open pits, devastating community health effects, worker dangers and, in many cases, human rights abuses. The report also shows that mining does not produce wealth for the people but rather becomes a 'resource curse' for countries such as Guinea, Niger, Zambia and Togo – a twofold curse for local communities, not only causing physical displacement but loss of their traditional livelihoods.

In Ghana, West Africa, a country with extensive gold mines, the Ghanaian Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice issued a report in 2000 that found "overwhelming evidence of hu-

man rights violations occasioned by the mining activities, which were not sporadic, but a well-established pattern common to almost all mining communities". Between 1990 and 1998, more than 30,000 people in the Tarkwa district were displaced by gold mining operations. "Our people have suffered beatings, imprisonment, and murder for standing up for our community rights against multinational mining companies," said Daniel Owusu-Koranteng, a mining activist from Tarkwa. An investigation by the Ghanaian community group WACAM (Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining) found evidence that between 1994 and

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aluminium-rich aircraft, which feature so prominently in a stream of major corruption scandals, involving massive bribes or "commissions" paid by the main manufacturing companies and arms dealers [5].

In debates over causes of Climate Change, the media too rarely highlight the major role of mining and metal production as well as arms manufacture and the polluting effects of using these arms in the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and many other regions.

The media is also all but silent about the situation of many indigenous people in India, whose lives are being devastated by the aluminium and steel industries. These people's movements to maintain their sustainable lifestyle deserve to be known and supported internationally. Tribal and non-tribal villagers protesting against aluminium, steel and chemical factories have been killed in police firings at Maikanch (2000) and Kalinganagar (2006) in Orissa, and Nandigram (2007) in West Bengal. These events are only the

extreme manifestation of a continuous harassment against these communities' attempt to defend their property.

This rapid forced industrialisation is claimed as "sustainable development" and "poverty reduction" when it is actually the opposite. Village people's standard of living is collapsing all over India as their lands are taken over for big industry

The Lanjigarh refinery is built by a London-based company called Sterlite or Vedanta. Tribal communities nearby have been split apart and their water, land, air seriously polluted. It is built next to one of Orissa's best-forested mountains, in a range called Niyamgiri, which has its own special tribal people, classed as a "primitive tribe", the Dongria Konds, who are preparing to resist any assault on their sacred mountain. This case has been over 3 years at India's Supreme Court, with huge pressures for and against, and vast sums spent by Vedanta. This is highly symbolic, for the Dongrias' supreme deity is Niyam Raja, the Lord of the Law – the main deity associated with the 4,000 foot

mountain summit, in whose name the Dongria have maintained a taboo on cutting trees up there, thus preserving an extensive area of primary forest with many unique species – which Vedanta wants to strip-mine! Vedanta's subsidiary Balco is a principal supplier to India's arms industry, including its missiles.

The industries being promoted in Orissa and neighbouring states of eastern India are providing fuel for the world's wars, as well as feeding a lifestyle of cars, packaging and mega-scale construction that is increasingly recognised as completely unsustainable in the long-term. As Bhagavan Majhi says – one of the tribal leaders of the Kshipur movement against the Utkal project –

"I put a question to the SP [Superintendent of Police]. I asked him, Sir, what do you mean by development? Is it development to displace people? The people, for whom development is meant, should reap benefits. After them, the succeeding generations should reap benefits. That is development. It should not be merely to cater to the greed of a few officials. To destroy the

millions of year old mountains is not development. If the government has decided that we need alumina, and we need to mine bauxite, they should oblige us with replacement land. As Adivasis, we are cultivators. We cannot live without land.....If they need it so badly, they need to tell us why they need it. How many missiles will you use? How many military aeroplanes? You must give us a complete account." [6]

Mining companies, arms companies, and the world's financial institutions that support them are linked extremely closely, and make large profits out of war. There will not be peace in this world until the arms race stops, and the arms race is fuelled by mining and the metals industry.

Felix Padel

Based on a chapter from a forthcoming book by Felix Padel & Samarendra Das on the political economy of the aluminium industry and its impact in Orissa

Notes

- [1] P.McCully Silenced rivers: The ecology and politics of large dam, 1996.
- [2] Albert Heiner Henry J.Kaiser: Western Colossus 1998 p.112.
- [3] G.D.Smith p.150.
- [4] Dewey Anderson Aluminum for Defence and Prosperity. Washington, US Public Affairs Institute 1951 p.3-5.
- [5] Sampson 1977 gives numerous examples up to the '70s. Since then, the world's media has exposed a constant stream of these scandals. The Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) is a London-based NGO virtually devoted to exposing these, frequently focusing on involvements by UK government departments and institutions.
- [6] This interview is in the film Matiro Poko, Company Loko (Earth worm company man) by Amarendra & Samarendra Das.

induced displacements

1997, AGC (Ashanti Goldfields Company) security personnel, acting in conjunction with the Ghanaian police and the military, had killed three artisanal miners.² In one incident in January 1997, 16 artisanal miners were severely beaten by AGC security personnel, and others have been attacked by security guard dogs.

Even as a job source, mining is unsustainable. The destruction of the traditional employment base is followed by the loss of the mine itself. When ore deposits are ex-hausted, the jobs disappear. Most large – scale projects have a lifespan of between 10 and 40 years, after which the mining companies shut up shop and move on to new projects. Any schools, clinics, and other services established by the companies usually lose their funding. When this happens, the miners and communities are generally left to fend for themselves. Since mining is specialized employment, miners typically have few other marketable job skills.

More than in other African countries the Ghanaian civil society is involved in the struggle against human rights abuses at the hands of mining companies and state security agencies and has formed the National Coalition on Mining (NCOM) in solidarity with communities affected by mining. The Ghanaian government, however, has liberalised the mining sector in line with IMF and World Bank prescriptions and is attracting increased investment from transnational mining companies. This increase in foreign investment does not translated into increased employment or government revenue.

Communities affected by mining have for many years recorded and reported affronts to their dignity and violations of their rights, especially social and economic rights. In 2006, NCOM listed

specific instances of savage abuse of citizens' rights by mining companies, the police and the military. These include: violent, illegal arrest and detention of community members; torture of persons illegally arrested and detained; assault and battery (sometimes involving firearms and other deadly weapons) of youth accused of involvement in illegal mining or either trespass on mine property; interference with citizens' constitutional right to publicly protest against activities of mining companies that affect them negatively.

"The repressive power of the state has increased", pointed out the Africa Initiative on Mining, Environment and Society (AIMES) in 2004: *"The attitude and behaviour of the state and its institutions has been hostile towards its citizens who are determined to promote their interest and rights vis-à-vis that of transnational corporations. There are instances across Africa where we witness state repression through the use of private and state security against communities and citizens for expressing dissenting views or making legitimate demands. This attitude and behaviour of the state inhibits transparency and participation in extractive sector issues."* In 2007 AIMES issued a warning against 'new' players on the African market: *"Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa's extractive sector has significantly increased over the last few decades especially with the new entrants such as China, India, as well as the US involvement in the oil extraction in the Gulf of Guinea. The increase has not led to improvement in poverty reduction, environment protection, and respect for human rights in Africa; rather, there has been an increased deprivation of the people and governments of Africa to the benefits of mining. Key among these negative consequences are increased incidence of poverty, scarcity of environmen-*

tal and livelihood resources, conflicts, gender disempowerment, violence and insecurity".

Blood diamonds and coltan in Congo

Most calls for legislative controls on the diamond trade have come from NGOs throughout the world, and especially those working to build peace in Africa. Although a legitimate diamond industry exists, increasingly attention is being paid to illicit trade and even, legal trade for illegal benefits. This is where the 'conflict diamond' debate emerged. Conflict diamonds are products whose trading financial benefits are immorally used to fuel the civil wars taking place in many countries in Africa. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is no exception. Rebel forces control some of the areas where diamonds are extracted and consequently, have become players in the mining game, extracting the diamonds, selling them illegally, and using the money to fund their insurgent activities.

As a result of the pressure, some controls have been attempted, among them, the UN Security Council's rulings on 'blood diamonds', which imposed sanctions against UNITA, a former rebel group in Angola accused of using diamond revenues to fund the Angolan civil war. Although it only addresses the problem in Angola, organisations campaigning to stop the trade of conflict diamonds are pressuring for the stipulations to be applied also to the DRC.

However, an even greater problem is the diamond mining industry and its illegal activities to finance the war. Most of the diamond mining in the DRC takes place in the eastern part of the country, which was for a long time controlled by the rebel factions with support from Uganda and

Rwanda. The horrifying effects of this situation are the forced displacement of the Congolese people living in the mining areas, as well as the human rights abuses being committed. The perpetrators are not only the rebel groups in Nord-Kivu and Sud – Kivu, but also the government forces. Human rights violations include the killing of civilians, ill-treatment of detained persons, extrajudicial executions of prisoners, and recruitment of children as combatants. In fact, all sides have been accused of having commercial interests in this war due to the vast resources involved.

Human rights groups have argued that some multinational corporations from rich nations have been profiting from the war and have developed 'elite networks' of key political, military, and business elites to plunder Congo's natural resources. A number of companies and Western governments pressured a UN panel to omit details of shady business dealings in a report (October 2003). As reported by The Independent (London):

"Last October [2002], the panel accused 85 companies of breaching OECD standards through their business activities. Rape, murder, torture and other human rights abuses followed the scramble to exploit Congo's wealth after war exploded in 1998. For example the trade in coltan, a rare mineral used in computers and mobile phones, had social effects 'akin to slavery', the panel said. But no Western government had investigated the companies alleged to have links with such abuses. Some, including ones from the UK, US, Belgium and Germany, had lobbied to have their companies' names cleared from the 'list of shame' ... Some companies gave legitimate explanations for their business in Congo, or pulled out. But lawyers for others challenge the panel's findings, often capitalising on errors in ear-

lier reports as proof of unreliability."

When the UN finally released the report at the end of October 2003, they listed approximately 125 companies and individuals listed that had been named in a previous report by the panel for having contributed directly or indirectly to war profiteering in the DRC. Other companies, the report noted, may not have been directly linked to conflict, but had more indirect ties to the main protagonists. Such companies benefited from the chaotic environment in the DRC. For example, they would obtain concessions or contracts from the DRC on terms that were more favourable than they might receive in countries where there was peace and stability.

Jan Van Criekinge

Sources

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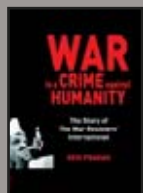


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Transnationals and the Militarization in Ecuador



During the last weeks of November and during most of December of 2007 a state of emergency (militarization of the zone) was declared in the Province of Orellana in the Amazon region of Ecuador, due specifically to the actions of the inhabitants of the Dayuma settlement who have raise up in protest because of the situation of abandonment on the part of the Ecuadorian government.

This militarization and repression has lead to various arrests and unlawful entry into homes of the residents, violating their Human Rights, only because they demanded that their basic needs be met.

But what is the true reason as to why the state of Ecuador has militarized this province?

In the province, one can find well-established state and transnational oil companies such as Repsol-YPF (Spain), Petrobell (Canada), Petrosud-Petrorivas (Argentina), Petroriental (China), Perenco (France), SIPEC/ ENAP (Chile), Petrobrás (Brazil), and Petroecuador (Ecuador), among others.

The state of emergency was declared basically to assure that these oil companies can continue to exploit oil without opposition and as a result, the Ecuadorian Army has threatened, suppressed, and imprisoned the population of Orellana.

The justification of the Ecuadorian Government is that no one can hinder "The development of the country," and because of this, Ecuador's oil should be exploited at all costs.

Here you can read from the President of Ecuador – Rafael Correa - own words "It is not the communities that are protesting, but a group of terrorists.

The people of the east don't support the romantic environmentalists, and it is those childish leftists who want to destabilise the government. Don't believe the romantic environmentalists. Everyone who opposes the development of the country is a terrorist.

There are terrorist people who make use of the inhabitants, saying that their territories have been forgotten. Don't let yourselves be deceived.



Photo: INREDH

The government is investigating who are behind all this. We even have information that sectors of the church are included. Hopefully this is untrue, because it would be terrible if church people were involved in such error.

The government will not allow exploitation of minerals and oil to be halted.

I refer to Ecuacorriente [the Ecuadorian sector of a Canadian mining company] because those millions will permit the country to be taken out of underdevelopment. We need them to build schools and health centers.

It is more immoral to avoid the cost-benefit of exploiting the ITT [oilfield] and making gaps in the jungle, because we need the money from exploitation of minerals and oil. I say it's more immoral to let people die by defending birds and trees".

This is another fact that confirms that in Ecuador, just like in other countries of the world, the interests of the transnational companies are favored over those of the people.

In addition, the Ecuadorian Army has a consortium of companies that are among the 25 largest businesses in all of Ecuador, and many of its companies are suppliers to the oil sector. For example, the Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército, or the Body of Army Engineers, has a series of contracts to construct highways in the Ecuadorian Amazon, and the army's air force has contracts with the oil companies to use their helicopters to transport materials for the oil towers.

The transnational oil companies are the true negotiators of the war, since they manipulate the state and the army at their every desire, obligating them to repress and threaten the population in order to be able to continue oil exploitation and maximize their earnings.

It is logical that these companies want to exploit more and more oil because the price per barrel boarders 100 USD, making oil exploitation a very lucrative business. Additionally, from every barrel exploited from the Ecuadorian Amazon, the state only receives 20% of the earnings. This means that if a barrel cost 60 USD, the state only receives 12 USD. However, this is changing due to some state decrees that will allow the state to earn more.

Under this model that favors the earnings of the oil companies over the rights of the state population, the state is doing whatever it likes with the population and is using adjectives to describe them such as "terrorists", "delinquents", "fanatics", etc. as is seen in the style of the Bush's speeches, trying to criminalize the mobilization of the people.

The power of the transnational companies in Ecuador over the army and the state has arrived at the point to when a member of the army comes to a community to make an arrest, he is frequently accompanied by a representative from the oil company, making a subtle implication that it was the oil company who ordered the arrest.

Up until now there are still people who were arrested and detained because of the situation in Dayuma. They will be prosecuted under charges of terrorism, and acting against the state, among others.

If you would like more information about the situation in Orellana or are interested in helping those who have been arrested, you can visit the following web pages:
www.accionecologica.org,
www.cedhu.org, www.inredg.org.
These websites contain detailed information about the situation and what is currently going on in the area.

Xavier Leon

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