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Global Witness responds to company over Congo report

Three days after the launch of its major report on the militarization of mining in the DRC, *Faced with a gun, what can you do?*, campaign group Global Witness has answered media reports of one company's response.

British company Amalgamated Metals Corporation (AMC) is named in the report as the owner of tin smelting company THAISARCO, which has been buying minerals from a supplier whose middlemen have been trading with armed groups. AMC has been quoted in the media as saying that it is "disappointed with the number of inaccuracies and omissions in the report".

Gavin Hayman, Director of Campaigns for Global Witness said: "We have contacted AMC twice to request a copy of their statement but have not received one (as of 10am on Friday 24 July) so are unable to respond in detail to their complaints. We would welcome them contacting us with further details."

The findings of the Global Witness report are based on a number of visits to the DRC and neighbouring countries in late 2008 and early 2009, during which researchers talked to exporters and other people involved in the trade, and also on analysis of official Congolese government export data.

AMC is also reported as saying that the metals industry "is taking the continued trade and the issue of provenance of cassiterite (tin oxide mineral used in mobile phones) of Congolese origin very seriously". AMC refer to their participation in a new industry initiative – known as the ITRI Tin Supply Chain Initiative - which started on July 1.

Gavin Hayman: "We are aware of the ITRI initiative but do not think it goes far or fast enough. Checking the licences of exporters will not solve the problem, when we know full well many of these exporters are trading with middlemen who buy from armed groups. In many cases, the licences are little more than a convenient smokescreen: companies need to go further and find out where the minerals came from in the first place and who has handled them along the way."

"ITRI's initiative should also reflect the fact that it is not only rebel groups but also soldiers of the Congolese national army who engage in the illegal exploitation and trade of minerals and prey on artisanal miners."

Global Witness is not calling on companies to pull out of the DRC but believes they could do a lot more to check out where the minerals they are buying are coming from. Tackling the access that warring parties have to the mines is fundamental to reducing the suffering of Congolese civilians in the east, including artisanal miners.

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