



global witness

For immediate release: 18 August 2009

Bisie killings show minerals at heart of Congo conflict Government should abide by commitment to demilitarise the mining sector

The killing of civilians near the Bisie cassiterite mine in Walikale, North Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), on 12 August 2009, is a stark reminder of how the fight to control Congo's mineral wealth is a key driver of violent conflict in the country, campaign group Global Witness said today.

At least 16 people were believed killed and 45 wounded in an attack on the village of Mpama, close to Bisie mine, in the early hours of 12 August. Most of the victims were civilians; two police officers were also killed. The perpetrators looted belongings and money.

Initial reports indicate that the attack may have been carried out by a newly-formed *mai-mai* group. During a visit to the region in August 2009, Global Witness had received reports that a new self-defence armed group, composed in part of former members of the 85th brigade of the Congolese army, was being formed in Walikale with the intention of retaining control of the cassiterite in Bisie. The 85th brigade had been in control of the mine until March 2009, when it was replaced by the 1st brigade. Further research is ongoing into the exact circumstances of the attack.

"The killings at Mpama show how Congo's mineral wealth provides an incentive for violence, and how the mines in the east are a focal point for armed groups' activities," said Global Witness director Patrick Alley. "They highlight the need for the Congolese security forces and the UN to do more to protect civilians in mining areas."

However, Global Witness warned that the attack should not be used as an excuse to send more soldiers into the mines. "The military presence in eastern DRC should be about protection of civilians and peacekeeping, not plundering the mineral wealth," said Patrick Alley.

The Bisie attack came just days after a welcome call by the Congolese government to demilitarise the mining sector. On 7 August 2009, Prime Minister Adolphe Muzito, accompanied by the Minister of Mines and other senior officials, visited Walikale and issued instructions from President Joseph Kabila that all military should vacate mining sites.

Less than three weeks before the Prime Minister's visit, Global Witness had published a report entitled "*Faced with a gun, what can you do?*", documenting the extensive involvement of armed groups and the Congolese army in the mineral trade and practices such as forced labour and systematic extortion of civilians.

"The Prime Minister's speech is the strongest directive so far regarding the military's illegal involvement in the mineral trade," said Global Witness director Patrick Alley. "It is a welcome move, and could be the first step towards preventing all the warring parties from accessing the mineral wealth. The government should now ensure that its commitment is implemented without delay."

Global Witness highlighted the importance of ending the impunity which has protected members of the army involved in the mineral trade. "Not only should soldiers be withdrawn from all mining sites, but military officers who have participated in or sanctioned the illicit trade in minerals should be brought to justice," said Patrick Alley.

For further information, please contact Lizzie Parsons on +44 207 561 6365, Amy Barry on +44 7980 664397, +44 207 5616358 or Annie Dunnebacke on +44 207 561 6397.

Global Witness report "*Faced with a gun, what can you do?*" can be found at:
www.globalwitness.org/fwag

Summary findings of Global Witness visit to eastern DRC, August 2009

Military control of Bisie mine continues since the redeployment of the 85th brigade

From 2006 to March 2009, Bisie mine, which accounts for around three quarters of the cassiterite production of the entire region, was under the control of the 85th brigade of the Congolese army, headed by Colonel Sammy Matumo. The 85th brigade was moved away from Bisie in March 2009. Global Witness believes that the departure of the 85th brigade could have signalled an important change in the situation in Bisie but that those who have taken over control of the area are rather replicating many of the same practices. Global Witness received new information that the 1st brigade, which replaced the 85th brigade, is continuing to profit from the trade. Soldiers of the 1st brigade are physically present in the mine and are extorting cassiterite and "taxes" from miners at roadblocks along the only road leading to Bisie.

The 1st brigade is composed in part of former members of the *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* (CNDP), a rebel group which was engaged in fierce battles with the Congolese army until January 2009, when it announced that it was joining forces with the government. A process of "accelerated integration" of former CNDP combatants into the Congolese army has led to the deployment of brigades headed by former CNDP commanders in mineral-rich areas of North and South Kivu.

The 1st brigade is headed by Colonel Antoine Manzi, a former CNDP commander. Sources from Walikale informed Global Witness that he and other members of the 1st brigade, including Colonel Hassan Bin Mashabi (another former member of the CNDP), were profiting from cassiterite mining in Bisie.

In addition, elements loyal to Colonel Sammy Matumo have remained in the area since the departure of the 85th brigade and are reportedly still taking a cut of cassiterite production in Bisie. Some of them are believed to be part of the armed group which carried out the attack on 12 August.

Sustained involvement of senior military officers in the mineral trade in 2009

High-ranking military officers, including commanders of the 8th military region in North Kivu, continue to be implicated in the illegal mineral trade. Among these is Colonel Etienne Bindu, promoted to the rank of second in command of the 8th military region in July 2009. Global Witness had already exposed Bindu's role in the exploitation of minerals in Walikale, in particular from Bisie. In August 2009, numerous sources confirmed that Bindu is still directly profiting from this trade, even since the departure of the 85th brigade which he had protected throughout the three years that it controlled Bisie.

Global Witness representatives met Colonel Bindu in Goma and presented him with their findings. He denied categorically that he had ever been involved in the mineral trade and claimed that he had never set foot in Bisie.

Continued military involvement in mining in South Kivu

On their latest visit, Global Witness researchers also found that military involvement in mining is still prevalent in numerous parts of South Kivu, for example in the Mushangi/Lutunkulu cassiterite and wolframite mines in Walungu, and several locations in Mwenga.

Some of the military involved in mining are units of the 10th military region; for example, members of the 10th military region have remained in control of the gold mine at Mukungwe (Walungu) since March 2008. Others are units of Operation Kimia 2, the UN-backed military operation against the *Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) - the predominantly Rwandan Hutu armed group, some of whose members are alleged to have participated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Armed opposition groups sustained through the mineral trade

Armed opposition groups are continuing to sustain themselves through the mineral trade in parts of eastern DRC. The FDLR, as well as smaller armed groups such as the *Forces républicaines fédéralistes* (FRF) and the *mai-mai* Yakutumba, have retained control of remote areas in Fizi, in the southern part of South Kivu, rich in gold, cassiterite and other minerals, where Operation Kimia 2 has not yet been fully deployed.

The deployment of Operation Kimia 2 appears to have temporarily disrupted the FDLR's mining activities in certain other areas, but the longer-term effect is not yet clear. The FDLR have abandoned some mines in parts of Mwenga (South Kivu), in anticipation of the deployment of Operation Kimia 2, only to continue mining in nearby areas. The FDLR have turned increasingly violent against the civilian population since the start of Operation Kimia 2.

In other cases, for example in parts of Mwenga and Kalehe, Congolese army units participating in Operation Kimia 2 have started taking over mining sites after dislodging the FDLR.

Some progress by government authorities and mineral traders

Prior to the Prime Minister's speech on 7 August in Walikale, the Ministry of Mines had developed a plan to clean up the mining sector, including through the creation of *centres de négoce* (trading centres) located near mining sites to enable better oversight of trading activities in conflict-affected areas. The provincial Minister of Mines in South Kivu has also introduced new procedures requiring mineral traders to provide more precise documentation on their chain of supply. Global Witness welcomes these initiatives, but believes that their success will depend on sustained political commitment from all the actors involved.

Global Witness also met representatives of the *comptoirs* (trading houses) in Goma and Bukavu which export minerals to European, Asian and other companies. Some of them claimed to have introduced tighter controls over their supply chain and asserted that they were no longer buying minerals from areas controlled by armed groups.

Global Witness believes that *comptoirs* should categorically refuse to buy minerals which are known to benefit armed groups or military units, such as those produced in Bisie or Mukungwe. Such measures would eventually exclude these groups from the supply chain and in turn enhance the reputation of the *comptoirs* and restore confidence in the international market.