



global witness

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Revealed: British companies trading in conflict minerals from Democratic Republic of Congo

UK government accused of hypocrisy for failing to act

British companies Afrimex and Amalgamated Metals Corporation (AMC) are among those named in a new report published today by campaign group Global Witness as buying minerals that are funding armed groups and fuelling the 12-year conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Several million people have died and many more have been displaced as a result of the conflict.

The British government knows about the trading links between the companies and the warring parties but has failed to act. In 2008, Afrimex, a small trading company based in Middlesex, was found by the government to be in breach of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises for buying from suppliers who made payments to a rebel group. Afrimex continued to trade in minerals throughout the course of the investigation, including with at least one of the same suppliers, but the UK government has yet to take any concrete action to ensure that these practices have stopped.

AMC, headquartered in Bishopsgate, London, is the parent company of Thailand-based THAISARCO, the world's fifth-largest tin-producing company. THAISARCO's main supplier, Congo-based Panju, sells minerals from mines controlled by the main rebel group, the FDLR, who are guilty of appalling human rights abuses, including rape and mass killings. Among the main shareholders of AMC are Victor Herman Sher, Geoffrey Charles Leacroft Rowan and Giles Robbins, all of whom appeared on the Sunday Times Rich List in 2009 and 2008.

"The British government is the largest bilateral aid donor to the DRC and a key diplomatic player. Its failure to hold British companies to account is undermining its own efforts and allowing one of the main drivers of the conflict to continue unchecked," said Patrick Alley, Director of Global Witness. *"We have asked the government countless times to pay more attention to the role of minerals in fuelling the conflict, and yet it seems that they are more concerned with protecting their companies' economic interests."*

The 110-page report, *'Faced with a gun, what can you do?'*, details how many mining areas in eastern DRC are controlled by rebels and the national army, who violently exploit civilians to retain access to valuable minerals; these include cassiterite (tin ore), coltan and gold. Cassiterite and coltan are used to make mobile phones and computers, among other things.

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.

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, including reporting them to the UN Security Council's sanctions committee.

Patrick Alley: *"As long as the warring parties can fund themselves through international trade, they will continue to be able to inflict widespread violence on the population. Breaking the link between minerals and the violence must be an integral part of the solution – not something that is looked into once the peace is achieved."*

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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 included: **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.