

GUATEMALA: LETTER WRITING NEEDED

Congressman blames local Mayan-Kekchi populations for problems Skye Resources has with its mining project in El Estor, Guatemala.

For the past few years, Rights Action – and other Guatemalan and North American organizations – have been reporting on a range of abuses associated with Skye Resources nickel mining plans in Guatemala, mostly particularly with a series of forced [and violent] evictions against Mayan Q'eqchi' communities that lived on the lands since before nickel mining began with INCO company in the 1950s and 60s.

At <http://www.rightsaction.org/video/elestor> you can see a QuickTime 10-minute video clip of the January 2007 forced evictions of Mayan communities by Guatemalan soldiers and police and the Skye Resources company. See and read a photo essay about these same evictions: <http://mimundo-jamesrodriguez.blogspot.com>.

BELOW: we send an article expressing concern for the safety of these communities, after negative comments made by a Guatemalan Congressman.

WHAT DO TO: see below.

SPEAKING TOUR IN CANADA, March-April: "INVESTING IN CONFLICT: North American mining companies, trickle down "development," & environmental destruction". For more information or to host event[s]: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org, 860-352-2448.

EDUCATIONAL DELEGATION TO GUATEMALA, April 26-May3: "IMPUNITY IN GUATEMALA: What do the 1998 killing of Bishop Gerardi and the global mining industry have in common? IMPUNITY". For more information: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org, 860-352-2448.

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FEAR FOR SAFETY - GUATEMALAN CONGRESSMAN BLAMES LOCAL RESIDENTS FOR SKYE RESOURCES' FAILURE TO CARRY FORWARD NICKEL MINE

On January 30, 2008, Vancouver-based Skye Resources announced it would be delaying the construction of the planned nickel mine near El Estor, Izabal. Skye has failed to raise the money that it requires to ramp up construction, and president Ian Austin noted in a press release that the decision to delay the project was made "in light of the recent turmoil in the credit markets."

A day later, Byron Chacón, congressperson of the Department of Izabal for the GANA party, blamed the project's delay on the 150 families that last year "invaded" lands allegedly belonging to Skye Resources. Chacón's comments were reprinted on January 31st in national newspapers (see original article below) in Guatemala, and it is possible that his comments provoke retaliation towards the Mayan Q'eqchi families that occupied lands last year.

It has been established that there is an armed group active in El Estor that openly supports the mining activities that Skye Resources was promising to develop in the area. The group claims that they operate as "Defenders of El Estor", and sent a signed statement (with no individual names) to this effect that was printed in the Prensa Libre (the largest newspaper in Guatemala) in November 2006.

According to a member of the group, speaking on the condition of anonymity in December 2006, "we formed to defend our interests as businesspeople and citizens in El Estor. The police can't do anything because [the] Human Rights [Ombudsman] won't let them."

This group allegedly physically threatened people from Barrio Revolución, Barrio La Paz, La Pista and La Union after the police forcibly evicted the communities - for the third time - from the lands they had been

occupying since September 2006.

All of the communities mentioned above have since been participating in a "good faith" negotiation process with Skye Resources' fully owned subsidiary CGN (Guatemala Nickel Company) in order to legalize their situation. As of mid-October 2007, agreements to transfer land title had been made between the company and two of the communities.

This is an urgent appeal for solidarity with the families living in regular and irregular situations in Lote 8, Barrio Revolucion, Barrio La Paz, La Pista and La Union, made out of fear for their safety given the irresponsible and dangerous comments made by Congressman Chacón.

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PLEASE WRITE TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE to express your concern for the safety of the Mayan-Kekchi communities living in concessioned lands near El Estor:

Diputado Byron Chacón, bchacon@congreso.gob.gt

Ian Austin, President and CEO, Skye Resources Suite 1203-700 West Pender Street Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6C 1G8, info@skyeresources.com.

CANADA PENSION PLAN (as of March 31, 2007, the CPP owned 629,000 shares worth 4.17 million dollars. Source: stockwatch.com): Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, csr@cppib.ca, 416-868-4075, Toll Free: 1-866-557-9510.

Ms. Bev Oda, Minister of International Cooperation, 509-S Centre Block, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6, Oda.B@parl.gc.ca.

Maxime Bernier, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 509-S Centre Block, House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6, BerniM@parl.gc.ca.

Embassy of Canada in Guatemala, Attention Ms. Maryse Guilbeault, 13 Calle 8-44 Zone 10, Edificio Edyma Plaza, Ciudad de Guatemala, Tel. (502) 2363-4348, gtmla@international.gc.ca.

Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights in Guatemala Attention to Anders Kompass 5a Av. 5-55, Zona 14 Edificio EUROPLAZA, Torre III, Nivel 14 Ciudad de Guatemala, Tel.: (502) 23823400, informacion@ohchr.org.gt.

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SPANISH ARTICLE

<http://www.elperiodico.com.gt/es/20080131/economia/48098/>

SKYE RESOURCES SIN CRÉDITO PARA INVERTIR EN GUATEMALA

La turbulencia en los mercados internacionales de capital impidió a Skye hallar inversionistas dispuestos a financiar la explotación de níquel en El Estor, Izabal.

Por: Ricardo Quinto

La minera canadiense Skye Resources, casa matriz de la Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel (CGN), anunció ayer que aplazará la búsqueda de financiamiento para desarrollar el proyecto Fénix, en El Estor, Izabal, hasta que mejoren las condiciones en el mercado internacional de capitales.

CGN ha sido víctima de las recientes turbulencias en las bolsas de valores globales debido a la crisis hipotecaria en EE.UU. y el temor de una recesión, los cuales han impedido encontrar inversionistas dispuestos a aportar capital para explotar la mina de níquel.

“A la luz de la reciente agitación en los mercados internacionales de crédito, hemos decidido que lo más prudente es cuidar los activos de nuestros accionistas”, declaró Ian Ausin, presidente y CEO de Skye Resources, a través de un comunicado en el que agrega que retomarán la búsqueda de financiamiento cuando se normalicen los mercados.

Ayer mismo circularon rumores de que Skye estaría abandonando el proyecto debido a la falta de capital, y vendiéndoselo a otra minera (se rumora que es Mayaníquel, subsidiaria de la multinacional BHP Billiton, que posee una participación en Skye). Regina de Cerezo, vocera de CGN, señaló que cuando se tiene un proyecto catalogado como una de las mejores reservas de níquel en el mundo, hay muchos actores interesados en participar. “De manera que no se descarta asociarse con otra empresa minera y tampoco sería sorpresa”.

Según De Cerezo, Skye Resources ha invertido a la fecha cerca de US\$100 millones en el proyecto, del cual el Estado es dueño del 2 por ciento del capital de CGN.

Carlos Meany, ministro de Energía y Minas, indicó que ya recibieron una notificación por parte Skye, donde le informan de una desaceleración del proceso de inversión por situaciones del entorno internacional.

Culpa a invasores

El diputado por el departamento de Izabal, Byron Chacón, apuntó que a finales de diciembre pasado, cerca de 150 familias invadieron los terrenos de la minera y no han podido ser desalojadas, lo que ha provocado malestar en CGN.

“Es una lástima que se frenen los trabajos, porque la empresa le ha dado mucho al departamento”, agregó Chacón. De Cerezo desestimó que esta sea la causa del aplazamiento del proyecto Fénix, aunque dijo que las invasiones de tierras son una preocupación.

Hugo Maúl, director del área económica del Centro de Investigaciones Económicas Nacionales (CIEN), opina que la coyuntura internacional no ayuda en nada a capitalizar este tipo de proyectos. Sin embargo, observa que esta situación provee la oportunidad ideal para dar una excusa honrosa a Skye Resources para ya no seguir invirtiendo en el país.

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