



Background Brief: Information provided to the Canadian Embassy during a visit on November 15, 2018

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This brief summarizes information provided to the Second Secretary of the Canadian Embassy in Manila during a two hour visit on November 15, 2018. Included in this visit were: four indigenous Ifugao human and environmental rights defenders from Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya; one member of a national public-interest scientific organization (AGHAM); members of two Philippine national support organizations, Alyansa Tigil Mina and Kalikasan Peoples Network for the Environment, and Catherine Coumans of MiningWatch Canada.¹

Content: “Hunt for Red October”²?

Between the 12th and 16th of October, large signs were strung up along main traffic thoroughfares in towns in the Northern Luzon provinces of Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Isabela, and Cagayan. These signs named both local and national Civil Society Organizations and accused them of having some form of association with the New People’s Army (NPA) (see appendix A for examples of these signs).³

These signs were followed up by a pamphlet that was distributed at bus stops and other public places (see appendix B).⁴ The pamphlet names: 27 individuals primarily from Nueva Vizcaya; one local community organization from the village of Didipio, in the municipality of Kasibu - Samahang Pangkarapatan ng Katutubong Manggagawa at Magsasaka, Inc. (SAKAKKMMI); and one provincial organization –

¹ We are not disclosing the names of individuals who participated in the meeting for their protection. Of the four participants from Didipio, three have been named in a public pamphlet that was distributed in Nueva Vizcaya accusing them of being involved in some way with the New People’s Army, an outlawed armed communist movement in the Philippines. Additionally a Manila-based scientist with Advocates for Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM), who also attended the Canadian embassy meeting, was similarly named on this pamphlet.

² “The Hunt for Red October” was the apparent code name given, and publicized, by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to actions undertaken against the NPA in the country in October. See <https://opinion.inquirer.net/116456/hunt-red-october>

³ We have only disclosed the names of organizations appearing on these signs from whom we received consent to make their names public. Others are blocked out.

⁴ We have only disclosed names appearing on this pamphlet from individuals who gave their consent to have their names made public.

Alyansa ng Novo Vizcayano para sa Kalikasan (ANVIK). These individuals who are named are accused of being NPA, or recruiters for the NPA in schools, or being and NPA contact.

All of the individuals from Nueva Vizcaya who are named have one thing in common, they have been critical of the human rights and environmental impacts of large scale mining in the Province, or have provided support to local individuals or organizations in these struggles. The list includes two public interest lawyers. The provincial and national organizations named have also supported local struggles to protect land, water and rights from industrial mining.

The public naming of individuals and legitimate public interest organizations in posters and pamphlets, such as those that recently appeared in Nueva Vizcaya, is, in the current political context in the Philippines, often a precursor to violent action against, and extra-judicial killings of, these named individuals. The recent massacre of nine sugar plantation workers in the town of Sagay, in the Province of Negros Occidental, on October 20 and the subsequent slaughter of their lawyer, attorney Benjamin Ramos, were both preceded by similar “red tagging” campaigns as this one in Nueva Vizcaya. Red-tagging is the term used in the Philippines to indicate accusations made against individuals and organizations that they are associated with the Community Party of the Philippines (CPP) or the NPA.

Background: The Struggle against OceanaGold in the Philippines

Five of the individuals named on the pamphlet and one organization, SAPAKKMMI, are from Didipio, the village where Canadian-Australian mining company OceanaGold has a controversial copper-gold mine. The elected Barangay Council of Didipio issued a resolution on October 19 certifying that the individuals and local organisations named in the “red tagging” incidents are law abiding citizens with no record of involvement in any NPA activities (see appendix C).

The struggle to stop mining from proceeding in Didipio is long and troubled dating back to the 1990s. There are a large number of Civil Society and government reports documenting environmental and human rights concerns associated with the mine throughout this history. Since OceanaGold started production in 2013, local, mainly Ifugao, villagers have complained about both human rights and environmental impacts including depletion of drinking water, contamination of surface water, lack of compliance with the provisions of a 2013 Memorandum of Agreement between the mine and the community, labour concerns, and concerns over land acquisition by the mine, to name a few.⁵

Currently tension has increased as OceanaGold seeks to renew its 25-year mine lease (known as a Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement or FTAA) that expires in 2019. On April 6, 2018, members of local organizations SAPAKKMMI and DESAMA prepared a petition opposing scoping steps taken by regulatory authorities related to requests by OceanaGold for an expansion of production at the mine. On October 2, 2018, a petition was hand-delivered to Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu, that was prepared by village Captain Erenio Bobola and elected officials of Didipio, strongly urging Cimatu to suspend the operations of OceanaGold.

The Embassy is requested to respond to the threats posed to these Environmental and Human Rights Defenders

In the meeting with the Canadian Embassy in Manila, a request was made by the affected villagers from Didipio that embassy staff take action in alignment with the Government of Canada’s “Voices at Risk”

⁵ For a review of past reports and a summary of ongoing environmental and human rights concerns see a report released in October 31, 2018 by MiningWatch Canada and US-based Institute for Policy Studies at <https://miningwatch.ca/sites/default/files/oceanagold-report.pdf>

guidelines to protect the individuals and organizations named in the October 2018 “red tagging” incidents in Nueva Vizcaya by:

- Writing an open letter to Hon. Jose Luis Martin Gascon, Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights to request a transparent investigation of the October 2018 “red tagging” incidents in Nueva Vizcaya, with copies furnished to: H.E. Rodrigo Duterte, President of the Republic of the Philippines; Hon. Jesus Dureza, Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process; Ret. Maj. Delfin Lorenzana, Secretary, Department of National Defense; Hon. Menardo Guevarra, Secretary, Department of Justice;
- Fully briefing Global Affairs Canada on this issue;
- Visiting Didipio to meet with community leaders, especially those who are now threatened by the recent “red-tagging” incidents, and informing them on steps the embassy can take to protect their rights in line with the Voices at Risk guidelines. It was suggested that provincial and national organizations who support community members of Didipio should also be invited to participate in this community visit by Canadian Embassy staff;
- Providing transparency on whether OceanaGold has signed an “Integrity Agreement” with the Canadian Embassy.