

Greetings from Ghana #19
Galamsey (Continued?)

I have been surprised and gratified at the response from you folks about the illegal mining featured in my last newsletter. And since the alarm bells have been sounded we have seen several different sectors become quite vocal, if not responsive.



The news anchor for JOY TV had samples drawn from all of the major rivers and streams. They are pictured with him on the left here. Those are clear containers.

He went with a producer and cameraman to a mining site, being run by Akonta Mining Limited. Akonta Mining Limited is an asset of the Ashanti Regional Chairman of the NPP, the current ruling political party, Bernard Antwi-Boasiako, popularly known as 'Chairman Wontumi'. But according to the Ministry, even though Akonta Mining Limited has a mining lease to undertake mining operations in some parts of Samreboi, outside the Forest

Reserve, "the company has no mineral right to undertake any mining operations in the Tano Nimiri Forest Reserve".

When the TV crew arrived an armed soldier told them to stop filming and made a couple of phone calls. According to the news anchor, minutes later trucks pulled into the compound and 35 armed soldiers emerged, broke their windshield and mirrors on their vehicle as well as damaged the lens on their video camera. The commander said he wanted them stripped to make sure they had no other recording devices on them. They refused to have that done and he told the news anchor, "You are being bold. If my gun should happen to go off right now no one will mourn you as a hero."

The TV crew left and made it back to the studio and filed their report – which is no longer available on the web. The military put out a press release saying that they do not protect mining operations and the soldiers wear different uniforms than the soldiers who were not filmed.

Similar reports of the military protecting mining operations were filed last year.

Fight against illegal mining: Over 30 fully armed military men protecting miners degrading the forest of Manso in the Ashanti region. #JoySMS



Illegal Mining

Despite the withdrawal of all military personnel from mining sites across the country, Luv News has evidence of over 30 fully armed military men protecting miners.

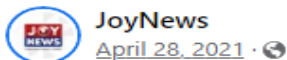
7:48 AM · Jan 20, 2021 · Twitter Media Studio

In response to the latest reports, the president held a conference with the chiefs of Ghana and reminded them that he has been opposed to illegal mining ever since he first took office during his first term in 2017. He said that things had not gone as well as he had hoped since then.

He also pointed out that he had stood firm in his opposition to illegal mining companies even though it had meant that he and his party had suffered greatly in the last national polls.

He reminded the chiefs that they control 80% of the country's lands and he has but 20% that he is given in

trust for the peace and prosperity of the citizens of this great nation. And he called on the chiefs to work with him for the betterment of the nation as together they face this grave situation.



President Akufo-Addo has directed the Ghana Armed Forces to commence an operation to remove all persons and logistics involved in illegal mining on the country's water bodies.



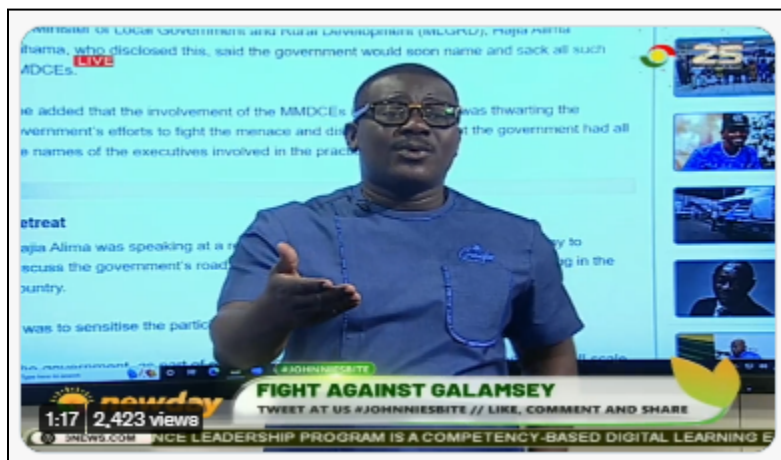
MYJOYONLINE.COM

Akufo-Addo directs Armed Forces to remove all persons, logistics engaged in mining on water bodies -...

The fact that President Akufo-Addo asked the military to resolve this situation on several occasions including one just over 18 months ago has not escaped his critics who are now becoming quite vocal.

Critics have recently accused the president of having empty promises, and worthless words. As

one critic demanded, “The people identified are from your party. We know who they are. You know who they are. Show us one person who has been arrested!”



So far the response from the politicians has been to address local area politicians who run the major cities and ask their help in controlling illegal mining by identifying the culprits and denying them access to the supplies they would need like food and fuel.

The Kings are taking their own approach. When someone is made a chief he does not sit on a throne. He sits on a ceremonial stool. In the ceremony it is said he is “estooled,”



The Omanhene of Kenyasi Number One in the Ahafo Region, Nana Osei Kofi Abiri, has cautioned that any chief within his jurisdiction found to be involved in illegal mining, otherwise known as galamsey, would be destooled.

According to him, the Chief would also lose his stool, as warned by the Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu, if he is found to engage in any form of illegal mining that has the potential of destroying water bodies and farmlands.

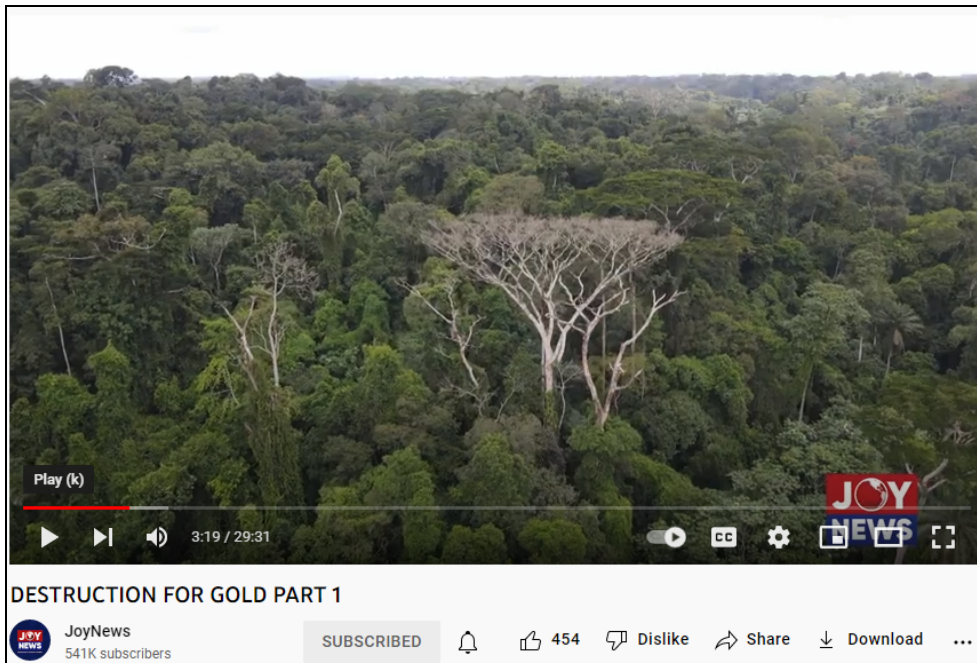
Nana Osei Kofi gave the warning at the inauguration of the Kenyasi Community Mining Scheme in the Asutifi North District in the Ahafo Region.

GBC's Thomas Nsowah-Adjei reports that the scheme, apart from providing employment for the youth, would also help protect the river bodies that serve as sources of drinking water.

The inauguration of Community Mining Schemes across gold mining areas in Ghana is a strategy initiated by the government to address the menace of illegal mining in Ghana, which has been a major source of destruction to the river bodies and degradation of lands for commercial and subsistence agriculture.

Besides, the youth, who are mostly involved in illegal mining activities, also lose their lives in the course of their operations. The chemicals used are also poisonous to the environment. The involvement of chiefs in illegal mining has been in the media recently because the lands where such activities go on are always under the

jurisdiction of a chief.



Perhaps they most telling was tonight's newscast where the announcer asked the head of the small mining operators coalition, "Do any of your organization work in the national forests?" He replied, "each of us have an exact area that we are allowed to work in and that is where we are. We do not pollute waterways and we

do not go outside of our geographic areas." The announcer asked, "Is Akonta Mining a member of your organization?" The answer was a quick, "No."

As a friend of mine said, "It's the same thing every time. They say all these things. Nothing changes." And as I was told from a mining camp, " Been up to the same thing all this while. Almost no different news. Do you know managers of these mines have



connections with military men. Men who sell out information of their operations schedules. Letting them the chance to act and hide their machine before milita men get here. An incidence happened last time. We got the hint to escape before the operations."

One can hope a million people running out of water will shift the situation, that a new voice will emerge. One that will be heard by people able to stop the corruption. For the sound of the straw that breaks the camel's back is not with a bang. It is but a whimper.

