

## **Canadian Mounted Police pursue Blackfire**

Press Release: Mexican Network of Communities Affected by Mining – Chiapas

August 29, 2011

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) raided the offices of Blackfire Exploration Ltd in Calgary, Canada on July 20 as part of investigations into accusations against the company and its directors of having bribed the former mayor of the Municipality of Chicomuselo, Chiapas, Mexico, Julio César Velásquez Calderón. [1] This conflict, which is steeped in irregularities, illegalities, and collusion between the Canadian mining company, the Mexican federal government and environmental authorities, the Chiapas state government, and the municipal authorities, culminated with the assassination of anti-mining leader Mariano Abarca Roblero on November 27, 2009.

One year and four months after a complaint was made to the RCMP for investigation into bribery in this case, in March 2010, [2] the RCMP has begun to act on the evidence brought forth and on the confession of the company. Not in vain, Transparency International published a report in May, which put Canada in last place in the struggle against bribery and corruption among G7 countries and among member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which includes around forty nations. [3]

The Canadian government's slow pace continues to cover up those companies that violate laws beyond its borders. This also explains why the majority of the world's mining companies have their headquarters in Canada or are registered in this country, a paradise for corporate impunity. Since Canada approved the Corruption of Foreign Public Officials Act in 1998 only two cases have been addressed. In 2005, a small fine was levied against an Alberta based company, and there has been an additional case of corruption in [Bangladesh].

On the other hand, only six days after assuming his post on January 6, 2011, the new mayor of Chicomuselo, Límbaro Miguel López, decried that “the ex-public officials (ex Municipal President, Julio César Velásquez Calderón, ex Trustee Alirosay Muñoz Pérez, ex Alderman Conrado Flores Hernández, in collusion with ex Treasurer Lidubin Ramos Cifuentes and ex Director of Public Services Abigail Morales Ramírez) still had not handed in the cheque-books for the city's public accounts, leaving the books of the treasurer in disorder (...), nor have public works records and tax records had been found.” [4]

Terri Lynn Batycki of the RCMP alleges that Blackfire illegally paid Julio César Velásquez Calderón “to keep the peace and prevent local members of the community from taking up arms against the mine.” In response to these accusations against Blackfire, Pierre Gratton, President and Executive Director of the Mining Association of Canada, said that he supports the law, indicating that Blackfire is not a member of this association, and denying that bribery is a big problem within the mining industry.

Not only is the culture of corruption and of poor public management under ex Mayor of Chicomuselo clear, but bribing municipal authorities is a common practice among multinational mining companies given that it is the municipality that must authorize land use changes and other aspects necessary for mining companies, as well as who may assert territorial control and security for mining investments.

Within this context, we demand that the RCMP determine who is responsible and punish those found guilty as soon as possible. It is also urgent that the RCMP make a visit to Chiapas in order to further their investigations. In the same way, we demand that the governor of Chiapas, Juan Sabines Guerrero, facilitate investigations into the corruption of ex Mayor of Chicomuselo in response to the complaint and supporting evidence of money changing hands between Blackfire and former Mayor of Chicomuselo, which REMA and Otros Mundos A.C. brought before the Prosecutor's Office of the State Congress of Chiapas and the Council of the Municipality of Chicomuselo.

## **Timeline [5]**

Between 2008 and 2009, the mayor of Chicomuselo was bribed by Blackfire. Otros Mundos, AC and REMA-Chiapas brought the evidence to light. [6]

In June 2009, Blackfire complained about the mayor's excesses before the congress.

On November 27, 2009 employees of Blackfire assassinate the representative of REMA in Chicomuselo, Mariano Abarca Roblero.

December 2009, the government of Chiapas temporarily suspends Blackfire's mine operations and jails three people implicated in the assassination.

February 2010, Horacio Culebro Borrayas, legal counsel for Blackfire, is jailed.

March 10, 2010, nine Canadian organizations request that the RCMP investigate Blackfire for alleged violation of the Corruption of Foreign Public Officials Act.

June 30, 2010, REMA and Otros Mundos A.C. make a formal complaint for intervention from the Superior Prosecutor's Office of the State Congress and of the Congress of the State, as well as the Municipal Council of Chicomuselo, with the objective that the alleged bribes that Blackfire made to the Municipal President be clarified. To date, there has been no response to this complaint. [8]

## **Blackfire out of Chiapas!**

[1] <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/rcmp-raid-calgary-miner-over-bribery-allegations/article2145226/>

[2] See the following document: <http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/index.php/mineria/86-mineria/631-solicitan-a-la-policia-real-montada-de-canada-investigar-a-la-minera-blackfire.html>

[3] <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-ranked-worst-of-g7-nations-in-fighting-bribery-corruption/article2032347/>

[4] <http://www.diariodechiapas.com/noticias/2011010619312/region/siembran-el-caos-exfuncionarios-municipales-corruptos-de-chicomuselo>

[5] To see all of the prior incidents in the Blackfire case, see:  
<http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/index.php/mineria.html>

[6] See the following documents: <http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/index.php/mineria/99-mariano-abarca/583-los-pagos-de-la-minera-canadiense-blackfire-al-presidente-municipal-de-chicomuselo-chiapas.html>

[7] See the following document: <http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/index.php/mineria/86-mineria/631-solicitan-a-la-policia-real-montada-de-canada-investigar-a-la-minera-blackfire.html>

[8] See the following: <http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/index.php/mineria/99-mariano-abarca/781-rema-chiapas-demanda-investigacion-por-corrupcion-del-ayuntamiento-y-la-empresa-canadiense-blackfire.html>