Over the past several weeks, the Peruvian government has continued its aggressive war on illegal mining in Madre de Dios: 1) a series of major raids has reportedly eliminated illegal mining from one of the biggest conflict zones, and 2) fuel restrictions are taking effect amid controversy.

**Illegal Mining Raids**

The Peruvian government is claiming that illegal mining has been completely eliminated from an area known as La Pampa in Madre de Dios due to the most recent raid, dubbed “Principal of Authority IV,”1,2,3. The raid focused on a section of La Pampa that served as the logistical base for illegal miners in the area (kilometer 107)4. La Pampa was also one of the main hotspots of illegal mining and is found in the buffer zone of the Tambopata National Reserve.

The May 2014 raids have reportedly eliminated mining from another major illegal mining hotspot in Madre de Dios known as Huepetuhe5.

In July, the government will establish a police base in Madre de Dios to ensure that miners do not return to the areas targeted in the raids6. The base will house 300 police officers and have the logistical support of the military.

According to Daniel Urresti, the official leading the government efforts against illegal mining, the number of illegal miners in Madre de Dios has been cut in half over the last eight months, from 30,000 down to less than 15,0007. He says that many of the illegal miners have returned to the departments they came from in western Peru.

The government extended the authority to use the military in support of the national police during raids through June 208.

**Fuel Restrictions**

The long-anticipated fuel restrictions have taken effect in Madre de Dios9. This measure, designed to cut off the fuel needed to run the illegal mining operations, was the subject of the deadly protests in Madre de Dios in April and May. It regulates not only who can buy and sell fuel, but also how much can be bought and sold per transaction10.

Thus, there are now fuel quotas in Madre de Dios, and this has sparked new controversy over fuel shortages11. The government has denied that any shortages are due to the illegal-mining measure and claim that the controversy is a trick by the miners to force a repeal of the quotas12,13.

**Formalization Process**

Miners have until July 10 to present proposals for modifications to the formalization process. The government established this deadline to reform the overall formalization process in the context of the 120 day period that began April 2014.

**Other Issues**
The Ambassador of Switzerland in Peru announced that the leading Swiss gold-importing companies are willing to work with the Peruvian government to acquire gold produced by artisanal miners who are in the process of formalization. Peru sends more than 50% of its annual production to Switzerland, which is home to four of the largest gold refineries in the world. This commitment is part of the Responsible Gold Initiative.

With the government’s crack-down on illegal gold exports leaving Cusco and Lima, there are reports that illegally sourced gold is now being smuggled through Bolivia.

Peru’s upcoming municipal and regional elections are October 5 and there are reports that illegal mining interests are infiltrating the process. For example, in Madre de Dios, eight political parties have candidates that have openly supported illegal mining interests.

We would like to credit ProNaturaleza’s “Observatorio Amazonia” as our primary resource for articles related to illegal mining in Peru.

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