



08 July 2022

MEMORANDUM

FOR : THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DENR MIMAROPA Region

THRU : THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR
For Technical Services

FROM : THE OIC-PENR OFFICER
PENRO Odiongan, Romblon

SUBJECT : REPORT ON THE UNDATED LETTER COMPLAINT OF MR. IRENEO RAFOL ROMANO ET. AL. RE: ALLEGED UNLAWFUL EXTRACTION OF NICKEL, GOLD, AND ILLEGAL LOGGING IN SIBUYAN ISLAND, ROMBLON BY ALTAI MINING PHILIPPINES (CO-2022-089703)

Respectfully forwarding the investigation report dated 08 July 2022 of Science Research Specialist II Felix Carl F. Falquerabao, Forest Ranger Ludwin M. Ruado, and Forest Technician I Ernie L. Forcadas regarding the above-mentioned subject.

Based on the investigation report, no environmental laws were violated by Altai Mining Philippines Corporation.

For information and further instruction.

"For and in the absence of the OIC-PENR Officer"

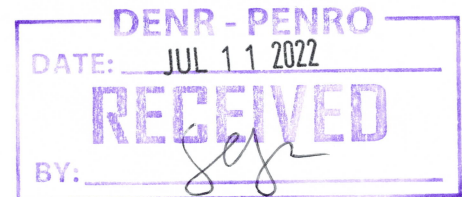

THELMO S. HERNANDEZ
Chief, Management Services Division

cc: **The Regional Director**
Mines and Geosciences Bureau – MIMAROPA Region
7/F DENR Bldg., 1515 Roxas Blvd. Ermita, Manila



08 July 2022

MEMORANDUM



FOR : **THE OIC PENR OFFICER**
PENRO Odiongan, Romblon

FROM : **FELIX CARL F. FALQUERABAO**
Science Research Specialist II

LUDWIN M. RUADO
Forest Ranger

ERNIE L. FORCADAS
Forest Technician I

SUBJECT : **REPORT ON THE UNDATED LETTER COMPLAINT OF MR. IRENEO RAFOL ROMANO ET. AL. RE: ALLEGED UNLAWFUL EXTRACTION OF NICKEL, GOLD, AND ILLEGAL LOGGING IN SIBUYAN ISLAND, ROMBLON BY ALTAI MINING PHILIPPINES (CO-2022-089703)**

Background Information

On 06 July 2022, the OIC PENR Officer of Romblon forwarded a memorandum signed by the OIC, ARD for Technical Services with the corresponding above-mentioned subject. In line with this matter, the undersigned was tasked to urgently investigate the allegations to shed light on its veracity.

In coordination with the Monitoring and Enforcement Section and Mt. Guiting-guiting Natural Park Protected Area Management Office (MGGNP-PAMO) of PENRO Romblon, the Agriculture Office of the Municipality of San Fernando, and officials from Barangay Taclobo, a composite team was assembled to investigate the alleged unlawful extraction of nickel, gold, and illegal logging in Sibuyan Island facilitated by Altai Mining Philippines Corporation (AMPC)

Purpose and Scope

The fieldwork aims to validate the veracity of the complaint and to recommend necessary actions to address the issue. The field investigation includes the ocular inspection of the area and a dialogue with the complainant along with the accused.

Prior to the investigation, the team made a courtesy call to Hon. Mayor Nanette B. Tansingco of San Fernando, and Hon. Barangay Chairman Fausto Bacero of Brgy. Taclobo. The purpose of the investigation was discussed during the meeting.

Findings and Observations

1. The subject area is located at Brgy. Taclobo, San Fernando, Romblon in Sibuyan Island. Travel time from DENR Sibuyan Sub-station to the subject area is approximately 45 to 50 minutes by public utility vehicles. Its main access is the Sibuyan Circumferential Road. (See map for reference)
2. During the courtesy call with Mayor Nanette B. Tansingco (Photo No. 1), the team explained that a complaint was lodged to the DENR MIMAROPA Region regarding the unlawful extraction of nickel, gold, and illegal logging in Sibuyan Island being facilitated by Altai Mining Philippines. The team then asked assistance for the conduct of the investigation and Mayor Tansingco willingly provided in the person of Mr. Manny Ladera of the Agriculture Office. The team then proceeded to Brgy. Taclobo for a courtesy call and to ask for the same assistance. Chairman Fausto Bacero agreed to personally assist the team during the investigation (Photo No. 2).
3. The team asked Chairman Fausto Bacero if he knew a certain Mr. Ireneo Rafol Romano and if there is a chance for an interview. Chairman Bacero stated that Mr. Romano is unfortunately not in San Fernando but in Manila.
4. The team then headed to the office of Altai Mining Philippines in Brgy. Taclobo. Upon arriving, the team was greeted by Mr. John Cleofe, AMPC's Administrative Officer, Mrs. Ludilyn Romero Montojo and Ms. Luilyn Viñas, AMPC's Community Relations Officers (Photo No. 3). The team introduced themselves and proceeded to explain the nature of the visit; an investigation in relation to the complaint of Mr. Ireneo Rafol Romano et. al. regarding the company's alleged unlawful extraction of nickel, gold, and illegal logging.
5. Mr. Cleofe explained that AMPC has no on-going extraction activities. He added that the company is merely setting up camp. The team observed on-going construction of bunkhouses in the area and clearing operations. Mrs. Montojo added that the area is where the original office of the company years ago before the cease and desist order was issued. She explained that after many years, the area and the structures were overwhelmed with bushes and shrubs, so a clearing operation must be conducted.
6. The team asked permission from Mr. Cleofe and Mrs. Montojo if the team could look around the company's compound and take photos for documentation. Mr. Cleofe and Mrs. Montojo welcomed the team. During the inspection, the team observed cleared bushes and shrubs set aside the fence which serve as the bounds of the compound (Photo No 4). No sign of logged trees observed. In contrast, few living trees were observed within the camp. It was also noted that the materials used for the construction of

bunkhouses were coconut lumber. Drilling equipment, backhoe, loaders, and few dump trucks were also noticed (Photo No. 5).

7. Reports from forest rangers, forest technicians, and park rangers led by Forester I Rolly Morales from DENR Sibuyan Sub-station during their regular patrolling, monitoring, and surveillance of forestlands for the months of May and June reveal few old tree stumps in Barangay España and Barangay Taclobo. However, no illegal forest activities were encountered.
8. After the inspection the team asked Mr. Cleofe about the status of the company's renewal application for exploration. Mr. Cleofe suggested that the question be answered by Mr. Steve Taule, Company Director who was on his way back from a meeting. Mr. Taule arrived few minutes later.
9. Mr. Taule invited the team to one of the open bunkhouses for an open discussion regarding the investigation (Photo No 6). The team explained the nature of the visit then proceeded to ask the status of the company's renewal application for exploration. Mr. Taule stated that the company is well aware of the complaints and misconceptions being thrown at them and added that no environmental laws were being violated.
10. Mr. Taule added that the company is currently waiting for a reply letter from the Mines and Geosciences Central Office regarding the status of their application. He assured the team that the company will not be doing any exploration activities let alone extraction activities until the company's exploration permit be renewed.

Comments and Recommendations

1. The result of the investigation shows that Altai Mining Philippines Corporation did not violate any environmental laws. No unlawful extraction of gold and nickel were being conducted. Extraction of nickel is done on a large scale so it would be obvious if extraction is being conducted. On the other hand, gold is not a mineral of interest for the company. Extraction of gold would be a liability for the company considering the fact that the declared commodity for their proposed mining operations are only nickel laterite and cobalt. However, Altai Mining Philippines Corporation is being reminded that prior to any exploration activities, the company has to secure the approval of its application for the renewal of the exploration period in compliance with Section 39 of DENR Administrative Order (DAO) NO. 2010-21. Likewise, prior to development/commercial extraction, the endorsement of the Sanggunian concerned shall be secured by Altai pursuant to Section 39.4c of DAO No. 2010-21 and the pertinent provisions of RA No. 7160, the Local Government Code of 1991.
2. The alleged illegal logging of Altai Mining Philippines Corporation is deemed untruthful. Inspection and verification within the company's compound in Brgy. Taclobo revealed that the on-going clearing operations only cut down overgrown bushes and shrubs. The company left out the trees for additional shade. Accordingly, patrolling reports from forest rangers of DENR Sibuyan Sub-station from May to June

reveal that no illegal forest activities were encountered in Brgy. España and Taclobo. However, Altai Mining Philippines Corporation is being reminded of Section 68 of Presidential Decree 705 which states, *"Cutting, gathering and/or collecting timber or other products without license. Any person who shall cut, gather, collect, or remove timber or other forest products from any forest land, or timber from alienable and disposable public lands, or from private lands, without any authority under a license agreement, lease, license or permit, shall be guilty of qualified theft as defined and punished under Articles 309 and 310 of the Revised Penal Code; Provided, That in the case of partnership, association or corporation, the officers who ordered the cutting, gathering or collecting shall be liable, and if such officers are aliens, they shall, in addition to the penalty, be deported without further proceedings on the part of the Commission on Immigration and Deportation"*.

3. Regarding the bunkhouses being constructed, Altai Mining Philippines Corporation's compound is considered to be a private area. Thus, the company has the full right to exercise free will within their dominion. The Department of Environment Natural Resources and the Local Government of San Fernando have no right to interfere in any activities within the property unless there is a breach on any national (environmental) or local laws and regulations.

For the PENRO's consideration and further instruction.


FELIX CARL F. FALQUERABAO
Science Research Specialist II


ERNIE L. FORCADAS
Forest Technician I


LUDWIN M. RUADO
Forest Ranger

cc: **The Regional Director**
Mines and Geosciences Bureau – MIMAROPA Region
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Photo Documentation



Photo No. 1: Courtesy call with Mayor Nanette B. Tansingco.



Photo No. 2: Courtesy call with Barangay Chairman Fausto Bacero.



Photo No. 3: Brief discussion of the purpose of the visit with AMPC officers.



Photo No. 4: Cleared out bushes and shrubs set aside to the bounds of the compound.

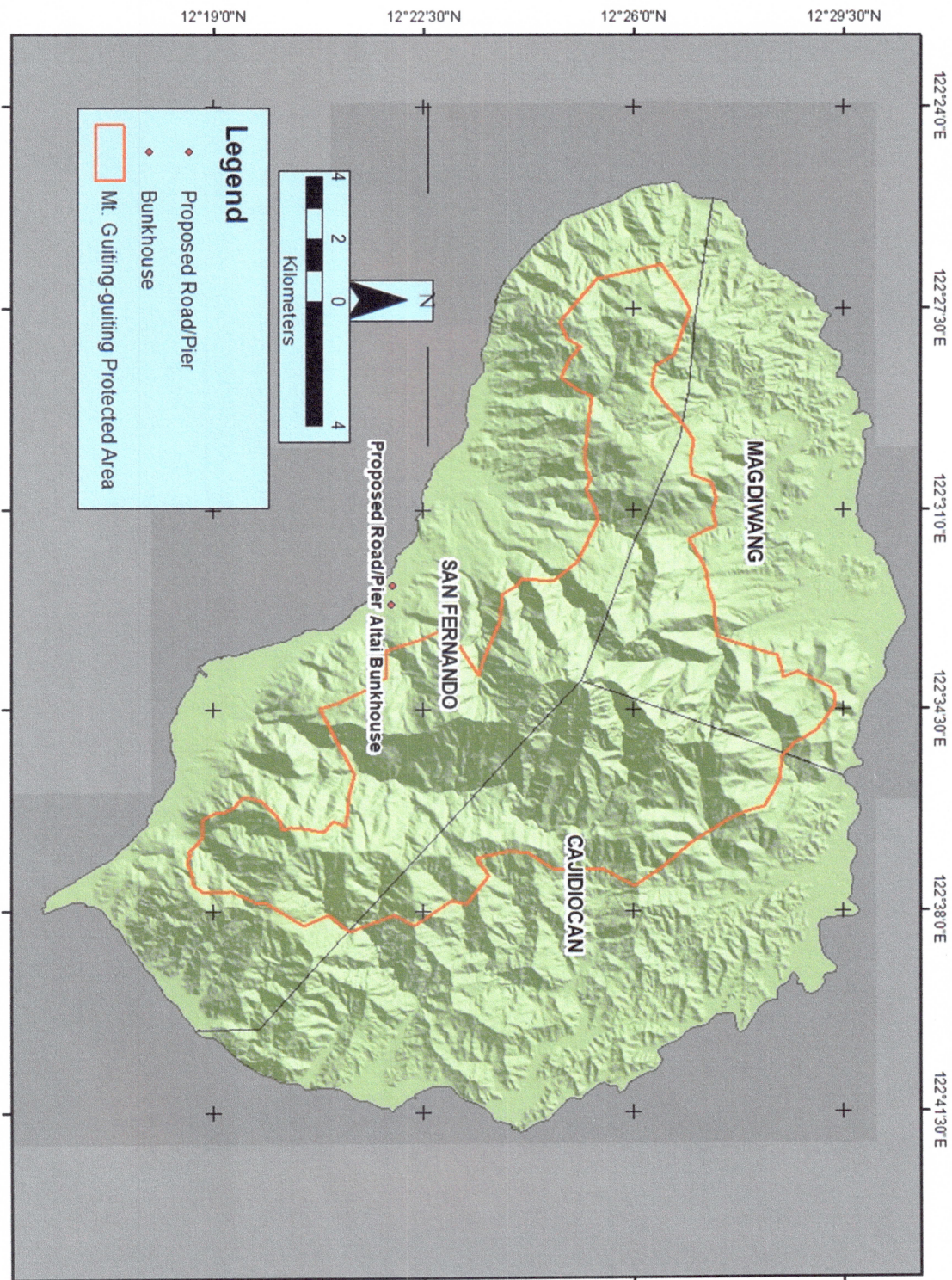


Photo No. 5: AMPC's loader, backhoe, and dump trucks parked within the compound.



Photo No. 6: Discussion and interview with Company Director Steve Taule.

Location Map



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