

PRESS BRIEFING

GOVERNMENT INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO COMBAT ILLEGAL MINING – HON EMMANUEL ARMAH-KOFI BUAH, MP

DATE: 3RD APRIL 2025

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, this morning's engagement is to update you on our collective fight against illegal mining. Let me start by stating that I have the full authority and mandate of the President, to wage a relentless and uncompromising war on Galamsey which as a matter of government policy, we consider as terrorism.

The Government of Ghana remains unwavering in its commitment to protecting our nation's future by preserving its critical natural resources—our water bodies and forest reserves. Recognizing the devastating impact of illegal mining on our environment, health, and long-term economic stability, we launched a deliberate, multi-stakeholder approach to combat this menace with the urgency it demands.

From the onset, this fight has been anchored on five main pillars;

- Reforming The Licensing Regime
- Strengthening Law Enforcement and Regulations
- Stakeholder Engagement And Education
- Reclamation Of Degraded And Mined Out Areas
- Providing Alternative Livelihoods For Mining Communities

This coordinated effort with key stakeholders has been critical in dismantling illegal mining networks and reclaiming our ecosystems.

Today, we are pleased to share significant progress in these operations, as promised to the people of Ghana.

Upon assuming office, we convened a meeting with technical experts from key regulatory agencies, including the Minerals Commission, Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA), and Forestry Commission, to assess the scale of illegal mining and the challenges impeding enforcement efforts.

To address these challenges, we also initiated a comprehensive strategy to sanitize the sector and promote sustainable mining practices.

Recognizing the pivotal roles of traditional leaders, parliamentarians, and advocacy groups, the government has engaged:

- Traditional Authorities: To enforce customary laws and support local enforcement.
- Parliamentarians: To amplify advocacy efforts in their constituencies.
- Media, and Civil Society Organisations: To bolster public awareness and policy influence.

There was also the critical constitution of two committees:

- **The “Working Committee on Illegal Activities in Forest Reserves and on Water/River Bodies:** Tasked with the mandate of reviewing the prevailing small-scale mining situation vis-a-vis past interventions and proposing actionable solutions to halt mining in water/river bodies and forest reserves, and make recommendations for the development of a comprehensive strategy to address mining challenges among others. Based on interim committee reports, the government has also implemented the following measures;
 - Revocation of all Licenses Issued after 7th December 2024.
 - All Community SSM Schemes Disbanded Technical Committee to Review all SSM Licenses
- **Ministerial Advisory Group on Illegal Mining (MAGIM):** Comprising senior military officials, this group assessed the SSM landscape and developed strategies for military deployment to combat

illegal mining. A reconnaissance tour of the country informed their recommendations.

The findings revealed that the withdrawal of military support in November 2022 had severely weakened the state’s capacity to combat illegal mining, especially in forest reserves particularly due to the use of advanced weaponry by illegal mining syndicates in forest reserves and along water bodies.

In response, His Excellency President John Mahama directed the Ministry of Defence to redeploy military personnel to support the Forestry Commission’s Rapid Response Unit and other state agencies in intensifying anti-illegal mining operations.

Key Achievements

At the beginning of 2025, nine (9) forest reserves were classified as “no-go” zones due to the dominance of armed illegal miners who blocked access routes and prevented Forestry Commission officials from performing their duties.

Status in January '25

9 Reserves	Active illegal mining site, difficult to control due to large numbers of illegal miners, violent armed guards and/or large numbers of excavators. Military support required.
12 Reserves	Frequent incursion by illegal miners, usually with excavators, and/or large numbers of illegal miners, requiring continuous surveillance and monitoring. Generally non-violent but has the tendency to become violent occasionally. Can be controlled by combined teams (4- 6) of RRT with occasional support of Military
18 Reserves	Medium difficulty. Generally, non-violent illegal miners. With the use of RRT (1 -3 teams), can be effectively brought under control.
4 Reserves	Situation generally under control by FSD local managen

Status as at end of March '25

2 Reserves	Active illegal mining site, difficult to control due to large numbers of illegal miners, violent armed guards and/or large numbers of excavators. Military support required.
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Through sustained joint operations, seven (7) of these reserves have now been reclaimed, although the armed gangs have tried re-entering the forests. As a result, we have had exchanges between these bandits and the Forestry

Commission, resulting in a near-fatal assault on one of the Forestry Commission personnel.

The reclaimed reserves include: Jimira & Jimira Extension, Afao Hills, Tano Anwia, Ofin Shelterbelt, Anhwiaso East & Anhwiaso South & Subri.

Efforts are ongoing to reclaim the remaining two (2) reserves – Asenayo & Desiri.

The joint Military-Forestry Commission task force has conducted targeted operations in high-risk districts across the Ashanti, Western, and Western North Regions, leading to significant seizures and arrests:

Forest District	Excavators Seized	Bulldozers Seized	Vehicles Seized
Nkawie	14	1	1
Bibiani	44	1	
Enchi	28	1	2
Sefwi Wiawso	1		1
Juaboso	13		
Total	100	3	4

Blue Water Initiative: Training 2,000 youths as Blue Water Guards to monitor and report illegal activities. Over 400 young people are expected to complete their training by the 15th of April 2025 to make room for the second batch of trainees. The importance of this initiative was confirmed by the sad incident in the Enchi District when a policeman drowned in the line of duty chasing illegal miners in the river, without lifeguards present. The presence of a trained Blue Water Guard could have averted the situation.

Tree for Life Initiative: Aims to plant over 7 million seedlings to restore degraded and mined-out areas, nationwide. The objective of this initiative is to

transform heavily degraded areas into functional, vibrant ecosystems that support biodiversity and human livelihoods.

Challenges and Legal Actions

On 28th March 2025, a court in Enchi in the Western North Region released 2 excavators back to illegal miners. Through the consented efforts and voices of the citizenry and the Legal Department of the Forestry Commission, the court has rescinded the earlier ruling and declared it void. This is a testament to the true power of the collaborative efforts we are calling for, in this fight.

Next Steps

- Geological investigations of mineralized areas
- Geotagging and geofencing of excavators that come into the country and the existing ones already deployed nationwide
- Education Campaigns: Collaboration with the Ministry of Education and NCCE to integrate environmental awareness into the school curricula and public messaging.
- Intensification of public awareness campaigns
- Explore other avenues of financial support for the reclamation of degraded and mined-out areas.
- Review of Mineral and Mining Policy to incorporate policy reforms aimed at decentralizing the licensing regime, beginning at the district level, with a focus on transparency and community involvement.
- Decentralization of Licensing: District-level vetting by DISECs and mining committees to reduce corruption and delays.

Call for Continued Collaboration

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources is committed to eradicating illegal mining. However, given the challenge's complex and multifaceted nature, the government urges all stakeholders—including traditional leaders, local assemblies, and civil society—to actively support these efforts to safeguard Ghana's natural resources for present and future generations.

His Excellency the President remains fully committed to his pledge to eradicate the illegal mining menace, and as sector Minister, I shall carry through this responsibility to the latter, no matter whose ox is gored.

I want to take opportunity to sound a note of caution to those involved in this illegal mining enterprise, and their faceless collaborators hiding behind political colouration and influence, that any attempts to make calls and overtures to intercede for their notorious culprits, will not succeed.

The fight against illegal mining is a national priority, and sustained collaboration is essential to ensure lasting success.

In Conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the mandate given me by the President is clear: wipe out Galamsey through any lawful means necessary and I intend to do exactly that.

Signed:

Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah, MP

Minister - Lands and Natural Resources

April 2025