

PETROLEUM IN COLOMBIA 2003

1. OXY IN U'WA TERRITORY ONCE AGAIN

THE ASSOCIATIONS OF TRADITIONAL U'WA AUTHORITIES
Sacred U'wa Territory, October 15, 2002

OCCIDENTAL DE COLOMBIA INC,-OXY- CONTINUES WITH THE OIL PROJECT "CONTRACT WITH SIRIRÍ ASSOCIATION " IN SACRED U'WA TERRITORY

On October 14th, 2002, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the U'wa people were surprised with the arrival of heavy machinery that would continue with the exploration and exploitation of oil for the GIBRALTAR 1 project in U'wa Territory.

Only one day has passed since the day when OXY intelligently operated its Gibraltar project under the name of ECOPETROL, coming in with complete military force, supported by the President of the United States and Colombia, and with support from Arauca, guaranteeing the security of oil operations in the area.

The U'wa know perfectly well that ECOPETROL is only a facade for the operation, but that OXY and other associates are the ones really supporting the technical personnel and machinery. The Gibraltar project is only 0.5% of the area of the Contract of the Sirirí Association signed May 16th, 2000 between: Ecopetrol, Occidental de Colombia Inc, Occidental Andina Inc. and Compañía de Petróleos Cordillera S.A. and finally Panameña, made protocol through a public mandate No. 0963 on April 27th, 2000 at Notary 45 in Santa Fe de Bogotá.

We are asking the environmental non-governmental organizations and all organizations related to human rights, Mother Earth and natural resources, at the national and international levels, to formally request official explanations from the President of OXY, the President of the United States, and the President of Colombia, of the information given in the General Assembly of Actionist Partners held in April in Los Angeles, United states, and also shared with the national and international press, which stated that OXY had withdrawn their oil exploration project from U'wa territory.

Now the campesino community in the project area is supporting the project because they have been tricked by the information that they have been given by

ECOPETROL, forgetting the environmental, social and cultural effects as well as the consequences to national sovereignty. Oil activity is carried out without caring who it will affect, and the human life it destroys.

We therefore ask: Will ECOPETROL guarantee respect for human life and for the environment? The answer is no, because no oil company in the entire world have demonstrated this. We also know that the supposed social projects that ECOPETROL has proposed at the local committee meetings will never be completed, because all that is really going on is a game, and the person that wins is the one who knows how to use the language, the space and time. Once oil infrastructure is in place, our friends will see that what has been promised will systematically disappear.

Our position as the U'wa people is complete rejection of a new intervention by OXY in our sacred territory. We have ancestral rights, backed by historical documents, that are now more than applicable in the defense of our greater rights, and because of this, we demand that the national and international community reject this violation of human rights by OXY and the Colombian State. We, the U'wa, are still firm on our project for the defense of life, the environment and national sovereignty. Money will not change the gift of life, and our sacred Mother Earth that feeds us at each moment, without her, we could not eat, drink or even breathe.

We ask all NGOs who are friends of the Earth, the environment and the sovereignty of the indigenous nations in South America, Central America, North America, Africa, Europe, etc. to send letters to the President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe Vélez, to the president of Occidental in the United States and in Colombia, as well as to ECOPETROL, asking that they respect the U'wa Nation of Colombia.

One cannot buy or sell life. Respect for human rights and for indigenous nations is an obligation of all countries in the world. We demand the complete cancellation of the oil exploration and exploitation project in U'wa territory. Today we initiate a new path on the defense for life...the identity of the states of the world are in their historic roots.

TRADITIONAL U'WA AUTHORITIES FROM CASANARE, ARAUCA, BOYACA, SANTANDER AND NORTE DE SANTANER INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY TOWN COUNCILS

ROBERTO PEREZ GUTIERREZ
President of the Greater Town Council
U'wa Association

Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 36 - March 2003

2. LETTER FROM THE U'WA TO THE WORLD

We are born as children of the earth...

We cannot change the indians

Nor the white (riowa)

We have said in a thousand different ways that the Earth is our Mother, and that we do not want to sell her. But the white people seem to not be able to understand this, they insist that we give it up, that we sell it, or that we treat it badly, as if the Indian was also a person of so many words...

We ask ourselves this: Is it really the custom of the white person to sell their mother? We don't know, but what we the U'wa do know is that the white person uses the lie as if he enjoyed it. The white person knows how to cheat, how to kill their own kin without letting their eyes see the sun, without letting their noses smell the grass; this is something execrable even for a salvage.

We know that the riowa has put a price on everything that lives, even on the Earth; they sell with their own blood and want us to do the same with our sacred territory, with ruiria, the blood of the Earth that they call oil.

This is all very strange to us and compared to our customs. All living things have blood: every tree, every vegetable, every animal, the Earth, too, and this blood of the Earth (ruiria, oil) is what gives strength to everything, to plants, animals and to human beings.

But we ask the riowa: how can you put a price on your mother and how much is this price? We ask them, not to detach ourselves, but to try to understand them, because after everything, if the bear is our brother, then so is the white human. We ask this because we believe that he, because he is civilized, maybe knows the way in which to put a price on a mother and sell her without shame. Because the Earth that we walk on is not just earth, it is the dust of our ancestors; we walk barefoot, to be contact with them.

For the Indian, the Earth is our mother, but for the white person, she is the enemy; for us, the animals are our sisters and brothers, for the white person they are items to be bought and sold. The riowa feel pleasure with death, they leave it in the country, in the cities, so many people spread out, like clear-cut trees in the forest.

We have never been so insolent has to violate the riowa's churches and temples, but they have come to violate our land. So we ask them....who is the savage? The riowa has sent giant birds to the moon (Siyora): to him we say that he should love the moon and care for her, and that he cannot go into the universe doing to every planet and star what he has done to each tree on earth. And to the white person's children we ask: who made the metal that constructed each feather that covers the big bird? Who made the fuel that feeds the bird? The riowa should not trick or lie to his children: he should be teaching his children that even to construct an artificial world, the human being still needs Mother Earth... because of this, we need to love her and take care of her...

The human being keeps looking for ruiria (oil) and in each explosion that runs through the jungle, we hear the monstrous step of death that comes after us by way of the mountains.

This is our testimony!

At the rhythm that this world marches, there will be a day in which the human beings replace the mountains of the condor for mountains of money. This means that eventually there will be nothing to buy, and nothing to sell. When this day arrives, it will be too late for the human being to contemplate his insanity...

All of their economic offers on everything that is sacred for us – the Earth and her blood – is an insult to our ears and to our beliefs. This world did not create the riowa or any of its governments, and that is why we must respect it! The universe belongs to Sira (god) and the U'WA only administer it. We are only one link in the weave of the ukua (a sacred bag for carrying coca) but Sira is the weaver. Because of this, the U'WA cannot stop, mistreat, or sell the Earth or her blood, or its children.

But the white person believes he is the owner, exploiting and enslaving in his own way; this is not good. It is breaking the equilibrium, it is breaking the ukua. If we cannot sell these things that do not belong to us, those who buy them cannot own them.

Some white chiefs have put down our decision of collective suicide as a last resort to defend our Mother Earth. Once again they present us as salvages. They look to confuse us and everyone else, to discredit us. To all the white population we say: U'WA is willing to commit suicide for life, white people are willing to commit suicide for money. Who is the savage?

The humiliation that the white person makes the Indian feel has no limits; not only do they dictate how we should live, they also tell us how we should die. They don't let us choose how to live...so now we chose how to die.

For more than five centuries we have risen to face the white person, before their violations and sicknesses, just as the river rises in the summer, just as the day rises from night...the riowa have condemned us to live like strangers in our own land. They have gathered us in base places close to the sacred cliffs where our chief Guicani and his tribe jumped to save the honor and dignity of our people against the ferocious advance of the Spanish and the missionaries.

Maybe the white human being will once again violate the laws of Sira, of the earth and even their own laws, but what they will not be able to avoid is the shame their children will feel for their parents who destroyed the planted, who took it to extinction, and robbed land from the Indians; because at the end of the cold, painful and sad night, the same night that seemed endless like the grass, teh error of the human being will be that, that not even his own children will be willing to

follow in his footsteps, and it will be thanks to them, to the new children of the Earth, that the rule of death will end and the new life will flourish...because there are no eternal summers, or species that can impose themselves on life...

Whenever human beings act with bad intentions, sooner or later they will have to drink their own poison. Because no one can cut a tree without killing the leaves, and in the web of life, no one can throw rocks without disturbing the peace and the balance of the water.

This is why that when our sacred sites are invaded by the smell of white men, the end will be near, not only for the U'WA, but also for the riowa. When he has exterminated the last tribe on the planet, before starting to count the genocide, it will be easier to start to count their last days that they have on this earth. When these times are near, the fountains of their daughters will produce no fruit, and in their evershortening lives the spirit of their children will never know peacefulness.

When the time comes when the Indians are without land, the trees will also be without leaves, and then humanity will ask, why? Only a few will understand that every start has its finish and every finish a start, because in the life, nothing is drifting alone. The serpent will have to bite its' own tail in order to close the destruction of death.

Maybe the U'WA could follow our path. So, like the birds make long journeys without any rest, we will also continue to guard our small corner of the Earth against the riowa. We will continue to sing to sustain the equilibrium of the earth, not only for ourselves and our children, but also for the white people, because they also need it. In the hearts of the U'WA we are worried for the future of the children of the white people, as well as for our own, because we know that when the last Indians and the last jungles have fallen, the destiny of their children and ours will be the same.

If we the U'WA can obtain the path, we will not retain the birds that are born in our territory; they can visit their white brothers if they wish. And we won't retain the air that is born in our mountains; it will be free to touch the happiness of white children, and our rivers should be as clean when they leave as when they entered.

So the pureness of the rivers will speak of human beings of the world below the pureness of our pardon.

Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 36 - March 2003

3. OCCIDENTAL SUED FOR CIVILIAN MASSACRE

Occidental Petroleum Sued in U.S. Courts For Role in Civilian Massacre in Colombia Plaintiff to Address CEO and Shareholders at Annual Meeting (Los Angeles, CA)- International rights attorneys filed suit today under the Alien Tort Claims Act against Occidental Petroleum and its security contractor, Airscan, Inc., for their role in the murder of innocent civilians in the hamlet of Santo Domingo, Colombia on December 13, 1998.

The filing coincides with OXY's annual stockholders' meeting on Friday, where a survivor of the massacre and critics will question the CEO, Ray Irani and the board of directors on the company's financially negligent and morally questionable practices worldwide including its role in the Colombian massacre. The suit that was brought forth by the International Labour Rights Fund and the Centre for Human Rights at North-western University Law School was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. The suit charges that both OXY and Airscan helped conduct the attack, providing key strategic information, as well as ground and air support to the Colombian military in the bombing raid on the town.

Airscan's plane -which provides aerial surveillance for OXY'S Caño Limón oil pipeline- accompanied the Colombian air force during the bombing, using its infrared and video equipment to pinpoint targets on the ground. While allegedly targeting suspected rebels, no rebels were killed.

Occidental Petroleum's Colombian operations are a magnet for violence and have been under fire from human rights and environmental groups for seven years. The company gained notoriety for its relentless attempts to drill for oil on sacred U'wa indigenous lands, but abandoned a direct role in that drilling effort after intense international criticism and local resistance.

Occidental has been a chief architect of U.S. foreign policy toward Colombia, which continues to reward the company-despite its track record-with increasing U.S. military aid to protect its oil operations. Lawmakers granted some \$131 million in U.S. military aid in 2003, and \$110 million is proposed in 2004 for the protection of OXY's Caño Limón pipeline. This unprecedented corporate subsidy of \$3.58 a barrel is a handsome payoff for OXY's aggressive lobbying efforts and political contributions.

"The evidence in this lawsuit validates what human rights and environmental groups have been saying all along-that OXY is a morally bankrupt company that directly perpetrates human rights abuses. It's an outrage that U.S. taxpayers are footing the bill for such a lawless corporation," said Kevin Koenig of Amazon Watch.

Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 39. - June2003

4. BP IN COLOMBIA

BP Company arrived in Colombia in the 80s to look for oil in the same territory that since the 40s oil companies have been exploring: the Casanare territory. However, Casanare is still mainly a livestock area.

In the 70s oil activity had increased and started to require energy and roads, and so the royalties generated were invested into electricity and roads for the industry. At the beginning of the 80s Cusiana and Cupiagua were discovered, the biggest deposits in Colombian history, that at the moment reach between 2000 and 2200 million barrels of good quality crude. The operation of this deposit profoundly affects the different life worlds of Casanare.

The exploitation of these deposits gave oil extraction first place in Casanare's economy, displacing other productive sectors; capital invested directly by the oil industry plus the royalties, were transferred to official entities, increasing the BIP. A study carried out by the University of the Andes, affirmed that between 1987 and 1995 Yopal increased its income by 350%; Aguazul increased 22 times its income and Tauramena, 65. Departmental incomes in 1992 did not reach 9000 million pesos, but in 1994 passed 30.000 million and in 1997, 204.000, when maximum oil production was achieved, according to statistics from the Department Assembly. In just three years, the Department's budget increased threefold.

Although income improved, the impact on quality of life of the population was negative. In the study previously cited, Yopal, Aguazul y Tauramena experienced levels of poverty that continually declined instead of improving during the period 1993 – 1996; this is ironic when taking into account that this period was when the municipalities obtained high levels of income from royalties.

There are other phenomenon that are generated by oil activity: migration, abandonment of homes, insufficient public and basic services (including health and education) for a growing population, poor quality homes, and a high cost of living. Casanare began to receive other impacts that oil brings: environmental degradation and human rights violations.

In the 90s, BP began drilling oil wells accompanied by serious denouncements from the Health Office of the municipality of Yopal, due to the inadequate disposal of industrial water. In reality, BP was drilling on the same riverbed. These denouncements brought the closing of the first oil well due to environmental impacts, in the country, which generated interesting debate regarding the importance of water. As well, BP was denounced by the British press, after visiting Colombia, because of its apparent links with paramilitary groups, who had assassinated peasant leaders who organized civil marches and blockades on the access roads to criticize social and environmental impacts due to the presence of BP in the region.

No legal battle was ever ensued against BP, however, Carlos Arroqui Cerquera, Marcos Mendoza and other peasant leaders from the Association of Peasant users (ANUC – UR, in Spanish) were assassinated because of the denouncements. These crimes are still in impunity and peasant organizations have had to flee from the region after the assassinations and constant threats to their leaders. The workers union of the oil company USO were never able to affiliate with the workers of BP because of the continuous threats and assassinations of leaders who wanted to build a Workers Syndicate Union in Casanare.

Like many regions of Colombia, impunity is total, not only regarding human rights, but also in terms of the environment. BP operations don't have social control groups due to military presence in their camps, and it is impossible for people or organizations to monitor oil activity, as is the case of the Network for Participatory Environmental Monitoring of Casanare (RED MAPA).

In a study carried out by one of RED MAPA's members, found that BP and other oil companies in the area did not fulfill environmental compensations that they legally have to pay for use of water, and which corresponds to 1% of the total cost of the project; they have ignored this payment for the entire project, supported by government authorities. As well, Agua Viva, a local organization, was able to ascertain that the majority of reforestation projects, which by law oil companies have to assume because of destruction to forested areas, in fact not exist, after several years of having to have completed reforestation.

More recently, BP was denounce by Antioquia populations, where the OCENSA oil pipeline passes, property of four partners of the Cusiana and Cupiagua fields: BP, Total (France, now Total FinaElf), Triton (US) and ECOPETROL (Colombia's national oil company), for not fulfilling agreements established during the construction of the pipeline, and for environmental impacts. Several of the peasant leaders in the area were assassinated and the lawyer working on the case is now in exile.

Oil multinationals take advantage of the reality of Colombia, especially BP, in order to violate environmental norms, ignore agreements made with social organizations, and assassinate or threaten those who oppose the oil industry.

For more information on BP in BP en Colombia:
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Source: RESISTANCE OILWATCH NETWORK BULLETIN Number 42. –
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