

Government of Papua New Guinea increases police resources in Porgera Valley

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The Government of Papua New Guinea has authorized the deployment of additional police resources to the Porgera Valley to address a significant increase in crime and illegal mining in the region in recent months. To support policing activities, the government has also appointed approximately 40 Papua New Guinea Defence Force personnel to assist as special constables under the command of the police.

Heightened levels of crime and the presence of illegal miners at Porgera jeopardize the health and safety of the mine's employees, along with the safety and security of local communities. There has been a significant increase in violent assaults by illegal miners in the last year, including 16 serious assaults on mine employees, and related unrest in nearby communities. Accessing active mining areas with no safety equipment or proper training is also extremely hazardous to the illegal miners themselves, many of whom have been injured in falls and other accidents.

The Government of Papua New Guinea has requested limited financial support and in-kind assistance from the Porgera Joint Venture to support additional policing activities in the region. Financial assistance is limited to per diem amounts for personnel involved in the deployment. In-kind assistance includes items such as office supplies, accommodation, meals, transportation and emergency medical support for government personnel.

The Porgera Joint Venture has agreed to provide such support on the condition that participating law enforcement officers receive appropriate training in community engagement and human rights and adhere at all times to applicable domestic and international legal and regulatory obligations for law enforcement officers.

A highly-respected, former Ombudsman of Papua New Guinea has been appointed as an independent observer to monitor the police operation, with the authority to investigate and report on any concerns related to policing activities. The Fund for Peace, an international non-governmental organization that works to prevent violent conflict and promote sustainable security, will support the independent observer in fulfilling his mandate. The Government of Papua New Guinea has also acknowledged that any community complaints levied against personnel involved in the special deployment will be fully investigated in accordance with established government or police procedures.

In preparation for the deployment, clear communication channels were established between community representatives, government, police, the independent observer and the Porgera Joint Venture.

The Porgera Joint Venture mine began operating in 1990 and remains one of the country's largest natural resource projects. The mine is a major driver of economic development in Enga province and provides direct employment for more than 2,500 Papua New Guineans. The mine has also made substantial investments in projects to support improved health care, education and infrastructure in local communities.