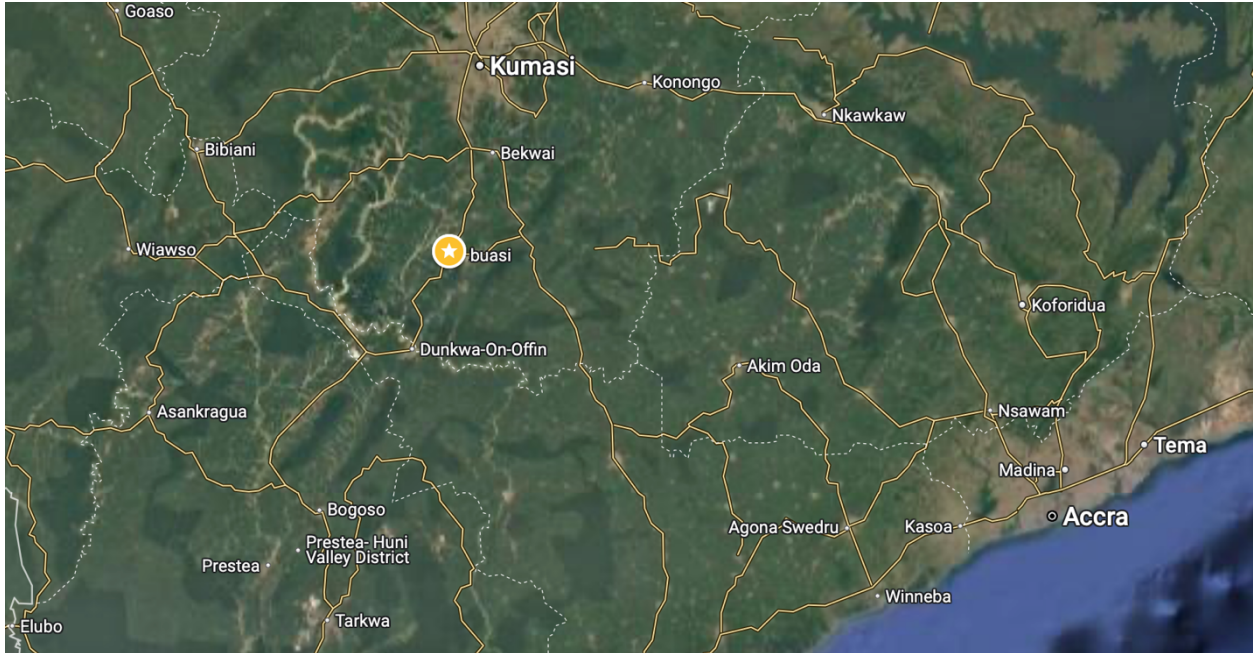


Incident at Gold Mining Site in Ghana (18 Jan 2025)

Summary



On the night of 18 January 2025, a violent incident occurred at the Obuasi gold mining site in Ghana's Ashanti Region. On 19 January, the Ghana National Association of Small Scale Miners reported that soldiers had killed nine unarmed people at the AngloGold Ashanti mine, with the army reporting that seven illegal miners had been killed in a firefight. Earlier, Ghana's armed forces had reported that about 60 illegal miners carrying locally manufactured rifles and other weapons had breached the mine's security fence at around 11:00 pm (2300 GMT) on Saturday 18 January, adding that they had fired on a military patrol deployed there, which led to a shootout. Ghanaian President John Mahama has ordered an immediate investigation into the incident and has called for AngloGold to pay for any medical expenses of those injured in the attack. AngloGold Ashanti has confirmed the incident, stating that seven "illegal miners" were killed. A statement released by the company on Sunday went on to say that "a large group of armed, illegal miners attempted to forcibly gain unauthorized access to mine infrastructure. Authorities mobilized to defend against this attack and to ensure the safety and security of employees and those in the immediate surrounds."

Background

In recent months, and particularly in the lead up to last month's presidential election in Ghana, the issue of illegal gold mining, known locally as *galamsey*, was a major concern for voters. In late 2024, the issue triggered a number of protests and criticism against the outgoing government of President Nana Akufo-Addo. There have also been growing concerns about the environmental impact that such illegal mining is causing in the region. In September and October 2024, demonstrators took to the streets of Accra to demand that the government take action to end illegal mining. After one demonstration, a swift police response, which involved detaining dozens of protesters accused of holding an illegal gathering, only further angered the local populations. While they were later released as anger over the arrests grew, calls have continued for more to be done about illegal mining. In 2024, *galamsey* in Ghana significantly increased following an almost 30% rise in global gold prices.

The attack at the Obuasi gold mine however is not new, with several other incidents reported in recent years at mines across Ghana. On 8 January 2025, a confrontation between police and a group attempting to steal gold at the Newmont Ahafo mining site in Ntotroso resulted in the death of three individuals. In March 2024, two security agents were killed at the Asanko gold mine during a clash with illegal miners. A civilian was also killed in that attack. Additionally, this latest attack at Obuasi gold mine is not the first. In 2016, illegal miners invaded the mine. While the mine resumed operations in 2019, tensions have remained and in 2023, the mine was once again invaded by illegal miners, leading to clashes with security forces. However, the 18 January 2025 attack at Obuasi gold mine does mark a new escalation of violence, with reports released by the military indicating that the intruders were armed with locally manufactured rifles and other weapons and fired at a military patrol deployed at the mine, which returned fire.

Additionally, the issue concerning illegal mining is not solely related to Ghana, but also exists and impacts the wider West African region. On 14 January 2025, Interpol announced that a major operation targeting illegal gold mining in West Africa had resulted in 200 arrests and the seizure of harmful chemicals, drugs and explosives. The operation, which ran from June to October 2024, spanned Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea and Senegal.

Advisory

This 18 January 2025 attack at the Obuasi gold mine raises the risk that industrial mining companies operating in Ghana may be blamed. Strong community engagement by mining companies to steady local relations should be expected. Additionally, there is an ongoing concern that local agitators will continue to stoke tensions. Consequently, companies should be braced for further unexpected incidents.

Mining companies operating in Ghana are advised to review the ground movements of their workers, contractors and equipment. Specifically, assessments should be carried out to identify whether these routes are safe or if they require monitoring or even security escorts. Reviews of physical security at camps, work sites and exploration drilling should be carried out, particularly where there are galamsey in proximity. Should the conditions shift or appear more dangerous, procedures should be known how to appropriately respond depending on the level of threat – agree under what conditions operations will be paused or movements to a safer place carried out. Maintain good communications with the local community, including any contacts that you may have. Co-operate with local law enforcement and the military, educate them about your operations and issues that you are managing. Hold regular conversations with industry peers and share experiences to better safeguard employees, contractors and community neighbours.