

Security personnel deployed to check galamsey

By Dominic Moses Awiah, ACCRA

ANATIONAL anti-galamsey task force was yesterday ushered into action, with a warning from the Minister of Defence, Mr Dominic Nitiwul, to galamsey operators and residents in communities ravaged by the menace not to dare the members because they do so at their peril.

The task force, comprising 400 soldiers and policemen and believed to be the most profound action taken by the government in its fight against illegal mining, has also been tasked not to fail the nation.

According to Mr Nitiwul, failure on the part of the task force to contain galamsey activities was not an option.

He was one of the ministers who addressed the members of the task force at a ceremony at the Burma Camp in Accra before they were deployed.

Dubbed: "Operation Vanguard", the task force has been divided into three groups to cover the Ashanti, Eastern

and Western regions, considered to be the most affected by the illegal operations.

The teams have been tasked to stay at their assigned regions until all forms of illegal mining, popularly known as galamsey, have been stopped and unauthorised mining pits permanently destroyed.

Trained at the Bundase Training Camp in the Ningo Prampram District in the Greater Accra Region, the task force members have been equipped and also supplied with new patrol vehicles and other logistics to enable them to perform their operations with urgency and speed.

Other speakers included the Interior Minister, Mr Ambrose Dery; the Inspector General of Police, Mr David Asante-Apeatu, and the Chief of the Defence Staff, Major General Obed Akwa.

Mr Nitiwul said the entire country was behind the 400 soldiers and policemen and that any attempt to sabotage their work would not be taken lightly.

"I will make it straight to the people who are daring the task force not to do that because the country is behind the task force. Don't dare them. It will not be in your interest to dare them...They will do everything and anything to make this mission a success," he said.

'Don't fail us'

The Chairman of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force Against Illegal Mining, Prof. Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng, who launched "Operation Vanguard", reminded the task force of their professional responsibility to the Ghanaian people.

"Some of you will be tempted with money, but what is at stake is more than your personal interest," he said.

Prof. Frimpong-Boateng, who is also the Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, said officers found to have been compromised by illegal actors and collaborators in the galamsey menace would be sanctioned.

He also urged them to flush out illegal miners from forests and the catchment areas of water bodies.

He said the government and the entire nation were relying on them to



• Prof. Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng

bring an end to illegal mining which, in the last few years, had destroyed the country's water bodies and the forest.

"You have been given one assignment, and that is to end illegal mining. You are not to take your assigned task lightly because the entire nation is watching you," Prof. Frimpong-Boateng said.

'Enter everywhere'

Mr Dery, for his part, urged the task force to pursue its operations with peace and security but not to spare any individual.

"In flushing out the illegal miners, make sure you do not leave anybody behind, whether the person is from Ghana, USA, Ukraine or Cote d'Ivoire," he told them.

He also emphasised the need for the task force to resist any attempt by

people to bribe or influence their work with monetary rewards.

For his part, the IGP, Mr Asante-Apeatu, said the deployment of a National Anti-Galamsey Task Force was not to intimidate citizens but to stop the unacceptable behaviour of illegal mining.

He said the task force was not targeting any particular group or citizens but people who had refused to adhere to the galamsey ban.

"I want to assure the communities we will be deploying security personnel to that everyone should be free to go about his or her normal duties. The deployment is not a force to intimidate anybody but rather a force to stop unacceptable behaviour that we all, as citizens, abhor," he said.

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