

Task Force arrests 13 illegal miners in Offin River

By Donald Ato Dapatem,
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THIRTEEN illegal miners have been arrested for allegedly mining in the Offin River and the Ntobroso Forest in the Atwima Mponua District in the Ashanti Region.

A task force formed by the Ghana National Association of Small Scale Miners (GNASSM) and some stakeholders arrested the miners in two separate operations.

Equipment including 14 Channa machines known in local circles as 'Tullusus', which the illegal miners used in their operations, were destroyed.

Seven of the illegal miners were arrested by the GNASSM Task Force and the Chief of Konsu, Nana Agyeman Duah I, on May 29, 2017. They have already been remanded by the Mankraso District Magistrate Court for two weeks.

On June 1, 2017, the task force and the Atwima Mponua District Security Council arrested six others at New Akyease and Ntobroso mining in the Offin River.

They were handed over to the police and have been remanded by a court.

The illegal miners were said to have taken advantage of the lull created by the six-month moratorium placed on all small-scale miners and were mining in portions of the river within the thick forest where their activities would not easily be detected.

First arrest

Briefing the *Daily Graphic*, the Mankraso District Police Commander, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Mr John Adusei, said the seven were brought to his office by members of the task force for mining in the forest.

He said after preliminary investigations, they were arraigned and subsequently remanded.

Speaking to the *Daily Graphic*, Nana Duah said he and his people arrested

six out of the seven and handed them over to the task force.

He said they had been on the lookout since the government placed a moratorium on mining, coupled with the declaration of support of the ban by the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II.

Second arrest

The District Chief Executive of Atwima Mponua, Mr William Darko, told the *Daily Graphic* that the district administration would ensure that those destroying the environment through "galamsey" were arrested.

He said the operations would continue till all such recalcitrant people were cleared from the area to bring sanity to the environment.

GNASSM

The head of the GNASSM Task Force, Mr Bresi Andoh, said although the members of the association were engaged in legal mining and, therefore,

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A task force formed by the Ghana National Association of Small Scale Miners (GNASSM) and some stakeholders have arrested 13 illegal miners who were mining in the Offin River.

did not agree with the blanket ban on the operations of all small-scale mining activities, they needed to help stop those engaged in illegal activities.

He stated that their task force had been able to halt hundreds of illegal miners from their activities.

"We want to make a strong statement that we are not the ones destroying the environment," he said.

He said although the ban was causing huge losses to their members, they, nonetheless, were also investing heavily in the task force which was entering areas which were not accessible by government agencies to fish the illegal miners out.