



Operations of Owere Mines: Management denies claims by youth

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THE management of Owere Mines Limited at Patrensa has refuted claims by the youth of Konongo that the mine has not been operational for more than 10 years.

The Manager of the mine, Mr Ernest Kofi Amponsah, told the Daily Graphic that the new management took over the mine a little over a year ago and had kept it operational.

He said mining was a serious business and capital intensive and “those investments are not easily accessed here in Ghana”.

Mr Amponsah added that the processing plant of the company could only take a certain type of ore, oxide and sulphide materials to feed it, saying, “we are currently drilling to find the ore material that can feed the plant”.

Background

The youth of Konongo and the military details protecting

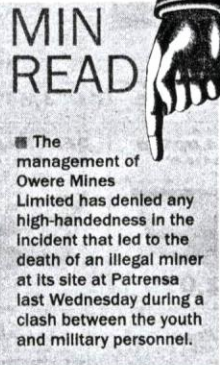
the mine concession clashed last Wednesday (June 24, 2020) over mining pits and illegal operations, leaving one person dead.

The youth, mainly small scale miners, had apparently encroached on the concession of the mine to prospect for gold and when the military and the private security of the mine went to close the pits, the youth resisted and blocked the road to the town with cement blocks and lorry tyres.

The youth claimed that the non-operation of the mine was denying them jobs, and that all the ore-rich concessions were owned by the company, claiming that it invariably deprived them of their source of livelihood.

Confrontation

Throwing more light on the impasse between the youth and the company's security, Mr Amponsah said about a week ago, management picked up intelligence that the illegal miners had invaded the concession of the mine at Patrensa, opposite the Tele Central Hotel, where they had erected wooden structures



close to a house and were mining within it.

He said the military details on site were informed and together with the mine's private security, went to the site where they met more than 100 youth.

He said because of the large number of people, the military decided to retreat and strategise.

Mr Amponsah said the company then decided to use Tuesday, a day the illegal miners did not work, to seal off

the pits and level the place.

However, he said, the military could not do that last Tuesday because they claimed they needed reinforcement from Kumasi to augment their number.

“The reinforcement came on Wednesday and they went to cover the pits and level the area,” he said.

Military's visit

He said at the time of the military's visit to the site, word had already gone round and the youth had left the place.

However, he said, as the military returned, they met road blocks on their way and the youth — armed with pump action guns, machetes and stones, stood in apparent readiness for a confrontation as they burnt tyres on the road.

Mr Amponsah said the military tried to clear the road blocks but were met with resistance from the youth who pelted them with stones and gun shots, which smashed the windscreen of one of the vehicles of the military.

He said the military returned fire which led to the death of one of them.

The military, he said, was unaware that a bullet had hit anybody, but were only informed when they were leaving.

“They picked the victim, who was bleeding from the ribs, to the First Class Hospital where he was pronounced dead on arrival,” Mr Amponsah said.

Thursday incident

Mr Amponsah said the mine picked up intelligence the following day that the youth wanted to stage a reprisal attack, hence the decision to beef up security.

He said the youth also destroyed the security check point, other properties of the company and even tried to set the junior staff quarters ablaze.

Mr Amponsah admitted that the company had been approached by the youth and some opinion leaders to cede some of its concessions to them for mining.

He, however, explained that the company on its own could not demarcate a place for them to mine, and that such a decision must involve the Minerals Commission and the directors of the company.

Community relations

Until this incident, Mr Amponsah said the company had had a very good relationship with the communities and had been engaging them regularly.

“We have 17 communities within our operational area, and our work is such that you cannot work in isolation from the community,” he said.