

Al Dia 08/17/2004

Nicaragua approved concession

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Picture: this is the place , known as Boca del Sabalo, in Nicaragua, close to the San Juan River, in which Nicaragua granted a permit for gold exploitation.

Ciudad Quesada.- The finger of criticism and questioning seems to be pointing at Nicaragua

Mario Callejas, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Development, Industry and Trade (Micif, for the acronym in Spanish, of Nicaragua), and the person in charge of giving mining concessions in this country, confirmed that he supported a mining project in Sabalos, Perseverancia Norte and Perseverancia Sur, places surrounded by the San Juan river.

This project would take place in a non-wooded area that was approved in a consultation among 400 producers in the area.

The reason why this company has not initiated operations, according to Callejas, is that the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA for the acronym in Spanish) is not giving an opinion, whether in favor or against.

This request was made by a businesswoman, identified as Zeneida Rizo Osorio.

The same company requested the exploitation of 35,462 hectares to obtain gold, to the North of the San Juan River.

Likewise, there are two other requests on the side of the San Juan River (San Carlos, Nicaragua); one to explore and then exploit 804 hectares and the other one to work in approximately, 5,861 hectares.

A request of exploitation in the San Juan River was already denied to Frank Mena Marengo, president of the Nicaraguan Mining Chamber.

Currently, in Nicaragua, there are a little more than 11 million hectares granted to mining and more than 2 million that had been requested for that purpose, according to data from Micif.

There are no examples

“Nicaragua would not practice what it preaches before Costa Rica”, informed La Prensa, a Nicaraguan newspaper, in yesterday’s edition, “because out of four grants requested in the area, only one has been denied through the Micif”

Hilda Espinosa, director of Environment of the Marena, contradicted Callejas, stating that the institution was not aware of the mining interest in the San Juan’s area

The MARENA would be in charge of the approval of the environmental impact studies, that is to say, it works as the Secretaría Técnica Nacional Ambiental (SETENA) that is currently analyzing the grant permit awarded to Industrias Infinito S.A. for the exploration and opencast gold exploitation in Crucitas, Cutris, San Carlos.

Nicaragua sent a delegation to our country yesterday in order to analyze the possibility of taking the Crucitas case to the Courts of our country.

Nicaragua’s Environmental Attorney’s Office announced on Friday, according to El Norte/Al Dia, that it will pose the case before the Environmental Prosecuting Attorney’s Office of our country.

Lisandro D’Leon, environmental attorney of that country said that not only by assessing a project of this type, at less than 5 kilometers away from the San Juan River, all agreements and international laws to avoid mining exploitation are being broken.

According to the official, they will appeal, in the corresponding Courts, to the declaration of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, the Ramsar Convention and the principles of the declaration of Rio de Janeiro on environment and development.

The conflict

Picture: Crucitas would be located at approximately 5 kilometers away from the San Juan River and the project would be developed by Industrias Infinito S.A.

The minister of Environment of Nicaragua, Arturo Harding, environmental organizations and the chancellor of that country himself, Norman Caldera, questioned the possibility of Costa Rica analyzing to give in a hill for exploitation in Crucitas in San Carlos, at only 5 kilometers of the San Juan River.

Harding said “the basin of the San Juan river is binational (it is the under the responsibility of both countries), thus, our country cannot and is not going to allow any mining exploitation that could damage the natural resources”, he pointed out.

“We trust that the Costa Rican government is not going to authorize this kind of activity because it is harmful. These activities are dangerous in fragile areas. It would be something irresponsible to authorize this exploitation”, he affirmed.

It cannot be

“This cannot be. The basin will be deeply affected if this project is initiated. This could lead to the political confrontation of both countries because of the river, and such confrontation would have to be cleared up at the OAS and we, Nicaraguans, are at disadvantage”, declared, on her part, Teresa Mariscal, from the Fundacion Procuencia del rio San Juan [Pro basin of San Juan River Foundation]

The minister of Environment of Costa Rica, Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, reacted to these declarations and made clear that, although our government does not agree with this activity, Nicaraguans do not have any jurisdiction on what is approved or not in Costa Rica.

“This concession was granted during the previous administration. The current government does not agree with this activity and has signed a decree, but , unfortunately, the interested company has vested rights and , if we overlooked them, we would have to pay a millionaire compensation”, he explained.

Nicaraguans claimed that the cyanide used in the process could contaminate the Infiernillo River, which is close to the project, and waste would be carried to the San Juan River.

However, this was refuted at the time by the manager of Industrias Infinito S.A., Jesus Carvajal, who made clear that there would not be any contamination and that the cyanide would undergo a special treatment in the tanks were it would be stored before coming out to the environment.

The Crucitas project will be at approximately 5 kilometers from the San Juan River and the rest of the mining projects in Nicaragua would be in the area of alleviation of the Indio Maiz Great Biological Reserve, one of the most important ones in America and located on the left bank of San Juan River.

To the director of the San Juan River Foundation (ONG), Antonio Ruiz, these projects would mean “the end of the river”

“We made clear that mining should stay away from the basin of the San Juan river. The mining activity should be limited to old mining towns”, the environmentalist added.