



# MiningWatch Canada

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## Mines Alerte

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25 October, 2006

Abogado Antonio Andretta Arizaga  
Minister of Government and Police  
Calle Benalcazar y Espejo  
Quito  
Ecuador

Dear sir:

Please accept cordial greetings from Canada on behalf of an organization that has worked for many years for Ecuador's right to choose its own ecologically sustainable, orderly, and peaceful path of development.

We have been working for several years with the organization DECOIN (Defensa y Conservación Ecológica del Intag) to support the communities of that zone in their efforts do create a prosperous and sustainable future, and to avoid the destruction of their houses, forests, and streams – including entire ecosystems and watersheds – threatened by Ascendant Copper's "Junín" open-pit copper mining project. We have seen a series of abuses committed by the company and/or its employees and contractors, including threats, intimidation, false accusations, and manipulation, against any person or institution opposed to destructive mining activity, from the inhabitants of Intag all the way to the mayor of the County of Cotacachi. Nevertheless, I am writing to you today with all due respect in specific reference to the events of October 17 of this year.

Very disturbing facts have come to our attention respecting the apparent persecution of Mr. Carlos Zorrilla, of the Intag region of Cotacachi County in the province of Imbabura. Observers and reliable witnesses have recounted how the house of the Zorrilla family and that of his employee Roberto Castro were illegitimately invaded by the police in an aggressive and intimidating manner. As well, a firearm and a quantity of illegal drugs were supposedly found. The police were there to investigate an alleged assault and robbery that supposedly took place during a peaceful demonstration in the capital on July 13, 2006.

The case presents a series of irregularities, among them the following:

- The woman who filed the charges against Mr. Zorrilla, an American named Leslie Brooke Chaplin, apparently worked Ascendant.
- Eye-witnesses who were present in the Quito march maintain that the march was peaceful and that no assault, much less robbery, took place, but that in fact Ms. Chaplin was verbally aggressive with the demonstrators. There is video documentation of this which will be presented as part of the criminal defence;

- Mr. Zorrilla was never informed of the charges against him and so did not have the opportunity to present documentation to show his innocence;
- Police participating in the October 17 raid travelled in unmarked pickup trucks, one of which has been identified by witnesses as belonging to Ascendant;
- Some of the police did not wear their ID tags (in fact some were wearing ski masks) and did not hand over a copy of the search warrant. Some of them acted in a very aggressive and intimidating manner;
- Neither Zorrilla's wife nor Roberto Castro were even allowed to read the search warrant;
- The police "found" illicit drugs and a handgun in Zorrilla's house that according to the family had not been there prior to the search;
- The police destroyed various family possessions and apparently took a quantity of money, a bank card, CD-ROMs, etc.

I urge you, Mr. Minister, to initiate at the earliest possible opportunity an investigation of the conditions of this case and the apparent involvement and influence of Ascendant Copper in the initiation and execution of the police action. At the same time I beg you offer a guarantee of security for Mr. Zorrilla, and that you monitor the security of Mr. Zorrilla, his family, and his colleagues. I am certain that we are not the only group interested in this case internationally, and that this case is attracting great attention in the press in Canada as much as in your country.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I await a rapid and comprehensive resolution to this troubling case.

Sincerely,



Jamie Kneen  
 Coordinator, Latin America Program and  
 Communications Coordinator  
 MiningWatch Canada

Copies:

- Dr. Claudio Muecay Arcos, Ombudsman, Ecuador
- Ing. Iván Rodríguez, Minister of Energy and Mines, Ecuador
- His Excellency Fernando Ribadeneira, Ambassador to Canada
- Sister Elsie Monge, Ecumenical human Rights Commission (CEDHU), Ecuador
- Hon. Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada
- His Excellency Christian Lapointe, Canadian Ambassador to Ecuador
- Gary Davis, Ascendant Copper Corporation
- Sasha Angus, British Columbia Securities Commission