



## SA mining firms take caution in Mali conflict

January 30 2013 at 08:00am

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South African mining companies AngloGold Ashanti and Gold Fields' production were as yet uninterrupted by the armed conflict in Mali though extreme caution is taken, including repatriation of foreign staff.

Although mining companies operate hundreds of kilometres from the fighting hotspot in the north, they had taken measures to protect assets and workers.

"We are... avoiding certain travel routes, limiting ground travel, deploying increased numbers of gendarmes around the mines and residential villages, and providing focused and regular communication to employees regarding the situation," AngloGold spokesman Alan Fine said.

Gold Fields spokesman Sven Lunsche said the company had not stopped any of its activities at its Yanfolila exploration project, which is located in the west of the country, the part of the country that is furthest away from the fighting.

"Due to the heightened risk of kidnapping, a small number of our expatriate staff have been flown out of the country, but otherwise our activities are continuing as normal," Lunsche said.

London-listed Randgold Resources, which operates the Loulo-Gounkoto gold mining complex and the Morila joint venture, said last week these were operating normally following the state of emergency in the country.

It added that its operations were in safe areas about 700km away from conflict zones and had not been affected by any of the issues that had afflicted Mali over the last 10 months, including the recent attacks by rebels in the north.

Chief executive Mark Bristow said that the company was nevertheless monitoring the situation closely and had put contingency plans in place to ensure that it could continue to contribute to the economy of Mali while protecting Randgold's people and property.

"Should the current military build-up impact on logistics, both operations are well-stocked with fuel and other consumables," Randgold added.

Radical Islamists seized Timbuktu 10 months ago as they took control of Mali's desert north in the chaos that followed a military coup in March last year.

AU peace and security commissioner Ramtane Lamamra said on Monday that the African force would cost \$460 million (R4.1 billion), with the AU promising to contribute an "unprecedented" \$50m for the mission and Mali's army.

The International Monetary Fund has agreed to provide an \$18.4m emergency loan to Mali. Japan said it would give an extra \$120m to help stabilise the Sahel region, days after 10 Japanese were killed in the Algerian hostage siege.

"I am glad to report that the overall amount that was pledged here reached the amount of \$455.53m," Lamamra said after the conference in the AU headquarters in Ethiopia.

Mali is Africa's third-biggest gold producer and relies on agriculture and mining. - Dineo Faku

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