



Bringing it All Back Home: the role of British companies in the destruction of West Papua.

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Introduction

Historian Andrew Griffin has described how, in 1793, Captain John Hayes, a British naval officer led an expedition from Bengal on behalf of the British East India Company¹. The expedition, comprising two ships, the *Duke of Clarence* and the *Duchess*, aimed to establish a trading post and secure territorial claims for Britain on what was to become known as the island of New Guinea. They landed at Dore Bay, near the present-day town of Manokwari. With a 21-gun salute Hayes, the three officers and the 21-crew members of the vessels signed a proclamation of annexation, raised the British flag and named the land 'New Albion'. As easy as that.

The place they landed was thought to have potential for lucrative spice trade, including nutmeg and cloves. They were greeted by local people who were well used to trading with travellers, having had a trading relationship with the Chinese for centuries.

Due to a combination of imperial overstretch and a lack of investment in the expedition, along with uncertainty about the quality and quantity of spices that might be derived from the settlement, British occupation lasted less than a year and a half. In 1795, the expedition left.

The British East India Company was also at the time wary of provoking conflicts with the Dutch, who considered New Guinea within their sphere of influence. Any attempt to set up a British outpost could have led to diplomatic tensions or even military confrontation. When the Dutch arrived in 1820, it was a result of the carving up of sphere of influence by the colonial powers. The Papuan people have, since this point in their history onwards, been politically controlled and manipulated by colonial horse-trading of one type or another.

The vast island of New Guinea was partitioned by European settlement which drew a colonial line of partition straight down the middle of the island. To the east of the line, Papua New Guinea and to the West, the land now designated as the Indonesian-ruled territory of West Papua. The island's rainforest is of immense global importance. It is the largest in the entire Asia-Pacific region and is the third largest in the world after the Amazon and Congo. West Papua is a region of unparalleled biodiversity. And just like the Amazon, this area of critical value to the sustainability of the planet is now under threat from industrial extractivism.

West Papua's recent history is indivisible from ongoing conflicts over the protection of the forest and the protection of the land from environmental devastation. West Papua has vast deposits of gold, copper, oil and gas, and is the site of a rapid expansion of industrial agriculture. This process of industrial development has fuelled decades of conflict involving the Indonesian government, multinational corporations, and the indigenous Papuan population, many of whom support the movement for independence from Indonesia.

This report will show that those areas of industrial development have been met with resistance from local communities. The Indonesian military seeks to protect industrial development with the use of repression, extrajudicial killings and collective dispossession.

The UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights estimates that 60,000 – 100,000 Papuans were displaced between December 2018 and March 2022 (OHCHR, 2022). In 2022, three UN Special Rapporteurs (On The Rights Of Indigenous Peoples, On Extrajudicial, Summary Or Arbitrary Executions, and On The Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons) issued a joint statement expressing grave concern about the rise in extra-judicial killings. They also noted that the Indonesian government had consistently denied access to UN organisations and to international relief organisations. Recent reports highlight ongoing human rights violations in West Papua, Indonesia throughout 2024 and 2025. Human Rights Monitor has documented numerous recent instances of extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances perpetrated by Indonesian security forces, particularly in the highland regions².

It is the aim of this report to explore how far British investors and British companies are implicated in this violence. As we will show, the failure of Hayes' venture, and the relinquishing of control over New Guinea to the Dutch, did not signal an end to British industrial interests in this part of the world. This report maps British present-day commercial interests in West Papua and in doing so highlights how conflict in West Papua is fuelled by the form that industrial development takes in the region.

In order to develop an understanding of this multi-layered conflict, and the role that British companies play in the conflict, this report will outline key British interests across three broad industrial sectors: metal mining, oil and gas extraction and agricultural plantation. Before moving to this analysis, the following section will provide an introduction to the historical and political context for the conflict that will be explored in this report.

The Politics of Settler Colonialism

Since the colonial era, West Papuans have been engaged in a constant struggle for their independence, first as a Dutch colony, and then as a territory occupied by Indonesia after a US-backed and UN-sanctioned vote³.

In the period of European colonisation, the island was occupied by three different powers: Australia in the south-east, Germany in the north-east, and the Netherlands in the west. In the aftermath of World War I, Australia took control of the German territory, which gave it possession of the entire eastern half of the island, present day Papua New Guinea, with the Dutch remaining in the western half. During its period as occupier, the Dutch treated West Papua as an entirely separate colony to the rest of Indonesia. This separation was made not only for administrative purposes but also because West Papua was ethnically, culturally and linguistically distinct from Indonesia.

The source of the current phase of struggle emerged from Indonesia's stated desire to incorporate West Papua into their territory, in contrast to the promises the Dutch had made to the Papuan people that it should become its own sovereign state. The Dutch were keen to keep a close diplomatic relationship with a territory that was as yet an untapped but guaranteed source of mineral wealth. The Indonesians were seeking control of the territory for the same reason.

During the Cold War, the Asia-Pacific became a key proxy battleground. The ongoing dispute between the Dutch and the Indonesian governments was closely monitored by the US, paranoid that the newly independent state would fall under the Soviet sphere of influence⁴. The diplomatic approach adopted by the US was crucial here: they leveraged their relationship with the Netherlands to ensure that Indonesia could be brought into their sphere of influence. West Papua fell victim to this geo-political repositioning and at the end of 1961, the US made it clear to the Netherlands they would not have US support in any showdown with Indonesia⁵.

After months of backroom negotiations the New York Agreement was signed by the Dutch and the Indonesians at the UN Headquarters in August of 1962 and administrative control of West Papua was ceded to a UN Temporary Executive Authority and subsequently to Indonesia. The agreement provided for a vote for self-determination. This vote would not take place until 1969. When it was finally organised, it used a highly contentious delegate system, with armed Indonesia forces present. The unanimous decision in this so-called Act of Free Choice was predictable: to cede control to Indonesia. The vote is known to this day by Papuans as the Act of No Choice⁶ or the "gunpoint referendum."⁷

During this period, the Indonesian government began implementing a policy known as 'transmigration' or 'Indonesianisation.' The policy, involving the subsidisation of families to move from different parts of Indonesia to West Papua,

“is predicated on the assumption that inculcation of the Indonesian world-view through contact with what are considered ‘more advanced’ and ‘civilised’ Javanese, will ultimately strengthen national unity...”⁸

More than 700,000 people were relocated from other parts of Indonesia to a wide range of areas in West Papua between 1969 and 1989 in an effort that was explicitly aimed at diluting the ethnic concentration of West Papua and undermining the peoples’ claim to their land.⁹ Indeed, families that relocated as part of the programme were allocated land to cultivate and build on.

West Papuan urban centres and coastal towns are now dominated by Indonesians who are integral to the project of industrialisation.¹⁰ At the same time, West Papuans experience the most extreme levels of poverty in the rural and highlands areas. These are also the locations that internally displaced peoples have been forced to relocate to.¹¹ The policy of transmigration has therefore facilitated an increase in the numbers of internally displaced persons, a position that is called “translokal” by the West Papuans.¹² The cultural ramifications of land loss have deep implications for the spiritual ancestry of West Papuan people, with the purging of ancestral land seen to evict not only those who live on it but the spiritual ancestors as well, severing a vital connection.¹³

Whilst transmigration, as an official policy, ended in 2000, it continued in practice as a result of a combination of poverty forcing people to leave their homes and military and police brutality, particularly in regions where the extractivist and plantation economies continuously expanded. On October 20th, 2024, Indonesia inaugurated its new president Prabowo Subianto, a former general in the Suharto era¹⁴ who has been widely accused of human rights abuses in East Timor as well as forced disappearances and violent crackdowns on critics of the state in the 1990s.¹⁵ One of Prabowo’s first acts as president has been to announce the reinstatement of the transmigration policy in Papua. The Minister for Transmigration has announced that this move aims to make Papua “fully united as part of Indonesia in terms of welfare, national unity and beyond.”¹⁶ This move makes explicit the intention of the Indonesian government to deny West Papuans the right to self determination.

The impact of the Indonesian settler colonial project, supported by routine militarised violence has been described by human rights organisation, TAPOL, as the “obliteration of the West Papuan people”¹⁷ and has been described by academic researchers as a “cold” or “slow-motion” genocide.¹⁸

The racist stereotyping of Papuans is deployed to legitimate their brutal repression.¹⁹ Indonesian government sources portray Papuans as primitive ‘warmongers’ and morally inferior, racist tropes that seek to justify Indonesian control over the territory and provide a pretext for the everyday presence of Indonesian military and security forces. These stereotypes are reminiscent of Dutch colonial racism, and, in their present-day version, stereotype Papuan people as “polluted, dangerous, and uncontrolled.”²⁰

So central is the promotion of racist tropes to the twin projects of militarisation and industrial development, that some describe the treatment of Papuans by the Indonesian state as a form of “industrial racism”.²¹ This is, indeed, a highly “racialised frontier of extraction.”²²

Their constant dehumanisation through state rhetoric, coupled to the push of an extreme form of nationalism, means that West Papuans occupy a conflicting space in the Indonesian collective narrative. They are characterised as primitive separatists in a land that belongs to Indonesia. They are also characterised as ungrateful for being included in the state, and for the numerous development programs aimed at improving their quality of life. This configuration of Papuans doesn’t quite know what to do with the concept of indigeneity. They locate the Papuan people as decidedly non-Indonesian, and therefore as separate from the nation, but never properly recognising that this is their ancestral land.²³ And yet the scale at which land is cleared and villages are displaced by the Indonesian state to make way for mines and plantations can be done precisely because this is not Indonesia. This scale of clearance can occur here because it is not Indonesian land or of Indonesian ancestral homes that are being destroyed.

In the report that follows, we detail the environmental and social impacts of the three most important industries in West Papua (agricultural plantation, oil and gas extraction and metal mining). We also describe the, resistance and conflict surrounding those industries, before going on to uncover the key role played by British corporations and investors.

Agricultural Plantation and Deforestation

Deforestation in West Papua has two main drivers: timber harvesting and a rapidly expanding system of agricultural plantation.

The single most important driver of deforestation is palm oil plantation, and this section of the report is largely focussed on palm oil. Indonesia is the world's largest exporter of palm oil, accounting for approximately 58% of the global market. The country has continuously expanded its palm oil industry, with a significant focus on West Papua. The Indonesian government has encouraged the establishment of plantations in West Papua twice the size of those in other parts of the country.²⁴

In 2024, local NGO PUSAKA published satellite images showing an increase in deforestation in oil palm company concessions in Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province, Teluk Bintuni Regency, West Papua Province, and Jayapura Regency, Papua Province, and industrial timber plantation (HTI) concessions in Merauke Regency, South Papua Province.²⁵ In Papua, both corporate-owned plantations and smallholder schemes exist, but large Indonesian and foreign firms primarily own and control vast plantation areas rather than relying heavily on smallholder farmer. West Papua's palm oil sector is predominantly characterised by large-scale plantations and therefore has far less small shareholder or local ownership integration than other parts of Indonesia, such as Sumatra and Kalimantan where plasma schemes (smallholder-company palm oil partnerships) are common.²⁶ Some companies are legally required to allocate 20% of their concession land to smallholders, but compliance is inconsistent,²⁷ especially in West Papua.²⁸ This imbalance means that indigenous Papuan landowners are pressured or incentivised to lease or sell their land to companies, often at low compensation rates.

Indonesian-owned agricultural businesses exhibit a high level of oligarchic control at all levels. There has always been a very high level of integration of senior military personnel involved as directors and owners of the Indonesian businesses that gain concessions.²⁹ Research by Human Rights Watch has shown that, historically, the Indonesian military (TNI) has supplemented its resources by engaging in various economic activities, including establishing foundations and cooperatives that own businesses. This involvement has often led to conflicts of interest and abuses of power.³⁰ In West Papua, the military's economic interests are evident in the allocation of mining and plantation concessions. The state has frequently granted concessions to companies linked to security forces, including military and police assigned to guard these concessions. Security forces therefore often have direct financial interests in resource extraction activities, either through direct involvement or by receiving protection fees from the companies themselves.³¹

A key enabler of this rapid corporate expansion is the Trans-Papuan Highway, the largest infrastructure project in West Papua's history. The highway consists of 2,700 miles of roads aimed at opening previously inaccessible areas for industrial development in minerals, timber, and agricultural plantations. According to an investigation by Nusantara Atlas, the highway is expected to strip 4.5 million hectares of land, including sections of the Lorentz National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.³²

West Papua is also the site of the world's single largest deforestation project in the Meruake region. The project, which commenced in September 2024 is tied to Indonesia's renewable energy targets and will mainly grow sugar for bio-fuels in order to achieve its long standing aim of a 31% renewable energy mix by 2030.³³ This transition is expected to be fueled by biodiesel from palm oil and bioethanol from sugarcane.

The Meruake deforestation is also part of a broader "food estate plan," which involves converting large tracts of land for rice and other cash crops. In regions such as Merauke, this transformation was envisioned by former President Joko Widodo as an opportunity to turn the area into Indonesia's food hub,³⁴ through the development of 500,000 hectares of rice plantation in southern West Papua.

As timber resources in other parts of Indonesia have declined, attention has increasingly turned to West Papua's forests, and the region does contribute a significant proportion of Indonesian timber exports, predominantly to China, India and the Middle East. However, recent analyses suggest that large-scale agricultural projects, particularly for palm oil and pulpwood plantations, have become more prominent drivers of deforestation in West Papua. Whilst logging has contributed significantly to deforestation, the expansion of agricultural and plantation activities currently represents a more significant threat to the region's forests.

Although the primary goal of the Meruake project plan is to increase renewable bio-fuel sources, the climate impact of the Meruake project is likely to be very significant. A recent study by the Center of Economic and Law Studies (CELIOS) reports that the carbon emissions from the planned deforestation will release 782.45 million tons of CO₂, increasing Indonesia's carbon emissions from 2-3 percent to 4-5 percent.³⁵

Environmental and social impact

Between 2002 and 2022, Indonesia lost up to 10.2 million hectares of primary forests, much of it due to land clearing for palm oil cultivation.³⁶ These plantations create ecological dead zones, eradicating traditional farming systems and severely reducing biodiversity.

There appears to have been a lull in deforestation due to an Indonesian moratorium on palm oil plantation. As part of this moratorium, concessions in West Papua were subject to a permit review, which concluded in February 2021.³⁷ In 2022, the EIA noted that satellite images showed a resumption of deforestation in West Papua.³⁸

2023 saw a surge in Indonesian palm oil plantations, with the NGO TheTreeMap noting that expansion was most significant in Kalimantan and Papua.³⁹ According to TheTreeMap, the Salim/IndoGunta group are a significant, and perhaps the most significant drivers of this expansion. Their concessions in West Papua are amongst the largest in Indonesia, and include Permata Nusa Mandiri (17,396 acres) and Subur Karunia Raya (38,600 acres).⁴⁰

Agricultural plantations require complete forest clearance, often through burning down large areas of forest, contributing significantly to air pollution. In the context of West Papua, the destruction of forests means the obliteration of rain forests and mangroves that are of irreplaceable value, and are at the heart of one of the world's most important carbon sinks. Indeed, release of carbon due to deforestation of current plantation concessions in West Papua alone will make it impossible for Indonesia to fulfil its commitments to carbon reduction under the Paris Agreement.⁴¹

The expansion of palm oil plantations in Indonesia has had devastating environmental and social consequences, with research from the Center for International Forestry Research indicating that approximately 83% of this expansion has come at the expense of old growth forests.⁴² The negative impacts of palm oil plantations are well documented, including soil erosion, depletion and contamination of local water supplies, and increased disease due to air pollution and crop pests.⁴³

Beyond palm oil, large-scale agricultural projects such as the Merauke sugar plantation—as we have noted, the world's single largest deforestation project⁴⁴—are contributing to widespread environmental destruction. Covering approximately 2 million hectares of forests, wetlands, and grasslands in the Merauke district, this project threatens both local ecosystems and Indigenous food systems. The plantation replaces existing forests and sago groves with rice fields disrupting traditional diets that rely on sago as a staple, thus further altering cultural traditions and the ecological balance.

Conflict

During the 53rd session of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal held in June 2024 at Queen Mary University of London, live eyewitness evidence was presented which recounted the damage faced by the Papuan communities as a result of these plantations.

One witness noted that the company PT Inti Kebun Sejahtera operated in their community in Sorong cutting timber and that when the timber stock was depleted, they changed their name and renewed their permits, becoming a palm oil plantation company. The witness recounted how his peoples' territory was seized without their permission, after they had refused the company's request for the land and the company's "right to cultivate" area. The community has repeatedly appealed to various government agencies such as the National Land Agency and Komnas HAM (National Human Rights Commission) but has not had any resolution. The deforestation to make way for palm plantation, has destroyed primary food sources for the community, such as sago trees. The witness described how the company utilises periods when the community is celebrating religious holidays or conducting traditional ceremonies to cut down parts of the forest.

Another witness recounted how PT Permata Nusa Mandiri was given permits by the government to take over indigenous territory in the Jayapura Regency, without the knowledge or consent of the communities. The people have held protests with signs stating "Papua is not an empty land" and demanding that the company's permit be immediately revoked. According to evidence presented to the Tribunal by Human Rights Monitor, PT PNM was ordered to stop activities in 2022 by the One Stop Integrated Licensing and Investment Agency until clarification was received from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, however it appears they continue to operate to this day.

Maybrat Regency is an area that has seen mass displacement and heavy military presence in conjunction with a staggering expansion of palm oil plantations. It has seen clashes between the military and the TPNPB (the pro-independence armed group) as well as protests against plantation expansion, transmigration, new military posts and lack of infrastructure. According to a report by the NGO TAPOL, in 2020 the military was given a specific mandate to assist with development efforts of palm oil companies.⁴⁵ Protests have been met with armed raids of villages, arbitrary arrests and shootings. In 2021, an incident in Kisor led to the displacement of over 3,000 indigenous people from 50 villages.⁴⁶ The military conducted raids in response to a police car ambush and attack on a military post carried out by the resistance movement.⁴⁷ The TAPOL report notes that at the time of the mass displacement, six companies in the area had acquired concessions for 573,800 hectares of land. Thus, many villagers were not only displaced but then prevented from returning. One witness at the PPT who was displaced after the Kisor incident and forced to go into hiding, noted that even

though the government has announced that all internally displaced persons have returned to their homes, this is not the case. The witness stated that new investments into Maybrat are being planned.

Maybrat is just one example of how state sponsored violence and resource extraction go hand in hand in West Papua. In places where extrajudicial killings, massacres and mass displacement occurs, logging, mining or plantation companies can often be found conducting or trying to conduct commercial activities. Military or the police force are often sent in to clear the land, and any resistance from the local community is typically met with violence.

British Profits

Upstream in the agricultural supply chain, it is possible to find British companies as significant owners and as shareholders of businesses that profit from Indonesia. Most prominent amongst those is British company Jardine Matheson, who own the second largest palm planter in Indonesia, Astra Agro Lestari (AAL). Jardine Matheson Holdings Ltd. own 80% of AAL. Other British shareholders of AAL include: FIM Advisers LLP, Prudential PLC, Schroders PLC, Nichejungle ICAV, Legal & General Group PLC and HSBC Holdings PLC.

In September 2024, a group of U.N. Special Rapporteurs wrote to AAL regarding alleged human rights and environmental abuses linked to palm oil production on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. The allegations included evidence of operating without necessary permits on Indigenous ancestral lands and farming communities' land, without the free, prior and informed consent of the traditional land owners and residents.⁴⁸ Whilst those allegations did not relate specifically to the company's activities in West Papua, AAL is likely to be involved in West Papua as a producer in the region via its network of subsidiaries.

Whilst AAL is the only fully controlled British company that is involved in the primary production of palm oil in Indonesia, a very large number of British companies own shares in primary producers and therefore profit directly from West Papuan palm plantations. In addition to Astra Agro Lestari, discussed above, the following companies have British shareholders. *Table 1* on the next page summarises a list of major British shareholders in those companies.

The companies we have highlighted are:

Salim

According to TheTreeMap, the Salim group is a major leading Indonesian agri-business company. They are perhaps the most significant drivers of palm oil expansion in the region, since their concessions in West Papua are amongst the largest in Indonesia, and include Permata Nusa Mandiri (17,396 acres) and Subur Karunia Raya (38,600 acres).⁴⁹

Noble Group

The Noble Group is a Hong Kong-based commodities trading company that operates palm oil plantations in West Papua, through its subsidiary PT Henrison Inti Persada (HIP), which has permits for 32,000 hectares in Sorong, West Papua.⁵⁰

Golden-Agri Resources

Golden Agri-Resources is a subsidiary of Indonesia's Sinar Mas Group, one of the world's largest palm oil companies, managing extensive plantations across Indonesia. It holds a number of concessions in West Papua through its subsidiaries. PT Sinar Kencana Inti Perkasa, a Golden-Agri subsidiary, operates the Kasuari Mill in Jayapura.⁵¹

Carson Cumberbatch

Carson Cumberbatch, is a Sri Lankan conglomerate, that holds concessions in West Papua through subsidiaries under its control, including PT Nabire Baru and PT Sariwana

Adi Perkasa (both owned by Goodhope Asia Holdings, a company majority owned by Carson Cumberbatch). The former had its operations suspended by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in 2017 due to environmental and human rights concerns;⁵² The latter holds an 8,000-hectare permit for oil palm cultivation in the Sima village area.⁵³

First Resources

First Resources is a Singapore based palm oil company and one of Indonesia's largest producers. First Resources has no direct control over West Papuan plantations though it is involved through affiliated or "shadow" companies including Ciliandry Anky Abadi, Sulaidy and PT Austindo Nusantara Jaya/ PT Permata Putera Mandiri.⁵⁴ These companies have been implicated in the large-scale conversion of forests and peatlands into industrial oil palm plantations.⁵⁵

British-Based Company	Salim	Noble Group	Golden-Agri Resources (Sinar Mas)	Carson Cumberbatch	First Resources
Nichejungle	X		X		
Prudential		X	X		
Schroders			X		X
HSBC			X		
FIM Investors			X		
St James's Place		X			
abrdn plc		X			
Silchester International Investors			X		
Heptagon Capital			X		
Jupiter Fund Management			X		
Legal & General			X		X
Tower Investments				X	
Fulcrum Pvt				X	
Portelet Investments				X	

Table 1: British shareholders in West Papuan palm plantations

The most significant shareholdings (in addition to Jardine Matheson) in those companies include:

- ~ More than 25% of Carson Cumberbatch is owned by just 3 British-based companies: Tower Investments (London), Fulcrum Pvt (registered in the Isle of Man) and Portelet Investments (registered in Jersey).
- ~ London-based Silchester International Investors owns 11% of Golden-Agri Resources
- ~ British finance giant Prudential owns 5% of Noble Group.
- ~ London-based Schroder Investment Management owns 7% of First Resources.

Companies registered in British-sponsored offshore secrecy jurisdictions also play a key role in the ownership of West Papuan palm plantations. For example, the largest shareholder in Golden-Agri Resources is Flambo International (with a 42% stake), a company headquartered in the British Virgin Islands.⁵⁶

This section has used an analysis of investors of companies active in West Papua that have major British shareholders. This is, however, only a part of a much more extensive financial investment process. All of the major palm plantations are also backed by an army of banks and finance houses, in turn backed by armies of accountancy and law firms.⁵⁷

Downstream, determining the exact volumes of palm oil from Indonesia used by British companies is difficult because of a lack of publicly available company-specific data. However, we can estimate how much palm oil is imported from Indonesia for processing in Britain.

In 2023, Britain imported over 3 thousand metric tons of crude palm oil and 75 thousand metric tons of refined palm oil from Indonesia.⁵⁸ Although precise import volumes, and the volume of their use in products by individual British companies are not publicly available, Britain's imports of palm oil from Indonesia indicates their importance in food and personal care product manufacturing. Major British companies like Unilever, Premier Foods, and Warburtons are significant users of palm oil. We know, for example, Unilever uses about 3% of the global supply, and half of its supply comes from Indonesia.⁵⁹

Tracing the source of Palm Oil from West Papua to a company like Unilever is extremely difficult due to the complexity of different layers of production and the supply chain in the industry. Fresh palm fruit bunches are likely to be bought and sold by agents and may pass through different collection points before reaching oil processing mills. This multi-layered process obscures the oil's origin. The existence of informal collection points adds another layer of complexity. These are locations where local harvesters drop off their crop, which is then aggregated and sold to mills. The informal nature of monitoring at these points makes it more challenging to document and monitor the flow of palm oil accurately.

However, we do know that Unilever sources palm oil from 2 mills located in West Papua. Those are the Kasuari mill in Jayapura (owned by Golden-Agri Resources)⁶⁰ and the mill in Sorong Selatan, operated by Putera Manunggal Perkasa (a subsidiary of PT Austindo Nusantara Jaya Tbk).⁶¹ The former mill processes harvest from a 15,210 hectares of oil palm plantation in Jayapura Regency, and the latter mill processes harvest from a 91,210 hectare oil palm plantation in South Sorong and Maybrat Regencies in Southwest Papua Province.

Mining

As the introduction to this report notes, although New Guinea did not escape interest from colonial powers in the carving up of their sphere of influence, it was regarded as too difficult a colony to exploit for natural resources and therefore throughout the 18th and 19th centuries was not seen as a lucrative site for extractivism. Industrial exploitation of West Papua's wealth arrived relatively late. It was not until the early 20th century that oil exploration began; significant oil and copper deposits were found in the 1920s.⁶² The US was careful to mask the full extent of West Papua's known reserves during the political horse-trading that it engaged in during the 1960s.⁶³ Whilst the pace of development has been comparatively slow, it has become progressively more intense since the post second World War period and West Papua has been particularly rich in gold and copper.

By far the most prominent site of West Papua's extractive industries is the Grasberg mine. Grasberg is recognised as the world's largest gold mine and the second-largest copper mine. Since its establishment in 1967, the mine has played a pivotal role in the global metals market. The Grasberg Open Pit, which commenced operations in 1990, has produced over 12 million tonnes of copper and 1,430 tonnes of gold. As of December 2022, the mine's proven and probable reserves stand at approximately 14 million tonnes of copper and 808 tonnes of gold. The mine was, until recently, 90% owned by the US mining giant Freeport-McMoRan. Currently it is owned and operated by PT Freeport Indonesia, a joint venture between the Indonesian government and Freeport-McMoRan. Grasberg is Indonesia's biggest source of tax revenue.⁶⁴

Another site that is slated for mining is a major gold ore deposit known as Wabu Block. Significant conflict has surrounded this site, with Amnesty International reporting that "the planned development of Wabu Block risks aggravating a rapidly deteriorating human rights situation."⁶⁵ A security buildup around the area, which began in 2019, has led to at least 12 suspected extrajudicial killings.⁶⁶ Whilst it is difficult to obtain recent information about the development, there is evidence that the legitimacy of operations remains highly contested. In January of 2024, a student group staged a peaceful protest against the development of the mine and the head of the Papua office of Komnas-HAM, the National Commission on Human Rights, noted in response that permission from the landowners had not yet been obtained.⁶⁷

Nickel mining operations in West Papua are also rapidly expanding. A recent growth of nickel mining has particularly effected Raja Ampat, a group of islands in West Papua known for their rich marine biodiversity. This mining area has tripled in size over the past five years.⁶⁸

Local communities also report cases of illegal mining, in which companies operate without proper permits and begin to operate. For example, in 2024, the

Chinese company PT Zoomlion entered the Kapiroya district in Deiyai Regency of Central Papua and began to mine for gold.⁶⁹ Their heavy machinery has had an impact on local access to clean water and caused erosion of the riverbanks.⁷⁰ The provincial government confirmed that no government permits, nor permission from the landowners had been obtained prior to the mining activities. This case is just one of many that is reported across West Papua.

An analysis in 2021 by Chain Reaction Research shows that there is significant overlap between companies involved in both mining and palm oil industries. Six of the 10 largest oil palm growers in Indonesia also operate mining businesses, while five of the 10 largest coal mining groups have palm oil plantations. Thirteen conglomerates were identified with substantial interests in both sectors. These include three of the firms discussed in the previous section as having major palm oil concessions in West Papua: Sinar Mas (owners of Golden Agri-Resources), Astra Agro Lestari, Bumitama, Salim Group, as well as the Indonesian state-owned firms (PTPN).⁷¹

Environmental and social impact

Grasberg's operations have led to mass displacement of the Amungme, Sempan and Komoro people, the traditional custodians of the land, as well as the destruction of the local ecosystem.⁷² In the culture of the Amungme tribe, the mountain is a sacred place. The Amungme people believe that spirits of their ancestors live in the mountain; it is "the sacred head of their mother", and its rivers are her milk.⁷³ The entire mountain has been completely destroyed, the land hollowed out and the rivers polluted.

An estimated 300,000 tons per day of toxic tailings largely untreated are deposited straight into the Ajkwa river's large and complex network of tributaries and the wider estuaries.⁷⁴ Analysis of satellite images indicates that at least 130 square kilometers of water and land have been affected by toxic waste dumping.⁷⁵ Samples have shown extremely high concentrations of Phosphate, Cyanide, Iron, Copper, and Zinc.⁷⁶ The consequences have been devastating: local people have been poisoned after contact with the toxic river; fish stocks have been devastated by suspended particulate matter (SPM) and copper toxicity; and transportation using traditional boats has been stopped due to toxic sediment deposits building up on the river.⁷⁷ Due to the poisoning of water and land, local people now must travel large distances to hunt for animals and harvest sago.

Nickel mining activities in both Raja Ampat and Jayapura have resulted in the discharge of substantial volumes of tailings into the Coral Triangle, a region of exceptional ecological sensitivity that encompasses parts of Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste. This area has been characterised by the Asian Development Bank as the "Amazon of the Seas"⁷⁸ and identified by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) as a global

epicentre of marine biodiversity, hosting approximately 76% of the world's coral species.⁷⁹ The Indonesian environmental organisation Auriga Nusantara has expressed serious concerns regarding the environmental impacts of nickel mining in these regions, including deforestation, water contamination, and ecosystem degradation.⁸⁰ The organisation reports that elevated sedimentation levels from mining operations are entering the marine environment in Raja Ampat, posing a significant threat to coral reef systems.⁸¹ Notably, one of the islands undergoing nickel extraction is situated within a designated UNESCO Global Geopark, underscoring the ecological importance of the affected area.⁸²

Furthermore, the release of tailings from nickel mines in Raja Ampat has adversely impacted local fisheries,⁸³ while mining operations in Jayapura have caused severe soil erosion and the flooding of agricultural land.⁸⁴ These environmental changes jeopardise local food security and livelihoods, as communities depend heavily on both fishing and farming for sustenance and economic stability.

Conflict

Along with key industrial sites, the Freeport mine has been a regular site of militarised struggles with workers. In 2017 when the company initiated mass lay-offs without any negotiation with the workers' union, a retaliatory strike by workers was met with a co-ordinated response from Freeport and the Indonesian state. In response, Freeport forcibly evicted striking workers from company owned homes, denied them access to company-funded hospitals and schools, and blocked access to bank accounts and credit services.⁸⁵ The company also used Indonesian security forces to arrest strikers unlawfully and subject them to torture and criminal prosecution.⁸⁶

Freeport-McMoRan is required to make payments to Indonesia's security forces for protecting the Grasberg mine.⁸⁷ This financial arrangement has certainly contributed to systematic human rights violations.⁸⁸ The state's capacity to commit systematic acts of violence and repression is reinforced by an extensive state surveillance network of state and corporate security forces which targets activists, clergy, students, local politicians, and customary leaders through intensive military intelligence operations.⁸⁹

Given this experience with Grasberg mine, it is not surprising that the majority of local people are actively opposed to the development of Wabu Block. The conflicts surrounding this project have already resulted in the militarisation of the region, with West Papuans regularly facing extrajudicial killings, physical assaults, and control by a violent state security apparatus. Indeed, since 2019, Amnesty International has documented 12 suspected cases of unlawful killing at the hands of security forces as well as incidents of routine arrests and beatings related to Wabu Block.⁹⁰

The Indonesian military continues to employ force to clear land for industrial mining projects. A recently published report by the PNG Integral Human Development Trust highlights ongoing military attacks against the Ngalum Kupel people, an ethnic-linguistic group that traditionally inhabits the highland mountain valleys along the tributaries of the Sepik River, near Kiwirok in the Pengunang Bintang region of West Papua.⁹¹ These assaults, which began in October 2021, involved aerial rocket and bombing attacks on villages around Kiwirok, carried out using drones and helicopters. The severity of the initial strike, combined with continued military actions—including sniper attacks on individuals, shootings, and torture—forced the Ngalum Kupel people to flee their homes. Since then, they have been unable to return to their villages, subsistence gardens, and ancestral land, leaving them displaced in the mountains with little access to food. The report documented the names of 284 community members who have reportedly died as a result. It further highlighted “linkages between the operation of Indonesian military forces, retired Police and ex-Military leadership, who are now Government Ministers, seeking to expand mining interests, which is the driver of conflict with traditional landowners in highland areas of Papua.”⁹²

Nickel mining has also led to conflict and is strongly opposed by local people. In Tablasupa, local communities were forcibly displaced from their ancestral lands to facilitate the establishment of a nickel mining operation.⁹³

British Profits

The Grasberg Mine

From 1996 onwards, a joint venture involving Freeport MacMoran and British-Australian firm Rio Tinto, headquartered in London, held a 90% stake in the Grasberg mine in Indonesia. This joint venture agreement entitled Rio Tinto to an unknown share of production above specific levels. In 2018, under pressure from the Indonesian government to increase national ownership, Rio Tinto fully divested and Freeport agreed to reduce its majority stake in the Grasberg mine to 49% in exchange for an extended mining license. This agreement will allow Freeport MacMoran to operate at Grasberg until 2041.

Exact profit figures from the mine during Rio Tinto’s involvement are not publicly disclosed. However, it is known that in December 2018, Rio Tinto sold its interest in Grasberg to Indonesia’s state-owned mining company Inalum for \$3.5 billion.

Whilst Freeport MacMoran is a US company, it does have significant British shareholders. The top 20 British shareholders together own over 4% of Freeport MacMoran, with a total market value of \$2.2 billion. Those shareholders are listed in *Table 2* on the next page. The largest of those, Northern Trust Global

Company	Value of investment (\$m)
Northern Trust Global Investments	631.7
Legal & General Investment Management	287.4
Janus Henderson Group PLC	183.5
Barclays PLC and Barclays Bank	165.6
HSBC Global Asset Management (UK)	146.6
Ninety One UK	135.3
Qube Research & Technologies	103.2
Marshall Wace	86.9
Railways Pension Trustee Company	72.3
J O Hambro Capital Management	65.1
Hosking Partners	49.9
Rathbones Investment Management	48.6
Aberdeen Group	48.4
Brewin Dolphin	41.1
AHL Partners	34.7
Schroder Investment Management	29.9
Pictet Asset Management	28.2
Royal London Asset Management	22.9
Hermes Investment Management	15.9
Marathon Asset Management	15.8

Table 2: British-based Freeport MacMoran shareholders

Investments, has a 1.14% shareholding in Freeport, worth a total of \$664m. As this report details above, Northern Trust also have holdings in the palm oil companies, Astra AgroLestari and Golden Agri. The second largest British-based shareholder, Legal & General Investment Management also has significant shares in Astra AgroLestari and Golden Agri. The Barclays Group and the Aberdeen Group hold shares in Noble. Schroder Investment Management is the largest shareholder in First Resources and also has holdings in Golden Agri.

British Investment in Nickel

In September 2024, Australian firm Nickel Industries Limited completed the acquisition of a 51% interest in the Siduarso Nickel-Cobalt Project in the Sarimi Regency in West Papua. The project spans 16,470 hectares. Exploration activities have included over 167 kilometers of ground-penetrating radar surveys, indicating significant potential for resource expansion.

Two British companies have large shareholdings worth over 3 million dollars in Nickel Industries Limited. Baker Street Capital Managers, a hedge fund investor holds around \$6 million worth and Jupiter Fund Management hold around \$3.6 million.

Trading Grasberg's Gold and Copper in London

The London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) is the most important trade association in international gold and precious metals markets. Its 174 members include central banks, private sector investors, mining companies, producers, refiners, and fabricators and other entities engaged in the trading, storage, and transportation of precious metals. The LBMA plays a critical role in maintaining and regulating the gold market. One of the LBMA's key responsibilities is setting global benchmark prices for gold via the LBMA Gold Price auction. This process, conducted twice daily in U.S. dollars, determines the international reference price used by market players.

The LBMA runs the largest over-the-counter (OTC) market for gold transactions worldwide. Unlike exchange-traded gold markets, the OTC market allows for direct trading of gold between parties. This means that the LBMA is the main site for trading gold from any major gold mine in the world, including Grasberg. The gold extracted from Grasberg is refined and sold through the LBMA's network, and its price is determined by the LBMA Gold Price auction.

Just as the LBMA sets global benchmark prices for gold, the London Metal Exchange (LME) serves as the global benchmark for the pricing of base metals. The LME is the world's most important market for industrial metals, setting reference prices used by producers, consumers, and financial markets worldwide

in: aluminium, copper, zinc, lead, tin and nickel. Corporate members of the exchange are required to own shares in the Exchange; Freeport is therefore a shareholder of LME Holdings, the parent company of the LME.

The LME is a central hub for global copper trading, accounting for approximately two-thirds of the world's copper futures contracts.

Copper traded on any exchange like the LME must meet specified quality standards. Copper is produced as 'cathode brands'. The copper cathode brand is the specific manufacturer or supplier's designation for their copper product produced through the refining process. These brands are often registered for trading purposes. For copper cathode brands to be traded on the LME, they must be registered as brands with the LME, and be included on the exchange's approved list. Freeport currently has nine copper cathode brands registered with the LME, allowing the company to utilise LME contracts for global sales. Two of Freeport's copper cathode brands registered at the LME can be directly traced to Grasberg, according to the company's own published reports.⁹⁴

The origin of the processing of Grasberg's copper concentrate into those brands can be found at two main facilities: PT Smelting (Indonesia), in which Freeport MacMoran holds a 39.5% stake in and Atlantic Copper (Spain), which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Freeport MacMoran). According to Freeport's 2022 Annual Report, 34% of the copper concentrates produced at Grasberg were sold to PT Smelting and 5% were sold to Atlantic Copper.⁹⁵ Those facilities therefore refine Grasberg's copper output and integrate it into global trade networks.

On the 3rd of February 2025, Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) and the London Mining Network (LMN) issued complaint letters to the LME and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regarding the trading of 'dirty copper'.⁹⁶ Under UK criminal law, the LME is obligated to report "any knowledge or suspicion of laundering of proceeds of environmental crime happening on its Exchange. Failure by the London Metal Exchange to exclude these illicit commodities could trigger liability under the Financial Services and Market Act 2000 and the Proceeds of crime Act 2002 (POCA) and could require the Exchange to immediately identify and halt the trade of these metals."⁹⁷

Trading Nickel in London

The LME plays a significant role in the global nickel market, serving as a primary platform for nickel futures and options trading. In 2024, the LME experienced a significant rise in nickel trading volumes, with average daily volumes increasing by 58.8% compared to the previous year.⁹⁸ There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, this is due to a recovery in the global price of nickel. Second, nickel is a crucial component in electric vehicle (EV) batteries. The rising global production of EVs has led to increased demand for nickel, prompting traders and manufacturers to use futures to hedge against fluctuations in the price of the metal.⁹⁹

Crucially, Indonesia has significantly expanded its nickel production, becoming the world's largest supplier. The country's mined production surged from 358,000 tons in 2017 to 2.2 million tons in 2023.

Oil and Gas

The Tangguh liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility, located at Bintuni Bay in the far west of West Papua, represents another key component of Indonesia's extractive ambitions. This facility is operated by a consortium headed by BP, which includes CNOOC and Mitsubishi Corporation.

Tangguh currently supplies roughly 20% of Indonesia's natural gas.¹⁰⁰ In 2016, BP announced Project UCC, a Tangguh expansion focusing on carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), enhanced gas recovery (EGR) and onshore compression.¹⁰¹ In January of 2025, BP launched a tender for a jackup drilling rig and related services and personnel to service a total of eight wells with the option to drill in an additional field that is part of the Tangguh project.¹⁰² The expansion will develop the Ubadari gas field — comprising two new offshore platforms along with 13 new production wells. It is expected to boost total LNG output by approximately 50%¹⁰³ and unlock 3 trillion cubic feet of gas.¹⁰⁴ The expansion is projected to cost \$7 billion.¹⁰⁵

According to BP, production from Ubadari is expected to begin in 2028. Upon completion, the whole facility is projected to provide 35% of Indonesia's gas.¹⁰⁶

Environmental and social impact

The LNG processing facility occupies 3,200 hectares of land, most of which is designated an environmental green zone, meaning construction or development should be highly restricted.¹⁰⁷ In total, the field has gas reserves estimated at over 800 billion cubic meters.¹⁰⁸ After it is processed and burnt, this will amount to well over 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon.¹⁰⁹ This climate impact alone equates to the net reduction of all European Union emissions projected between the years 2015 and 2030.¹¹⁰

The Bintuni Bay region is home to communities whose lives have long been sustained by the rhythms of the sea. Fishing has been both a livelihood and a way of living. Yet, the construction of BP's Tangguh LNG project in the early 2000s ruptured this relationship. The forced relocation of ten villages severed local people from their ancestral fishing grounds, a disruption that was compounded by offshore construction. BP's presence has not only redrawn the physical landscape but has also disrupted the delicate equilibrium between human life and marine ecosystems, a balance that had been maintained through Indigenous custodianship for millennia. Within this landscape of extraction, Bintuni Bay is in the middle of one of the world's largest continuous mangrove forests—a fact that underscores both its ecological significance and its vulnerability.

BP's relocation agreement included commitments to build new homes, schools, and healthcare facilities for displaced communities, as well as a pledge to prioritise local Papuan workers. However, essential services such as electricity, schools, and healthcare remain inadequate.

During the facility's construction, BP established the Tangguh Independent Advisory Panel (TIAP) to provide "independent, external advice to senior BP decision-makers regarding non-commercial aspects of the Tangguh LNG Project".¹¹¹ The panel was tasked with ensuring that Tangguh could serve as a "world-class model for development." Since its inception, TIAP has published 14 reports, the latest of which coincided with BP's announcement of a 20-year contract extension, increasing production capacity by 50% and extending operations until 2055. This report, published in 2023, inadvertently exposes the limits of BP's commitments. Of the 456 homes promised by BP, only 97 had been completed by 2023. A 2018 investigation by *New Matilda* revealed a stark contrast between corporate wealth and community deprivation: despite the BP group recording global profits of \$3.8 billion that year, the primary health clinic it had constructed for local residents had been without electricity for six months.¹¹²

The expansion of Tangguh LNG has also intensified demographic and economic pressures. The influx of thousands of workers has driven up food prices and placed additional strain on local villages. Some Papuan leaders argue that the project has accelerated a broader agenda of cultural erasure, diluting Indigenous identity through migration and economic displacement. A 2008 *Guardian* investigation found that of the 6,000 workers initially employed in the plant's construction, fewer than 500 were retained, with only around 50 being Papuan.¹¹³ The latest expansion employed 13,500 workers, yet long-term employment opportunities for Papuans remain minimal.

The framing of Tangguh as a "world-class model for development" establishes a troubling precedent for global governance.¹¹⁴ The role BP has assumed—overseeing governance functions typically reserved for the state—points to an emerging neoliberal order in West Papua, in which multinational oil companies do not merely extract resources but actively shape the political and economic conditions under which extraction occurs. The TIAP report itself notes since 2004 BP has been expected to "support" and "improve" local governance and that it has "improved the quality of life" for Bintuni Bay's residents.¹¹⁵

The 2023 TIAP report also notes that environmental performance is assessed under Indonesian law, which deems it "excellent." Such assertions fail to acknowledge the fundamental reality that Tangguh operates on occupied land, where Indonesian legal frameworks actively promote extraction. This context renders the endorsement of Indonesian officials unsurprising; their interests are aligned with BP's continued expansion.¹¹⁶

Conflict

Since production began, BP has faced accusations of aligning with Indonesian authorities in the repression of the Papuan population. BP retains close ties with security forces that have been responsible for extrajudicial killings and displacement. The company has been urged by NGOs to “support” and “improve” local governance since 2004.¹¹⁷

A notable incident in 2001 involved BP’s then-senior vice president, John O’Reilly, who visited the plant around the time of an attack on Indonesian police, which left several officers dead. Researcher Eben Kirksey later uncovered evidence suggesting the attack was staged by the Indonesian military.¹¹⁸ In response, the Indonesian government launched Operation ‘Sweep and Crush,’ leading to the detention, torture, and ill-treatment of over 140 people, with seven extrajudicial killings reported.¹¹⁹

While the company employs locally hired Papuan security personnel, it maintains the ability to summon police and military forces at its discretion.¹²⁰ Payments to security forces—documented by multiple sources¹²¹—suggest an implicit endorsement of state violence. The targeting of peaceful social movements in Bintuni Bay by security forces contracted through BP further underscores the complicity of multinational corporations in state repression.¹²²

BP employs local Papuan security guards at its plant but retains the authority to call in police and military forces when deemed necessary.¹²³ The company also pays a fee for protection services to both the police and military.¹²⁴ A 2018 investigation found that BP’s private security force is managed by a company run by retired Indonesian military and police personnel, leading to the suppression of peaceful social movements in Bintuni Bay.¹²⁵

Whilst there is a lack of recent information on this conflict, the Autonomous University of Barcelona’s Global Atlas of Environmental Justice noted in its 2023 update:

“Despite repeated calls to suspend operations, the LNG project is still active, delivering significant financial benefits to the central Indonesian government. As long as the Papuan population suffers under natural resource exploitation that merely serves the government they actively seek independence from and suffer violence from, justice has not been served.”¹²⁶

British Profits

In addition to supplying Indonesia, the Tangguh Bay consortium also holds seven long term international sales and purchase agreements to supply LNG to Mexico, South Korea, China and Japan.¹²⁷ Tangguh is also increasingly becoming a flagship project of the company. In BP’s 2024 Annual Report, in the Gas and Low Carbon Energy section, the Tangguh expansion is the first project mentioned.¹²⁸

We can estimate the annual revenue of the Tangguh Bay LNG facility using published production figures. It has a production capacity of approximately 11.4 million tonnes per annum (MTPA).¹²⁹ To estimate revenue from this production, the annual LNG volume can be converted to energy units, using an approximate energy value of 51.7 MMBtu¹³⁰ per tonne, a commonly used industry average.¹³¹ This means that Tangguh Bay will produce around 589 million MMBtu per year. Assuming a long-term contract price of \$10 per MMBtu, which is within the typical range for Asian buyers in recent years,¹³² the approximate annual gross revenue for the facility can be calculated as: 589 million MMBtu x \$10 per MMBtu = \$5.89 billion.

Of course, this is revenue, not profit, and therefore this figure does not account for production costs, transportation, or taxes. However, it is very significant indeed; a total of 40% of this revenue will accrue to BP under the consortium agreement. We can estimate that BP can reasonably expect a revenue of in excess of £2 billion from Tangguh Bay every year.

Britain and the arming of Indonesia

Britain has a long history of exporting arms to Indonesia, a history that has sparked debates over human rights concerns and their use in internal repression.

Indonesia bought over 40 of BAE Systems Hawk aircraft throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 1993, a significant contract was secured for the sale of 24 Hawk fighter-trainers to Indonesia, a deal that was met with controversy due to concerns over their use not only for training, but for attacks in the suppression of the independence struggle in East Timor.¹³³ British firm Babcock and BAE Systems have also supplied naval vessels and weapons to Indonesia.¹³⁴

While the UK does not publicly disclose *total* arms export figures, it does publish data on export licences and defence contracts. Two types of licences are issued for arms exports. First, limited-value “standard” licences which must stipulate the value of each export. Second, pre-approved, flexible licences allow a specific UK exporter, normally a major arms company, to export a number of shipments of military equipment to multiple destinations over a set period of time (usually up to five years). Those licences do not specify the value of the export since they are flexible. It is therefore assumed that the latter type of licences are much higher in value.

According to British government data obtained by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade,¹³⁵ since 2008, the British government has issued 2,055 limited-value “standard” licences and 170 unlimited-value licences for Indonesian arms exports. The total value of the former is over £1.1 billion. As noted above, the value of the latter is likely to be much higher. *Figure 1* sets out the numbers of items included in those licences.

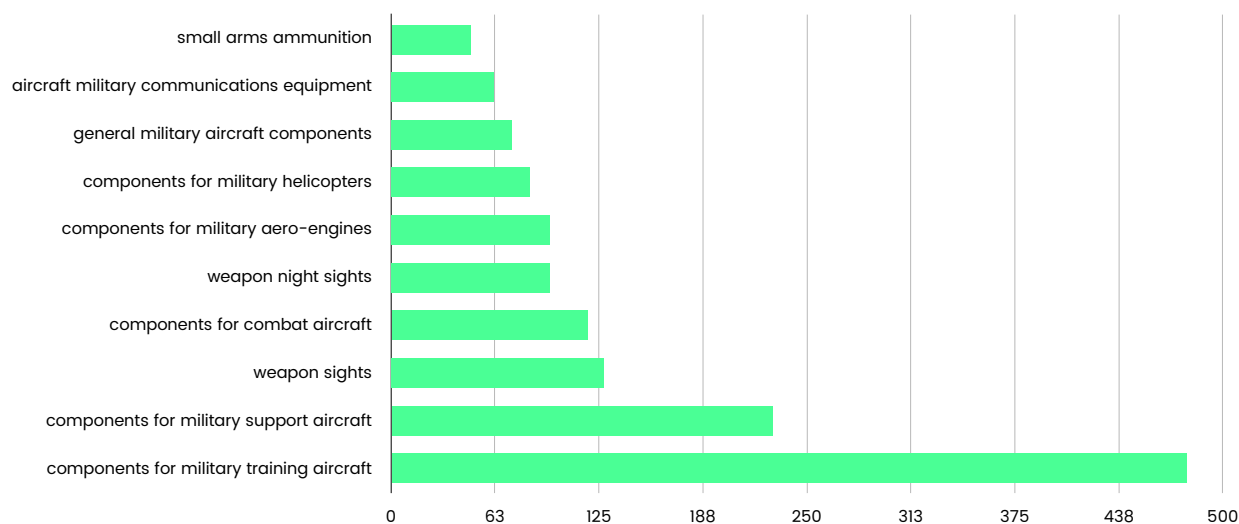


Figure 1: British arms exports to Indonesia since 2008 by included items

In 2003, legal proceedings were launched against the UK government, arguing that arms exports to Indonesia violated UK and EU laws prohibiting sales where there is a risk of internal repression. In 2004, the High Court rejected the challenge.¹³⁶

In 2015, the UK Export Finance annual report revealed that £175 million in loans had been granted to Indonesia for Starstreak missiles supplied by Thales (a French company with 16 sites across Britain). Evidence from the 2021 Kiwirok attacks discussed above, which displaced entire villages, confirmed the use of Thales FZ 68 rockets.¹³⁷

Britain's involvement in supporting the Indonesian military extends beyond arms sales. The UK-Indonesia Partnership Roadmap 2022-2024 outlines plans for joint military training, including a Jungle Warfare Exercise between the British and Indonesian armies in 2022/2023. Additionally, according to a report by news agency *New Matilda*, the UK has spent over £1 million since 2014 training Indonesian police units.¹³⁸ The Indonesian Mobile Brigade Corps (Brimob), a special forces unit often deployed in West Papua, is trained in counter-terrorism at the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC). The UK is the second largest funder of the JCLEC providing £998,214 according to the 2017 and 2019 annual reports.¹³⁹ In 2018, the UK provided 59 programs through the centre.¹⁴⁰

According to documents obtained from the Ministry of Defence through the freedom of information requests, the British Army and Royal Navy have provided numerous training courses in defence to the Indonesian Military. Between 2009-2022, the British army delivered 83 courses, many of which could be used fighting insurgency in West Papua. For example, five of those courses were entitled "International Jungle Warfare Instructions Course."¹⁴¹

Conclusion

The relationship between securitisation and the presence of transnational corporations is not merely one that is based on a mutual interest between the Indonesian state and investing corporations. This relationship is also a direct one since the Indonesian military charges security fees. Freeport McMoran and BP have thus paid significant sums of money to retain the services of private security companies.¹⁴² During local protests against mining and other activities, Indonesian forces have utilised water cannons and rubber bullets to disperse protestors. They also routinely fired upon crowds engaged in peaceful protests, resulting in civilian casualties.¹⁴³ The arbitrary detention and torture of Papuan dissenters has also been routinely employed by military actors to defend corporate land-grabbing for agriculture and highly contentious industrial projects.¹⁴⁴

The forms of extractivism led by transnational corporations in West Papua can be thought of as *predatory* in two closely interlinked ways. First they are value extractive. They extract value from resources that are below the land or seas that local people lived on, and lived from, for tens of thousands of years. They extract resources and the value from those resources with very little going back to local people. Second, those forms of extractivism necessitate violent interventions by the Indonesian state and its security forces because of the need to secure a process of value extraction that either destroys food sources, water supplies and living space, or simply displaces people *en masse*. In order to defend their livelihoods, people are therefore forced to confront the corporations and state forces that are the protagonists of those forms of *hyper*-extractivism. It is a process that has led one commentator to describe what is happening in West Papua as “killing in the name of development.”¹⁴⁵

This report has shown that this process of hyper-extractivism relies upon British corporations and British markets, just as it relies upon the supply of British weapons and training. The British government on its website has stated: “The UK will reaffirm long-held respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Indonesia, including the provinces of Papua and West Papua, and that the UK reaffirms that it does not support activities or views of any individual or entity which advocate against that territorial integrity.” The British state in other words guarantees the repression and dispossession of the West Papuan people. Shareholders in British companies are major benefactors of the form of settler colonialism and industrial racism that plays out in West Papua.

Every year, a list of British companies, or companies with major operations and investments in Indonesia, are invited to the Monarch's annual birthday celebrations by the British embassy in Jakarta. This list of companies reflects the list of British commercial interests in Indonesia. *Annex 2* shows the invitees to this event for the years 2019-2024. The invitation list includes some prominent names that feature in this report: Aberdeen Group, Jardine Matheson, BAE Systems, Babcock, Barclays, BP, HSBC, Rio Tinto, Schroders and Unilever. Those annual birthday celebrations alert us to the fact that the British government is playing an active role not just in facilitating business in Indonesia, but is facilitating business with the firms that profit directly from West Papua and in doing so is fueling the brutal repression detailed in this report.

The UK-Indonesia Partnership Roadmap 2022-2024, published in 2022, summarises the British government's policy on the relationship between the two countries. This document projects "dynamic connections between our people; significantly increased two-way trade and investment flows... sustained UK-Indonesia leadership on climate, clean energy and sustainable development."

This commitment to a continued long term partnership also promises the continuation and escalation of repression for West Papuans.

In March of 2025, the Indonesian government sparked protests across the country by ratifying a revision to military law which allows for active military personnel to hold an even wider range of government posts such as the Attorney General's office, the State Secretariat, the Counterterrorism Agency and other civil institutions.¹⁴⁶ Current President Prabowo Subianto is a former special forces commander and the former son-in-law of President Suharto, known for his 32 year military dictatorship.¹⁴⁷ Peaceful protests across the country have been met with violence by Indonesian riot police.¹⁴⁸ This consolidation of military power does not bode well for West Papuans attempting to seek justice through these institutions.

The struggles described here are struggles over land and territory in terms of who owns them, yes. But much more fundamentally they are struggles over the form of land ownership that has been imposed upon the West Papuan people, first by the Dutch and then by Indonesian occupiers. Land ownership is based on the extension of the commodity form of land-as-property in which 'unoccupied land' is parcelled up by the state for sale to wealthy individual investors, profit making corporations and the state itself. This commodity form is almost universally opposed and is seen as fundamentally hostile, violent and destroying the capacity for social reproduction and survival in West Papua.¹⁴⁹ Collective ownership of land is not merely a cultural preference, but is a matter of survival. Thus, "the reduction of land available to indigenous Papuans, through the settlement of

transmigrants and other forms of economic development, [has] resulted in a reduction in the lands necessary for indigenous Papuans to practise shifting cultivation – their traditional means of subsistence.”¹⁵⁰

The UK-Indonesia Partnership Roadmap promises “dynamic connections between our people; significantly increased two-way trade and investment flows... sustained UK-Indonesia leadership on climate, clean energy and sustainable development.” The partnership is explicitly aimed at accelerating the Indonesian model of industrial development based upon the theft of land. As British investors line up to profit from this model of industrial development and industrial racism, the British government offers its unconditional support.

The evidence set out in this report demonstrates that its unconditional support will simply mean more repression, more mass displacement and continued poverty for the West Papuan people.

Annexes

Company	Sector	Type of Interest
BP	Oil & gas	Direct
Jardine Matheson/ Astra Agro Lestari	Agriculture	Direct via subsidiary
Unilever	Agriculture	Via supply chain
Nichejungle	Agriculture	Shareholding
Prudential	Agriculture	Shareholding
Schroders	Agriculture	Shareholding
HSBC	Agriculture	Shareholding
FIM Investors	Agriculture	Shareholding
St James's Place	Agriculture	Shareholding
abrdn plc	Agriculture	Shareholding
Silchester International Investors	Agriculture	Shareholding
Heptagon Capital	Agriculture	Shareholding
Jupiter Fund Management	Agriculture	Shareholding
Legal & General	Agriculture	Shareholding
Tower Investments	Agriculture	Shareholding
Fulcrum Pvt	Agriculture	Shareholding
Portelet Investments	Agriculture	Shareholding
Northern Trust Global Investments	Mining	Shareholding
Legal & General Investment Management	Mining	Shareholding
Janus Henderson Group	Mining	Shareholding
Barclays PLC and Barclays Bank	Mining	Shareholding
HSBC Global Asset Management UK	Mining	Shareholding

Company	Sector	Type of Interest
Ninety One UK	Mining	Shareholding
Qube Research & Technologies	Mining	Shareholding
Marshall Wace	Mining	Shareholding
Railways Pension Trustee Company	Mining	Shareholding
J O Hambro Capital Management	Mining	Shareholding
Hosking Partners	Mining	Shareholding
Rathbones Investment Management	Mining	Shareholding
Aberdeen Group	Mining	Shareholding
Brewin Dolphin	Mining	Shareholding
AHL Partners	Mining	Shareholding
Schroder Investment Management	Mining	Shareholding
Pictet Asset Management	Mining	Shareholding
Royal London Asset Management	Mining	Shareholding
Hermes Investment Management	Mining	Shareholding
Marathon Asset Management	Mining	Shareholding
Baker Street Capital Managers	Mining	Shareholding
Jupiter Fund Management	Mining	Shareholding
London Bullion Market Association	Mining	Trading
London Metal Exchange	Mining	Trading

Name	Industry	2019 celebration	2022 celebration	2023 celebration	2024 celebration
Aberdeen Standard Life	Financial services	x			
Aggreko Energy Services Indonesia	Energy and utilities	x			
Allen & Overy	Corporate Legal services		x	x	
ARUP	Architecture, engineering, infrastructure		x	x	x
Astra International (Jardine Matheson)	Mining, logistics, agribusiness, financial services etc.	x		x	x
BAE Systems Ltd	Aerospace, defence and security		x	x	x
Babcock	Aerospace, defence and nuclear engineering		x	x	x
Barclays Capital	Investment banking	x			
BMT Asia Pacific Indonesia	Environmental management consultancy	x			
BP Indonesia	Oil and gas	x		x	x
BP Petrochemicals Indonesia	Petrochemicals	x			
British Standards Institute	Standards and certification	x		x	
BuroHappold UK	Engineering consultancy	x		x	x
Clarke Energy	Energy			x	
CRODA Indonesia	Chemicals			x	x
Deloitte	Consulting	x			
Edelman	Strategy and consulting	x			
EDMS Ltd	Security systems	x			
Energy Industries Council (EIC) UK	Trade association	x			
Ernst & Young	Consulting	x			
Harbour Energy	Oil & gas			x	x

Annex 2: List of British companies and companies with major UK operations invited to the Monarch's birthday celebrations in Jakarta for the years 2019-2024¹⁵¹

Name	Industry	2019 celebration	2022 celebration	2023 celebration	2024 celebration
Houlder	Marine and offshore engineering	x			
HSBC	Financial services	x	x	x	x
Invest NI	Investments	x			
Jardines Lloyd Thompson reinsurance Brokers	Risk insurance	x			
JCB Indonesia	Construction Equipment	x			
Linklaters LLP	Legal Services	x			
Lloyd's Register Indonesia	Maritime classification, assurance, certification, inspection, and training	x		x	
LSEG	Financial sector			x	x
Mott MacDonald	Engineering consulting	x	x	x	x
OCS Indonesia	Cleaning & security				x
Ophir	Oil & gas	x			
Pilgrims Group	Security risk management	x			
Premier Oil	Oil & gas	x	x		
PricewaterhouseCoopers Indonesia Advisory	Consulting	x	x	x	x
Rio Tinto	Mining	x			
Schroders Indonesia	Asset management	x			
Serco	Public services, defence etc.	x			
Shell	Oil & gas	x	x	x	x
Standard Chartered Bank	Financial services	x	x	x	
Tony Blair Institute	Research & consulting			x	
Turner & Townsend	Construction			x	x
Unilever Indonesia Tbk	FMCG	x	x	x	x
Wood Group Kenny	Subsea engineering, oil & gas	x			

Annex 2: List of British companies and companies with major UK operations invited to the Monarch's birthday celebrations in Jakarta for the years 2019-2024¹⁵¹

Endnotes

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