

Rio Tinto admits to bribery charges

BY SANDRA RAMBLER
SHANGHAI, CHINA

— On March 20, admissions of guilt for taking bribes were made by four top executives employed by one of the world's largest foreign mining companies, Rio Tinto.

Stern Hu, who was in charge of Rio Tinto's iron ore operations in China, will serve 10 years and be fined \$73,250 while the three other executives will be sentenced to between seven and 14 years on bribery and secrets charges for commercial espionage.

Rio Tinto is a key industry negotiator in commodity price talks with the government and is one of the top providers of iron ore in China.

Since the arrest, the four Rio Tinto employees, have not been allowed any public comment. The maximum penalty for taking large bribes in China is five years and seven years in prison for commercial espionage.

Rio Tinto and Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP), the two largest foreign mining companies in the world, would greatly benefit from the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange Bill that has been previously introduced by Arizona senators, John McCain and Jon Kyl.

This bill would short circuit the usual and customary process all mining companies go through to get mining permits in the United

States. Instead, the bill would allow the companies to get a free pass from the U.S. Federal Laws and to mine in the most destructive way possible, a copper ore body below land that is considered sacred by the Apache people near Superior, Ariz.

The bill tramples over all the religious and human rights of Native American Indian tribes, who are opposed to the land exchange bill. A tribal resolution opposing the land swap had been passed by the San Carlos Apache Tribe and various neighboring tribes in Arizona and the National Indian Congress of American Indians, the largest Native American Indian organization in the United States.

The special interest legislation would allow Rio Tinto and BHP to bypass the normal procedure all mining companies go through, without any look by the U.S. government at the mine design or the consequences of mining to the area landscape. The guilty verdict and convictions of Rio Tinto's four top executives may raise questions about Rio Tinto's business practices.

The proposed land swap bill would also override the Executive Order made by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1955 to make Oak Flat off limits to mining and this would set a dangerous precedent.

The bill proposed by Arizona

senators McCain and Kyl is the latest in a series of previously failed attempts to carve out a special interest taxpayer bailout for these giant mining companies of Rio Tinto and BHP.

The name of the mine proposed at Oak Flat is Resolution Copper Mine owned by BHP and Rio Tinto.

In more events earlier this month, Arizona Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick introduced House Bill 4880, a new version of the bill originally introduced by Arizona senators McCain and Kyl. Kirkpatrick is calling it the "Copper Basin Jobs Project."

Meanwhile, Wendsler Nosie, Sr., Tribal Chairman for the San Carlos Apache Tribe, testified before the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate conveying great opposition to the Southeast Arizona Land Exchange bill as proposed by Arizona senators McCain and Kyl.

"The administrative process should be followed by all foreign companies that are trying to conduct business in the United States and these mining companies such as BHP and Rio Tinto should be no exception," says Chairman Nosie. "Our Apache people have suffered long enough and have faced many atrocities. But our prayers are strong and we are continuing our Apache way of life each day."