
Problems with oil exploration in Colombia

Last February the Colombian Environment Ministry issued an authorization for oil exploration by Oxy, a branch of the US company Occidental, to start in indigenous territory on the border with Venezuela, considered one of the largest oil fields of the hemisphere. To stop the beginning of the activities of the company, about 4,000 members of the U'wa tribe recently threatened to commit mass suicide if oil exploration takes place on their ancestral lands.

"All honorable men and women understand that the path one follows by causing wounds to mother Earth is a deadly one," said Jose Cobarria said, a spokesperson of the U'wa. He issued an appeal for help from the international community, "so that they help the white man (Oxy) understand the meaning of the life of the people and animals" who live on the tribal lands

Source: Amazon Coalition Action Alert/ Update February 4, 5, 1997; Associated Press, February 3, 1997.