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Amazon Defense Coalition: Chevron Lying About Toxins in Mr. Salinas' Water Well, Evidence Shows

Elderly Man in Ecuador's Rainforest Becomes Target of Global Internet Attacks Fostered by Oil Giant

LAGO AGRIO, Ecuador--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--Yes, the scientific evidence at trial in Ecuador proves that the freshwater well at the house of Manuel Salinas in Ecuador's Amazon -- featured on 60 Minutes on Sunday -- is contaminated with toxic carcinogens. Sorry, Chevron, but Mr. Salinas knows more than you do about his own well.

Salinas, a long-suffering elderly man in Ecuador's rainforest who was featured on the broadcast Sunday, has been targeted by Chevron in a web-based global misinformation campaign that claims the well from where he gets his drinking water is free of oil-related contamination. He lived with his family and some chickens for more than twenty-five years next to an enormous toxic waste pit built by Texaco in 1974 that still oozes its contents into the surrounding soils and groundwater, as reported by the broadcast network and confirmed by trial evidence.

In the broadcast, Mr. Salinas -- one of thousands of Ecuadorians suing the oil giant for \$27 billion in damages -- complained to correspondent Scott Pelley that the water in his well was contaminated and smelled of oil.

Chevron has since claimed, in messages repeated on the internet by several right-wing bloggers, that evidence in the trial shows that the water well on Mr. Salinas' land is not contaminated with hydrocarbons.

Chevron is wrong, according to the definitive report on the trial evidence prepared by an independent, court-appointed expert who reviewed more than 62,000 chemical sampling results produced as evidence by both parties.

A water sample taken in the trial directly from Mr. Salinas' freshwater well showed toxic levels of likely carcinogens and harmful heavy metals that are derived from oil, including benzo[a]pyrene, indeno[1,2,3]pyrene, and cadmium. The U.S. government, has determined that each of these chemicals are likely or probable carcinogens, as reflected in a toxic substance registry maintained at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

The oil drilling site next to Salinas' house, called Shushufindi 38, was built by Texaco and closed by the company without any remediation long before it stopped operating in Ecuador in 1990. Petroleum hydrocarbon levels found in soil samples taken in and around the waste pit were as high as 476,528 ppm, or 4,760 times than maximum amounts permitted under relevant U.S. law.

"The pollution in the entire area where Mr. Salinas lives is comparable to



many Superfund sites in the U.S.," said Douglas Beltman, the scientific advisor to the local communities and a former EPA official. "Chevron should be ashamed of itself for attacking this defenseless man instead of cleaning up the pollution it left behind, which Mr. Salinas has been forced to live with."

Chevron has also tried to claim the oil well next to Mr. Salinas' house is the property of Petroecuador, Ecuador's state-owned oil company. In fact, the well was never used by Petroecuador for oil production, only by Texaco. Texaco was solely responsible for the design, construction, operation, and closure of the waste pits around Salinas' home and will be held responsible for cleaning it should the communities win the lawsuit.

Chevron purchased Texaco in 2001 and will be responsible for any liability assessed in the case. The trial is expected to end later this year.

About the Amazon Defense Coalition

The Amazon Defense Coalition represents dozens of rainforest communities and five indigenous groups that inhabit Ecuador's Northern Amazon region. The mission of the Coalition is to protect the environment and secure social justice through grass roots organizing, political advocacy, and litigation. Two of its leaders, Luis Yanza and Pablo Fajardo, are the 2008 winners of the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize.

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