

Cenit works to contain spill damage

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World Pipelines, Thursday, 23 February 2023 10:00

Colombian oil pipeline operator Cenit is working to contain damage from an oil spill from the Transandino pipeline (OTA), which was caused by an illegal valve used to siphon off crude, the company said in a statement on Tuesday.

Colombia loses thousands of barrels of oil per day to thieves who drill into pipelines traversing the country. The stolen oil is typically used in processes for making cocaine or bootleg fuel for illegal mining.

Cenit said it is working to contain damage and repair a section of the OTA in Ricaurte, a municipality in the Andean country's Narino province. It called the situation an emergency, posing an environmental threat to local waterways, but did not comment on how much oil had spilled.

"An illicit valve installed by unknown third parties was found on the OTA, which was causing a loss of crude oil," Cenit, a fully-owned subsidiary of majority state-owned oil company [Ecopetrol](#), said in a statement.

"This illicit valve was dealt with as soon as it was detected," Cenit said. A Reuters investigation last year reported that scores of illegal refineries used to process stolen oil were polluting jungle areas near the Pacific-port city of Tumaco, also in Narino province.

"Cenit is working to activate two control points," the company said. "One on the river Guiza and another on the river Mira, monitoring the state of the bodies of water."

People in the area should steer clear of the contamination and allow technical professionals access to the site, the statement said. Locals should avoid consuming or using water from the area, it added.

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