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APRIL says facts don't support claims of major fires on its concessions

Comments reportedly made by Indonesia's Senior Presidential Aide, Kuntoro Mangkusubroto naming Asia Pacific Resources International Limited (APRIL) as one of several companies responsible for a majority of fire hotspots in Riau Province, Indonesia require verification. They do not correspond with intensive monitoring on-the-ground conducted by APRIL in its own concessions over the past several weeks nor with information on Friday from Indonesia's official national body for Meteorology, Climate and Geophysics (BKMKG), which identified 13 hotspots in Riau, none of which are on APRIL's concessions.

On Thursday, the Director General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation of the Ministry of Forestry, Sonny Partono stated that assessments by the Ministry clearly indicated fire hot spots were primarily occurring outside of concession areas licensed to large companies.

In addition, Director General of the Ministry of Forestry Bambang Hendroyono confirmed on Friday that fires causing haze were mostly occurring on community land, not forestry concessions. He highlighted that large concession holders had no reason to conduct burning on their land because it was prohibited by law and would damage their commercial interests.

APRIL has maintained a strict no-burn policy in its concessions since commencing operations in 1994 and continues to monitor its concessions daily, deploying land patrols and aerial surveillance. APRIL also actively deploys its fire fighting resources to assist government and communities in fighting fires outside its concession areas.

While there have been a small number of fires within APRIL's concessions over the past three weeks, all of those fires were spread from fires that began outside our concessions and all were quickly extinguished by our fire fighting teams.

Fire prevention, detection and rapid deployment of resources to extinguish fires is a key operational commitment by APRIL. Protection of our concession areas from fires also makes strong commercial sense – fires in our concessions would destroy valuable forestry assets.