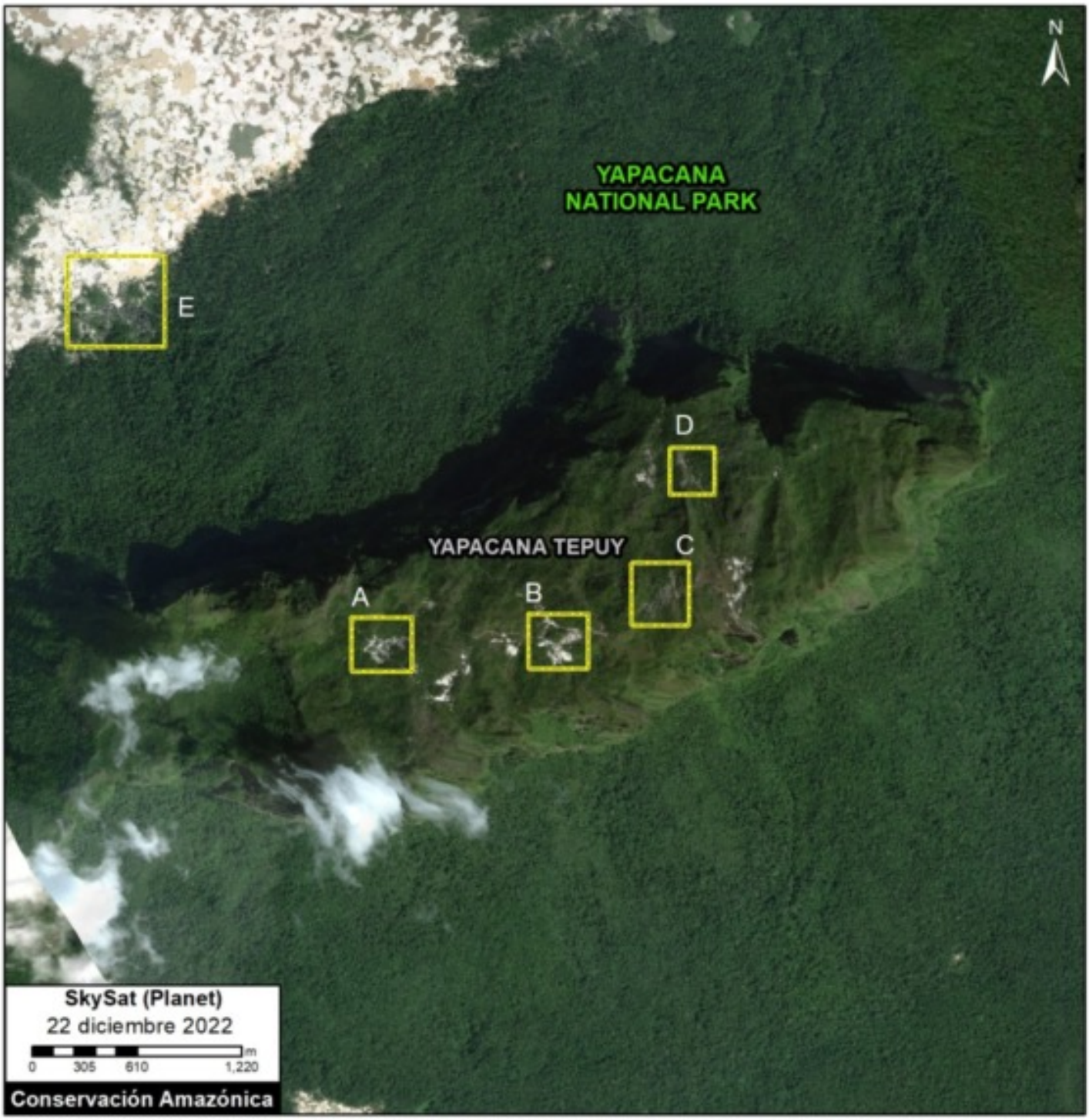
MAAP #174: Following Raid, Illegal Mining Camps Still Intact on Yapacana Tepui (Venezuela Amazon)



Base Map. Illegal mining in Yapacana National Park, location of Zooms A-E below. Data: ACA/MAAP, Planet

Several weeks ago (on December 17, 2022), the **Venezuelan government conducted a military operation against illegal mining activity in Yapacana National Park,** located in the heart of the Venezuelan Amazon.

This operation came just after a high-profile article in the Washington Post exposing the severity of the illegal mining within the park, including **on top of the sacred Yapacana tepui mountain**. MAAP also published two urgent reports on the subject (MAAP #156 and MAAP #169).

The raid was documented on Twitter by the Operational Strategic Commander of the Armed Forces of Venezuela (see links below).

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According to the series of tweets, the military was dismantling illegal mining camps, equipment, and supplies.

We obtained and analyzed **very high-resolution satellite images** taken just before (December 10) and after (December 22) the crackdown (December 17), covering the tepui and part of the surrounding lowlands (see **Base Map**).

We found **no signs of the crackdown taking down mining camps on top of the tepui**. As presented in the series of images below, mining camps on the tepui appear intact and not dismantled (see Zooms A – D).

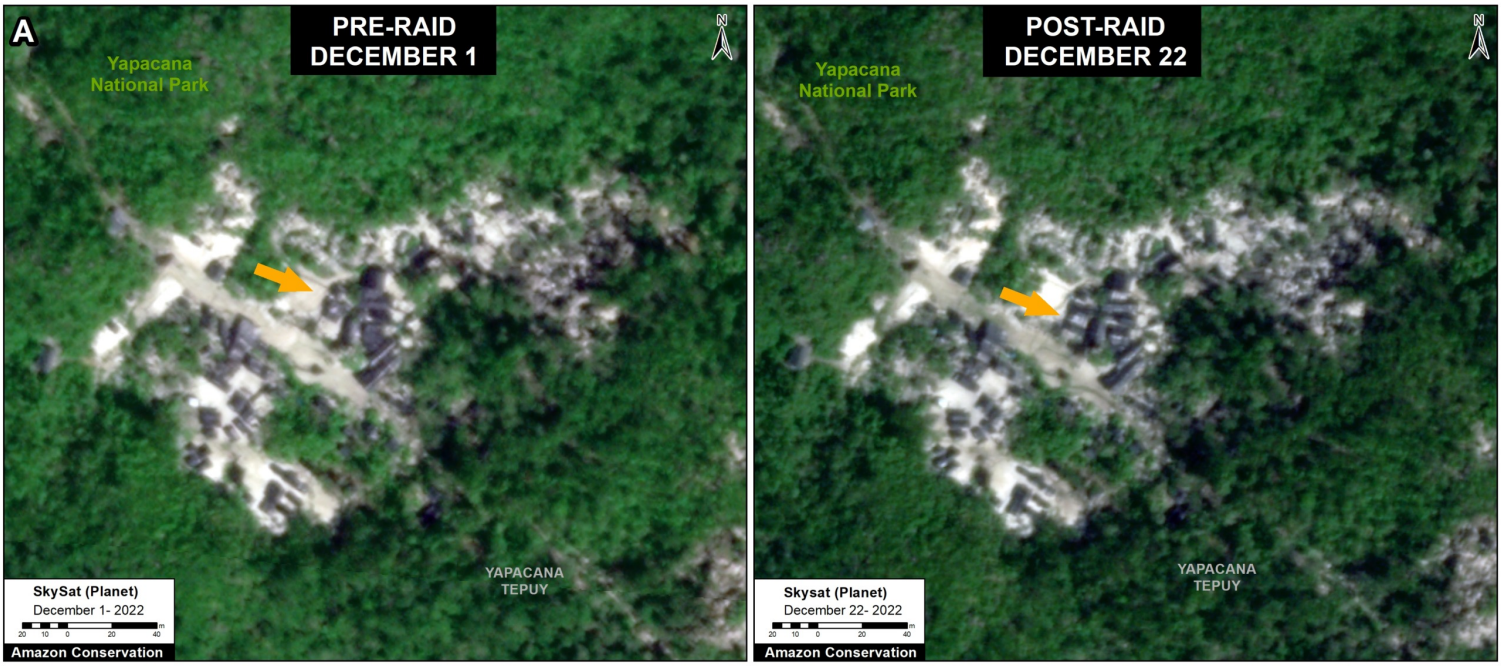
We also found no major signs of the operation in a section of the lowlands adjacent to the tepui (see Zoom E).

In conclusion, given the massive scale of illegal mining activity in Yapacana National Park, it is clear that a single operation is not sufficient to dismantle thousands of mining camps and remove thousands of illegal miners. A large-scale and long-term effort is needed.

High-Resolution Zooms

The following series of very high-resolution satellite images show the tepui and part of the surrounding lowlands just before (left panel) vs just after (right panel) the government raid. See Base Map above for location of Zooms A-E. The orange arrows serve as general reference points between the two panels.

Zoom A



Zoom A. Data: ACA/MAAP, Planet.

Zoom B

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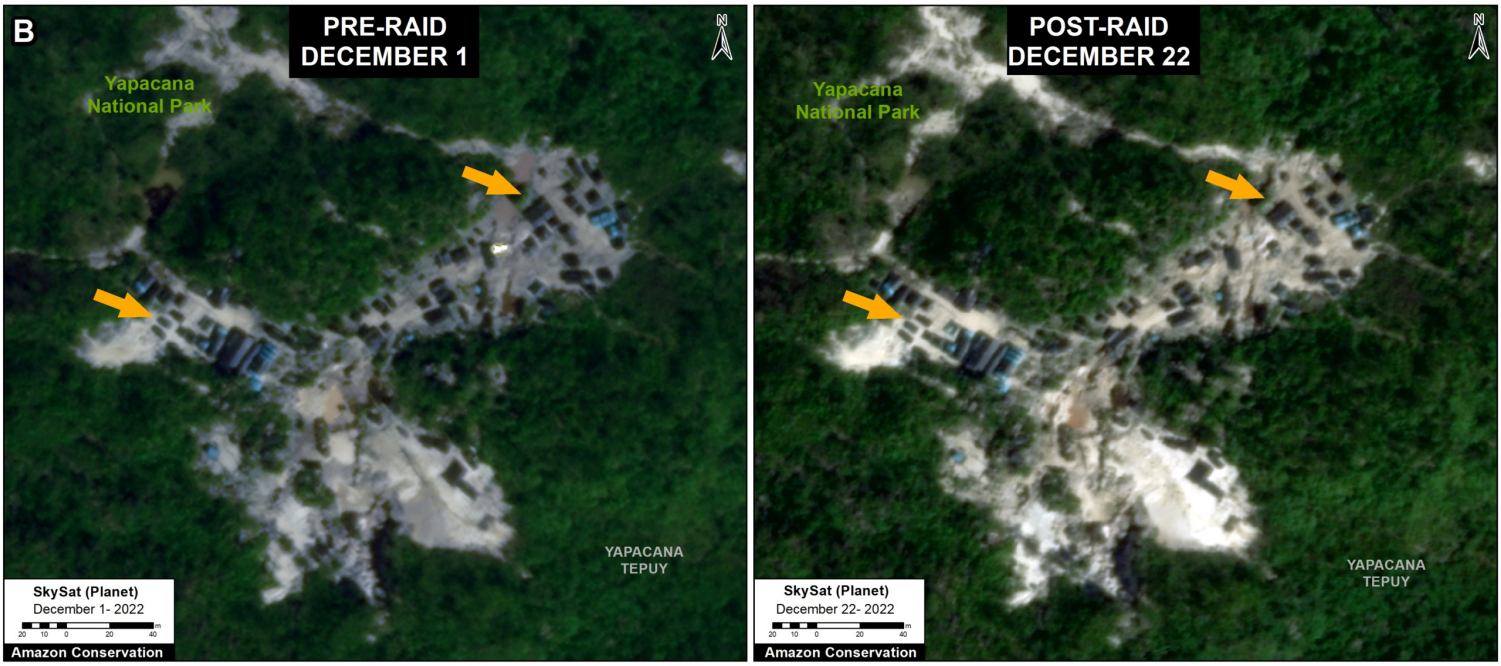

Zoom B. Data: ACA/MAAP, Planet.

Zoom C

Zoom C. Data: ACA/MAAP, Planet.

Zoom D

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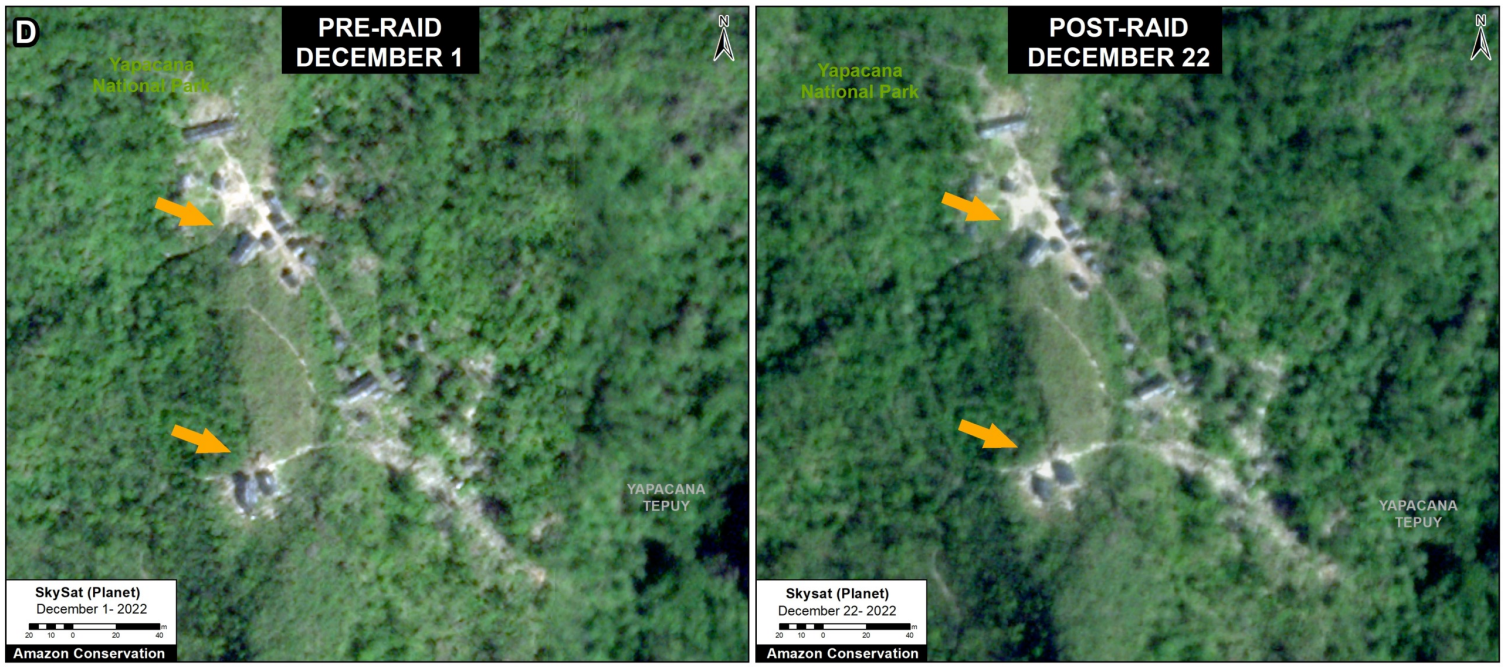
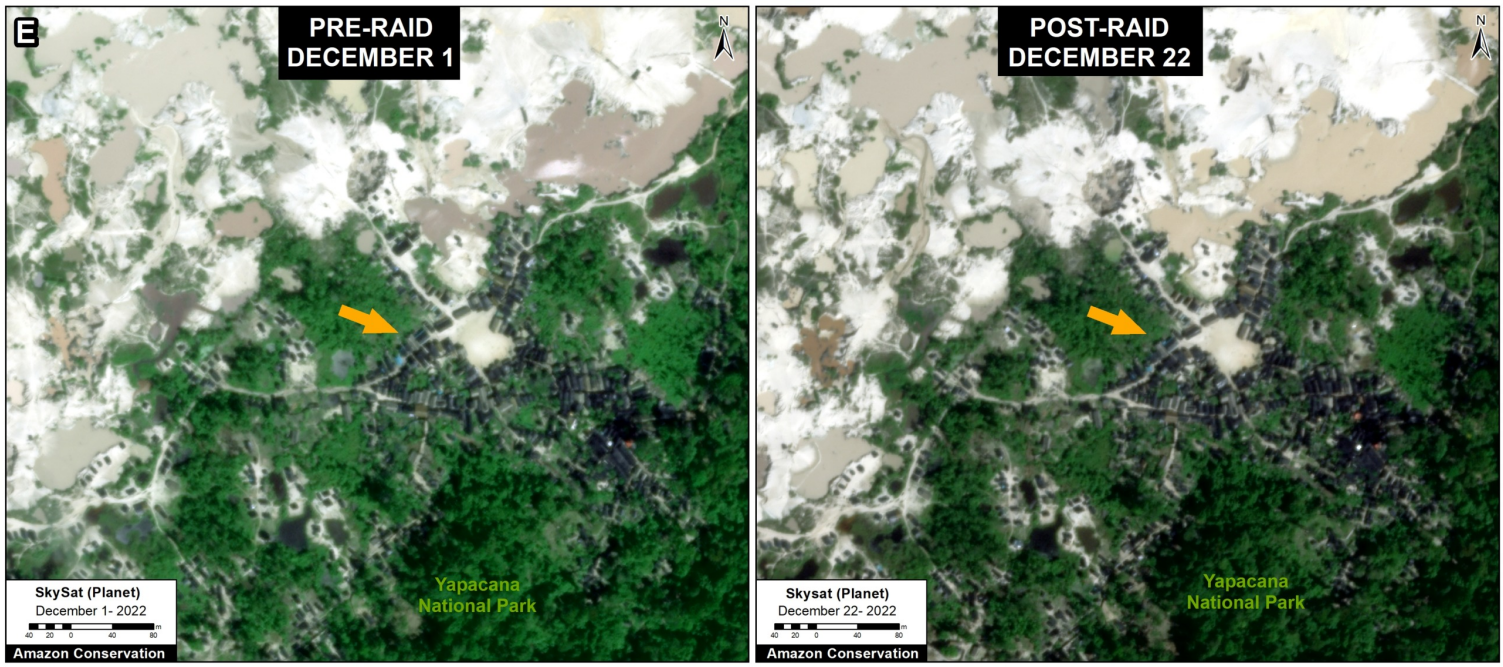


Zoom D. Data: ACA/MAAP, Planet.

Zoom E



Zoom E. Data: ACA/MAAP, Planet.

Raid Documented on Twitter

As noted above, the recent raid in Yapacana National Park was documented on Twitter by the Operational Strategic Commander of the Armed Forces of Venezuela, as seen in this series of links:

#FANB desplegada en el Parque Nacional Yapacana - Amazonas, en el desmantelamiento de campamentos de minería ilegal.
Dec 18, 2022

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#FANB desplegada en Yapacana - Amazonas desactivando y desmantelando estructuras de minería ilegal, quienes hacen caso omiso a Las Leyes de la República y violan todo tipo de ordenamiento y reglamentaciones para la conservación del medio ambiente natural y la biodiversidad.
Dec 19, 2022

En misiones de Seguridad y Defensa #FANB inutiliza 8 motores, 6 plantas eléctricas y otras estructuras usadas arbitrariamente en el Parque Nacional Cerro Yapacana por grupos armados que irrespetando el ordenamiento territorial destruyen el ambiente con trabajos de minería ilegal.
Dec 19, 2022

En Operaciones de Seguridad y Defensa en el Parque Nacional Yapacana #FANB localiza y desmantela campamento de minería ilegal con 27 moto bombas, 10 plantas eléctricas, 6 turbinas, 5000 metros de manguera, 4000 litros de gasoil, 2 tamices y otros pertrechos de minería ilegal.
Dec 19, 2022

#FANB desplegada en el Parque Nacional Yapacana - Amazonas, destruyendo e inutilizando maquinarias y medios de soporte de minería ilegal que son enterrados por parte de los grupos delincuenciales armados para evitar su localización.
Dec 20, 2022

#FANB desplegada en misiones de Seguridad y Defensa en Yapacana. Está prohibida la explotación minera en áreas protegidas por el Estado, como Parques Naturales, Bosques y Reservas Forestales. Quienes incumplan dicha normativa serán intervenidos legalmente de acuerdo a La Ley.
Dec 21, 2022

Acknowledgements

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Citation

Finer M, Ariñez A (2023) Following Raid, Illegal Mining Camps Still Appear Active on Yapacana Tepui (Venezuela Amazon). MAAP: 174.

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