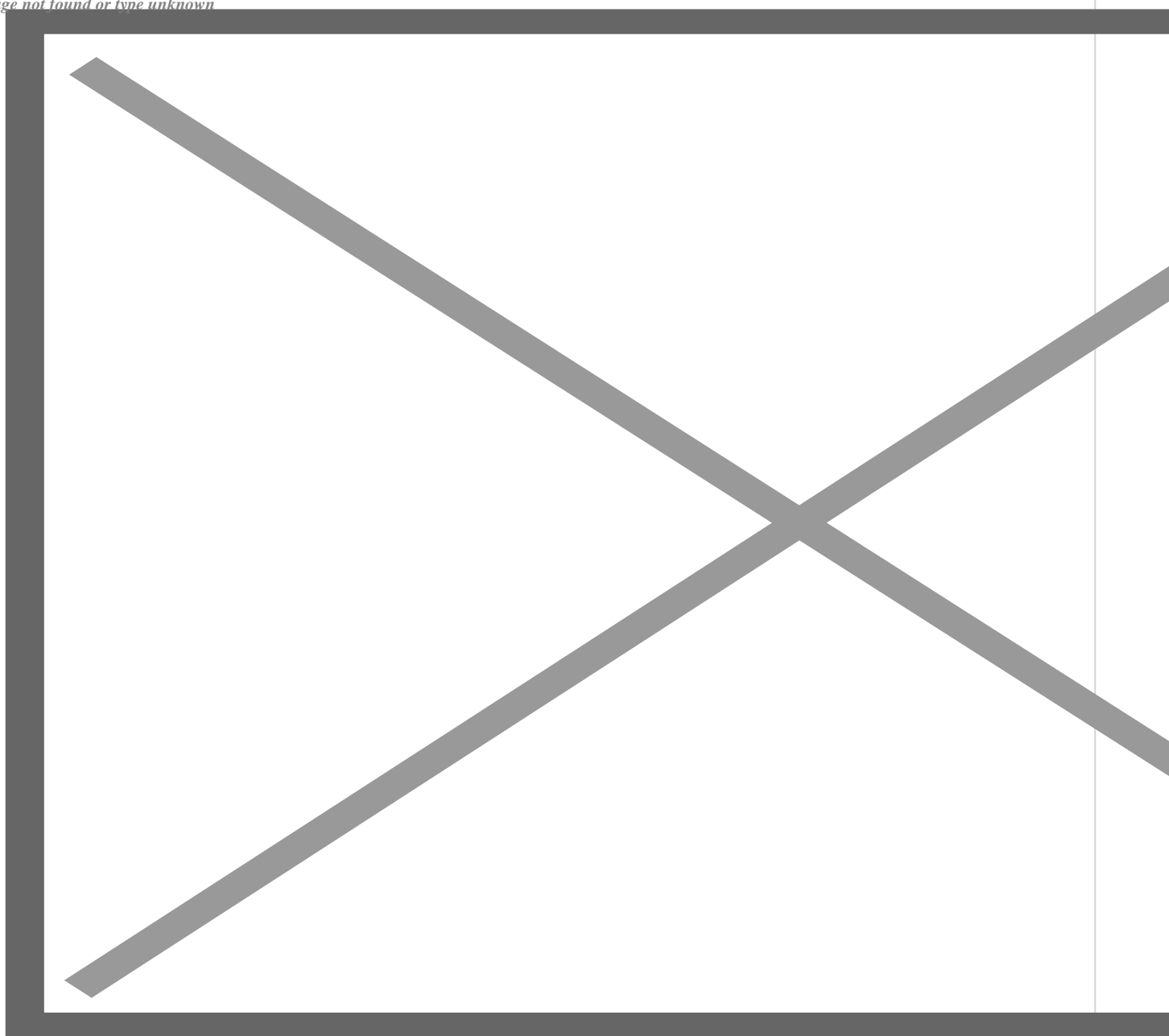


Bolivia starts criminal cases against provoked forest fires

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In this file photo, firefighters try to extinguish a fire in the grasslands surrounding the Viru Viru airport in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. 831 fires had been reported in Bolivia just in the first days of August, for a total this year of 15,555. (AFP/Rodrigo Urzagasti)

La Paz, August 31 (RHC)-- The Bolivian Forest and Land Social Control and Inspection Authority (ABT) reports that 54 criminal proceedings are being conducted for causing forest fires in regions of the country's eastern departments.

Of the ongoing investigations, 48 were conducted in the department of Santa Cruz and 6 in Beni. Similarly, 27 of the trials are related to complaints against identified persons and 27 to alleged perpetrators.

The Palmasola Prison has 4 people in pre-trial detention, of which two are charged for damage to forest reserves and two for damage to protected areas. The ABT has thus far initiated 253 administrative proceedings, of which 155 in Santa Cruz, 36 in Beni and 62 in the rest of the nation.

The authority further reported that 144 of these processes belong to private properties and 109 in peasant, intercultural or Community Territories of Origin (TCOs) communities.

The ABT conducted operations in fire-reporting sites based on reports collected and information from the Geospatial Monitoring and Information Unit (Umig) The Commission has been working with the Member States to identify and establish the responsibility for the use of the new technologies.

The Government enacted DS 5203, which provides for an increase in the fine for illegal burning from 190 to 976 Housing Development Units (UFVs), and will be put into effect with the approval of its regulations.

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