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ALLISON DEMPSTER: A small exploration company has been at the heart of some big news in Northern Ontario lately. Platinex is behind the \$10-billion lawsuit launched against a Northern Ontario First Nation. That has the First Nation calling into question the Province's entire mining regime. Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug filed a constitutional challenge to the Mining Act as part of their defence in the suit last week. Now court documents show Platinex may be the first in what some people are calling a disturbing new development in mining exploration in Canada. The CBC's Jody Porter joins us now to explain why. Hi Jody.

JODY PORTER: Good morning.

DEMPSTER: So what's this new development?

PORTER: It's the use of a former military man to provide security for a mineral exploration company. This happened back in February when Platinex started its drilling program near Big Trout Lake, that's about 600 kilometres north of Thunder Bay. You may remember the news stories, the people of the nearby First Nation, that's Kitchenuhmaykoosib, issued the company with an eviction notice. The community said the exploration work was a violation of its ban on resource development on their traditional lands. That's when the company brought in a former soldier named Paul Gladstone, and we know about this because Gladstone had to file an Affidavit as part of Platinex's lawsuit against the community. In the court documents Gladstone says his role was to assess and manage the situation, but what concerns the First Nation about this man well part of it has to do with Gladstone's background. He's a former officer with the British army and he's got a private security company set up with offices in the U.S. and Canada, but most of his recent experience is related to mines in the Middle East and South America. It's those factors that bother John Cutfeet. John is the First Nation's Councillor responsible for resources. He refers to Gladstone as a mercenary that is a foreign soldier hired to serve private gain.

JOHN CUTFEET / First Nation Councillor Responsible for Resources: Solitary people are trying to keep the peace by whatever means possible. You heard of situations in other countries where business people end up staring the barrels of guns of the military and the police, so this basically something at a different scale. That is a concern that they were prepared to send this person a mercenary fuel, but to come and enforce the drilling program.

DEMPSTER: So Jody, was this person armed?

PORTER: Well that's not clear at this point, although it is expected to be one of the questions put to Paul Gladstone when the case goes to court. I did speak with Gladstone last week and understandably he was reluctant to say too much with the case before the courts, but he did say he'd be very much interested in talking to me after he's finished in court. He says that's because he feels the booming mineral sector means he'll be doing a lot more security work as exploration heats up in Northern Ontario.

DEMPSTER: So what does the company say about why they hired a former soldier to provide security during their exploration?

PORTER: Well certainly the Affidavits filed by the company give the impression that their employees were really frightened by the First Nations people they encountered. In Gladstone's own account of the situation that's filed with the court, he's also very critical of what he sees as the OPP's unwillingness to provide the workers with security. I should say that when I talked to the Chief of the Kitchenuhmaykoosib he had a different version of events referring to having a relaxed cup of tea over the campfire at the drilling site. This is part of what will get hammered out in court of course, but in the meantime because of the lawsuit media questions to the company are going through their lawyer, and here's what Neil Smitheman has to say about Gladstone's role.

NEIL SMITHEMAN / Lawyer for Platinex: The company's consultant needed someone who had some experience, can act as a spokesperson for the company. Mr. Gladstone in particular had the security expertise as well to assess and manage a potentially, what was perceived as a potentially volatile situation to ensure it was the kind of thing that would not get out of hand.

DEMPSTER: So should the First Nation be concerned about that private security hired by Platinex?

PORTER: Well Madeleine Drohan thinks so. She's a Canadian journalist and the author of a book called 'Make a Killing, how and why corporations use armed force to do business'. Now her expertise is in third world countries where mining companies regularly use hired soldiers to provide security at mine sites. Drohan says she sees similarities between this situation and what she's seen in the third world, and she said she was really surprised to hear about what's happening in Kitchenuhmaykoosib. Drohan says usually soldiers are hired by mining companies in places where unlike Canada governments are weak and local or national police are unreliable or untrustworthy.

MADELEINE DROHAN / Journalist and Author: Here in Canada we do have institutions that are functioning and should be able to do this without calling in some sort of mercenary from abroad. I guess my concern in the case that we're talking about is the remoteness of the community, because it's not as accessible for those security forces. We're talking about you know the provincial police to get in there right away if there's a conflict, and you know when emotions start getting hot and there's a protest over land, you know things can get out of control very quickly.

PORTER: Allison, Drohan says this is the first time she's heard of a resource company using ex-military personnel for security of this type in Canada, and she says it's important that both levels of government keep a close eye on the situation and other development conflicts with aboriginal people here. She says that's to keep them from evolving to the deadly situation she seen in other countries.

DEMPSTER: So Jody, when does all of this go to court?

PORTER: The next court date is towards the end of June. It's to deal with a request from Platinex for an injunction against the First Nation. The company has asked the courts to prevent people from the community from coming anywhere near their drilling camp, then it's expected it will take many more months for the court to deal with the broader case, that's the \$10-billion claim against the First Nation and the Counterclaim that Ontario's mining laws caused all of this in the first place. I'll keep you posted.

DEMPSTER: Thanks Jody.