

The Last Great Ape Organization - LAGA

November 2007 Report



Highlights

- **The Taiping 4** finally arrive **back home** ending a **5 years wildlife trafficking saga**.
- **4 operations** were carried out **against 8 dealers**. 3 dealers including a Guinean caught with more than **300 pieces** of ivory, some transformed into **chopsticks destined for China**.
- A **military officer arrested** on illegal trade in primates.
- **2 Ghanaians** and head of a big business establishment arrested in **International trafficking of 500 African Gray parrots** destined for **Bahrain**.

General

November month gave very good results at the political and operational levels with a special focus on the fight against corruption.

The month was very active in meetings in MINFOF pertaining to structural reforms on wildlife law enforcement, **the return of 4 gorillas (Taiping four), ivory trafficking control by government, and fight against corruption**. This culminated in the final return of the Taipin four gorillas **received** at the Douala International Airport by the **Minister MINFOF** and taken to the Limbe Wildlife Centre. **LAGA played a major role** in assisting the Cameroon government in negotiating the return of the Taiping four gorillas against a strong financial interest from South Africa. This included LAGA's participation in the high level negotiation mission **sent by the Prime Minister** resulting in an excellent **diplomatic victory**.

The Taiping Four affair exposes a **different angle in combating illegal trade in apes** - the political fight against the international players of the trade. The Taiping Four are four gorillas that were smuggled from Cameroon to Nigeria to the Taiping Zoo in Malaysia, which paid **1.6 million dollars in this illegal deal**.

An officer of the Cameroon Army was arrested trying to sell one live primate in Bamenda in the North West Province. He was arriving from the South stationed in **area strife with corruption connected to illegal ivory trade**. He was caught on record explaining how **his position helped him in the past to avoid justice and fast track illegal trade**. Prior to this offence, we have recorded information showing how deep the suspect was involved in the traffic of wildlife species and products while he was in his previous post in Djoum. **The dealer was locked up** in National Gendarmerie Company in Bamenda.

Another **operation** concerning the illegal exportation of 500 African Gray parrots took place in Douala **despite a lot of corruption and attempts to sabotage** the operation from law enforcement officers by some officials of the Littoral Provincial Delegation of MINFOF, who are accomplices to this illegal exportation. **2 Ghanaians**, international parrot traffickers were arrested in Douala International Airport trying to illegally export 500 African Gray parrots to Bahrain using falsified documents. Their main partner Eroko, the **head of the Internet Club a big export group** known to be involved in illegal activities including **the falsification** of documents was also arrested and put behind bars. The value of the shipment seized is estimated at hundreds of thousands US dollars to the end buyer.

This validated information we had before about the organized chain of complicity in the parrot trade and how **white-collar criminals thrive on this complicity gaining a legitimate cover and eliminating the risk factor**. The profit margins are huge and the value of **a single shipment reaches half a million dollars** in the market of destination.

Other operations took place in Douala concerning **3 Dealers** arrested with more than **300 pieces of ivory artefacts**. Many carved items, chop sticks were **destined for China**. Another dealer was arrested with **3 leopard skins and 1 elephant tail**, he is a businessman and a **regular dealer** in skins and ivory, he has a brother in the East Province who supplies him the products.

Investigations

- **25 investigations** were carried out in **9 provinces** including - North West, West, Center, North, Littoral, South, South West, East and Adamawa.
- Investigations led to 4 successful operations, 1 in Bamenda – North West Province, and 3 in Douala – Littoral Province.
- Field collaboration intensified in Douala with regards to the exportation of parrots and the case of a hippopotamus sent to Pakistan.
- Field collaboration also intensified in the South West Province pertaining to parrot exportation through Idenau to Nigeria, and Internet Scan cases in Buea.

Operations

4 operations were carried out **against 8** dealers despite corruption.

- 14/11 – 1 Dealer (**an officer of the Cameroon Army**) arrested trying to sell a live primate in Bamenda, North West Province. He was arriving from the South stationed in an area high in corruption connected to illegal ivory trade. **He was caught on record** explaining how **his position helped him in the past to avoid justice and fast track illegal trade**.
- 21/11 – 3 Dealers arrested in Douala, Littoral Province with more than 300 pieces of ivory artifacts. Many carved items were destined to **China as chop sticks**.
- 22/11 – Dealer arrested in Douala, Littoral Province with **3 leopard skins, 1 elephant tail**.
- 24/11 - **2 Ghanaians**, international parrot traffickers were arrested in Douala International Airport trying to illegally export 500 African Gray parrots using falsified documents. Their main partner Eroko, the **head of the Internet Club a big export group** known to be involved in illegal activities including the falsification of documents was also arrested and put behind bars. The value of the shipment seized is estimated at hundreds of thousands US dollars to the end buyer.

Legal

- There are **12 dealers behind bars during this month**: 7 in Littoral Province; 1 in Central Province, 2 in West Province, 1 in South West Province and 1 in the North West Province.
- **35 cases** were followed-up by the legal department this month (**active cases in courts**).
- **19 cases** are scheduled and being tried in the court this month
- **1 case** is scheduled and being tried in the **Court of Appeal of Garoua** this month (Hassana)
- **6 cases** are waiting for the process of appeal to reach the court. 4 in the West, 1 in the Littoral and 1 in the South Province (Djoum). The Courts of First Instance have not completed the file needed for the transmission to the Attorney General.
- Legal Department organized **17 missions out of the Center Province**: 5 in Bamenda, 1 in Mamfe, 4 in Douala, 1 in Garoua, 1 in Nkongsamba, 1 in Djoum, 1 in Bafang, 2 in Bafoussam and 1 in Bafia to follow up operations and cases before the courts.
- **4 court cases were opened following operations**.
 - The first on a primate took place in Bamenda in the North West Province with the MINFOF provincial delegation: a military officer was arrested coming from Djoum. He is using his uniform and profession as a cover; during the investigation, prior to this offence, we have recorded information showing how deep the suspect was involved in the traffic of wildlife species and products while he was in his previous post in Djoum. The dealer was locked up in National Gendarmerie Company in Bamenda.

- The second on 3 leopard skins and 1 elephant tail took place in Douala with the MINFOF provincial delegation. 1 dealer involved in leopard skin trade and elephant products was arrested. The dealer was put behind bars in the police station cell.
- **The third one** concerning worked ivory took place in Douala in the Littoral province with the MINFOF provincial delegation. This operation involved the raid of an ivory transformation workshop containing large quantities of ivory, and products of other protected species, which have been seized. 3 of the workers including one Guinean were arrested. The dealers spent 8 days in the police station cell before being admitted to appear free while waiting for trial.
- **The fourth one concerning illegal exportation of** African gray parrots took place in Douala International airport with the MINFOF provincial delegation. A consignment of 500 gray parrots have been seized which were about to be exported using fraudulent means. Three of the traffickers including two Ghanaians were arrested. Their lawyer, Mr. Philip Ndikum signed an undertaking that they will be present whenever and wherever needed, and they were released after 9 days spent in the police station cell. The procedure is still ongoing at the level of Legal Department of the High Court of Douala-Bonanjo. The parrots suspected to have been captured in the Southeastern forest of Cameroon were immediately rushed to the Limbe Wildlife Center.
- **Prosecutions:** Two cases were sentenced this month:
 - **05/11:** The court of First Instance of Bafoussam convicts Tchatchet Nicole, a leopard skin dealer to one (1) year imprisonment term suspended for three (3) years and to pay an amount 4,000 as fine and 100,000 as damages.
 - **05/11:** The court of First Instance of Bafoussam convicts Youmbissi Michel, another leopard skin dealer to one (1) year imprisonment term suspended for three (3) years and to pay an amount of 50.000 Fcfa as fine and 150,000 Fcfa as damages.
- **Appeal:** Two appeals were registered this month in the West province - Bafoussam

Media

- **42 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, TV and written press including: 12 written press materials (7 in English, 5 in French), 3 radio news features (all in English), 25 radio news flashes (11 in English, 14 in French), 2 TV news features (all in English).
- Guests include: Minister MINFOF, Technical Adviser No 1 MINEP, Head of British foreign and common wealth office in London, Director of LAGA
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: Maroua lion skin dealers sentenced, Melong leopard skin arrest, evolution of wildlife conservation, International cooperation in wildlife law enforcement, British support for wildlife enforcement, A military officer arrested for illegal trade in apes, Taiping 4 return, Two Ghanaians arrested for export of about 500 parrots,
- 23 media pieces in English, 19 in French making a percentage of 54.8% in English and 45.2% in French.

External Relations and Policy

- The Taiping four gorillas finally return to Cameroon, in an important victory in the international arena, in what a PASA press release is “ending a five years saga that became one of the most high profile cases in animal trafficking in history”.
- The Taiping Four affair exposes a different angle in combating illegal trade in apes - the political fight against the international players of the trade. The Taiping Four are four gorillas that were smuggled from Cameroon to Nigeria to the Taiping Zoo in Malaysia, which paid 1.6 million dollars in this illegal deal. After the discovery of this affair by the

International Primate Protection League (IPPL) Cameroon has been demanding the return of the gorillas in accordance with CITES guidelines.

- LAGA played a major role in assisting the Cameroon government in negotiating the return of the Taiping four gorillas against a strong financial interest from South Africa. This included LAGA's participation in the high level negotiation mission sent by the Prime Minister resulting in an excellent diplomatic victory.
- LAGA meeting the Minister of MINFOF on wildlife law enforcement and fight against corruption in CITES.
- LAGA also met the Minister of MINFOF on the allocation to LAGA a Brigadier from the National Control Brigade as a tool in the fight against corruption and the trade in parrots through international airports.
LAGA participated at an inter-ministerial meeting on the repatriation of Cameroon's Taiping 4 gorillas from South Africa.
- LAGA met with the Director of Wildlife on completion of sample collection from the 32 ivory seized in Yaounde for DNA tests.
- LAGA meeting the British High Commission American Embassy and the Dutch Ambassador on assisting MINFOF in the fight against corruption
- LAGA received a guest from the Headquarters of WSPA to inspect different projects, discussions on investment in projects in Cameroon, the NGO and corruption landscape.
- LAGA assisted Better World in unconventional media sensitisation during the return of the Taiping 4 gorillas and held meetings with them on issues of corruptions in NGOs.

Management

Different members of LAGA are using their vast experience in the fight against corruption to put into action programs in the fight against corruption outside the wildlife law. This is a realization of LAGA's vision that the tools it develops will be applied outside wildlife, as the criticism for which LAGA was born is not specific to conservation. AC introduction file is an integral part of this report.

Finance

LAGA Expenditure by budget line for November 07

Amount CFA	Budget line	Details	Amount USD
2,622,700	Investigations	25 inv,9 provinces	\$5,894
888,900	Operations	4 Operation, against 8 dealers	\$1,998
2,633,900	legal	follow up 35cases 12 locked subjects	\$5,919
2,826,975	Media	42 media pieces	\$6,353
108,000	Policy & External Relations	T4/Geneva/Tanzania	\$243
1,060,900	Management	Coordination	\$2,384
1,049,616	Office		\$2,359
11,190,991	TOTAL EXPENDITURE NOVEMBER		\$25,148

LAGA Expenditure by donor for November 07

Amount CFA	Donor	Amount USD
0	Born Free	\$0
2,826,975	BHC	\$6,353
2,988,626	FWS	\$6,716
186,500	Body Shop	\$419
0	UNEP-Congo	\$0
2,352,000	UNEP-General	\$5,285
1,912,700	Rufford Foundation	\$4,298
924,190	Shinning World	\$2,077
11,190,991	TOTAL	\$25,148

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



Taiping four Gorillas now in Cameroon are in the Limbe Wildlife Centre. They were smuggled from Cameroon through Nigeria to the Taiping Zoo in Malaysia, which paid 1.6 million dollars in this illegal deal, and finally to South Africa from where they were returned. LAGA played a major role in assisting the Cameroon government in negotiating the return of the gorillas against a strong financial interest from South Africa. This included LAGA's participation in the high level negotiation mission sent by the Prime Minister resulting in an excellent diplomatic victory.



Ivory seized from a transformation workshop after arrest of three dealers including a Guinean in Douala. The ivory chopsticks were destined for China.





2 Ghanaians, international parrot traffickers, and a Cameroonian, the head of Internet Club a big export establishment were arrested in Douala International Airport trying to illegally export 500 African Gray parrots using falsified documents. This validated information we had before about the organized chain of complicity in the parrot trade and how white-collar criminals thrive on this complicity gaining a legitimate cover and eliminating the risk factor. The profit margins are huge and the value of a single shipment reaches half a million dollars in the market of destination.



Leopard skin dealer arrested in Douala with three leopard skins, he is a businessman and a regular dealer in skins and ivory, he has been working with a supplier from the East Province.

Link of the month

- Cameroon holds Ghanaians for smuggling 500 parrots - Reuters
Tue Nov 27, 2007

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL2718102>

- Taiping four return – Cameroon National Television Broadcast
Cameroon Minister of Forestry and Wildlife welcomes the Taiping four gorillas at the Douala International Airport and the Limbe Botanic Garden to show Cameroon's commitment to the fight against illegal wildlife trade and corruption.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4enrwikiMYqU>