

The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

September 2019 Report



Highlights

- **5 major traffickers arrested with two large ivory tusks found inside a Toyota Prado car**
- **The son of a former finance minister owner of the car arrested alongside four others in connection with the ivory trafficking.**
- **Interpol intelligence analyst from Singapore alongside two criminal investigations officers from regional bureau visited the office.**
- **The Media Officer travelled to US to participate at the Jackson Hole Film festival as a volunteer.**
- **The Head of the Legal Department participated at an international workshop where he presented the strengths and weaknesses of the wildlife law enforcement process in the country.**

General

This month was marked by the arrest of **5 traffickers with 2 large ivory tusks.**

5 traffickers were arrested with 2 huge ivory tusks weighing 53kg and measuring over 1.7m long. The son of a former finance minister transported in the ivory alongside four other accomplices inside his black Toyota Prado and were arrested with the contraband seized at the Omnisport neighbourhood in Yaounde. Investigations carried out in Douala concerning pangolin scales trafficking by an international syndicate provided leads that enabled the operation in Yaounde.

The media officer participated at the 2019 Jackson Wild summit in the US, where she sat in as a preliminary judge in one of the categories and volunteered during the entire festival carrying out several activities, assisting the organising team.

Investigations

- **17 investigation missions** of varying lengths were carried out in **4 regions** out of the 10 Regions of Cameroon including Littoral, East, South and Centre Regions
- Investigations in Yaounde and Douala led to the arrest of five 5 ivory traffickers with two large elephant tusks weighing 53kg in Yaounde.

Investigations Table

Investigation Missions	Regions	No. of Operations	No of traffickers arrested
17	4	1	5

Operation

An operation carried out this month with MINFOF **arresting 5 traffickers**.

5/9/2019 – 5 traffickers arrested in Yaounde, Centre Region with 2 ivory tusks weighing 53kg. The son of a former finance minister who was the main trafficker in the deal was arrested alongside four other traffickers during the operation that was the result of an investigation that was started following operations carried out in Douala. Leads from the past operations were followed by the investigations and this led to the arrest in the heart of the capital city of the traffickers with two extraordinarily large elephant tusks that were transported in a black Toyota Prado car belonging to the son of the former minister. Tusks with this size are rarely seen nowadays because poachers kill elephants even when they are still babies with very small tusks.

Operations Table

No of Operations	Regions	No of Traffickers Arrested	Contraband
1	1	5	2 ivory tusks weighing 53kg

Legal

- The legal department carried out **9 missions** out of Yaounde-Centre Region: 2 in Douala (Littoral), 1 in Mbanga (Littoral), 1 in Kribi (Littoral), 1 in Ebolowa (South), 2 in Djoum (South), 1 in Bangangte (West) and 1 in Garoua.

- There were **12 traffickers behind bars in the month**: 3 in East region, 3 in South region, 1 in Centre region and 5 in Littoral region.
- **29 cases** were followed up by the legal department this month.
- **26 cases** were scheduled in court this month.
- **A trafficker** was convicted during the month.
- **Prosecution**: There was one court ruling.
 - **24/09/2019**: The Douala-Ndokoti Court of First Instance found the accused **BANDOUMA Benoit guilty and sentenced him to one month suspended sentence during 3 years and to pay 200,000 FCFA as fines and 1,300,000 FCFA as damages.**

He was arrested in Douala on the 30/07/2019 for the illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 16 ivory tusks.
- **Appeal**: An appeal against the ruling has been filed this month at the Littoral Court of Appeal.

Legal Table

No of Missions (Out of Centre Region)	No of Court Judgements	No of Traffickers Given Prison Sentence	Prison term (in months)	No of Traffickers Sanctioned (No prison sentence)	No of Appeals lodged	No of Cases Tried in Courts
9	1	0	0	1	1	26

Media

- **35 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to written press, radio, and internet including; 19 written press materials (10 in English and 9 in French language), 12 radio news flashes (7 in English and 5 in French) and 4 internet publications in French.
- Interviewee: The Deputy Director has an interview at CRTV radio in the program “*Greeting the Triangle*”, to talk about the work of LAGA concerning the ivory trafficking in Cameroon.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: The Kribi court case against a Ghanaian national arrested with 18 African grey parrots and the Yaounde arrest of 5 ivory traffickers.
- 18 media pieces in French and 17 in English making a percentage of 51.4% in French and 48.6% in English.

Media Table

<i>No of Media Pieces</i>	<i>TV</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Internet</i>
35	0	12	19	4

External Relations and Policy

- The Deputy Director alongside the heads of the investigation and legal departments held a meeting with Interpol officials on building collaboration for effective wildlife law enforcement. Present during the meeting was an Interpol intelligence analyst from the Singapore office.
- The Head of the Legal Department actively participated at a national workshop to build the capacity of magistrates and other judiciary officials on effective wildlife law enforcement and to encourage collaboration between the different stakeholders involved in the fight against wildlife crimes. During the workshop, he did a presentation on how to calculate the general and specific damages accruing from court rulings. He also participated at an international seminar in Yaounde on the collection of court decisions and analysis in wildlife crime within central Africa. During this seminar, he did a presentation on the lapses in the wildlife law, the strengths and weaknesses of the monitoring and enforcement mechanism.
- A legal adviser participated at a training workshop for wildlife law enforcement officials of the Northern part of the country. During the training, she did presentations on the drafting of a good wildlife offence statements, calculation of general and specific damages and corruption in the law enforcement process.
- One of the legal advisers held a meeting firstly with the state counsel in Kribi and another in Mbanga to discuss matters pending at their various courts respectively and a second legal adviser held a meeting with state counsel in Djoum for the same purpose while a third legal adviser held another meeting with the state counsel in Bangangte with the same objective

Management

- Management hosted the CCU financial officer to work on some financial reporting and procedures on funding execution.
- A staff from the African Alliance for Development Action (AADA) was trained at the various departments of the organization to equip the trainee with the various skills in effective office and project management.

Activism Front

All the activism fostering activities carried out by the LAGA family are online; this could be gotten at the LAGA website – <http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Actiwithvism/tabid/77/Default.aspx>.

Presentation: Operation Sparrow Hawk

The purpose of this presentation was to take stock of the arrests of suspects, judgments and recovery of public funds during Operation Sparrow Hawk launched by the president in order to determine main goal of the operation. The presentation predicates its conclusions on the sheer number of arrest - more than 300 persons convicted by the courts - that this is indeed a fight against the embezzlement of public funds and corruption, even as it proves to be ineffective. Subsequently, the discussions focused on the shortcomings of the law creating the Special Criminal Court; on the political will of the Head of State to really fight against this scourge and finally on the solutions to stem this scourge.

Presentation: Early Marriage: The Case of Cameroon

The presentation looks at the phenomenon of early marriages of young girls in our community and tries to assist us understand how and why it happens. It takes a look at the many causes that include poverty, traditions and cultures etc. The presenter tells us about the consequences which are in the vast majority negative to the young girl whose future has simply and squarely been dashed forever and her biological setup that has to probably deal with early pregnancies and psychological stress. Several efforts are in line to stemming this problem but at times they look a little too short and late. The role the government plays is too little too far between while the civil society is not yet fully up to gear to shut this out. These and many more were some of the discussions shortly after the presentation.

Presentation: Child Maltreatment

The presentation looks at the factors that create the conditions for maltreatment and what are the various forms of maltreatment. The presenter starts by defining maltreatment which he says is harm do to a child at various levels including physical and psychological. He examines the environment where maltreatments flourish and uses personal observations to illustrate the issue. The discussions focused on reasons for the situation, personal experiences and suggestions on what to do in society to enabling a fight against these cruel instances. It also relativizes the issues as the acts are judged against the background of cultural perspectives and therefore invariably lead to relativism in the appreciation of the issues.

Finance

In preparation and would be made available soon as possible on the LAGA website www.laga-enforcement.org .

Link of the month

5 persons were arrested in Yaounde with 2 large ivory tusks weighing over 50kg and one of the arrested is the son of a former finance minister. The arrest that was carried out by wildlife officials of the Centre Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife was significantly important as the son of a former minister was involved. The press ran the story with the news site Alwihda info picking up the story.

https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-Trafic-d-ivoire-le-fils-d-un-ancien-ministre-des-Finances-arrete_a76935.html

This Month in Pictures



Two huge ivory tusks weighing 53kg and measuring over 1.7m in length seized in Yaounde



The tusks were recovered from a Toyota Prado car belonging to one of the arrested traffickers who is the son of a former finance minister



Wildlife officials take measurements of ivory tusks

The story was reported widely in local press