

May 2006 Report

Highlights -

- **Successful fast investigation concerning ivory trafficking operation at an unprecedented scale.**
- **Engaging further the Government of Cameroon and the International community.**
- **Ivory dealer arrested on board a Chinese ship**
- **A wealthy ivory arrested West Province.**

General

May month is dominated by the incident of 3.9 tones of ivory seized in Hong Kong. It was used for a successful unprecedented investigation and operations in Cameroon as well as political achievements engaging further the Government of Cameroon and the International community.

Information arriving from Hong Kong CITES Management Authority to Cameroon's MA on seizure of 3.9 tons of ivory initiated an investigation led by MINFOF in collaboration with customs authorities and the forces of law and order in collaboration with LAGA. At this stage the investigation revealed the time and place of the illegal act and gathered enough evidence to forward 3 main suspects for prosecution both on customs charges as well as wildlife charges. The investigation also revealed two additional containers with false compartments. In both traces of ivory were found. From CoP 13, every CITES meeting, Cameroon has constantly alerted that the markets of China represents a threat to its elephant population, and that large amounts of ivory are illegally trafficked from Douala, in containers, to China. During CoP 13 LAGA, on the CITES delegation, initiated a side meeting with the Chinese delegation and delegations of Central and Western Africa for this matter.

The smugglers are professional and the concealing methods they were using are new to the customs authorities. The equipment used for detecting the ivory in Hong Kong is not available for export inspections in Cameroon.

Cameroon suspects the ivory in this shipment is gathered from different neighbouring countries. Cameroon is seeking a DNA test to verify this for the benefit of mapping wildlife trade in the sub-region and playing a positive role in fighting it.

Trying to build a full picture from a single incident is a matter of statistical analysis that is beyond this report. Yet, there are still basic observations that can put this investigation in a larger context. The seizure in Hong Kong represents more than 300 killed elephants.

Assuming the false compartment is fully charged before each journey, the evidence collected from the additional two containers alone makes this a smuggling affair of around 12 tons of ivory or 900 killed elephants. This activity was probably done over time as the recycling of the containers shows.

It appears that the magnitude of this ivory trafficking scheme is unprecedented. On one hand, one can argue that increased enforcement in China, Hong Kong and Cameroon is evident and clear in terms of seizures and court sentences and the fact that ivory trade is getting more centralized and operates in new innovative modus operandi is a normal response to an increased enforcement. On the other hand, one

can argue that despite all enforcement efforts, illegal ivory trade is simply on the increase.

A full confidential report concerning this investigation is shared with relevant authorities, a none-confidential version of it will be circulated soon.

Investigations

- **20 investigations were held in 7 provinces.**
- **International investigation on 3.9 tones of ivory seized in Hong Kong** begins and stretches over 3 Provinces in Cameroon and half a dozen countries.

Operations

- **5 operations** – 2 carried out with Provincial Brigades, 3 connected to the international ivory investigation.
- Information arriving from Hong Kong CITES Management Authority to Cameroon's MA on seizure of **3.9 tons of ivory** initiated an investigation led by MINFOF in collaboration with customs authorities and the forces of law and order in collaboration with LAGA. At this stage the investigation after arresting 3 subjects and conducting 2 house searches revealed the time and place of the illegal act and gathered enough evidence to forward other 3 main foreign suspects for prosecution both on customs charges as well as wildlife charges. The successful investigation also revealed two additional containers with false compartments. In both traces of ivory were found. A full confidential report is shared with relevant authorities, a none-confidential version of it will be circulated soon.
- **An ivory dealer has been arrested on board a Chinese ship** at the Douala Port in possession of sample ivory products on sale. The dealer was using the regular method of arriving the ship with sample ivory products attractive to potential Chinese buyers and inviting them to make illegal deals at safer corners in the city of Douala. This is the second arrest on a Chinese ship.
- **A wealthy ivory dealer has been arrested** in Foumban, West Province with four large tusks. The dealer is owning two vehicles, spends most of his time in France and is well connected. This case presented a new level of fight against corruption and obstruction of justice. Subject is now behind bars.
 - For more details see LAGA's case tracking System.

Legal

- There are **17 dealers behind bars**: 4 in the west province; 7 in the south province (5 in Nsangmelima, 2 in Kribi); 4 in the littoral; 1 in the north, 1 in the central province)
- - 7 cases are scheduled in the court this month.
 - 8cases waiting for the process to reach the court of appeal
 - 1 case waiting for the process of opposition to start
 - 6 cases waiting for a date of trial (on process in front of the state attorney or the MINFOF)

- 9 cases on execution process.
- Legal unit was implicated in an international investigation of 3.9 smuggling ivory from Cameroon to China.
- Interpol Cameroon is implicated in the investigation.
- Bonobo case in DRC first stage still pending.

Media front

- **25 media pieces** produced and pushed to radio and written press including 16 radio newsflashes (3 in English, 13 in French), 4 radio talk shows all in French and 5 written press materials.
- **Guests include:** Secretary General MINFOF, Diplomats (British High Commissioner and second secretary British high commission, American Ambassador), and ASSANEFG vice president (NGO)
- **Subjects include:** ivory dealer arrest on a Chinese ship in Douala, distribution of wildlife justice continuation, logging company wildlife dealer prosecution, Bafia drug and ape dealer arrest, elephant tusk dealer arrest in Fouban, law enforcement and Dja reserve, lion dealer arrest in the North, ivory arrest North West province, ivory dealer prosecution North West, apes and related human diseases.

External Relations and Policy

the incident of 3.9 tones of ivory seized in Hong Kong. It was used for a successful investigation and operations in Cameroon as well as political achievements engaging further the Government of Cameroon and the International community.

Internationally - LAGA facilitated communication and collaboration between the HK and Cameroon's CITES management authorities, and kept constant flow of information to CITES, INTERPOL, HK CITES MA, China CITES MA, Taiwan authorities, LATF. LAGA facilitated DNA testing between Cameroon MA

Nationally LAGA put together different forces within Cameroon that are not used to interagency collaboration. The investigation included – Gendermerie of three different provinces, Judicial Police, INTERPOL NCB, Service of trafficking of drugs, Customs, Police frontier, Immigration Police, MINFOF, General Attorney of Littoral Province.

With International community US Ambassador, British High Commissioner and World Bank forest advisor all played a role concerning this case after LAGA's communication.

LAGA held high level meetings with General Director of Customs, Secretary General of Delegation of national Security, and General Attorney of Littoral Province.

Management

- LAGA's Management returned to be more field based as previously defined.

Finance

LAGA Expenditure for May 06

Amount CFA	Budget line	Details			Amount L
1,922,740	Investigations	20 investigations, 7 provinces	-1,922,740		\$3,733
1,523,000	Operations	2 operations +4 arrests HK inve	-3,445,740		\$2,957
1,359,450	legal	follow up 17 cases12 locked su	-4,805,190		\$2,640
761,010	Media	25 media pieces+Magazine lau	-5,566,200		\$1,478
133,533	Policy and External Relations		-5,699,733		\$259
1,471,600	Management	Coordination	-7,171,333		\$2,857
666,129	Office		-7,837,462		\$1,293
63,900	LAGA Family - Investing in team spirit and pro		-7,901,362		\$124
7,901,362	TOTAL EXPENDITURE MAY		0		\$15,342

AmountCFA	Donor					Amount U
1,304,333	Born Free	Used	May		-1,304,333	\$2,532.7
1,540,169	World Bank	Used	May		-2,844,502	\$2,990.6
1,551,010	BHC	Used	May		-4,395,512	\$3,011.7
2,019,950	FWS	Used	May		-6,415,462	\$3,922.2
1,160,500	Arcus	Used	May		-7,575,962	\$2,253.4
325,400	ProWildlife	Used	May		-7,901,362	\$631.8
7,901,362	TOTAL					\$15,342.5

Ofir Drori
 Director
 The Last Great Ape Organization

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



