

The Last Great Ape Organization - LAGA

April 2008 Report



Highlights

- A principal **International Ivory Dealer** arrested in an unprecedented operation in The **Republic of Congo** while replicating the LAGA model.
- An **Internet Scammer** arrested trying to sell a chimp using **falsified government documents**.
- A **big illegal ivory trade network busted** in Mamfe – South West Province.
- A **dealer arrested in Ngaoundere** for illegally trading in Leopard skins and trophies of other endangered animal species, another arrested at Ngoyla – East Province.
- **8 dealers** arrested double the monthly average during the absence of LAGA Director proving the **growing capacity and independence of the LAGA family**.

General

This month was marked by a big operation in the Republic of Congo following LAGA's replication phase with a **total of 9 dealers** arrested double the monthly average.

LAGA carried out a **mission in the Republic of Congo** in order to follow-up the potential in developing Wildlife Law Enforcement beyond Cameroon. LAGA used recommendations of replication of the model by different bodies including COMIFAC and CARPE. The mission was very successful and was geared at igniting law enforcement through precedence and creating a structure to sustain effective law enforcement. It was carried out at 3 levels:

1. Political – meetings were held with Ministries, Embassies, International bodies, The Judiciary, Police, Gendarmerie, Lawyers, NGO's etc.
2. Structural – Planning a structure to continue with the efforts and pushed by LAGA.
3. Operational – A big operation was carried out.

A **principal ivory business veteran was arrested in Brazzaville the Republic of Congo** – he has been trading ivory for several decades, with contacts in DRC, China, Japan, West Africa. He is well known but was for a long while untouchable, **both connected to Ministers** as well as being **the father of an important rebel leader**. He has been employing West African carvers, as well as inviting carvers from Kinshasa, he has several workshops and has his own display room in his secured compound. He was **locked** while the international community is mobilized to balance the effect of corruption and keep him behind bars.

This month was a test to the **LAGA family running LAGA** without the LAGA director. The **excellent results in all fronts** proved the growing capacity and independence of its departments. **4 operations against 8 targets** were carried out, one busting a big network in Mamfe – South West dealing in large-scale ivory, trophies and elephant meat, another arresting a wildlife dealer in Ngaoundere – Adamawa for illegally trading in leopard skins and trophies of other endangered animal specie, and one at Ngoyla – East Province for killing and trading in a leopard skin.

Besides the good rate of operations, this month also focused on **Internet Wildlife** fraud in Cameroon after studying the worrying growth of this type of fraud. A **well-known scammer** engaged in fraud and illegal wildlife trade over the Internet was arrested in Buea, South West Province. He was arrested trying to sell a chimp over the Internet to a client in Belgium using **falsified government documents and CITES Permits**. His connection to other forms of fraud including illegal immigration and adoption scams is still being investigated. The link between Internet wildlife fraud and other forms of fraud had been discovered before and discussed with the Prime Minister of Cameroon. During the last meeting of the United Nations' Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora – CITES, governments were called upon to increase efforts in combating illegal internet wildlife trade and fraud.

Investigations

- **29 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **7 provinces** including - North West, South West, West, Adamawa, North, Littoral and Center.
- **Field investigations led to 3 successful operations** after targeting dealers: Mamfe – South West, and Ngaoundere – Adamawa Province, Ngoyla – East Province. Ivory, leopard skins, meat and trophies of other endangered species were seized.
- Internet Investigations identified and initiated communication with 4 wildlife Internet scammers. **One was targeted and arrested in Buea** – South West Province. He was engaged in fraud and illegal wildlife trade over the Internet was arrested.
- Field tests continue for new candidates. **5 new candidates were tested** this month with encouraging results.
- Collaboration involving Internet Investigations was initiated with France, Malaysia, Spain and Israel was initiated, that with South Africa intensified.

Operations

5 operations were carried out this month, **4** with MINFOF against **8 subjects**, an outstanding result in the absence of the LAGA Director proving the growing capacity and independence of the LAGA family; and an unprecedented operation in the Republic of Congo.

- **04/04/08 - A big network of 5 suspects** dealing in large-scale ivory, trophies and elephant meat was **busted** in Mamfe – South West Province. They were involved in the killing of 3 elephants in Mamfe and were arrested with arms and ammunition used in killing the elephants. Amongst the suspects is a former custom officer who uses his connections and money to finance their activities, and a village chief giving them immunity. **They resisted arrest, were very aggressive** and attacked one of the arresting officers - the MINFOF Divisional Delegate, Mamfe.
- **05/04/08 - A well-known scammer** engaged in fraud and illegal wildlife trade over the Internet was arrested in Buea, South West Province. He was arrested trying to sell a chimp over the Internet to a client in Belgium using **falsified government documents and CITES Permits**. His connection to other forms of fraud including illegal immigration and adoption scams is still being investigated. The link between Internet wildlife fraud and other forms of fraud had been discovered before and discussed with the Prime Minister of Cameroon.
- **12/04/08 - A renowned wildlife trader** was arrested in Ngaoundere – Adamawa Province for illegally trading in leopard skins and trophies of other endangered animal species. He was laundering the trade under the cover of a traditional healer, claimed to have a permit for trade in wildlife but it turned out to be untrue. His claim that he has a relative working in the Waza National Park who supplies him with animals and trophies is being investigated.
- **26/04/08** – A well-known dealer was arrested at Ngoyla – East Province for killing and trading in a leopard skin. He is **a recidivist** who was out of prison for a very short time. He was locked-up for other criminal activities.
- **28/04/08 - A principal ivory business veteran was arrested in Brazzaville the Republic of Congo** – he is trading ivory for many decades, with contacts in DRC, China, Japan, West Africa. He is well known but was for a long while untouchable, **both connected to Ministers** as well as being **the father of an important rebel leader**. He has been employing West African carvers, as well as inviting carvers from Kinshasa, he has several workshops and has his own display room in his secured compound. He is also said to wed a Japanese wife. Hundreds of ivory items amounting to a gross estimate of 40 kg were seized. Many of the items were carved as chopsticks (sold for 20\$ a pair) and hankos (name seals) for the **Asian market**. On the day of operation a Chinese client was recorded discussing business with the criminal. Also 3 leopard skins, and many carving equipment that was not attached to tables were seized. He **was locked** while the international community is being mobilized to balance the effect of corruption and keep him behind bars.

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **14 missions** out of the Center Province: 1 in Douala (Littoral), 2 in Buea (South West), 1 in Garoua (North), 1 in Ngaoundere (Adamawa), 1 in Edea (Littoral), 1 in Limbe (South West), 1 in Abong Mbang (East), 2 in Nanga Eboko (Center), 1 in Bamenda (North West), 2 in Mamfe (South West) and 1 in Bafoussam (West).
- There are **16 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the Littoral Province, 4 in the East Province, 1 in the West Province, 4 in South West Province, 2 in North West Province, 1 in Adamawa Province and 2 in Center Province.
- **36 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **17cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: Two cases were sentenced this month
14/04: The Court of First Instance of Bamenda convicts Abong Emmanuel, Begah Joseph and Awolloh Raymond to pay an amount 3.000.000 Frs. as general damages, 258.000 Frs. each as a fine and 39.000 Frs. as court charges. Awolloh and Begah **are retained in prison** for none payment of fine and court charges.

Media front

- **33 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, TV and written press including: 6 written press material in English and 6 in French, 2 radio talk shows (all in English), 1 radio news feature in English, 17 radio news flashes (10 in English, 7 in French), 1 TV feature (in English).
- Guests include: Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, CARPE focal point, Provincial Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife South West Province, Head of Communication of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, The Traditional Ruler of Bamungo and the Traditional Ruler of Bali Nyonga in the North West Province.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: Internet scammer arrest on protected wildlife species in Buea, Leopard skin dealer arrest in Douala, A dealer in elephant trophy and meat arrest in Mamfe, and publication of news letter of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife.
- 20 media pieces in English, 13 in French making a percentage of 60.6%in English and 39.4%in French.

External Relations and Policy

- The successful experimental pilot project on effective wildlife law enforcement in Cameroon is currently being replicated in Congo Brazzaville at the request of the government of that country. In an unprecedented operation in Congo Brazzaville, a big and notorious ivory businessman has been arrested in Brazzaville. Meetings held in Congo are included in the annex describing the Congo work.
- LAGA met with the minister of Forestry and Wildlife to discuss about the parrot cases, MoU and review of wildlife law enforcement.
- Meeting with Director of wildlife and protected areas to discuss about the Greek logger case, parrot case, MoU and the lack of collaboration of the delegate of Nanga Eboko, Centre Province.
- The Director of LAGA held a meeting with the Inspector General in the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife to discuss about MoU.
- The Head of Media and External Relations met with the Divisional Officer of Eyumujock Sub Division, Manyu Division to hand documents on wildlife law enforcement for distribution to local village chiefs.
- LAGA met with the U.S Embassy to discuss issues on parrot and ivory cases, the fight against corruption and the Greek logging manager arrest in Nanga Eboko – Centre Province.

- A meeting was held between the Director of LAGA and Israeli Ambassador to discuss on the fight against corruption and update of LAGA activities.
- LAGA held a meeting with CARPE to discuss on the replication of LAGA to other countries and the participation of LAGA in the regional selection committee for CARPE small grant programme.
- Presentation of a paper on Cameroon wildlife law enforcement policy at the 3rd Manyu Economic Development World Conference in Eyumujock.

Management

LAGA's vision of replicating its model to other countries in the sub-region has already started to be realized. This month the transfer of experience has concretized in tangible results. As LAGA is replicating its experience the most valuable resource becomes trained and experienced personnel that could assist in disseminating LAGA's working methods. Searching for local human resources in Congo started in several fields – media, investigations, operations, legal, lawyers, etc. LAGA will soon move one of its legal advisers to Congo.

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 1. Political – meetings were held with Ministries, Embassies, International bodies, The Judiciary, Police, Gendarmerie, Lawyers, NGO's, Investigators etc.
 2. Structural – Leave behind a structure to continue with the efforts and pushed by LAGA.
 3. Operational – A big operation was carried out.
- 2 volunteers joined the LAGA family this month. Irene joined the Media Department as a Media Assistant and Arrey joined the Management Department to assist in the managerial, financial and administrative duties

Finance

LAGA Expenditure by budget line for April 08

Amount CFA	Budget line	Details	Amount USD
4,143,780	Investigations	30 inv, 7 provinces + Congo	\$9,985.0
1,052,475	Operations	4 Operations, against 7 subjects	\$2,536.1
3,282,700	Legal	Follow up 36 cases 16 locked subjects	\$7,910.1
1,602,201	Media	33 media pieces	\$3,860.7
2,140,838	Policy & External Relations	UK/Congo/S. Africa	\$5,158.6
943,400	Management	Coordination	\$2,273.3
1,142,953	Office		\$2,754.1
14,308,347	TOTAL EXPENDITURE APRIL		\$34,447.9

LAGA Expenditure by donor for April 08

Amount CFA	Donor	Amount USD
0	Born Free	\$0.0
4,786,342	FWS	\$11,533.4
3,175,580	UNEP-Congo	\$7,652.0
1,013,501	UNEP-General	\$2,442.2
2,652,167	Rufford Foundation	\$6,390.8
220,000	Parrot Trust	\$530.1
2,460,757	WSPA	\$5,929.5
14,308,347	TOTAL	\$34,478

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



A total of 617 items – 41 Kgs seized during an operation in The Republic of Congo. A principal ivory business veteran was arrested he was trading ivory for several decades, with contacts in DRC, China, Japan, West Africa. He is well known but was for a long while untouchable, both connected to Ministers as well as being the father of an important rebel leader. The dealer has been employing West African carvers, as well as inviting carvers from Kinshasa, has several workshops and has his own display room in his secured compound. He was a tough nut to crack as he carries deals in his house and doesn't like to move ivory out by himself. Still, he was arrested outside with a substantial quantity. 3 leopard skins, and many carving equipment that was not attached to tables were seized





Congo Operation – Many of the items were hankos (name seals) destined for the Asian market as a whole and the Japanese market in particular.



Despite genuine fear, searching his house was stressful but very successful as hundreds of ivory items amounting to a gross estimate of 41 kg were seized.



Congo Operation - Many of the items were carved as chopsticks (sold for 20\$ a pair) for the Asian market, especially the Chinese market. .



Elephant tails and elephant meat sized when a big network of 5 targets dealing in large-scale ivory, trophies and elephant meat was busted in Mamfe – South West Province. They were involved in the killing of 3 elephants in Mamfe and were arrested with arms and ammunition used in killing the elephants. They resisted arrest, were very aggressive and attacked one of the arresting officers - the MINFOF Divisional Delegate, Mamfe.

Links of this month

- As part of LAGA’s media efforts, Traditional Rulers were called upon to help in the protection of endangered species-Cameroon National Television Broadcast- The North West administration called on traditional rulers to assist the government in sensitising the population on the need to protect endangered wildlife species by denouncing people found in the communities engaged in illegal hunting and trade. In responding to that call, His Royal Highness The Traditional Ruler Mbofoa Zofoa III of Bamungo in Ngohketunjia Division of North West province Cameroon and his population rescued a leopard and a baboon trapped in a neighbouring forest. The animals were then brought to the Yaounde Mvog Betsi zoo.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8LjLM02c8>