

# The Last Great Ape Organization - LAGA

## September 2009 Report



### Highlights

- **LAGA Activities replicated in the Central African Republic.**
- **2 principal International Ivory Dealers** arrested in unprecedented operations in The Central African Republic.
- About **1 ton of ivory seized** during the **bursting of an international ivory trade network** in Douala – Littoral Region.
- **4 dealers were sentenced this month.**
- **A dealer, also a recidivist and threatened the team with his gun was arrested in Djoum – South Region** for illegally trading in live primates other protected wildlife species.
- Head of Legal Department makes a **presentation on Internet wildlife trade during the Conference of the Interpol Wildlife Working Group** in Brazil.

### General

This month was marked by a special focus on the crackdown of international ivory trafficking in Cameroon and in the Central African Republic resulting in the **arrest of 4 international ivory traffickers.**

LAGA's vision of replicating its model to other countries in the sub-region that was already successful in the Republic of Congo continued this month in the Central African Republic (CAR). The transfer of experience was concretised in tangible results with a successful operation resulting into the arrest of 2 principal international ivory traffickers in Bangui – CAR. The LAGA Director and another member of the LAGA family arrived the CAR charged with assessing wildlife law enforcement, building a replication of LAGA with WWF-CAR, and transferring Cameroon government's globally acclaimed wildlife law enforcement experience to the CAR wildlife law enforcement authorities. The mission was very successful and was geared at igniting law enforcement through precedence and creating a structure to sustain effective law enforcement at the request of the government. It was carried out at 3 levels:

1. Political
2. Structural
3. Operational

A successful operation was carried out resulting in the **arrest of 2 members of a big network** in Bangui – CAR specialized in international ivory trafficking. **One has been in the business for more than 20 years** and at the center of the network. He exports to Europe and other parts of the world - to France through a diplomat, to Italy as packages to a CAR national, to the Czech Republic through a priest delivered as packages for the Catholic Church, and to Turkey. To him, CAR is a junction with ivory arriving from DRC as well and sent towards Nigeria and Cameroon. His younger brother had been arrested before and locked up by LAGA in Cameroon. Another member is a woman of **French and Central - African Nationality**. She is well known and well connected. She exposed about 200Kg of ivory and was recorded saying she has **600kg** of ivory in CAR, some hidden in the bush, **200 Kg in Italy** and **50 Kg in France**. She claims she got a CITES export permit long ago that expired and now she will "use money" to make a new permit and take all the stock to France. This is laundering illegal ivory using a legal cites permit scheme, (that alone can stand to show the problem with legal sales of ivory and the value of a total ban to effective enforcement). She is also recorded trying to sell her stock of CAR at 150,000 Euros. That should also give you an idea of the bribing power we are facing. In her house search she kept on saying "I know the Procurer General (General Attorney) which shows her intention to sabotage justice

procedure using her contacts and influence. She was also bragging in her relations with the French embassy in Bangui.

Another network of **international ivory traffickers** was busted in Douala – Littoral Region. **2 members of the network were arrested** by the Littoral Regional Delegation for National Security with a huge consignment of raw ivory totalling 1 ton representing more than 150 killed elephants. The ivory is purported to be from Cameroon and Gabon and that some highly placed government officials are also part of the network, and 2 other identified members are fugitives under chase.. More investigations are being carried out on this by the Douala Judicial Police and the National Control Brigade of MINFOF. LAGA is assisting in the establishment of a case file against the traffickers. According to the Director of LAGA, illegal ivory trade is a well organized international criminal business and well connected to other organized crime syndicates such as illicit trade in drugs and arms. The illegal ivory trade is rooted in corruption. Fighting corruption is therefore necessary in stopping illegal ivory trade; this, through effective wildlife law enforcement and prosecuting the heads of the criminal ivory trafficking cartels.

In another operation, **a well known dealer was arrested in Djoum** – South Region for illegally trading in life primates and products of other endangered wildlife species. **He is a recidivist** who had been arrested several times before. His whole family is into poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. He was **arrested with a hunting rifle and threatened the operations team with the rifle.**

### Investigations

- **22 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **7 Regions** of Cameroon- North, West, South West, South, Littoral, Adamawa and Center.
- International Investigations was carried out this month in the **Central African Republic that led to 2 operations** while replicating the LAGA model.
- Internet Investigations targeted 3 Internet wildlife dealers engaged in fraud in Bamenda – North West Region and Buea – South West Region. Investigations are still ongoing.
- Field tests continue for new candidates.
- One field investigator stopped working with LAGA because of disagreement over procedures of work.

### Operations

**3 operations** were carried out this month, **2 operations** in Cameroon against **4 subjects**, and **1 operation in the Central African Republic against 2 dealers.**

- **01/09/09** – **a well known dealer was arrested in Djoum** – South Region for illegally trading in life primates and products of other endangered wildlife species. He is a recidivist who had been arrested several times before. His whole family is into poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. He was **arrested with a hunting rifle and threatened the operations team with the rifle.**
- **21/09/09** - A network of **international ivory traffickers** was busted in Douala – Littoral Region. **2 members of the network were arrested** by the Littoral Regional Delegation for National Security with a huge consignment of raw ivory totalling 1 ton representing more than 100 killed elephants. The ivory is purported to be from Cameroon and Gabon and that some highly placed government officials are also part of the network. More investigations are being carried out on this by the Douala Judicial Police and the National Control Brigade of MINFOF. LAGA is assisting in the establishment of a case file against the traffickers.
- **30/09/09** - A successful operation was carried out resulting in the **arrest of 2 members of a big network** in Bangui – CAR specialized in international ivory trafficking. **One has been in the business for more than 20 years** and at the center of the network. He exports to

Europe and other parts of the world - to France through a diplomat, to Italy as packages to a CAR national, to the Czech Republic through a priest delivered as packages for the Catholic Church, and to Turkey. To him, CAR is a junction with ivory arriving from DRC as well and sent towards Nigeria and Cameroon. His younger brother had been arrested before and locked up by LAGA in Cameroon. Another member is a woman of **French and Central - African Nationality**. She is well known and well connected. She exposed about 200Kg of ivory and was recorded saying she has **600kg** of ivory in CAR, some hidden in the bush, **200 Kg in Italy** and **50 Kg in France**. She claims she got a CITES export permit long ago that expired and now she will “use money” to make a new permit and take all the stock to France. This is laundering illegal ivory using a legal cites permit scheme, (that alone can stand to show the problem with legal sales of ivory and the value of a total ban to effective enforcement). She is also recorded trying to sell her stock of CAR at 150,000 Euros. That should also give you an idea of the bribing power we are facing. In her house search she kept on saying “I know the Procurer General (General Attorney) which shows her intention to sabotage justice procedure using her contacts and influence. She was also bragging in her relations with the French embassy in Bangui.

## Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **13 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 2 in Mamfe (South West), 1 in Bafoussam (West), 2 in Douala (Littoral), 1 in Bamenda (North West), 1 in Ntui (Centre), 1 in Bengbis (South), 2 in Djoum (South), 1 in Belabo (East) and 2 in Abong-Mbang (East).
- There are **16 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the West Region, 1 in the East Region, 4 in South Region, 4 in the North West Region and 5 in the South West Region.
- **27 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **21 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: 4 dealers were sentenced this month
  - **01/09/09**- The Court of First Instance of Abong-Mbang (East) sentenced Megnone Eugene Blondel to pay a total of 632 840 FCFA (About \$1300) as fine and damages. Megnone was arrested for illegally trafficking elephant tusks and African Grey parrots.
  - **18/09/09** - The Court of First Instance of Bamenda (North West) sentenced Awal Danladi and Bala Mohamed to pay jointly, a total of 1.348 400 FCFA (About \$2700) as fines and damages, or 9 months imprisonment in default of payment. They were arrested for illegally trying to trade in leopard skins.
  - **28/09/09** – The Court of First Instance of Yaounde Administrative Center sentenced Njankouo Aboubakar to 1 year suspended sentence for 3 months and to pay a total of 738 000 FCFA (About \$1500) as fines and damages. He will be retained in jail for 3 months in default of payment. He was arrested for illegally trying to trade in a leopard skin and elephant products.
- The Head of Legal Department gave a presentation on the international wildlife trade through the Internet during the Conference of the Interpol Wildlife Working Group in Brazil. His presentation was highly appreciated and he had opportunity of making new contact with other law enforcement agencies represented from other parts of the world. This is in continuation of the process instituted by the LAGA Director in which other members of the LAGA family are given the opportunity to take part in international forums and to build more capacity.

## Media front

- **54 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to TV, radio, and written press

including: 6 written press materials, 2 in English and 4 in French, 45 radio news flashes (1 in English, 19 in French), 1 radio news feature in French, 1 TV news feature in English and 2 radio talk shows in English.

- Guests include: The Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Deputy British High Commissioner, Information Officer at the US Embassy in Cameroon, LAGA Director, Head of LAGA Legal Unit, Littoral Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife and Fon of Bali.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including; 1 ton ivory seizure in Douala, prosecution of chimp dealers in Douala, case file established against gendarme officer and 21st INTERPOL conference in Brazil.
- 31 media pieces in English, 23 in French making a percentage of 57.4% in English and 42.6% in French.

Unconventional media:

- XINUA press Agency journalist met with LAGA Director to discuss an article on Chinese involvement in the illegal ivory trade.

### **External Relations and Policy**

- The Head of Legal Department gave a presentation on the international wildlife trade through the Internet during the Conference of the Interpol Wildlife Working Group in Brazil. His presentation was highly appreciated and he had opportunity of making new contact with other law enforcement agencies represented from other parts of the world.
- Meeting with US Embassy concerning the procedure against the SDO of Boumba and Ngoko (Yokadouma) who is implicated in and alleged to be part of elephant meat trafficking in the East during an operation. In addition getting the US Embassy to sign on the APT-AID principles of increase transparency and accountability in the development sector.
- LAGA Director held meetings with several NGOs to discuss on corruption in the forestry sector and building a coalition to fight it.
- The UN Ambassador of the Year of Gorilla Ian Redmond met LAGA Director to discuss on wildlife law enforcement in the sub region (Congo Basin) and corruption in conservation projects.
- Meeting between the LAGA Director and World Bank concerning the SDO of Boumba and Ngoko who is implicated in and alleged to be part of elephant meat trafficking in the East during an operation. Also discussed is the adaptation of the APT-AID principles of increasing accountability and transparency in development business by the Bank.
- In the meeting between LAGA Director and Canadian High Commission, the following were discussed: corruption in the wildlife sector, the enforcement of wildlife law, signatory to the APT-AID principle for promoting transparency and accountability and the lack of progress in the project of the anti-corruption law to be adopted by the General Assembly.
- The new Head of CHOC Project met with LAGA Director to discuss on the following issues; the fight against corruption through citizen legal action, the APT-AID principles for promoting transparency and accountability and the lack of progress in the project of the anti-corruption law.

### **Management**

- The Head of Legal Department participated in the Conference of the Interpol Wildlife Working Group in Brazil and gave a presentation on the international wildlife trade through the Internet. This is in continuation of the process instituted by the LAGA Director in which other members of the LAGA family are given the opportunity to take part in international forums and to build more capacity.
- One field investigator stopped working with LAGA because of disagreement over procedures of work.

### **Activism Front**

- A presentation by Aime Frisco of the Legal Department on Constitutional change in Cameroon and Africa in general – A device for African leaders to conserve their reign! The constant change of constitution is presented as a tool for maintaining power and running away from justice for fear of condemnation after leaving power.
- LAGA Director presented on the topic Corruption in the NGO Business to the Peace Corps staff as a part of building a module for fostering activism.

### **Finance**

In preparation, will be made available shortly.

## THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



**Some worked ivory seized during the operation in Bangui – CAR. 2 members of a big network specialized in international ivory trafficking were arrested with about 200 kg of ivory and one was recorded saying she has 600kg of ivory in CAR, some hidden in the bush, 200 Kg in Italy and 50 Kg in France. The network extends to France through a diplomat, to Italy as packages to a CAR national, to the Czech Republic through a priest delivered as packages for the Catholic Church, and to Turkey. Ivory is also sent to Cameroon and Nigeria with imports from the Democratic Republic of Congo. More investigations are being carried out to arrests more suspects who are part of the network.**



**The Minister MINFOF speaking during a Press Conference on 1 ton ivory that was seized in Douala where an international network of ivory traffickers was busted. 2 members of the network were arrested by the Littoral Regional Delegation for National Security with a huge consignment of raw ivory totalling 1 ton representing more than 150 killed elephants. The ivory is purported to be from Cameroon and Gabon and that some highly placed government officials are also part of the network.**



## **Links of this month**

- Illegal wildlife traffickers arrested – Ariane Television Broadcast: The Littoral Regional Delegation for National Security has arrested 2 wildlife dealers in Douala for trafficking in 1 ton of ivory about to be exported to the international black market. The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife in collaboration with the Judiciary and LAGA is establishing a case file against these ivory traffickers who are now behind bars. This, in conformity with the law of 1994, governing the wildlife sector in Cameroon. None is above the law!!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKkcR1zrIag>

- Seizure of 1 ton ivory in Douala – Cameroon National Television Broadcast: The arrest of the ivory traffickers was carried out by the Regional Delegation for National Security assisted by MINFOF. These traffickers are now behind bars and a case file is being established against them by MINFOF, technically assisted by LAGA. If found guilty, both risk a prison term of 3 to 10 years as provided by the 1994 wildlife law.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXBSuqr4Uhg>

- Three wildlife traffickers arrested in Kurt village in Nwa, Donga Mantung Division in the North-West Region for illegally killing three chimpanzees – Cameroon National Television Broadcast. This act is described by the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife as wildlife crime and as such punishable under the law of 1994 governing the wildlife sector.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5\\_YuVZihDY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5_YuVZihDY)

- Activism in LAGA - The NGO is not a technical institute in charge of mere execution of Programme. The NGO should foster activism and act in the spirit of fighting for a cause and has a secondary goal to produce activist, leaders and bring a positive change to their country beyond the service of the NGO.

The NGO should instill specified values in its members. Staff is recruited not according to merely skills but examined in their values and potentials to become independent activists. The rarest quality of personnel is honesty and the desire to bring a change in one's country. Any recruit has to pass a period of volunteering where these aspects (values) are thoroughly examined and the post in the NGO should not be regarded as a job but as a mission and therefore demanding exceptional devotion, commitment, sacrifice, initiatives, self discipline fitting a fight for a cause. At any point of time, when a member of the organization does not prove these qualities, he/she will be removed.

LAGA members are encouraged to carry any external activities connected to a cause and some NGO's time will be given to do so.

### **Weekly Activism Debates**

Every week, the NGO is carrying educational activities where members are encouraged to debate issues of development, activism and encourage critical views of the realities of the country and the ways to bring change. For that, the organization is having a library of films and presentations prepared by the NGO members as an assignment.

### **Food for Spirit**

A weekly quote stressing a specific value is posted in the office under the title 'Food for Spirit'

### **Food for Thought**

A quote from research / book containing figures or other facts provoking critical thought on development in Africa are posted weekly under the title 'Food for Thought'.

### **Library**

As part of educational activities in LAGA, there exist a library at the disposal of the staff and visitors aim at propelling activism

### **Involvement**

Daily, the NGO is supplying the members with news papers of the day. One of the NGO members is in charge of daily press briefing. This is done to get the members more involved in the realities of the country as the basis of citizen's involvement and activism.

### **Creating Independent Activists**

The NGO members are encouraged to develop their own projects on the various development issues of their country and are given NGO time and management time to do develop the project in the vision of turning it in to an independent NGO/paper/book. The function of leadership is not producing more followers but to produce more leaders.

<http://www.laga-enforcement.org/LAGAValues/tabid/77/Default.aspx>