

Central and West Africa Wildlife Law Enforcement Network

Monthly Regional Wildlife Law Enforcement Briefing – November 2013

Summary

This month was marked by arrest operations in most replication projects - Cameroon, Congo, Guinea, and Togo. In Cameroon, 4 major dealers were arrested with elephant products, crocodile products and a live mandrill in 2 different operations; in Congo, 4 different operations led to the arrest of 8 major ivory dealers of different networks in Brazzaville including a Chinese national attempting to board the Ethiopian Airlines with sculpted ivory; in Guinea - Conakry, an international ivory trafficker with connections in Benin and Central Africa and other countries was arrested after a second attempt with 48 ivory pieces; in Togo, 9 dealers in ivory, lion and leopard skins were arrested following a visit of AALF Coordinator and AALF Investigator.

Good prosecutions were obtained in Cameroon, Guinea and Gabon. In Cameroon, 5 major dealers were sentenced in Djoum – South and Edea – Littoral to serve prison terms and to pay damages awarded to MINFO; in Guinea – Conakry, a trafficker who admitted to have sold more than 500 chimpanzees was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment and to pay about \$17,300 as damages; and in Gabon, a major ivory trafficker and his accomplices were sentenced to 6 months imprisonment term and to pay damages of 300 million FCFA (about \$600).

Cases of corruption and bribery attempts were observed again this month – in Congo, the Chinese arrested while trying to smuggle worked ivory pieces via Ethiopian Airlines bribed some officials 60.000 FCFA (about 125 USD) to get the ivory through by using a fixer.

LAGA Director travelled to Kenya to work on the Kenyan and Ugandan Replications of LAGA. This included working sessions with coordinators, recruitment, meeting with officials, NGOs and others.

CAMEROON – LAGA

- 4 dealers arrested in 2 different operations in Makenene and Yaounde in the Center Region. 2 of them were arrested in Makenene with a variety of elephant parts including bones, teeth and tail, and crocodile skin. 2 others actively involved in the trade of live primates as pets were arrested with a live baby mandrill in Yaounde - Center. They were coming with it from Lolodorf – South and have other supply points in the South; selling in Yaounde - Center.
- 5 dealers were sentenced this month. The Court of First Instance of Djoum - South convicted 4 dealers, 2 dealers to 3 months imprisonment each and 2 others to 2 months imprisonment each for the illegal killing of elephants. In another case, the Court of First Instance of Edea – Littoral convicted 1 dealer to 2 months imprisonment and 1.000.000 FCFA (about \$2,000) as damages in addition to fines and court fees for illegally trying to trade in elephant parts
- LAGA Director travelled to the US attempting to add the lessons of LAGA to the forefront of strategies in the US for fighting wildlife trafficking. Meetings were held in DC and NYC with NGOs, experts and government officials. In his message he argued that the global strategy against wildlife crime still lacks crucial components and advocated for a clear indicator in the forefront of the US strategy – a weekly arrest and subsequent prosecution and imprisonment of a major wildlife trafficker for every country in the world, and for placing the fight against corruption in the center of it, in a practical and innovative way.

Action needed:

- Letter of Congratulation to the Minister of Justice for the good prosecutions obtained against major traffickers of elephant and other protected wildlife products.

CONGO – PALF

- 2 traffickers, including a Chinese national were arrested at Maya Maya International Airport while attempting to smuggle worked ivory on board the Ethiopian Airlines. The Chinese bribed some officials 60.000 FCFA (about 125 USD) to get the ivory through by using a fixer.
- In other operations, 3 traffickers belonging to the same network were arrested in Brazzaville with raw ivory; 2 other traffickers were arrested in Brazzaville with a sac full of sculpted ivory; one of them is from the Democratic Republic of Congo who facilitates the cross-border trade between the 2 countries; and 1 more trafficker arrested in Brazzaville for illegally trying to trade in sculpted ivory.
- Press conference at the US Embassy about the Denver ivory crush and how it relates to Congo and the fight against ivory trade in Africa

Action needed:

- A strong Letter of Congratulations to the “Gendarmerie Nationale” of Brazzaville for their collaboration in the series of 5 operations within the past 5 weeks.
- Letter of Congratulations to the “Ministère de l’Économie Forestière et du Développement Durable” (MEFDD) for all their efforts in arresting ivory traffickers.
- Letter to the Ministry of Justice insisting on strong deterrent sentences on arrested wildlife traffickers with particular attention to the “Procureur de la République” in Brazzaville and that arrested wildlife criminals should not be freed.

GABON – AALF

- The Coordinator of AALF and 1 Investigator from AALF Gabon travelled to Togo and assisted TALFF in targeting and arresting 9 major wildlife dealers.
- Good prosecution was obtained in Oyem this month. A major ivory trafficker Issa Adamou and his accomplices were sentenced to 6 months imprisonment term and to pay damages of 300 million FCFA (about \$600). Other court cases in other antennas are being followed up.
- A training workshop was organized in Franceville by the Provincial Director and State Prosecutor for OPJ / APJ on the vulgarization of wildlife and forestry laws and the state of affairs on international wildlife trafficking.

Action needed:

- Letter of Congratulations to the Minister of Justice for good court verdict in Oyem with emphasis on good legal procedures in other wildlife cases with special attention on corruption issues.

GUINEA – CONAKRY-GALF

- A major international ivory trafficker with a network of suppliers in Benin, Central Africa and other countries was arrested after a second attempt with 48 ivory pieces. Profound investigations got details on new *modus operandi* used by ivory dealers in Guinea to avoid arrests and confiscations of ivory. He explained also how law enforcement has become a serious obstacle to the ivory trade in Guinea. The operation was carried out by the NCB Interpol team, Ministry of Environment and GALF team.
- Another major trafficker of protected wildlife Ousmane Diallo who admitted to have sold more than 500 chimpanzees was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment and to pay about

\$17,300 as damages to the Ministry in charge of Wildlife (Ministère de l'Environnement et des Eaux et Forêts) by the Court of First Instance - Dixinn.

Action Needed

- Letter of congratulation to Interpol NCB – Guinea and the Minister for Security for their collaboration in arrest operations.

TOGO – TALFF

- The Coordinator of AALF and 1 Investigator from AALF Gabon travelled to Togo and assisted TALFF in targeting and arresting 9 major wildlife dealers.
- 8 ivory dealers were arrested in 3 different operations with a total of 14 kg of ivory pieces - 4 traffickers belonging to the same network; another network of 3 traffickers and 1 other trafficker.
- In another operation, a dealer in felid skins was arrested with 4 skins – 2 lion skins, 1 leopard skin and 1 panther skin.
- Following operations, focus continued on putting in place a team comprised of investigators and Jurists, training and building their capacity for the effective application of wildlife laws and the fight against corruption.

Action needed:

- Letter of Congratulation to the Ministry of Security and “Office” for their collaboration and role in assisting in the arrest of major wildlife dealers.

C.A.R – RALF

- Because of security problems in that country, no veritable activity was undertaken. This situation may continue for the next couple of months.

CHAD

- Follow-up of cases initiated by the Jurist sent to Chad to evaluate and initiate court cases against dealers arrested are being followed-up and controlled by the LAGA team in Yaounde. 2 cases were effectively sent to court against 7 dealers in Amtiman for illegally trafficking in ivory and other elephant products.

Action needed

- Letter of Recommendation to the Minister in charge of wildlife in Chad on immediate start of the replication of LAGA activities in that country.

The Central Africa Wildlife Law Enforcement Network

The Central Africa Wildlife Law Enforcement Network is a collaboration created by the first wildlife law enforcement NGO in Africa and its replications in the region, fighting corruption to get the wildlife law applied.

Cameroon – LAGA - ofir@laga-enforcement.org
Congo – PALF – naftalihonig@palf-enforcement.org
Gabon – AALF – luc@conservation-justice.org
C.A.R – RALF - hubertyamandekoulayom@yahoo.fr
Guinea Conakry – GALF - charlotte.houpline@yahoo.fr
Togo – TALFF – info@talff-enforcement.org