

Central and West Africa Wildlife Law Enforcement Network

Monthly Regional Wildlife Law Enforcement Briefing – October 2013

Summary

This month was marked by arrest operations in Cameroon, Congo and Gabon. In Cameroon, 6 dealers including 2 international traffickers were arrested in 3 different operations in Lomie, Yaounde and Garoua; products included ivory and other elephant trophies, a live mandrill, skins of protected animals etc. In Congo, dealers were arrested with elephant tusks and leopard skins; and in Gabon, operations were carried out against illegal wildlife traffickers and illegal timber exploiters

Good prosecutions were obtained in Cameroon with 3 ivory traffickers sentenced, some receiving a 6 months prison term and damages awarded to MINFOF.

Cases of corruption were observed in Congo whereby a search was halted for no apparent reason involving Chinese citizens arrested by the authorities of Odzala-Kokoua National Park for ivory trafficking.

LAGA Director went to Kenya to work on the replication in a series of meetings to advance that plan.

LAGA Head of Investigations Department travelled to Togo to help putting in place an Investigations Department for the TALFF Project through selection and training of Investigators. A Jurist from AALF – Gabon also travelled to Togo to assist in putting in place a Legal Department for the TALFF Project.

CAMEROON – LAGA

- 2 international dealers in wildlife products were arrested within 1 hour in Garoua – North with a wide variety of protected wildlife products including 14 hippo teeth, elephant parts, and Nile crocodiles skins; other products were serval cat skins bought from Nigeria, antelope horns and jaw bones.
- 3 major dealers of the same network were arrested within 1 hour in Lomie – East with 4 small elephant tusks and other elephant parts including tails, jaw bones and teeth. One of them is a business man with connections to administrative authorities who initially resisted arrest.
- A trafficker in live primates arrested in Yaounde - Center with a 4 months old live baby mandrill while illegally trying to trade in it. He is known to have steady suppliers in the South, buys mostly from Ebolowa and sells in Yaounde.
- The Court of First Instance of Yaounde - Administrative Centre sentenced 3 major ivory traffickers to serve prison terms. In the first case, 1 dealer was sentenced to 06 months imprisonment and to pay 400.000 FCFA (about \$800) as fine and 2.000.000 FCFA (about \$4000) as damages. In the second case, 2 other dealers were sentenced to 06 months imprisonment each and to each pay 400.000 FCFA (about \$800) as fine and 1.500.000 FCFA (about \$3000) as damages.

Action needed:

- Letter of Congratulation to the Minister of Justice for the good prosecutions obtained against major wildlife traffickers.

CONGO – PALF

- A major ivory dealer was arrested with 2 elephant tusks in Sibiti. He is at the center of a poaching ring, organizes poachers to kill elephants and supply him with the tusks.
- Another dealer was arrested with 2 leopard skins in Brazzaville while illegally trying to trade in them. He has suppliers from the Northern part of Congo.
- Legal follow-up on a case of a major recidivist ivory dealer in northern Congo as well as two Chinese citizens arrested by the authorities of Odzala-Kokoua National Park for ivory – this included a search, halted due to corruption.

Action needed:

- Letter to the Minister of Justice on delayed legal procedure and corruption observed in the court cases against arrested wildlife dealers.
- Letter of Congratulations to the Brazzaville Gendarmerie for the recent arrests of wildlife dealers especially of the leopard skin dealer.

GABON – AALF

- 2 persons were arrested in Minvoul for the illegal detention of arms, 458 type and ammunition which they use in poaching.
- 1 person was arrested in Bakoumba – Franceville while threatening to kill mandrills in the Lékédi national parc managed by SODEPAL. Investigations revealed that he was trying to con the parc management for money.
- The ALEFI project assisted in the closure of the SOLIGA saw-mill in Oyem after multiple warnings from the Provincial Director of the Minister of Water and Forest on illegal exploitation of wood. A team made of the Judicial Police, DPEFWN, Chief of Mitzic and a Conservation Justice Jurist.
- Still in Oyem, a Nigerian was arrested and presented to the State Counsel (Prosecutor) for exploiting wood without permits.
- In Makokou, the Provincial Director of Water and Forests accompanied by Conservation Justice went to investigate the feeling of reserve wood by the PENG XIN company. After confirmation, the company in question paid the sum of 60.000.000 FCFA (about \$120,000) as penalty.
- The Manager of the TTG company of Indian nationality and a Gabonese representing the SGPTB company were arrested with 600m³ of wood. They also paid a penalty.
- The Conservation Justice (CJ) Ogooué-Ivindo antenna assisted in the first important cases of wood seizure initiated in the PANEFI activities.
- The CJ Assistant Coordinator travelled to Togo to help in putting in place the Legal Department of TALFF through selection and training of candidates.

Action needed:

- Letter of Congratulations to the Minister of Water and Forests for good collaboration with AALF and the ALEFI projects in order to fight against corruption, wildlife law enforcement and illegal timber exploitation

GUINEA – CONAKRY-GALF

- Investigations targeted dealers of tortoises, lion skins, shark fins, ivory, lamantins, bushmeat etc. Targets include those of other nationalities such as Benin, Mali, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Senegal within Conakry, at the seaport and Kipe.
- Cases resulting from arrest operations are as still followed-up in court especially that against Ousmane Diallo, a major trafficker of great apes.

Action Needed

- Letter of congratulation to Interpol – Guinea for their collaboration in arrest operations.

TOGO – TALFF

- This month focused on putting in place a team comprised of investigators and Jurists. LAGA Head of Investigations Department travelled to Togo to help putting in place an Investigations Department for the TALFF Project through selection and training of Investigators. The Assistant Coordinator of AALF – Gabon also travelled to Togo to assist in putting in place a Legal Department for the TALFF Project.
- Collaboration was established with “Office” in assisting TALFF to carryout arrest operations.

Action needed:

- Letter to the Minister in charge of wildlife to look at and tackle corruption and governance issues in his Ministry

C.A.R – RALF

- RALF Coordinator arrived from CAR and was trained in Yaounde - Cameroon under the regional exchange program for further improvement and more operations in regional enforcement
- 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.

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