

Central and West Africa Wildlife Law Enforcement Network

Monthly Regional Wildlife Law Enforcement Briefing – December 2013

Summary

This month was marked by arrest operations in most replication projects - Cameroon, Congo, Guinea and Gabon. In Cameroon, 4 major dealers were arrested with elephant products, one of them an ecoguard – MINFOF and 2 others connected to the Ngoyla – East municipality using their car to transport ivory; in Congo, an ivory trafficker connected to the case of sculpted ivory was arrested in Brazzaville; in Guinea, 3 Chinese nationals were arrested with ivory, seahorses, shark fins and other sea products while attempting to traffic them through the airport in Conakry; in Gabon, operations led to the arrest of ivory dealers, a dealer in leopard skin, and other dealers in protected wildlife products.

Good prosecutions were obtained in Cameroon and Guinea - Conakry. In Cameroon, a dealer in products of elephants and other protected wildlife species sentenced to serve a 50 days prison term and to pay damages to MINFOF; in Guinea, an ivory dealer was sentenced to 19 days imprisonment and to pay damages.

Cases of corruption, bribery attempts and lack of collaboration were observed again this month – in Cameroon following the arrest of 2 ivory traffickers, one of the dealers is the son of the Mayor of Ngoyla – East, who is based in Spain and tried to intimidate the arresting team, and later tried to bribe them. Lack of collaboration and breach of procedure by MINFOF was again observed in the case of the ecoguard arrested when the MINFOF Delegate of the Far North Region refused to write a remand warrant for the suspect to be locked up and the Conservator for the Waza national park endured lack of collaboration by MINFOF especially during the writing of the PV.

LAGA Director meets with Luc Mathot, Naftali Honig and Charlotte Houpline for a week of sessions on the formation of the EAGLE network, and different aspects of taking the work of the LAGA replications to the next level as the network continues to grow.

A Wildlife Official from Uganda was trained in Yaounde on investigation, operation, management, legal and media procedures with the goal of replicating LAGA activities in that country.

CAMEROON – LAGA

- 2 major ivory traffickers were arrested in Lomie – East by MINFOF officials with elephant tusks while trying to illegally transport them using the car of the Ngoyla municipality. LAGA was involved in the Legal follow-up and questioned the Mayor on PV; and investigations are still on-going to see the involvement of the mayor and the trafficking of ivory to Spain by the arrested suspect.
- An ecoguard working in the Waza national park arrested with a wide variety of elephant products and other wildlife products including elephant skull, jawbones, foot and ear; and other wildlife products including giraffe skull, 9 kob horns and the skull of a topi tsessebe. He transported the products on his bike from Waza to Maroua where he was arrested.
- The Court of First Instance of Bafia - Center a major dealer to 50 days imprisonment and to pay 50.000 FCFA as fine, 200.000 FCFA (about \$400) as damages. He will be retained in jail for 6 months in case of default of payment of fine and court fees. He was arrested in Makenene – Center for the illegal detention and attempted sale of parts of the protected animals.

Action needed:

- Letter to the Minister – MINFOF reiterating the lack of collaboration and breach of procedure concerning many wildlife cases since the beginning of 2013

CONGO – PALF

- 1 trafficker was arrested in Brazzaville in connection with a sculpted ivory case
- Opening of a PALF Facebook page: www.facebook.com/PALF.Congo. Single best post reached over 33,000 people, with over 1400 clicking
- Meeting with new Prosecutor for Brazzaville with the European Union on collaboration and strict adherence to procedure concerning wildlife enforcement and the fight against corruption.
- Signed for funding for PALF with Secretary General of CEEAC in Libreville - Gabon
- Work paused due to violence in Brazzaville, but recommenced before the end of the year

Action needed:

- Strong congratulations to the Gendarmerie Nationale of Brazzaville for the series of 5 operations in 5 weeks
- Strong insistence to the Procureur de la République in Brazzaville that wildlife criminals not be freed and that Justice be strictly handed down to wildlife criminals, as the capital city is falling behind other courts like Ouessou and Ewo, which have sentenced criminals more strongly in recent months
- Strong insistence that the various people working at the airports (Customs, Police, airlines) be vigilant about Chinese nationals smuggling ivory

GABON – AALF

- An ivory trafficker belonging to a network was arrested in Minvoul for illegal ivory trafficking and violent attack on an ANPN ecoguard.
- Another major ivory trafficker arrested in Woleu-Ntem after a long investigation to track him. He is implicated in many other illegal ivory trafficking cases especially that concerning the Sub-Prefect of Bolossoville.
- In Oyem, a major poacher and trafficker of felid skins was arrested with a leopard skin while trying to illegally trade in it.
- A special anti-poaching mission was carried out from the 28-31 December 2013 with the Provincial Directorate of Water and Forests, the National Park of Batékés Plateaux, the Gorilla Protection Project, Rougier Gabon and the Lékédi Parc in Franceville arresting many suspects who kill and trade in protected wildlife and their products

Action needed:

- Letter of Congratulations to the authorities of the Judicial Police for their assistance in arrest operations.

GUINEA – CONAKRY-GALF

- 3 Chinese nationals were arrested by the Guinean Customs while trying to illegally traffic products out of the country including ivory, seahorses, shark fins and other sea products hidden in boxes of cigarettes and cans at the airport in Conakry.
- A dealer in ivory was sentenced to 19 days imprisonment and to pay a fine 90,000 GnF (about \$13) and 6,500,000 GnF (about \$951) as damages and interest.

- Investigations on international trafficking of shark fins, sea turtles, manatees and meat of protected wildlife species continued with some trafficking networks identified. Investigations were also carried out on a CITES export permit for a bonobo to Armenia issued by Guinea in 2011 that is connected to the case against of Doumbouyah Ansoumane (former MA CITES in Guinea)
- A meeting was held between GALF and the new CITES Management Authority on how to stop wildlife products leaving the country through the airport; another meeting was held with the Interpol team with emphasis on Chinese traffickers.
- A mission was carried out to the National Centre for Fisheries Science in Boussoura in order to find a legal basis for the protection of sharks (sharks are not protected by the Wildlife Act) in Guinea – Conakry.

Action Needed

- Letter of congratulation to Interpol NCB – Guinea, Custom Authorities and the Minister for Security for their collaboration in arrest operations especially at the airport.

TOGO – TALFF

- Cases of arrested dealers especially international dealers continued to be followed-up in court.
- Meetings were held with officials of the Ministry in charge of wildlife, Judiciary and Interior on the effective application of the wildlife laws in Togo and collaboration with TALLF – viz, the Lome State Prosecutor; the Director of OCRTIDB (Office Central de Répression du Trafic Illicite des Drogues et du Blanchissement – ‘Office’); the Director of Forest and Environmental Inspection of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Resources; and the Legal Adviser of the Ministry in charge of wildlife.
- 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

- A LAGA Legal Adviser travelled to Chad in order to meet the authorities pertaining to the replication of LAGA activities in that country and to follow up cases initiated last year that are pending at the level of courts.

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