

## *Central Africa Wildlife Law Enforcement Network*

### **Monthly Regional Wildlife Law Enforcement Briefing – September 2012**

#### **Summary**

The month of September was marked by the uncovering of an alarming black market trade in human body parts and elephant meat in Cameroon in an operation that saw the arrest of 5 people in Djoum - a small town in the South Region of the country. 2 other dealers, both female were arrested in 2 different operations for dealing in gorilla parts and meat of other protected wildlife species. AALF – Gabon carried out an unprecedented feline skins operation arresting a dealer with 6 leopard skins, 2 elephant tails, and 17 other feline skins. PALF focused on the North of Congo this month and arrested 2 dealers in elephant products in Sangha including an ecoguard.

5 dealers sentenced this month in Cameroon, 3 of whom were arrested for trafficking ivory in the South Region, and the 2 others for trade in life primates in the West Region. Acts of corruption are still visible especially in Congo following the unprocedural release of wildlife criminals.

LAGA Director gave a participated in the World Customs Organization's (WCO) training in Uganda on corruption during a GAPIN conference. GAPIN is the World Customs Organization's initiative for fighting wildlife crime, a "green Customs" initiative. More than a dozen African countries were represented. The person in the entire WCO (World Custom Organization) in charge of Ethics is interested in integrating LAGA further into WCO and talked about the ethics sub-committee of WCO.

#### **CAMEROON – LAGA**

- A network of traffickers in human parts and elephant meat was busted in Djoum – South with 5 suspects arrested. Most notable among this discovery was the head of a human being that still had some hairs on it. Reports coming in from Djoum say the products – the human body parts and the elephant meat were being ferried to Yaounde by the traffickers to serve as constitutive elements for some occultist practice by an important personality in the capital city. As in many of such practices, human body parts, baby parts etc are frequently used by unsuspecting people for black magic and witchcraft. It should be noted that this operation was the initiative of wildlife officials who are in a renewed alert mode to track wildlife criminals. This opens up a vast and new domain of crime in the country. It equally shows to what extend the trafficking of wildlife species can go with human parts becoming a trade item on the same level as wildlife species parts.
- In 2 other operations, 2 female dealers were arrested with gorilla parts and meat of protected wildlife. One of them was arrested in Yaounde - Center while trying to trade in gorilla parts including a fresh gorilla skull as well as gorilla meat; the other was arrested with 4 bags of bush meat including protected wildlife species in Abong Mbang - East.
- 5 dealers were sentenced in 2 different Regions. The Court of First Instance of Sangmelima - South sentenced 2 ivory traffickers to 2 months of prison each and to pay jointly a sum of 13.850.000 FCFA (about \$28,000) as damages; the Court of First Instance of Djoum - South sentenced another ivory dealer to 3 months of prison and to pay a sum of 3.000.000 FCFA (about \$6000) as damages. The Court of First Instance of Bangangte - West sentenced 2 dealers to 3 months of prison each and to pay a sum of 150.000 FCFA (about \$300) as damages for illegal detention and trying to traffic a life chimp.

#### **CONGO – PALF**

- An ecoguard arrested in Sangha in Northern Congo. Killing of elephants and trading in their products. In a joint operation, MDDEFE / Gendarmerie Nationale, with support from

African Parks Network and PALF, two suspects were arrested; one of whom recently deserted his post as an Ecoguard. Northern Odzala-Kokoua National Park is still under threat. These suspects admitted to being involved with a recent elephant killing in the national park and the transport of an assault rifle.

- A man involved in traffic of an AK-47 for elephant poaching arrested in Sangha.
- Cases followed on the unprocedural release of some convicts locked up in Brazzaville, Sangha and Ouessou. Corruption of penitentiary officials highly suspected and being investigated. The case of Ouessou involves an ivory poacher who murdered a fellow trafficker for ivory and was then released from prison.

Action needed:

- Letter of Congratulations to the Sangha wildlife authorities and forces of law and order for the two arrests operations.
- Letter to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights on lack of transparency, unprocedural and illegal release of convicts from Brazzaville, Ouessou and Sangha prisons.

**GABON – AALF**

- An unprecedented feline skins operation carried out by AALF, MEF and B2 against a wildlife dealer with 6 leopard skins, 2 elephant tails, and 17 other feline skins while trying to illegally trade in them.
- Makokou antenna: following of 2 cases concerning ammunitions traffic from Congo-Brazzaville; 952 ammunitions (calibre 12) had been confiscated in August but the traffickers have been released. Media exposure in this case, and letters with all details were sent to the Ministry of Interior. The General in charge of this kind of issue has confirmed he will follow this.
- New Antenna opened in Tchibanga: training of Ecoguards and MEF agents on the penal processes, PV writing, wildlife law.
- Participation in training organized by French Gendarmes in Libreville, for 17 OPJ from Gabonese Gendarmerie, 3 OPJ from Police and 3 magistrates.
- USFWS agreed to fund AALF project.

Action needed:

- Letter of Congratulations to MEF, Ministry Justice and Gendarmerie Brigade for their participation in the arrest of the trafficker in Libreville.

**C.A.R – RALF**

- A working session was held with the LAGA Deputy Director in Bangui on the difficulties facing the project, on capacity building and how to orient activities towards arrest operations.
- RALF held a meeting with officials of the Ministry in charge of wildlife on review and putting up an effective code for the protection of endangered wildlife species in CAR.

Action Needed

- There are still no results for the project and project is encouraged to get back on track and focus arrests and prosecutions.

**CHAD**

- LAGA continues to work with administrative and wildlife authorities, other NGOs and individuals to push for information on wildlife dealers and a general strategy to combat poaching and other wildlife crimes in Chad.

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 so as to directly tackle problems there.

**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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