

The Last Great Ape Organization – LA GA

February 2011 Report



Highlights

- **A violent attempt on a LAGA staff and collaborator combated.**
- **3 main dealers arrested** for trying to trade in **4 elephant tusks and for kidnapping a LAGA staff.**
- **3 operations** carried out arresting **5 wildlife dealers in Cameroon** - Littoral and South with a primate and 7 sea turtle shells.
- A very good prosecution obtained in Abong Mbang – East - **a major dealer sentenced to 2 years imprisonment.**

General

This month served us as a reminder of the **danger accompanying our work** with violent attempts on a LAGA staff and collaborator. The month was also marked by 3 operations against 5 subjects in Cameroon.

One LAGA investigator was kidnapped by a ring of illegal ivory dealers, we managed to rescue him and get 5 dealers arrested in their Mercedes Benz but his life was probably saved due to sticking to procedures built for such scenarios. He was sent to infiltrate an increasingly resilient network - Douala's ivory dealers. He had recorded by his hidden camera the dealers with ivory tusks as they explain the different ways they export ivory concealed in carved armchairs, and as they brought him to a woman that "produces permits" for illegal ivory through "her contacts in the Ministry - MINFOF". The arrest was planned for the Yaounde airport where we expected them to export the ivory. The main dealer is commonly called "Euro" for his wealth, and is proud of buying "his Magistrates" and "his Colonels".

At one point they started suspecting the investigator, and as they involved more ivory dealers they have concluded he is a LAGA investigator and kidnapped him. Since our investigators operate with strict communication procedures we understood very fast that we have a problem. We called his phone using his local dialect, again according to procedure we are all drilled with. From that we gathered he is kidnapped though we could not get his exact location. Trying to lure the dealers to different locations and searching for the dealers' Mercedes in three different towns we finally managed to arrest them and recover our investigator who was unharmed, though quite surprised he came out of this alive. The five are still behind bars as the international community helps our anti-corruption efforts to deflect the many corruption attempts for their release. The kidnapping of a LAGA staff showed us the importance of following strict measures and procedures in the field to deal with such events in a professional manner. This event was dealt with in a professional calculated manner and also stands to show the criminal nature of wildlife offenders.

3 operations were carried out this month against **5 subjects** in Cameroon. 3 major dealers in ivory and products of other protected wildlife species were arrested in Kribi – South for trying to trade in 4 elephant tusks, kidnapping and violent attempts on a LAGA staff and a collaborator. One of them is also a recidivist who had been arrested before for other crimes and from records, affirms that he had gone to Nigeria several times to sell ivory. During the investigation phase, they kidnapped the investigator and forcefully transported him from Douala to Kribi where they were arrested.

In other operations, a main dealer and the owner of a shop who has been dealing in primates for more than 5 years was arrested in Yaounde – Center Region with a life Mandrill. He resisted arrest and instigated a crowd to be violent during his arrest. While in the Gendarmerie Brigade, he

attempted on several occasions to negotiate with the arresting officers through bribe for his release. He also tried to bring in some highly placed relatives in the Cameroon military to intervene on his behalf. Also, a regular dealer arrested in Bangangte – West Region with a live baby chimp while trying to trade in it. He is also reputed for selling bushmeat in Bazou – West and also has some main buyers / customers in Bafoussam - West.

A very good prosecution was obtained this month. The Court of First Instance of Abong-Mbang - East sentenced a major dealer to **2 years** imprisonment and to pay **\$1960 as damages**. He was arrested in Abong-Mbang for killing and trading in elephant parts

Investigations

- **26 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **7 Regions** of Cameroon- West, South West, South, East, Littoral, North West and Center.
- 1 Investigator was kidnapped this month regarding the case of 3 ivory dealers. This was a reminder of the danger accompanying our work and the importance of following strict measures and procedures in the field to deal with such events in a professional manner. We managed to rescue him and get 5 dealers arrested in their Mercedes Benz but his life was probably saved due to sticking to procedures built for such scenarios. He was sent to infiltrate an increasingly resilient network - Douala's ivory dealers. He had recorded by his hidden camera the dealers with ivory tusks as they explain the different ways they export ivory concealed in carved armchairs, and as they brought him to a woman that "produces permits" for illegal ivory through "her contacts in the Ministry - MINFOF".
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- Investigations led to 3 successful operations after targeting dealers in Yaounde – Center, Bangangte – West and Kribi – South.
- Training of Investigators on operations procedure continued this month so that they could start to actively assist and help in controlling some operations in the field.
- Field tests continued with 1 new candidate as the department is experiencing a shortage in effective investigators.

Operations

3 operations were carried out this month against **5 subjects** in Cameroon.

- **02/02/11** – A main dealer and the owner of a shop who has been dealing in primates for more than 5 years was arrested in Yaounde – Center Region with a life Mandrill. He resisted arrest and instigated a crowd to be violent during his arrest. While in the Gendarmerie Brigade, he attempted on several occasions to negotiate with the arresting officers through bribe for his release. He also tried to bring in some highly placed relatives in the Cameroon military to intervene on his behalf.

- **03/02/11** – A regular dealer arrested in Bangangte – West Region with a live baby chimp while trying to trade in it. He is also reputed for selling bushmeat in Bazou – West and also has some main buyers / customers in Bafoussam - West.
- **09/02/11** - 3 major dealers in ivory and products of other protected wildlife species were arrested in Kribi – South for trying to trade in 4 elephant tusks, kidnapping and violent attempts on a LAGA staff and a collaborator. One of them is also a recidivist who had been arrested before for other crimes and from records, affirms that he had gone to Nigeria several times to sell ivory. During the investigation phase, they kidnapped the investigator and forcefully transported him from Douala - Littoral to Kribi where they were arrested. The investigator was saved by adhering to procedure and the quick reaction of the whole LAGA team that rapidly put together officials of the forces of law and order that arrested the dealers and rescued the investigator and the collaborator.

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **16 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 1 in Douala (Littoral), 2 in Edea (littoral), 1 in Buea (South West), 1 in Muyuka (South West), 2 in Abong-Mbang (East), 1 in Kribi (South), 2 in Bafoussam (West), 1 in Dschang (West), 2 in Bafang (West), 1 in Bamenda (North West), 1 in Ebolowa (South).
- There are **14 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the East Region, 9 in the South West Region, 1 in South Region, 1 in the littoral Region and 1 in Centre Region.
- **29 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **27 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: 1 case was prosecuted this month
 - **08/02/2011**: The Court of First Instance of Abong-Mbang sentenced BARKINDO Gadji to **2 years** imprisonment and to pay **\$1960 as damages**. He was arrested in Abong-Mbang for killing and trading in elephant parts.

Media front

- **36 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, TV and written press including: 7 written press materials (4 in English and 3 in French), 23 radio news flashes (8 in English and 15 in French), 4 talk shows (3 in English and 1 in French) and 2 TV productions (1 in English and French each).
- Guests include: Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, the Director of LAGA, and Coordinator of the great ape project of USFWS.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including; leopard skin dealers arrest in Douala, baby chimp trafficker arrested in Bangangte, traditional ruler assist in wildlife law enforcement, upcoming wildlife cases in court against wildlife defaulters.
- 16 media pieces in English, 20 in French making a percentage of 44.4% in English and 55.6% in French.
- A team from France 24 visited LAGA and covered its day to day activities.

External Relations and Policy

- Meeting between LAGA Director and Dirck Byler of U.S Fish and Wildlife Service issues discussed - strategies in developing wildlife law enforcement and replication strategy creating regional law enforcement.
- LAGA Director travelled to Congo Republic and held meeting with enforcement officials and anti-corruption commission.
- Programmer on different application of Ushahidi system in Cameroon.
- LAGA was invited to present its vision of law enforcement in an Anti poaching strategy and regional law enforcement meeting. LAGA's representative followed discussions during the

meeting and included methods to increase effective control and presence by Ministry officials in checking the illegal exportation of wildlife products.

Management

- 1 Investigator was kidnapped this month regarding the case of 3 ivory dealers. This was a reminder of the danger accompanying our work and the importance of following strict measures and procedures in the field to deal with such events in a professional manner.

Activism Front

All the education activities carried out by the LAGA family are online; this could be gotten at the LAGA website – <http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Activism/tabid/77/Default.aspx>.

Replication

During this month, LAGA helped other replication projects in the following:

- LAGA Director travelled to the Republic of Congo and held meeting with enforcement officials and anti-corruption commission as well as to evaluate the replication efforts in that country.
- Financial and Activity reports of February (cross checking, corrections, comments, and validation) for AALF completed.
- Correcting, completing, validating, translating and putting the AALF Annual Report for 2010 on line.
- Working on the address tablet of AALF collaborators and employees.
- Working on the PALF Activity and Financial Reports, translating the reports from English to French and putting them on line.
- Website work done for PALF, RALF and AALF, page updated including the Gabon Decree on illegal hunting of elephant.

Finance

LAGA Expenditure by budget line for February 2011

Amount CFA	Budget line		Amount USD
1,803,675	Investigations	18 inv, 7 Regions	\$3,711
942,100	Operations	3 Operation against 5 subjects	\$1,938
2,516,235	Legal	follow up 29 cases 14 locked subjects	\$5,177
1,671,185	Media	36 Media pieces	\$3,439
426,600	Policy & External Relations	Congo/Gabon/CAR/UK/Czech	\$878
956,200	Management	Coordination	\$1,967
1,608,365	Office		\$3,309
9,924,360	TOTAL EXPENDITURE FEBRUARY		\$20,420

LAGA Expenditure by donor for February 2011

AmountCFA	Donor	Amount USD
4,510,795	FWS	\$9,281.5
340,000	FWS-Replication	\$699.6
949,185	BornFree Foundation	\$1,953.1
	Rufford Foundation	\$0.0
2,639,705	Neu Foundation	\$5,431.5
131,000	SFS France	\$269.5
1,353,675	ProWildlife	\$2,785.3
9,924,360	TOTAL	\$20,420.5

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



A regular dealer arrested in Bangangte – West Region with a live baby chimp while trying to trade in it. He is also reputed for selling bushmeat in Bazou – West and also has some main buyers / customers in Bafoussam - West.

Links of this month

- A dealer arrested in Bangangte – West and a baby chimp rescued – Cameroon National Television broadcast. A main dealer was arrested in Bangangte – West Region with a live baby chimp while trying to trade in it.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p24Lw8H_CVk