

The Last Great Ape Organization - LAGA

December 2007 Report



Highlights

- An **International wildlife trafficker** caught in Douala with **720 parrots**.
- **Seized parrots released** into the wild by **Minister**, MINFOF
- Cases initiated against **3 international traffickers** involving a **live hippopotamus** worth about **80.000 dollars**.
- Investigations initiated against **2 Chinese** trafficking **25 kg of ivory** through the **Yaounde-Nsimalen airport**.
- **Unprecedented victory in the fight against corruption** tackling a **high ministry official**.

General

December month gave very good results at the political and operational levels.

The fight against corruption reached an unprecedented level. LAGA produced enough evidence aimed at **tackling corruption at a very high level** in MINFOF resulting in the **removal of a highly placed official, and leading to victory for the fight against corruption**. This official was collaborating with the offenders, issuing false declarations on CITES permits, and attempting to block LAGA cases.

The **Minister** MINFOF symbolically **released African Gray parrots** that were seized in the Douala International Airport in an attempt to export them through fraudulent means with the complicity of some corrupt MINFOF officers of the Littoral Provincial Delegation. The parrots suspected to have been captured in the Southeastern forest of Cameroon and destined for the kingdom of Bahrain were rushed to the Limbe Wildlife Center upon seizure from where they were released into the wild by the authorities of the MINFOF. **This is the first time such an event is taking place in Cameroon.**

One international wildlife trafficker was arrested **trying to illegally export 720 parrots out of Cameroon** through the Douala International Airport. He was arrested and put behind bars. The operation targeted an even higher dealer, **the biggest wildlife exporter**, and uncovered issues of **complicity and corruption within the Ministry**. Again it validated information we had before about the organized chain of complicity in the parrot trade and how **white-collar criminals thrive on this complicity gaining a legitimate cover and eliminating the risk factor**. The profit margins are huge and the value of **a single shipment reaches half a million dollars** in the market of destination.

The high profile dealer had **asked for 48 million CFA** compensation from the Ministry for the introduction of a ban introduced in the EU on import of wild birds over avian flue. This of course has no legal base. The information LAGA has is that **Ministry officials helped him with this claim as well as a worker of WWF**.

Operations started against **2 Cameroonians and a Pakistani** for illegal international trafficking of a **live hippopotamus** from Cameroon to Pakistan. The hippopotamus estimated to **weigh 600 kgs** is worth about **80.000 dollars** is currently being kept in a zoo in Lahore – Pakistan.

Investigations

- **20 investigations** were carried out in **6 provinces** including - Littoral, West, Center, South, South West and North West.
- Investigations led to 1 successful operation in Douala International Airport involving an **international wildlife trafficker**. He was arrested with **720 parrots** that he was trying to export.
- Investigations were initiated regarding the trafficking of **25 kg of ivory** by **2 Chinese** through the Nsimalen Airport, Yaounde.
- Investigations led to the identification of 3 traffickers, **2 Cameroonian and 1 Pakistani** concerning the illegal exportation of a **hippopotamus from Cameroon to Pakistan**. The animal is estimated to be worth about **80.000 dollars**.
- Collaboration in Douala was intensified regarding international wildlife traffickers through the Douala International Airport.

Operations

An operation was carried out **against an international trafficker**.

- 04/12 – 1 International trafficker was arrested trying to illegally export 720 parrots through the Douala International Airport. **The offender is the largest legal exporter**, monopolizing the business and very known person to the administration. We have documents that prove he was attempting to **export the parrots to an illegal destination** and that **he falsified a government document** (we have two versions of this documents – before and after). The later crime is punishable 10-20 years under sections 203 and 205 of the penal code.
- 27/12 – Operation started against **2 Cameroonians and a Pakistani** for illegal international trafficking of a **live hippopotamus** from Cameroon to Pakistan. The hippopotamus estimated to **weigh 600 kgs** is worth about **80.000 dollars**.
- **The Operations Unit intensified** with a new member joining LAGA in its fight against illegal wildlife trade and corruption. He is a high officer working at the Presidency of the Republic with **extensive experience in managing operations and enforcing procedures**.

Legal

- There are **8 dealers behind bars during this month**: 4 in the Littoral Province; 1 in the Central Province, 2 in the West Province and 1 in the South West Province.
- **31 cases** were followed up by the legal department this month (active cases in courts)
- **18 cases** are scheduled and being tried in the court this month
- **1 case** is scheduled and being tried in the **Court of Appeal** of Garoua this month (Hassana)
- **7 cases** waiting for **the process of appeal to reach the court**. 4 in the West Province, 2 in the Littoral Province and 1 in the South Province (Djoum). The Courts of First Instance have not completed the file needed for the transmission to the Attorney General
- The Legal Department **organized 11 missions out of the Central Province** this month: 1 in Bamenda (North West), 1 in Mamfe (South West), 4 in Douala (Littoral), 2 in Nkongsamba (Littoral), 1 in Djoum (South), 1 in Bafang (West) and 1 in Bafoussam (West) to follow up operations and cases before the courts.
- **A court case was opened concerning illegal exportation of African gray parrots**, following an operation that took place on the 4 of December in the Douala International airport with the MINFOF provincial delegation. The dealer was arrested while trying to export 720 parrots to Mexico (100 parrots) and Serbia (620). On the verification of the CITES Permits, Certificate of Origin and the Airline Transport Certificate, it was discovered that 620 parrots were being sent to the Kingdom of Bahrain, an illegal parrot destination and not to Serbia. The suspect had also falsified information on the exportation documents. The dealer was locked up in the Airport police station cell before being released. The case is yet to be handed over to the court.

- **Prosecutions:** One case was sentenced this month:
 - **04/12:** The Court of First Instance of Nkongsamba convicts Djofang to serve a prison term and to pay an amount of 33,000 as fine and 150,000 as damages for illegally trading in leopard skins, a totally protected species.
- **Appeal:** One appeal was registered this month in the Littoral province – Nkongsamba in the case of Djofang Henry dealing with leopard skin.

Media front

- **18 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, TV and written press including: 8 written press materials (6 in English, 2 in French), 1 radio news feature (in English), 7 radio news flashes (2 in English, 5 in French), 1 radio talk show (in English) 1 TV news feature (in English).
- Guests include: Minister MINFOF, Technical Adviser No1 MINEP, LAGA Director.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including; The return of gorillas to Cameroon, Two Ghanaians arrested for export of about 500 parrots, Cameroon faults airline over parrots smuggling, Another consignment of 500 parrots for illegal export seized at the Douala airport, Wildlife law enforcement intensified in Douala, Maroua lion skin dealers sentenced, Female dealer in protected wildlife species sentenced.
- 11 media pieces in English, 7 in French making a percentage of 61.1% in English and 38.9% in French.

External Relations and Policy

- LAGA meeting the Minister of MINFOF on wildlife law enforcement and fight against corruption and the trade in parrots through international airports several times.
- LAGA met with the Secretary General of the MINFOF in a general cabinet meeting to discuss on the trade parrots through international airports and the fight against corruption involved in this trade.
- LAGA had its first meeting with the new US Ambassador on Wildlife Law Enforcement and the fight against corruption.
- LAGA met with the newly appointed Director of Wildlife and protected Areas
- LAGA met with the North West provincial Delegate for Forestry and Wildlife to discuss on wildlife law enforcement progress in the province and also the newly appointed South West province Delegate to discuss strategies for wildlife law enforcement in that province.
- Meeting with the Fon of Bali on wildlife protection through effective wildlife law enforcement using the annual dance festival as a non-conventional medium.
- Meeting with the Cameroon Focal Point for CARPE to brief him current trends in wildlife law enforcement in Cameroon.

Management

- Important crossroads in the steering of LAGA work and the fight against corruption, all leading to **victory for the fight against corruption.**

The parrots' cases uncovered corruption at a very high level. Insisting to tackle it got us many new enemies, threats, and warnings that we are “stepping on the wrong toes” and that it will send us on “a one way ticket out of Cameroon”. Focusing on the parrot trade allowed us to uncover how white-collar criminals thrive on this complicity gaining a legitimate cover and eliminating the risk factor. The profit margins are huge and the value of a single shipment reaches half a million dollars in the market of destination.

In a special corruption report we submitted to the Minister we highlighted our evidence for the role played by a highly placed MINFOF official who was collaborating with the offenders, issuing false declarations on CITES permits, and attempting to block our cases. This case quickly intensified the backlash to our anti-corruption work alienating a highly placed official and most of the involved officials in one side and LAGA and the Minister on the other.

Finance

LAGA Expenditure by budget line for December 07

Amount CFA	Budget line	Details	Amount USD
1,714,400	Investigations	20 inv,6 provinces	\$3,810
513,700	Operations	1 Operation, against 1 international dealer	\$1,142
2,500,290	legal	follow up 31cases 8 locked subjects	\$5,556
1,372,450	Media	18 media pieces	\$3,050
915,360	Policy & External Relations	UK/France/Kenya/Bahrain	\$2,034
947,600	Management	Coordination	\$2,106
961,883	Office		\$2,138
8,925,683	TOTAL EXPENDITURE DECEMBER		\$19,835

LAGA Expenditure by donor for December 07

Amount CFA	Donor	Amount USD
0	Born Free	\$0.0
1,015,250	BHC	\$2,256.1
3,545,329	FWS	\$7,878.5
116,200	Body Shop	\$258.2
0	UNEP-Congo	\$0.0
850,000	UNEP-General	\$1,888.9
1,189,450	Rufford Foundation	\$2,643.2
618,000	Shinning World	\$1,373.3
331,250	Parrot Trust	\$736.1
989,704	IPPL	\$2,199.3
270,500	Tracy Duggan	\$601.1
8,925,683	TOTAL	\$19,835

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



Parrot release by Minister of Forestry and Wildlife H.E. Ngolle Ngolle Elvis. A total of 1220 parrots were seized at the Douala international Airport from illegal dealers involving Ghanaians. This was witnessed and covered by both national and international media during a special ceremony.



Parrots in transportation crates at the Limbe Wildlife centre being filmed by international journalists



Before their release to the wild the parrots were examined and treated at the Limbe Wildlife centre after undergoing harsh conditions violating international transportation norms.

Links of the month

- Parrot release into the wild – Cameroon’s National Television Broadcast
Symbolic release of parrots by Cameroon Minister of Forestry and Wildlife during the return of the Taiping four gorillas at the Limbe botanic garden to show Cameroon's commitment to the fight against illegal wildlife trade and corruption

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4enrwikiMYqU>

- Cameroon group faults airline over parrot smuggling - Reuters
Wed Dec 5, 2007

<http://www.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUSL0587231220071206>