

The Last Great Ape Organization - LAGA

October 2009 Report



Highlights

- **3** big International Ivory Dealers **arrested in Brazzaville after crossing over the river from Kinshasa – DRC following the continuation of replication in these 2 countries followed by a French TV crew.**
- **A new PALF coordinator in The Republic of Congo.**
- **3 members** of the network dealing in protected bush meat **arrested in Yaounde-Center.**
- **2 ivory dealers arrested** in Bengbis – South Region.
- **An ivory dealer arrested** in Yaounde – Center Region following work done with an international investigator.
- A total of **4 operations** against **9 subjects** carried out during this month.
- **3 dealers were sentenced this month.**

General

This month was marked by a special focus on the crackdown of international ivory trafficking in Cameroon and in the Republic of Congo resulting in the **arrest of 6 international ivory dealers**; another operation was carried out resulting in the arrest of **3 bush meat dealers**.

As part of follow-up of the replication of LAGA activities in the Republic of Congo and following a special mission carried out by the LAGA Director, **3 members of a big network** specialized in international ivory trafficking were arrested in Brazzaville – Republic of Congo after crossing over the river Congo from Kinshasa - The Democratic Republic of Congo. A total of 40 kg of worked ivory were seized while they were trying to trade in the ivory. This confirms our suspicion that the River Congo acts as a major trade route enhancing the illegal trade of ivory and other protected animal species.

LAGA's goal from 2003 has been to create a new model for **NGO-Government collaboration** establishing wildlife law enforcement. Our hope was that by bringing about results with an innovative approach, we will be able to change the existing system and trigger a paradigm shift in the way NGOs tackle wildlife crime. The model is essentially shifting away from targeting small-time poachers in the forest and focusing in prosecution of major dealers, fighting head the major obstacle to the application of the wildlife law in Africa – **Corruption**.

Following several awards and recommendations from the international community to replicate the model in other countries, LAGA has started working with other NGOs transferring the LAGA experience and model throughout the sub-region. The LAGA model is currently operating in three countries and projected to reach five by mid 2010.

2 other operations focused on ivory were carried out this month. A well known ivory dealer with supplies from the Northern part of Cameroon was arrested in Yaounde following a special mission carried out with an International Investigator. He is part of a network of ivory dealers in a notorious and violent hotspot known as “Briqueterie” in Yaounde, an area difficult to penetrate and that served to connect ivory dealers in the major towns on Douala, Yaounde etc. **He was arrested with 1 raw elephant tusk, 1 carved elephant tusk and 29 worked pieces of ivory.**

2 ivory dealers and at the same time poachers were **arrested at Bengbis – South Region** for illegally trying to trade in a **pair of elephant tusks**. They were responsible for killing many

elephants and were denounced by their own village committee for the wanton killing of elephants in their area.

3 members of network specialized in illegal trade in bush meat of protected wildlife species were arrested in Yaounde – Center Region. They have suppliers from the East, South and Central Regions and have a store with deep freezers in which they keep the killed animals. They were arrested in the Nkoldongo market in Yaounde with meat of African Dwarf Crocodile, Giant Pangolin, Bosman's potto, De Brazza's monkey, Gorilla meat etc. Instead of concentrating in arresting and legally pursuing the dealers, the MINFOF team was more interested in selling the bush meat. Many irregularities were observed during the auction sale of the bush meat and more investigations are being carried out so as to pin-point these irregularities and acts of corruption that possibly took place.

3 dealers were sentenced this month. The Court of First Instance of Bengbis (South) sentenced 2 dealers to **1 year** in prison and to pay a total of 856.650 FCFA (About \$2000) as damages and fines. They will be retained in jail in default of payment of the fines and damages. They were both arrested in Bengbis while trying to illegally trade in 2 elephant tusks. In another case, the Court of First Instance of Bamenda (North West) sentenced one dealer to pay a total of 1.960.000 FCFA (About \$4000) as fines and damages. He will be retained in jail for 9 months in default of payment. **He is a military man who was arrested for illegally trading in a live primate.**

Investigations

- **22 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **8 Regions** of Cameroon- North, West, South West, South, Littoral, Adamawa, East and Center.
- An International Investigator was hired this month for a special mission **to track ivory dealers** in Cameroon. This resulted into the **arrest of one ivory dealer** in Yaounde – Center.
- Internet Investigations targeted 2 Internet wildlife dealers engaged in fraud in Bamenda – North West Region and Buea – South West Region. Investigations are still ongoing.
- There are ongoing investigations on the 1 ton of ivory seized in Douala in September 2009.
- Field tests continue for new candidates.

Operations

4 operations were carried out this month against **9 subjects, 3 international ivory traffickers were arrested in Brazzaville – Republic of Congo and 6 dealers arrested in Cameroon.**

- **11/10/09** – A well known ivory dealer with supplies from the Northern part of Cameroon was arrested in Yaounde following a special mission carried out with an International Investigator from France. He launders the illegal business under the cover of a shop. **He was arrested with 1 raw elephant tusk, 1 carved elephant tusk and 29 worked pieces of ivory.**
- **15/10/09** - **2 ivory dealers** and at the same time poachers were **arrested at Bengbis – South Region** for illegally trying to trade in **a pair of elephant tusks**. They were responsible for killing many elephants and were denounced by their own village committee for the wanton killing of elephants in their area.
- **15/10/09** – **Following a special mission carried out by the LAGA Director, 3 members of a big network** specialized in international ivory trafficking were arrested in Brazzaville – Republic of Congo after crossing over from Kinshasa - The Democratic Republic of Congo. A total of 40 kg of worked ivory were seized. This confirms our suspicion that the River Congo acts as a main route in the illegal trade of ivory and other protected animal species.
- **16/10/09** - **3 members of network specialized in illegal trade in bush meat of protected wildlife species were arrested in Yaounde – Center Region.** They have suppliers from the

East, South and Central Regions and have a store with deep freezers in which they keep the killed animals. They were arrested in the Nkoldongo market in Yaounde with meat of African Dwarf Crocodile, Giant Pangolin, Bosman's potto, De Brazza's monkey, Gorilla meat etc. Over 240 killed and live animals were seized.

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **17 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 1 in Buea (South West), 1 in Limbe (South West), 2 in Bafoussam (West), 1 in Dschang (West), 3 in Douala (Littoral), 2 in Bamenda (North West), 1 in Ntui (Centre), 2 in Bengbis (South), 1 in Djoum (South), 1 in Ebolowa (South), 1 in Ambam (South), 1 Kyo Ossi (South).
- There are **14 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the West Region, 1 in the East Region, 2 in the Littoral Region, 3 in South Region, 2 in the North West Region and 4 in the South West Region.
- **31 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **23 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: 3 dealers were sentenced this month
- **16/10/09** - The Court of First Instance of Bamenda (North West) sentenced Kang Ruffin to pay a total of 1.960.000 FCFA (About \$4000) as fines and damages. He will be retained in jail for 9 months in default of payment of fines and damages. Kang Ruffin is a military man who was arrested for illegally trading in a live primate.
- **28/10/09**- The Court of First Instance of Bengbis (South) sentenced Bikoum Calvin and Toulou Mindje to **1 year** in prison and to pay a total of 856.650 FCFA (About \$2000) as damages and fines. They will be retained in jail in default of payment of the fines and damages. They were both arrested in Bengbis while trying to illegally trade in 2 elephant tusks.

Media front

- **55 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), 38 radio news flashes (17 in English, 21 in French), 3 radio news feature (2 in English and 1 in French), 3 TV news feature (2 in English and 1 in French) and 4 radio talk shows (2 in English and 2 in French).
- Guests include: The Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, LAGA Director, Head of LAGA Legal Unit, Director of Wildlife and Protected areas, the Conservator of Mvog Betsi zoo, Senior officer of MINFOF Control Brigade, CARPE Focal point, Littoral Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife.
- Subjects focused on: wildlife law enforcement including: 1 ton ivory traffickers arrested in Douala, crackdown ivory operation in Bangui – Central African Republic, Press Conference on 1 ton ivory by MINFOF, and Bengbis judgement on ivory dealer.
- 27 media pieces in English, 28 in French making a percentage of 49.1% in English and 50.9% in French.
- LAGA received a special envoy from TFI to Cameroon for the coverage of 1 ton ivory seizure.

External Relations and Policy

- A series of meetings held in Israel with Israeli activists in searching for ways to foster activism and recruit volunteers for Africa.
- LAGA Head of Media and External Relations met the Director of wildlife and protected areas to press on the assignment of agents in the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife to work

with LAGA in the collection of samples of the ivory stock seized in Douala for a DNA test analysis.

- LAGA Director met with several NGOs to discuss on corruption in the forestry sector and building a coalition to fight it.
- A new PALF Coordinator – Naftali Honig was put in place in the Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo.

Management

- An International Investigator was hired this month for a special mission to track ivory dealers in Cameroon. This resulted into the arrest of one ivory dealer in Yaounde – Center.
- A new PALF Coordinator – Naftali Honig was put in place in the Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo.

Activism Front

- A presentation by Felix Ajong of the Legal Department on the topic: NEPAD a success or a failure?
- For NEPAD to succeed, it must establish momentum and counter the leading negativity about its governance aims by taking some dramatic steps to install and enforce high standards of fiscal, economic and political governance. It must engage the African public in a real debate about governance and policy and other industrial policies with active input from business and academia.

Finance

LAGA Expenditure by budget line for October 09

Amount CFA	Budget line	Details	Amount USD
3,195,638	Investigations	25 inv, 9 Regions	\$7,181
807,400	Operations	4 Operations against 9 dealers	\$1,814
2,500,830	legal	follow up 21 cases 14 locked subjects	\$5,620
1,642,835	Media	55 media pieces	\$3,692
465,165	Policy & External Relations	Isreal/Congo/Bangui	\$1,045
914,700	Management	Coordination	\$2,056
1,261,992	Office		\$2,836
10,788,560	TOTAL EXPENDITURE OCTOBER		\$24,244

LAGA Expenditure by donor for October 09

AmountCFA	Donor	Amount USD
867,285	BornFree Foundation	\$1,949.0
2,296,200	FWS	\$5,160.0
3,264,381	NEU Foundation	\$7,335.7
3,007,365	ARCUS Foundation	\$6,758.1
544,723	Parrot Trust	\$1,224.1
808,606	AWI	\$1,796.9
10,788,560	TOTAL	\$24,244.0

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



Bush meat and some live animals of mostly protected species seized during an operation at Nkoldongo – Yaounde in the Center Region when a network was busted. 3 members of the network were arrested with meat of African Dwarf Crocodile, Giant Pangolin, Bosman's potto, De Brazza's monkey, Gorilla meat etc. Over 240 killed and live animals were seized.



New PALF Coordinator in Brazzaville (Naftali Honig) right, with the LAGA Director posing with ivory seized from 3 international dealers during their arrest in Brazzaville. The dealers crossed over the River Congo from Kinshasa - DRC

Links of this month

- LAGA Replication - LAGA's goal from 2003 has been to create a new model for NGO – Government collaboration establishing wildlife law enforcement. Our hope was that by bringing about results with an innovative approach, we will be able to change the existing system and trigger a paradigm shift in the way NGOs tackle wildlife crime. The model is essentially shifting away from targeting small-time poachers in the forest and focusing in prosecution of major dealers, fighting head the major obstacle to the application of the wildlife law in Africa – Corruption. Following several awards and recommendations from the international community to replicate the model in other countries, LAGA has started working with other NGOs transferring the LAGA experience and model throughout the sub-region.

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Projection for replication:

Chad – January 2010 –under WCS, Gabon – May 2010 – under a new specialized NGO.

<http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Replication/tabid/166/Default.aspx>