



EAGLE

# Wildlife Law

# Enforcement Briefing

- ✓ **44 wildlife and forest criminals were arrested this month**
- ✓ **26 criminals arrested for illegal logging in Gabon, 3 of them will be prosecuted for corruption, 4 of them Chinese Nationals**
- ✓ **A corrupt police officer arrested in Uganda for covering activities of an arrested wildlife trafficker**
- ✓ **4 significant ivory traffickers arrested in Cameroon, one of them a repeat offender**
- ✓ **5 leopard skin traffickers arrested in Gabon**
- ✓ **3 foreign ivory traffickers arrested in Benin with 20 kg raw ivory**
- ✓ **5 traffickers arrested in Uganda with Giant pangolins and hippo teeth**
- ✓ **Vietnamese ivory trafficker and his partner, behind a 3.8 tonnes shipment – largest seizure in West Africa’s history - gets two years imprisonment in Togo**

## Summary

This month is marked by an extraordinary number of arrests and gains in the fight against corruption. In an unprecedented crackdown operation against illegal logging in Gabon . 3 of them, including a public officer, will be prosecuted for corruption.

Chinese businessman and his 2 local collaborators, one of them a major player in the timber trade and repeat offender, were arrested for illegal logging of Kevazingo tree, a rare and protected tree that is sacred to many communities. Following the arrest, two accomplices came to the Prosecutor’s office and offered a \$4,000 bribe attempting to release the Chinese trafficker. The Prosecutor, thanks to his integrity, ordered Police to arrest them and charge them with corruption. 21 more criminals were then arrested in a series of operations. 4 of them are also of Chinese nationality. Among those arrested an important public officer, the Vice President of Regional Council in Ovan, who will be prosecuted for corruption.

In Uganda a police constable was arrested together with a wildlife trafficker he was assisting. The police

officer was regularly acting as a means to protect wildlife criminals and grant them impunity. The corrupt police officer attempted to protect the trafficker during the arrest and will be prosecuted for abuse of public function at a special corruption court. 4 significant ivory traffickers were arrested in Cameroon, all of them members of a large trafficking network, one of them a repeat offender.



*First 4 of 26 forest criminals arrested in Gabon for illegal logging - 5 of them were Chinese.*

5 leopard skin traffickers were arrested in Gabon. Last year a Vietnamese ivory trafficker and his collaborator were arrested and accused of organizing the largest shipment of illegal ivory in West African history of 3.8 tonnes. This month they were prosecuted to 22 and 24 months in jail. EAGLE flew in a Vietnam-

ese translator to the court to allow the prosecution. 3 ivory traffickers with 2 tusks, about 10 kg each, were arrested in Benin. 3 traffickers of hippo teeth and one trafficker with giant pangolins were arrested in Uganda.

## Cameroon – LAGA

- A significant ivory trafficker arrested alongside one of his ring members in Cameroon's major ivory trafficking hub – Douala following his attempts to sell ivory jewellery and sculpted pieces. He is well known in trafficking circles and had served two prison terms including the maximum three-year jail term for ivory trafficking. The two traffickers had deployed a network of counter-intelligence ring members around the surroundings where they had planned the deal to forestall any arrests.
- 2 other significant ivory traffickers arrested with a raw ivory. They were arrested during two operations, the first trafficker who has a long history of ivory trafficking involving members of his family also was arrested during an attempt to sell it. His arrest enabled launching of another investigation which resulted in the arrest of an even more significant ivory trafficker, who was described as his boss. They are members of an ivory trafficking ring recruiting poaches around hotspots in the country.
- The coordinator met with the Ambassador of Germany to discuss the wildlife law enforcement and support for LAGA work.
- Within EAGLE Exchange Program a legal advisor from Congo participated in training at LAGA, while an investigator arrived from Gabon to support investigation department and exchange experience.
- Organizational Development Officer arrived from CCU, Nairobi, to get familiar with an EAGLE project in the field, to discuss and revise strategy to enhance fostering activism and family spirit values and strength of teams across the network and to support investigations.

*Carved ivory seized from traffickers*

*Major ivory trafficker arrested, he responds to questions at wildlife station*



# Congo – PALF

- Activities of PALF were limited in October due to a civil unrest across the country, which forced some team members to leave for a secure place.
- PALF team is undergoing preparations for structural changes.
- CTS (Technical Follow-up Committee) of the Ministry of Forestry and Sustainable Development inspected the PALF project, with satisfying findings.

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- PALF legal adviser undertook a three weeks training in Cameroon within EAGLE Network Exchange Program.

# Gabon – AALF & ALEFI

- Chinese businessman and his 2 local collaborators, one of them a major player in the timber trade and repeat offender, were arrested for illegal logging of Kevazingo tree, a rare and protected tree that is sacred to many communities. Following the arrest, two accomplices came to the Prosecutor's office and offered a \$4,000 bribe attempting to release the Chinese trafficker. The Prosecutor, thanks to his integrity, ordered Police to arrest them and charge them with corruption.
- 21 more criminals were then arrested in a series of operations, following the first arrest. 4 of them are also of Chinese nationality. Among those arrested an important public officer, the Vice President of Regional Council in Ovan, who will be prosecuted for corruption.
- 2 traffickers arrested with 2 leopard skins and illegally held ammunition in Libreville, Gabon, in operation carried out by AALF, Judicial Police and officers of Commission of Water and Forests. The first trafficker was arrested red handed during an attempt to sell the skins for 1,200 USD, while the other one was arrested one day later.
- 3 leopard skin traffickers arrested. The Conservation Justice assisted the Gabonese authorities in catching 2 traffickers, who were trying to sell the skin, belonging to a third trafficker. All three are involved in the trade driving

these big cats to extinction.

- 4 court cases of 13 traffickers were followed, none of them reached conviction yet, but all the traffickers remain in prison, waiting for the decision.
- Several meetings and discussions were held during this month with Presidents of courts in Oyem, Koulamoutou, Makokou, with Prosecutors in Libreville, Oyem, Koulamoutou, Mouila, with the investigating judge in Oyem, with Provincial Directors and with the Wildlife and police officers to discuss the concrete problems in specific cases with them.
- An investigator of AALF travelled to Cameroon for three weeks to support investigations and share experience.



2 traffickers arrested with 2 leopard skins and illegally held ammunition



In the jungles of Gabon the Kevazingo tree is considered to be sacred. This impressive tree, also known as Bubinga (Guibourtia), can grow to more than 40 meters tall, way above the rain forest's darkness and its solid trunk can reach the diameter the size of a man. Unfortunately Kevazingo is extremely rare tree species, threatened by extinction due to overexploitation. Timber from Kevazingo, which takes many years to mature, is highly valued in Asia. The Japanese and Chinese use it to make furniture, but also wooden bells and another music instruments. Since 2001 the Gabonese

Government has enacted laws to protect its sacred tree, but illegal logging and corruption still continues and the tree remains the most vulnerable victim in this story.

But deep in the rain forest, the frontline of protecting the sacred tree is a dangerous fight of handcuffs and chainsaws, as 26 forest criminals got arrested in a crackdown operation. Among those arrested 1 public official, 5 Chinese nationals.

A truck carrying a huge Kevazingo tree was stopped by the Prosecutor of the Republic accompanied by armed officers of the Police, the Gendarmerie and the ALEFI team, near Makokou. The driver and the conveyor presented the permission for collecting fallen or already dead timber issued on the name of Mr. Nze Angwe, a known logger in the province. Two days later investigators searched the place, where the tree was cut, nearly a hundred kilometers from the town. The investigation revealed that the Kevazingo tree was cut as a fresh wood by Nze Angwe, who came to the village with a Chinese timber trafficker.

Now the logger, his Chinese accomplice, and the driver are arrested and remain in custody, waiting for the court hearing. For Nze Angwe, the logger, this is not his first conflict with the law. He was already arrested and prosecuted for illegal logging in May 2013. But the sacred tree attracts greed that pushes such criminals to continue to take the risks.

The story of the Central African forest is not just of chainsaws but of complicity and corruption. Following the arrest, two accomplices came in the Prosecutor office and tried to bribe him with 4,000 US dollars attempting to release the Chinese trafficker. The prosecutor, thanks to his integrity and willpower, ordered Judicial Police to arrest them and put them in jail. They will be judged for the corruption act.

"It is not just a corruption attempt, but it is clearly and simply corruption! These two persons think they just need one or two millions to bribe Gabonese justice?", explained the prosecutor Mr. Alain Georges Moukoko, already known for his fight against corruption in Gabon. He previously refused 100,000 US dollars from managers of SIAT Gabon company, that develops activities in palm oil, rubber tree and ranching. He also added that he will follow the legal process until the two men are sentenced following the law. "These two men will be judged, like the Chinese and his men who are used to violate the Gabonese law and are devastating forest without fearing the law".

Prosecutor Moukoko just arrived in this Gabonese province two weeks ago and declared war on illegal logging and corruption. For those that value the spirit of the Kevazingo tree, this is good news, hoping for the criminals destroying their heritage to get behind bars. So far Prosecutor Moukoko has lined up 26 forest criminals in his first month in office.

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## Guinea – Conakry – GALF

- The former head of the CITES department of the Ministry of Environment in Guinea Ansoumane Doumbouya, arrested for falsification of CITES permits and promoting international trafficking in wildlife, is still kept behind bars. The investigation of this case helped to dismantle one of the largest network of traffickers across the African and Asian continents.
- GALF team attended a meeting held at the National Directorate of Water and Forest Department. The goal of the meeting was a formulation of an action plan for implementation of CITES in Guinea. This process will be supervised by the UNOPS experts.

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## Togo – TALFF

- Last year a Vietnamese ivory trafficker and his collaborator were arrested and accused of organizing, the largest shipment of illegal ivory in West African history of 3.8 tonnes. This month, they were prosecuted to 22 and 24 months in jail. The ivory was destined to go to Vietnam via Malaysia. The operation was made possible thanks to the Mixed Unit Container Control, headed by the Central Office for Repression of Illicit Traffic of Drugs and whitening (OCTRIDB). The TALFF Project supported the authorities in monitoring this case and flying in a Vietnamese translator to court hearings.

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## SENEGAL - SALF

- Aziz Sall, the international trafficker of Timneh parrots and other birds, arrested in September 2015, was released from being charged for violating the Code on Wildlife and Hunting, due to an agreement on financial transaction with the Directorate of Water and Forests Authority. This procedure is based on the Code, which allows such an end of criminal proceeding, but it is unacceptable in case of international trafficker. Therefore he was only prosecuted for falsification of official documents and received a suspended sentence of three months in prison.
- 30 endangered Timneh parrots, seized in the operation, disappeared from the aviary managed by the Directorate of Water and Forests and funded by WPT. The theft is being investigated and was reported to court.
- SALF held several meeting with the international community in order to discuss and face the difficulties of prosecution of traffickers, which repeatedly appear on the side of the Ministry of Environment.
- The NGO WARA finally received its official permission to carry out activities as foreign NGO in Senegal after almost 2 years of delaying the process for administrative reasons. After obtaining the authorization, SALF conducts all necessary steps to be in compliance with national legislation.
- Two new legal advisors were hired after finishing the test period.
- Legal adviser from SALF travelled to Cameroon to undergo training at LAGA within the EAGLE Network Exchange Program.

## Benin – AALF-B

- 3 ivory traffickers were arrested in a sting operation carried out by the Judicial Police, the General Directorate of Forestry, Natural Resources and AALF-Benin. Their attempt to sell 2 elephant tusks, over 10 kg each, cut into 4 equal pieces carefully packed and hidden in a travel bag ended in the prison cell. These 3 traffickers, one from Niger and 2 Guinean, are part of a large trafficking network, which has been operating in West Africa for a long time.
- The Coordinator of AALF-Benin and a legal adviser met with the Agent of Public Treasury to enhance cooperation on cases against arrested wildlife trafficking and strengthen the attitude of the Agent towards recovery of fines and damages.
- Meeting with the prosecutor of Porto Novo was held on trophies trafficking to discuss the case of traffickers, arrested in July.
- Meetings were held with the prosecutor of Ouidah, the Chief of Forestry Inspection the Commander of Inspection Chief of Water and Forests Department on the case of sea turtle shells traffickers.



*3 ivory traffickers were arrested in a sting operation with 2 elephant tusks, over 10 kg each.*



## Uganda - EAGLE Uganda

- A trafficker arrested with 6 feet long python skins in a hotel during an attempt to sell the skins. A police constable, acting as his body guard, scanned the place for him before his arrival and informed him, that the place is secure. Then he monitored the whole situation, pretending reading newspaper. When the trafficker was arrested, he tried to leave the space, but before he managed, he was arrested as well. EAGLE team fought successfully to keep both – the trafficker and the police-

man behind bars. While the trafficker is charged with illegal possession of wildlife products, the police constable is charged with abuse of public function at a special corruption court. At the beginning of November the whole case was moved from the local court to the higher court. This is a significant step in the fight against corruption and impunity.

- A trafficker with 4 giant pangolins was arrested. EAGLE Uganda team and police arrested the trafficker in swift operation while he was trying to sell the animals. He has been trafficking pangolins for decades, so he is implicated in a death of thousands of these strictly protected animals. The arrest happened in the same part of Uganda, where 9 traffickers with over 80 kg pangolin scales were arrested last June. Pangolins are rapidly driven to extinction, as the booming illegal trade threatening them is on an exponential increase.

- 2 traffickers arrested in a sting operation with 30 hippo teeth. EAGLE Uganda hit on the border with Rwanda and Vincent Opyene prepared a nice welcoming surprise to Tah Eric Kaba – LAGA's deputy director who came the night before to Uganda on a support mission.

- Another trafficker with hippo and warthog teeth arrested in Uganda. In the operation, carried out by EAGLE Uganda and police team the trafficker was arrested red handed, during an attempt to sell the teeth. He has been trafficking hippo ivory for many years, collecting it from poachers in DRC and bringing to Kampala market, he often traf-



*A police constable, arrested while he was protecting a wildlife trafficker*

ficked larger amounts of the contraband. Before his arrest he had spent over three weeks moving around with the contraband in a small polythene bag fixed inside another bag.

- The EAGLE Uganda investigators were trained in defensive driving and use of motorbikes for stalking while doing surveillance.



*A trafficker with 4 giant pangolins was arrested.*



*He has been trafficking hippo ivory for many years, collecting it from poachers in DRC.*

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# Headquarters

- Perrine Odier, the Replication Regional Assistant, conducted a mission to Ivory Coast to assess potential of a possible replication.
- The Organizational Development Officer Jana Hajduchova travelled to Cameroon to get familiar with an EAGLE project in the field, to discuss and revise strategy to enhance fostering activism and family spirit values and strength of teams across the network and to support investigations.
- Two activists from South Africa and one from Malawi arrived to Nairobi for training in fighting wildlife crime and corruption. Victor Banda from

Malawi had been the Deputy General Auditor of Malawi and later deputy director of the Anti Corruption Commission. He has a long list of high officials he got to prosecution. In South Africa, an animal rights activist has been in touch with us for more than a year, a candidate for super-volunteers program, and with great passion to bring EAGLE methods to South Africa. Increasing ties with South African activists is important for EAGLE Network as we have a lot of investigation information that ends in South Africa.

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# International Media Coverage

- Corruption keeps Africa's poachers in business – an article on the work of PALF in Congo Brazzaville in The Times

[Link to the Times](#)

- African Conservation Group With Unusual Mission: Enforcement – New York Times about the arrest of Ansoumane Doumbouya, former Guinea CITES head.

[Link to the New York Times](#)

- Anna Egbe Etaka, the EAGLE activist from LAGA Cameroon, travelled to the US at the end of September to volunteer in the Elephant Conservation Summit at the Jackson Hole, where she also participated in preparation of the video.

[Link to the video](#)

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## THE EAGLE Network

EAGLE: Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement, is a network of members across Africa, who are replicating effectively a program and operational model to undertake wildlife law enforcement, which is based on the LAGA-Cameroon model, trailed, practiced and tested since 2003. The EAGLE Network currently operates in eight African countries and keeps expanding.

The over-arching objective of the EAGLE Network is: *Developing civic activism and collaborating with governments and civil society to improve the application of national and international environmental legislation, through a program of activities: investi-*

*gations, arrests, prosecutions and publicity. Through this, EAGLE aims to generate a strong deterrent against the illegal trade in wildlife, timber and related criminal activities, including corruption.*

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