

Project of Independent Observation in Support of
Forest Law Enforcement in Cameroon

**Approved by the Ministry of
the Environment and Forests**

Report No. 027 En

Joint Mission: Central Control Unit – Independent Observer

Title: None

Location: Central Province

Mission date: September 20-21, 2002

Company: GCI Nyanzom, IBC

Independent Observer (Global Witness):

Mr. Stuart Wilson, Project Director

Mr. Owada Jean Cyrille, Technical Assistant

Mr. Tangyie Ché Célestine, Driver

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1. SUMMARY

The Minister's Cabinet Office, through the Technical Advisor no 2 (TA 2), and the Central Control¹ Unit (CCU) carried out a control mission in Mbalmayo, Nyong Department, and in So'o and Bafia, Mbam and Inoubou Department, from September 20 to 21, 2002.

Joined by the Independent Observer (Global Witness), the mission aimed to confirm or invalidate a denunciation according to which a truck carrying timber (*A. pachyloba*), coming from a suspicious origin and travelling to the company IBC (Industrie du Bois Camerounais – Cameroonian Timber Industry), had been escorted by the Ombessa local forest law enforcement official, Mr. Zok David.

During the mission, various people were questioned, including IBC representatives, the Nyong and So'o Departmental Delegate, the Ombessa local forest law enforcement official and the Nkometou local forest law enforcement official.

Two essential questions needed to be answered: (1) Where was the timber coming from and where was it being taken to? (2) Had the Ombessa local forest law enforcement official escorted the concerned timber from Bafia to Mbalmayo, and if so, why?

The answers to these questions form the conclusions of the Independent Observer in relation to this mission and are shown below:

- The concerned timber allegedly and seemingly comes from the Community Forest (CF) allocated to Foco Nyamzon Group of Common Initiative (GCI) located in the Mbam and Inoubou Department. The Ombessa local forest law enforcement official confirmed that the timber was going to the IBC-Mbalmayo sawmill.
- The Ombessa local forest law enforcement official acknowledged in an official hearing having escorted the concerned timber, for which the truck driver did not carry a transport permit.

In view of the above, **the Independent Observer recommends:**

- The summoning of Mr. Jackson Ngwa, owner of the concerned timber, to an official hearing for an official report about the violations of provisions of article 127(2) the 23rd of August Order, 1995, making compulsory the use of permits for the transport of any forest product;
- The summoning of IBC-Mbalmayo to an official hearing in regards to the statement given by the Ombessa local forest law enforcement official;
- That a control mission be carried out in Nyanzom Community Forest in order to review the situation of its exploitation;

¹ "Control" in the context of this report means "Law Enforcement" or to "check compliance with law"

- That the CCU reviews the statement made by the Ombessa local forest law enforcement official and suggests administrative sanctions;
- The dispatch of a control mission to the IBC sawmill log ponds in order to certify and verify the origin of the timber processed in this sawmill;

2. RESOURCES USED

- 1 4x4 pick-up truck.
- 1 Video Camera.
- 1 Camera.
- Maps (scale 1/200000)
- 1 Laptop computer.

3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

The mission comprised the TA2, a member of the CCU, two members of the Independent Observer technical team, the Central Province Delegate of Environment and Forests, the Departmental Delegates of Environment and Forest in their respective administrative division, as well as the Head of Central Province Brigade.

4. CONSTRAINTS

The mission encountered a major constraint, namely the informal nature of information received.

5. RESULTS OF THE MISSION

5.1. Summary of the case

On the 20th of September, 2002, the Minister of the Environment and Forests requested a control mission in Mbalmayo, Nyong and So'o Department, Central Province. The Minister's decision was in reply to a denunciation according to which a suspect truck carrying *A. pachyloba* from Mbam was on its way to IBC/Mbalmayo. According to the same denunciation, the concerned timber had allegedly been transferred onto another truck during the journey.

5.2. Meetings with IBC representatives and various external services representatives

The mission met with IBC representatives in Mbalmayo. They did not acknowledge having ordered timber allegedly transported by a truck registered LT 024 A. The mission took care to consult the vehicle registration document of trucks entering IBC's factory. No truck registered as above was found.

The mission then had a working session with the **Nyong and So'o Departmental Delegate**. During this meeting, the Central Province Head of Brigade stated measures taken by its Brigade since the 18th of September, 2002, with a view to intercept the concerned truck. He declared having set up a 24-hour rota monitoring system, based on shifts, at Messa'si checkpoint, at the entrance of Yaoundé. The Head of Brigade and the Nyong and So'o Head of the Forest Section claimed having received the main information about this allegation from a certain Mr. Ibrahim Mbombo.

The Head of Forest Section declared having unsuccessfully tried to intercept the concerned truck, which, according to his statement, had not crossed his territorial jurisdiction.

The mission then went to Ombessa to question its local forest law enforcement official, who was accused of having escorted the concerned timber. For lack of finding the local forest law enforcement official, the mission went to Bafia, where it held a meeting with the **Mbam and Inoubou Departmental Delegate**. The latter declared that the concerned timber originated from Foco-Nyanzom GCI. The GCI Community Forest is located on the Nyanzom and Mpagné Forest parcels, in Deuc District.

The Community Forest, Foco Nyanzom GCI, is subjected to the management convention signed on the 25th of February, 2002.

The Independent Observer met the Nkometou local forest law enforcement official at his checkpoint on the Obala-Yaoundé route. The remaining members of the mission did not take part in this meeting because they had stayed behind. It emerged from this meeting that the local forest law enforcement official had, a week before, seized a white truck half loaded with *A. pachyloba*, due to a transport permit dated from the previous operating year. Two days later, he allegedly released the truck because of the intervention of a certain Mr. Fobi, an English teacher at Mbalmayo's secondary school, who allegedly presented himself to the local forest law enforcement official with a note from the Central Province Delegate stating that the use of transport permits from the previous operating year was justified by a lack of printed copies at the Forestry Tax Revenue Securement Programme.

5.3. Official hearing of the Ombessa forest law enforcement official

The Ombessa forest law enforcement official is accused of having escorted the concerned timber from Bafia to Mbalmayo. The mission had not been able to question him during its field visit from September 20 to 21, 2002. For this reason, the official hearing took place at MINEF on the 5th of November, 2002, under the lead of TA2, in the presence of the Independent Observer (see Appendix).

During the hearing, the Ombessa official recognised that:

- He had come across a truck carrying timber, including *A. pachyloba* at Nkometou checkpoint in the morning of the 20th of October, 2002;
- The truck was stopped because its driver did not carry any transport permit;
- He intervened in favour of the truck driver, despite the irregularity that the latter did not carry any transport permit;

- He received the request and accepted to escort the truck in order to spare the driver, who according to the official was a friend of his, any additional trouble.
- He knew that the concerned timber was travelling to IBC-Mbalmayo.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to this mission, the conclusions of the Independent Observer are as follows:

- The timber concerned in this report seemingly comes from the Community Forest known as Foco Nyanzom GCI, located in the Mbam and Inoubou Department. This timber was being transported to IBC-Mbalmayo.
- The Ombessa local forest law enforcement official recognised in an official hearing having escorted a truck carrying timber, including *A. pachyloba*, on its way to Mbalmayo. The truck driver did not carry any transport permit, which is why he allegedly requested the official to escort him.

In view of the above, **the Independent Observer recommends:**

- The summoning of Mr. Jackson Ngwa, owner of the concerned timber, to an official hearing for an official report about the violations of provisions of article 127(2) the 23rd of August Order, 1995, making compulsory the use of permits for the transport of any forest product;
- The summoning of IBC-Mbalmayo to an official hearing in regards to the statement given by the Ombessa local forest law enforcement official;
- That a control mission be carried out in Nyanzom Community Forest in order to review the situation of its exploitation;
- That the CCU reviews the statement made by the Ombessa local forest law enforcement official and suggests administrative sanctions;
- The dispatch of a control mission to the IBC sawmill log ponds in order to certify and verify the origin of the timber processed in this sawmill;

Appendix

PROCES-VERBAL D'AUDITION DU CHEF DE POSTE FORESTIER ET DE CHASSE D'OMBESSA DANS LE CADRE DE LA MISSION DE CONTROLE CONDUITE PAR LE CONSEILLER TECHNIQUE N°2 DANS LA PROVINCE DU CENTRE, DU 20 AU 21 SEPTEMBRE 2002.

Suite à la mission de contrôle effectuée dans la province du Centre sous la supervision du Conseiller Technique N°2, Global Witness a fait comprendre au CT2 par lettre datée du 29 octobre 2002, qu'elle n'avait pas été présente lors de l'audition du Chef de Poste Forestier d'Ombessa qui apparaît comme un témoin important dans le cadre de cette mission.

Le présent procès verbal conduit par le CT2 en ce jour du 05 novembre 2002 présente les déclarations du chef de Poste Forestier d'Ombessa dans le cadre d'une audition en présence de :

- Monsieur Albert K. BARUME, Deputy Project Director/Global Witness ;
- Monsieur Jean Cyrille OWADA, Forest Engineer/Global Witness ;
- Monsieur ZOK David, Chef de Poste Forestier et de Chasse d'Ombessa ;
- Monsieur TADOUM Martin, Cadre d'appui CT2/Cabinet MINEF

Après avoir fait la genèse de cette mission, le Conseiller Technique N°2 a posé la question ci-après au Chef de Poste Forestier :

« Des informations reçues lors de la mission venant notamment d'un certain Ibrahim et certains agents forestiers du terrain (Checkpoints), il est ressorti que dans la nuit du 20 septembre 2002, vous avez convoyé de Bafia jusqu'à Mbalmayo un camion contenant du bois de Pachyloba transformé de source douteuse. Quelle est votre réaction par rapport à cette question ? »

Réponse de Monsieur ZOK David, chef de poste forestier d'Ombessa

Je ne reconnais pas avoir convoyé le bois de Bafia pour Mbalmayo. Toutefois, je reconnais que le 20 septembre 2002, je me rendais à Ebolowa afin d'honorer un rendez-vous de santé. Pour ce faire, j'étais au bord d'une pick up appartenant à un ami. C'est après le péage de Nkometou venant de Yaoundé que j'ai trouvé le fils d'un ami dénommé NGWA JACKSON Mangeh aux prises avec mes collègues de service du « Check-Point ». Je me suis arrêté et il m'a fait savoir en me présentant le document du GIC, qu'il était entrain d'amener son bois à Mbalmayo. Reconnaisant bien l'existence de ce GIC, j'ai demandé aux collègues de laisser passer le camion.

Les collègues se sont exécutés et Monsieur NGWA m'a supplié de le suivre parce qu'il a été sujet à de nombreuses interpellations et tracasseries depuis son départ de Bafia. Je lui ai fait savoir que j'allais rencontrer mon cardiologue à

l'hôpital Enongal d'Ebolowa, raison pour laquelle je suis parti très tôt le matin (aux environs de 3 heures). C'est ainsi que nous avons fait chemin ensemble ; mais j'ai constaté fort heureusement que le camion avait traversé bon nombre de barrières de contrôle sans problème, à l'exception du poste forestier d'Essazok où j'ai dû encore intervenir auprès des collègues.

Nous nous sommes séparés à ce point et j'ai continué mon chemin jusqu'à Ebolowa où malheureusement, je n'ai pas pu rencontrer mon médecin qui était en déplacement. Je suis rentré immédiatement à mon poste et c'est le lendemain samedi à mon retour d'un rite traditionnel à un endroit de ma circonscription, que le délégué départemental m'a informé qu'une équipe de contrôle conduite par le CT2 voulait me rencontrer.

Après que le délégué m'ait donné la quintessence de l'objet de cette mission, j'ai en ma qualité de responsable forestier et politique de la zone (Président de la Sous-section RDPC et adjoint au maire de Bafia rural), amorcé mes investigations sur le sujet. C'est dans ce cadre que j'ai rencontré Monsieur NGWA Philippe, le père de l'intéressé qui s'avère être mon ami, en même temps militant du parti. Ce dernier m'a remis le document relatif audit bois et m'a également révélé que c'est un certain Ibrahim qui a déclenché le problème parce qu'il disputait le bois avec son fils.

Je dois saisir cette opportunité pour relever que certains de mes militants sont venus m'informer qu'il y'a un certain Ibrahim qui s'affiche comme négociant de bois et déclare à qui veut l'entendre être associé à des généraux, à certains ministres avec qui il traite. Celui-ci prétend qu'il est tout puissant et jure qu'il devrait tout mettre en œuvre pour que je sois relevé de mes fonctions de Chef de Poste Forestier et de Chasse. Il aurait tenu le même langage à certains de mes collègues des autres départements du Centre.

Après l'audition, la présente réponse a été lue devant l'assistance dont certains (représentants Global Witness) prenaient des notes individuellement.

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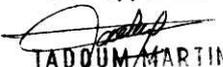
- MIN EF
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11 NOV 2002

Le Conseiller Technique N°2




Le Rapporteur


TADDUM MARTIN
INGENIEUR DES EAUX ET FORETS