



global witness

Cameroon

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

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

Report of the Independent Observer

No. 074En

Central Control Unit – Independent Observer Joint Mission-----

Title	None
Location	Lomié Sub-Division, Haut-Nyong District, East Province
Mission date	19 August 2003
Company	DH

Independent Observer Team (Global Witness):

*M. Serge C Moukouri, Technical Assistant
M. Owada Jean Cyrille, Technical Assistant
M. Tangyie Che Célestine, Driver*

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Central Control Unit (CCU), accompanied by the Independent Observer (Global Witness), undertook a control mission to Lomie Sub-Division in the Haut-Nyong Division of the East Province, from 17 to 21 August 2003. This mission was part of a routine control programme started on 12 August 2003.

The mission's objective was to verify allegations made by the Head of the Nzime-Lomie Central Canton, claiming that there were illegal logging activities in Pohempoum Village. However, when the control mission arrived, there was no longer definitive evidence of the illegal logging operations. This is attributed to the relatively long time period which had elapsed between the reporting of the infractions and the conduct of the mission. Those responsible for the illegal logging operations are alleged to have broken the seal marking closure of the logging site and taken away the machines seized by the Provincial Control Brigade for the East.

Before traveling to the site in question, the mission team held talks with the person who reported the alleged infractions. Evidence gathered in the field appears to corroborate the accusations of illegal activities leveled; that is, the unauthorised logging of timber did take place in the forests surrounding Pohempoum Village.

The failure of the Head of Local Forestry Post for Lomié to make appearance during the mission did not allow the mission team to take a statement from him regarding the accusations made against him.

The main conclusions of the Independent Observer with regard to the case under study are as follows:

- Acts of illegal logging took place in state forests located in the vicinity of Pohempoum Village;
- The Provincial Control Brigade for the East is alleged to have seized machines used in committing these illegal acts during one of its missions. These machines are alleged to have been illegally retrieved by their owners;
- The Head of Local Forestry Post for Lomie is reported to have played a key role in the perpetration of these illegal logging activities.

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

- Summoning the Head of Local Forestry Post for Lomié to a hearing and taking disciplinary actions against him if the accusations of his involvement in the illegal logging prove to be true;
- Verifying whether litigation has been initiated by the Provincial Control Brigade for the East and progress to date regarding the seizure of machines involved in the illegal activities;
- Summoning and charging Messrs Ambroise Loga and Didier Hugues for unauthorised logging in a state forest.

2. RESOURCES USED

- 1 Toyota Hilux Pick up
- 1 Yamaha 100 motorbike
- 3 GPS (Garmin brand)
- 1 Video camera (Sony brand)
- 1 Digital camera
- 1 Laptop computer (Sony brand)
- 1 Videotape recorder

3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

The mission was made up of Mrs Essono Danièle and Mr Djibrila, agents of the CCU; Mr James Afene Obam, Senior staff at the Forestry Department; and Messrs Moukouri and Owada, the technical team of the Independent Observer. These members were joined by the Chief of Forestry Section for Haut-Nyong and the assistant of the Head of Local Forestry Post for Lomié.

4. CONSTRAINTS

This mission was ordered after a long delay, taking into account the date the alleged infractions were initially brought to the attention of the competent authorities. There were no illegal activities occurring at the time of the mission visit.

The absence of the Head of Local Forestry Post during the mission did not allow the mission team to question him about the accusations made against him.

5. MISSION'S FINDINGS

5.1 Case summary

The Head of the Nzime-Lomie Central Canton notified MINEF via a letter dated 18 June 2003 about illegal logging taking place within his territorial jurisdiction (see Appendix 1). This letter stated that the company DH was responsible for this activity with the complicity of the Head of Local Forestry Post for Lomié. In response to this letter, MINEF ordered a mission of inquiry.

5.2 Discussions held with the informant

The mission team met with Mr Jean Pierre Mabilia Mabilia, Head of Nzime Central Canton. During this discussion, the latter declared that the allegations made in the letter originated from the establishment of a wood processing unit in Pohempoum Village by the Honourable Gerard Lomie in partnership with one Mr Didier Hugues. This unit was initially set up to process timber from the Kongo and Ngola-Achip community forests. However, the manager of this processing unit, Mr Ambroise Loga, and the owner of the machines, Mr Didier Hugues, at their own volition, felled trees in the surrounding forest, under the pretext of producing desks for a neighbouring school. The felled trees were sawn on site and transported to the processing unit where the timber was further processed before being marked by the Head of Local Forestry Post for Lomié.

The machines used in this operation were allegedly seized by the Provincial Control Brigade for the East, before being illegally retrieved by their owner. According to the Canton Head, three or four truckloads of between 30 to 40m³ were allegedly been evacuated in the course of these activities

5.3 Mission's observations

a. Unauthorised logging in a state forest

Evidence found in the field confirms the Canton Head's allegations. Ten tree stumps were counted by the mission, as shown on the map and in the photographs below. These felling activities also encroached into an area already reserved for a community forest. The mission also observed a desk bearing the "DH" logo in one of the classes of the Pohempoum School.

Photos: Desk bearing the "DH" logo; site and stumps of illegal logging



b. Illegal marking of timber

The allegation of illegal marking of timber is the result of the use of the official Marking Hammer by the Head of Local Forestry Post on illegal timber. This act committed by the Head of Local Forestry Post could constitute complicity of a sworn official in the perpetration of a forestry offence. This act is punishable by a doubling of the sanctions stipulated in Section 162 of the 20 January 1994 Law.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main conclusions of the Independent Observer in regard to the case under study are as follows:

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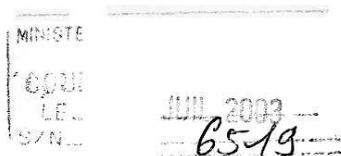
APPENDICES

Appendix 1

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S.M Jean Pierre MABIA
Chef de Canton NZIME du Centre

LOMIE



A
Monsieur le Ministre de
l'Environnement et des Forêts

YAOUNDE

Objet : Coupe frauduleuse de bois dans une forêt communautaire
en cours d'attribution et dans la réserve du Dja.

DH/15
09/04

Excellence,

UCC
Verifications
[Signature]
8/10/03

UCC
21/12/03
[Signature]

M^r Dymbulla
BV traiter
ce dossier
[Signature]
17/07/06

Je viens respectueusement auprès de vous dénoncer une coupe illicite de bois plus de 1.000 m³ dans une forêt communautaire au village Doumzoh I par une certaine Société qui se fait appeler D.H. Cette coupe de bois frauduleuse se fait avec la complicité agissante du Chef de Poste Forestier de Lomié. Ces fraudeurs manipulent les pygmées et quelques villageois.

Cette situation est tellement grave parce que cette forêt communautaire est encore en cours d'attribution et d'autre part de nombreuses essences sont prélevées de la réserve du Dja classée patrimoine mondiale.

Dans l'espoir qu'une prompt réaction mettra un terme à cette fraude massive et que des sanctions sévères seront infligées à ceux ci, je vous prie de recevoir mes sentiments distingués.

Fait à Pohempoum, le 18 juin 2003