

Project Independent Observation in support of  
Forest Control and Monitoring of Infractions in  
Cameroon

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

**Report of the Independent Observer**

**No. 100En**

*Central Control Unit – Independent Observer Joint Mission*

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<b>Title</b>	Deng-Deng Forestry Reserve
<b>Localisation</b>	Bélabo, Lom & Djerem Division, East Province
<b>Mission date</b>	19th May 2004
<b>Company</b>	None

**Independent Observer Team (Global Witness):**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
2. RESOURCES USED .....	3
3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION .....	3
4 CONSTRAINTS .....	3
5. MISSION'S FINDINGS .....	3
5.1 Findings and information gathered by the Independent Observer .....	3
5.1.1 Logging within the D-DFR .....	3
5.1.2 Small-scale chainsaw operation .....	4
5.2 Analysis of the Independent Observer .....	6
6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	7

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within the framework of monitoring of forest territory, the Central Control Unit (CCU), accompanied by the Independent Observer (Global Witness), visited the Deng-Deng Forestry Reserve (D-DFR) on 19 May 2004. The aim of the mission was to control and evaluate logging activities in this forest by investigating, describing and taking prescribed legal action against all illegal logging activities within the D-DFR or its periphery.

The D-DFR is the object of widespread economic interest. In 2002, the Independent Observer concluded a mission confirming the existence of serious small-scale chainsaw operations in the periphery of the reserve.

During the mission upon which findings this report is based the Independent Observer noted the following:

- After investigating part of the road network crisscrossing the reserve, the observation team discovered that industrial logging had taken place within the D-DFR at the beginning of 2004, as evidenced by the cutting of trees, opening of roads, and the establishment of hauling tracks and log ponds;

According to the Head of the Belabo Local Forestry Post, these activities were carried out by the Common Initiative Group (CIG) called “*Main dans la Main*” which seemingly had acquired a Timber Recovery Permit (TRP) in the reserve;

- Most of the fifty logs found on the site were marked twice. The first marking was done with the official marking hammer of seizure No. 26 by the East Provincial Control Brigade (E-PCB) and the second by an official marking hammer, the number of which could not be identified;
- A small-scale intensive chainsaw operation still exists in the periphery, extending into the D-DFR. More than 2,000 planks, laths, boards and rafters of mostly *ayous* were impounded in different parts of the D-DFR and its periphery.

The sworn agents of the CCU did not charge any offenders encountered in the forest.

On the basis of the aforementioned facts, **the Independent Observer recommends that MINEF:**

- Verify the grounds for which the E-PCB presumably had initiated litigation for alleged illegal activities concerning logs felled in the reserve, and status of progress;
- Should title exist, rescind the Timber Recovery Permit granted to the CIG “*Main dans la Main*”, and impound and sell the logs abandoned on site;
- Ensure that litigation be initiated against small-scale chainsaw operators whose timber was impounded during the mission;
- Sign an agreement with the railway company, CAMRAIL, on the transportation of sawn timber to the Greater North in order to better control the flow of this timber.

**The Review Committee recommends that:**

- The payment of taxes be verified and, as depending of the result, annul the Timber Recovery Permit granted;
- The Belabo Branch of ANAFOR (National Agency for Forestry Management) be revived;
- The Timber Recovery Permits be annulled for areas in and around the Dimako Forest Reserve;
- The Divisional Delegate produce a report of the auctioned impounded timber;
- CAMRAIL be required to ascertain the lawful origin of the logs it transports.

## 2. RESOURCES USED

- 1 Toyota Land Cruiser
- 2 GPS
- 1 Video Camera
- 1 Digital camera
- 1 Laptop

## 3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

The mission comprised Mmes Essono and Ndzana as well as Mr Neckman of the CCU, Mr Bikié of the Data Processing Unit of MINEF, and Messrs Njeukam and Moukouri of the Independent Observer technical team. The Heads of the Belabo, Goyoum and Deng-Deng Local Forestry Posts were also involved in the mission.

## 4 CONSTRAINTS

Uprooted trees made it difficult for the team to investigate the entire Deng-Deng road network.

## 5. MISSION'S FINDINGS

### 5.1 Findings and information gathered by the Independent Observer

#### 5.1.1 Logging within the D-DFR

Within the Deng-Deng Forest Reserve (D-DFR), the mission team discovered logging operations of an industrial scale which had created four log ponds containing some fifty logs comprising about 680m<sup>3</sup> total volume. These logs represented the following species: *Sapelli*, *Sipo*, *Ayous*, *Tali*, *Iroko*, *Dibétou*, *Bilinga* (see photographs below).

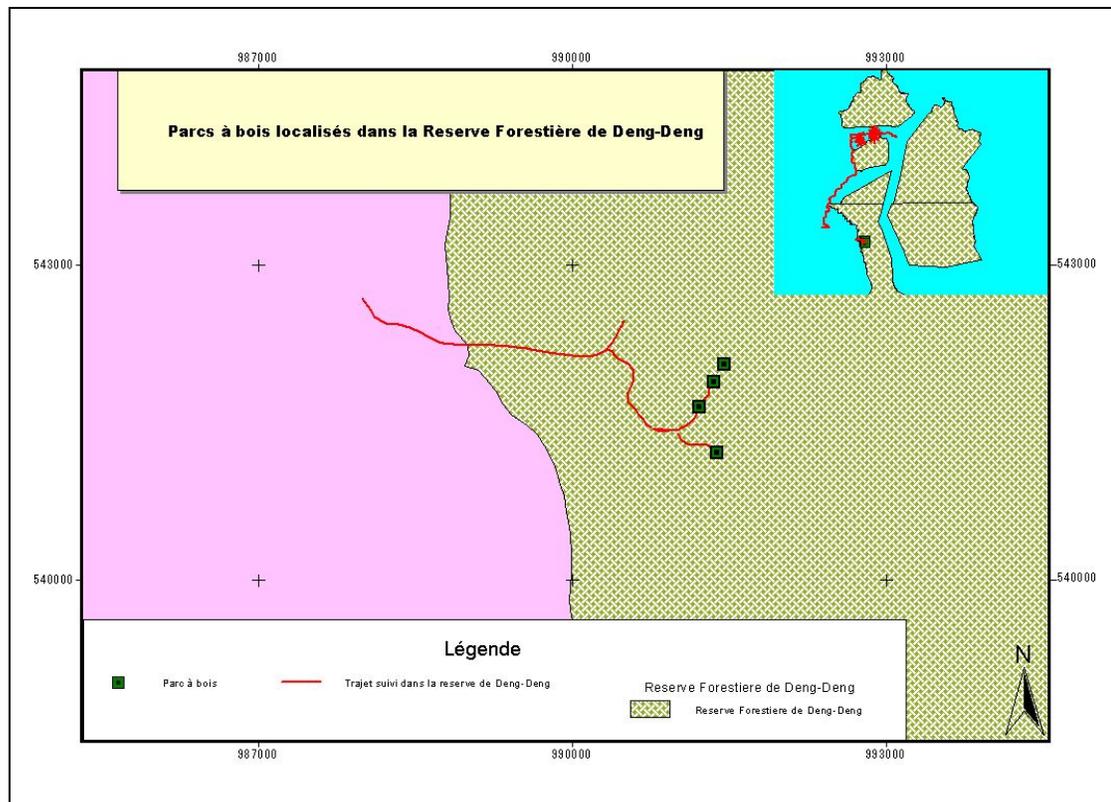


These logs, which were all harvested at the beginning of 2004, did not bear the label of any logging company. They were impounded and released by official marking hammer No.26 of the East Provincial Control Brigade (E-PCB) and by another marking hammer the number of which could not be identified by the mission. The operator said to be conducting the logging is the Common Initiative Group (CIG) “*Main dans la Main*”.

According to the Head of the Belabo Local Forestry Post, this CIG had obtained a Timber Recovery Permit (TRP); the site was only closed and its timber impounded because logging activities had been started without notification of commencement being issued by the forestry administration.

GPS (Global Positioning System) points taken during the mission’s tour and transferred onto the map of the D-DFR during the mission showed that these activities had taken place within the reserve (see map below).

**Map 1:** Logging sites in the DFR



### 5.1.2 Small-scale chainsaw operation

Small-scale chainsaw operations benefit from the presence of a dense road network in the Deng-Deng Forest Reserve’s periphery. Intensive small-scale chainsaw operations are ongoing in and around this reserve.

GPS points taken and represented on the map shown above as well as photographs taken by the Independent Observer during the mission support this assertion.

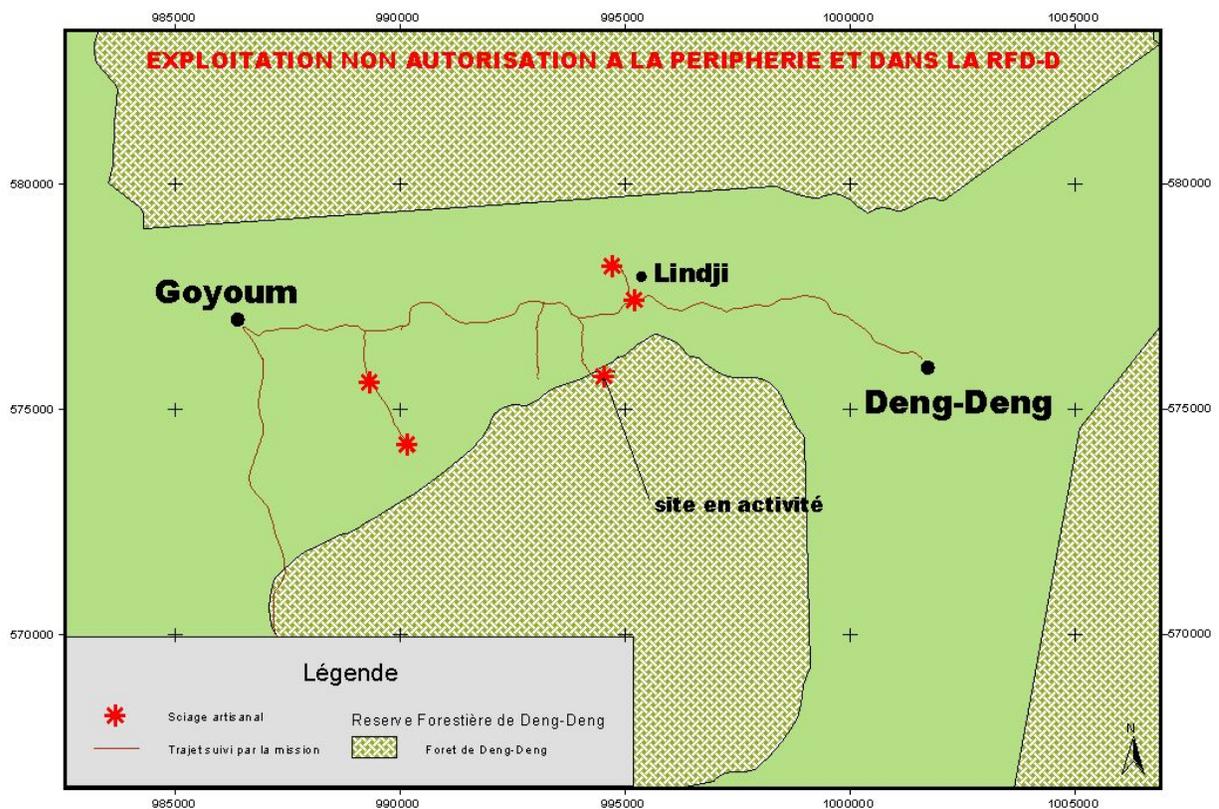
At one site discovered by the mission team during the visit, at least twenty persons were engaged in illegal forest activities. A significant quantity of sawn *ayous* estimated at about 1,000 pieces was impounded. Two of the persons encountered at

the site introduced themselves as the owners of the contentious timber but criminal charges were not finalized against them by the CCU.



The mission impounded some fifty sapelli planks being transported by a vehicle. About 1,200 pieces of sawn timber were found on other sites. No OSO (official statement of offence) was established in the field.

**Map 2:** Logging Sites around the DFR



## **5.2 Analysis of the Independent Observer**

In the field, the Independent Observer could not obtain any document relating to the industrial logging operations recently undertaken in the Deng-Deng Reserve. The information obtained from the Head of the Belabo Local Forestry Post concerning this logging activity raises some serious questions.

The first question relates to the fact that the activity was allegedly carried out by a CIG on the basis of a Recovery Permit for not felled trees. Such recovery, as a matter of fact, can only be conducted through a Sale of Standing Volume (SSV) title. In order to be granted a Sale of Standing Volume, as is the case in the granting of all logging permits, the applicant must have a status of accord granted by MINEF (Law of 20 January 1994, Art. 73(1) and 41(1)). Moreover, pursuant to the Decree of the Application of Forest Management (Art. 35(1) and 36(2)), only individuals and enterprises can be authorized to carry out logging activities. It therefore follows that a CIG which, contrary to a commercial enterprise, has the legal status of a non-profit making entity, cannot legally be accorded commercial logging rights nor obtain a Standing Tree Recovery Permit.

The second question relates to the fact that the site of the CIG was only closed and the logs initially impounded for want of notification of commencement of activities by the Provincial Delegation of MINEF. The absence or the illegality of the Timber Recovery Permit, even more than the absence of the said notification, already justified the measures taken. It is surprising that the impounded logs were subsequently released, in spite of the obvious illegal way in which they were obtained. This could explain why the number of the second official marking hammer found on all of the logs was illegible; that is, the illegibility was intentional.

The small-scale chainsaw operations observed by the mission in and around the Deng-Deng Forest Reserve allegedly can be attributed to a network of well organized enterprises. The sawn timber is destined for the Greater North.

Obviously, the presence of three Local Forestry Posts around this reserve is no assurance of forest protection. It is therefore necessary to take new measures in order to protect the resources of this reserve.

The mission could verify the existence of offences related to unauthorized logging in a State Forest and particularly in the D-DFR or on State land. These offences are prescribed and punishable by articles 156 and 158 of the Law of 20 January 1994.

## 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The observations mentioned above reveal that the Deng-Deng Forest Reserve is subject to such heavy pillage that measures hitherto taken to safeguard the forest are not sufficient to prevent illegal activity.

Also, the persons interrogated by the CCU, persons responsible for the widespread chainsaw operations, were not charged for the offences committed in the reserve.

### **The Independent Observer recommends that MINEF :**

- Verify the grounds for initiating litigation against E-PCB for alleged illegal activities concerning logs felled in the reserve;
- Rescind the Timber Recovery Permit granted to the CIG “*Main dans la Main*” (based on verification of taxes paid), and impound and sell the logs abandoned on site;
- Ensure that litigation be initiated against small-scale chainsaw operators whose timber was impounded during the mission;
- Sign an agreement with the railway company, CAMRAIL, on the transportation of sawn timber to the Greater North in order to better control the flow of this timber.

### **The Review Committee recommends that:**

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