

Project of Independent Observation in Support of
the Control and Monitoring of Forestry Offences in
Cameroon

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

Report N° 015Fr

Central Control Unit – Independent Observer Joint Mission

Title: No title

Location: Central Province

Mission date: 15 July 2002

Company: Okola Forestry Post

Independent Observer Team (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 Central Control Unit (CCU) of the Ministry of the Environment and Forests (MINEF) carried out a mission to Okola, Lékié Department, Central Province on 15 July 2002, accompanied by the Independent Observer Team.

The aim of the mission was to hold an inquiry following a letter received from Inspector No. 3 of the General Inspectorate (MINEF/Minister's Office). This letter (see annexe 1) mentions the seizure of a false document containing copies of the MINEF seal and the Minister's signature (see annexe 2). The letter also alleges the involvement of the Head of the Okola Forestry and Hunting Post (Mr. Dima) in the obtention and fraudulent use of an official document (waybill) for the purposes of monetary gain, with the collusion of Mr. Tsala. According to MINEF procedures, waybills are only issued to operators by the Departmental Delegation. The Head of Post's role in relation to this document is limited simply to checking it.

Mr. Dima, Head of the Okola Forestry and Hunting Post, denied all involvement in the obtention and fraudulent use of waybills, and in copying the signature of the Minister for the Environment and Forests.

The Lékié MINEF Departmental Delegate declared that he had no knowledge of the fraudulent document. He also stated that he had issued Mr. Dima with two demands for explanation regarding insubordination and failure to report on his activities.

Mr. Tsala was not questioned, it having been confirmed by local sources that he had departed hastily before the arrival of the mission.

With regard to the above, **the Independent Observation Team recommends:**

- The transmission of the file to the appropriate legal authorities with a view to establishing the criminal responsibility of those involved in forging and using the document described above;
- The opening of an administrative inquiry on the part of MINEF, with a view to possible administrative penalties.

2. RESOURCES USED

- 1 Toyota pick-up belonging to Global Witness
- 1 laptop computer
- 1 GPS
- 1 video camera

3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

Two CCU officials and two members of the technical Independent Observer Team took part in the mission.

4. RESULTS OF THE MISSION

4.1. Summary of the case

On 12 June 2002, Inspector N° 3 contacted the Minister for the Environment and Forests by means of Note No. 466/N/MINEF/CAB/IG/I3, denouncing the obtention and fraudulent use of an official document (waybill) along with the copying of the signature of the Minister. The complaint also mentioned the involvement of the Head of the Okola Post and the collusion of Mr. Tsala.

The Inspector's suspicions were aroused by the presence of Mr. Nkoa Michel and Mr. Owono Louis Charles at the postal services outside normal hours. They were attempting to verify the validity of a document that had been given them in return for a monetary payment, a document that turned out to be fraudulent. Messrs. Nkoa and Owono also declared to Inspector No. 3 that the Head of the Forestry and Hunting Post and Mr. Tsala were in possession of a booklet of waybills that they were issuing to logging companies in exchange for money. According to MINEF procedures, heads of forestry and hunting posts are not authorised to hold waybills, far less to issue them to logging companies.

On 10 July 2002, the Minister created a control mission by means of Memorandum No. 0037/NS/MINEF/CAB/UCC with a view to holding an inquiry into the allegations made against the Head of the Forestry and Hunting Post and Mr. Tsala.

4.2. Meeting with the Head of the Okola Forestry and Hunting Post

On 15 July 2002, at approximately 14.30, the CCU left for Mr. Dima's office in Okola, accompanied by the Independent Observer Team.

On the control team's arrival at the office of the Head of the Okola Forestry and Hunting Post, this latter excused himself to the CCU under the pretext that he had to go and collect the keys for his office, which he had left at home. The Independent Observer Team suggested that the CCU team should accompany the Head of Post, given the nature of the allegations made against him. In fact, the Head of the Okola Forestry Post could have gone to the barrier to inform Mr. Tsala of the presence of the control mission. The Independent Observer Team's suggestion was not taken up by the CCU.

Shortly afterwards, the Head of Post returned and the control team were able to enter his office.

Introducing the meeting, Mrs. Essono of the CCU explained the reason and aim of the mission.

Mr. Dima replied to questions from the CCU officials and the Independent Observer Team, stating the following:

- 1) Mr. Tsala is my nephew, and I do sometimes entrust tasks to him in a personal capacity.
- 2) I employed Mr. Tsala as a temporary trainee but this did not work out and this is why I no longer employ trainees.
- 3) I am not aware of Mr. Tsala's business affairs. I think he is working in the east. And I have never heard of Mr. Nkoa Michel or Mr. Owono Louis Charles.
- 4) I have not been involved in either the obtention or use of a false document nor in copying the signature of the Minister. I did hear about this matter from Hortense Mboh of the Ministry postal service. I raised this question with Mr. Tsala who told me that this document had followed normal channels.
- 5) The police questioned Mr. Tsala in relation to this affair.
- 6) I did not set up mobile control barriers with trainees.

Mrs. Essono asked Mr. Dima (Head of Post) if he had any waybills in his possession. Mr. Dima replied that he did not and asked the CCU to show any proof that he could have affixed his signature to any waybill for timber transportation between Okola and Douala. The Head of Post did not mention the Obak control point and took the mission to the Okola barrier.

4.3. Discussions with the population at the Okola barrier

The mission also considered the allegations that people not employed by MINEF were being used for control tasks. No further information was obtained from the population at the Okola barrier.

4.4. Observations at the Obak control point

After holding a meeting with the Lékié Departmental Delegate, the mission visited the Obak control point. The mission noted the absence of Mr. Tsala from the Obak control point. Mrs. Mvogo, a MINEF employee present at the scene confirmed that Mr. Tsala normally worked at this control point as Mr. Dima's employee although Mr. Tsala was not a MINEF official. The mission also received confirmation that Mr. Tsala very often used the motorbike provided for the Okola Head of Post.

Finally, Mrs. Mvogo stated that Mr. Tsala had been at the Obak control point that day but that he had fled after having been informed by someone that a CCU mission was in Okola.

4.5. Meeting with the Lékié Departmental Delegate

The mission met with the MINEF Departmental Delegate to Lékié. The Delegate stated that he had no knowledge of the fraudulent document. He also stated that he had, two months previously, sent Mr. Dima two demands for explanation regarding his lack of discipline. Finally, the Delegate told the mission that the Head of the Okola Post never reported back on his activity to his superiors, and that he acted as if he were a self-sufficient Head of Post.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Independent Observer team recommends:

- The transmission of Mr. Dima's file to the appropriate legal authorities with a view to establishing the criminal responsibility of all people involved in the offence of forging and using the above noted document.
- The opening of an administrative inquiry on the part of MINEF with a view to possible administrative penalties.
- The issuing of a demand for explanation from the Head of the Okola Forestry Post in relation to his suspected involvement in the obtention and use of fraudulent documents.

Annexes

Annexe 1

MINISTRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET DES FORETS

CABINET

INSPECTION GENERALE

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix - Travail - Patrie

YAOUNDE, LE 12 JUIN 2002

N° 466 /N/MINEF/CAB/IG/03

~~CONFIDENTIEL~~

Mme ASSOUMOU

*Envoyer d'urgence une
mission de l'IG sur place
et préparer une demande
au chef de poste forestier d'Okola*

NOTE

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE DE
L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DES FORETS

YAOUNDE -

Objet : Saisie d'un faux document
et imitation de la signature de M. le
Ministre de l'Environnement et des
Forêts. Corruption, complicité du
Chef de Poste forestier d'Okola.

*u M^r
Vos instructions
de IG*

*Mme ASSOUMOU
Présidente du Comité (membres)
Mme ASSOUMOU
04/07/02*

Au cours d'une ronde que j'ai effectuée le 12 juin 2002 dans les services du courrier dont je supervise le fonctionnement, j'ai approché deux individus dont l'aspect suspect m'a fort intrigué par ce que s'étant présentés devant le bureau du courrier départ à une heure qui n'était pas celle des réceptions des usagers. Priés de me dire l'objet de leur visite au service du courrier, les Sieurs OWONO Louis Charles CI n° 1030191574 du 11/06/2001 et NKOA Michel CI n° 57/0450/96 du 10/06/1996 toutes délivrées à OKOLA m'ont avoué qu'ils voulaient vérifier l'authenticité d'un acte du Ministre qui leur a été remis par un certain TSALA Mayer, homme de main de Mr DIMA Bella, Chef de poste forestier d'Okola. A l'examen du document en question, il m'a été aisé de constater que le cachet rond du MINEF était faux, le nominatif également et la signature de votre Excellence imitée. Poursuivant mes investigations, nos deux hommes ont avoué avoir remis à l'entremetteur du chef de poste la somme de 825 000 francs pour l'obtention dudit acte auprès de vos services compétents. Ils affirment également que Mr DIMA Bella chef de poste forestier d'Okola est en possession d'un carnet de lettres de voiture et que son complice qui n'est pas agent du MINEF mais qui arbore la tenue, l'aide à convoyer du bois d'Okola à Douala moyennant 250 000 francs pour service rendu.



Compte tenu de tout ce qui précède, il serait souhaitable, sauf meilleur avis de votre part d'adresser d'abord une demande d'explication à Mr DIMA Bella chef de poste forestier d'Okola, puis d' y envoyer une mission d'enquête pour faire toute la lumière sur cette affaire.

J. J.
[Signature]

Vos instructions ultérieures m'obligeraient./-

P.J. : Faux acte

INSPECTEUR N°3



[Signature]
Paul Akanga Akankou
Professeur à l'école de Lyéssé

Annexe 2

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix – Travail – Patrie

MINISTRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET DES FORETS

CABINET DU MINISTRE

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work – Fatherland

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
AND FORESTRY

MINISTRE'S CABINET

ARRETE N° 10282 / CAD / MINEF DU 27 DEC. 2001
PORTANT CERTIFICAT D'EXPLOITATION EN QUALITE DE
TRANSFORMATEUR DE BOIS DES ETABLISSEMENTS
MICHAELO & FILS

Le Ministre de l'Environnement et des Forêts ;

- Vu La Constitution ;
- Vu La loi N° 81 / 13 du 27 novembre 1981 portant Régime des Forêts de la Faune et de la Pêche ;
- Vu Le Décret N° 83 / 169 du 19 avril 1981 fixant le Régime des Forêts ;
- Vu La loi N° 94 / 01 du 11 janvier 1994 portant Régime des Forêts, de la Faune et de la Pêche ;
- Vu Le Décret 97 / 282 du 07 décembre 1997 portant Organisation du Gouvernement ;
- Vu L'avis de la Commission Technique Nationale en sa séance du 19 novembre 2001 ;

ARRETE

Article 1er : Les Etablissements MICHAELO & Fils B.P 2475 Yaoundé sont à compter de la date de signature du présent arrêté, certifiés à l'exploitation en qualité de transformateur de bois.

Article 2 : Ce certificat qui est strictement personnel et incessible, permet exclusivement l'instruction, conformément à la réglementation, de tout contrat d'achat de bois en grumes auprès des sociétés titulaires d'une vente de coupe ou d'une concession forestière.

Article 3 : Le présent arrêté sera enregistré puis communiqué partout où besoin sera

Fait à Yaoundé, le 27 DEC. 2001

LE MINISTRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET DES FORETS

SYLVESTRE NAH ONDDA