



global witness

Cameroon

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

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

Report of the Independent Observer

No. 039 En

Joint CCU – Independent Observer Mission

Title	None
Location	Ngoro, Mbam and Kim Department, Centre Province
Mission Date	19 - 21 March 2003
Company	None

Independent Observer (Global Witness):

Mr. Reiner Tegtmeyer, Project Director

Mr. Serge C. Moukouri, Technical Assistant

Mr. Albert Mballa Mbarga, Driver

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1. SUMMARY

The Central Control¹ Unit (CCU), accompanied by the Independent Observer (Global Witness), carried out a mission in Ngoro District, Mbam and Kim Department, Centre Province, from 19 to 21 March 2003.

The objective of the mission was to seek, take note of and bring proceedings against any cases of irregular logging found. The mission's mandate also included monitoring the forest territory on the mission's itinerary. The two objectives were based on a letter sent to MINEF reporting the plundering of forests in Ngoro District.

Before going to the field, the mission had two working sessions, one with the Ngoro local forest law enforcement official and one with the mayor of Ngoro.

The main conclusion of the Independent Observer related to this mission is that intensive illegal logging and small-scale timber processing is taking place in the communal forests situated in Ngoro District. The facts observed in the field partly confirm the allegations of fraudulent logging made in the letter sent to MINEF. The mission "seized" around 50m³ of sawn *Ayous* and *Pachyloba*, and equipment implicated in this offence. The Independent Observer also noted the almost complete inertia of the local MINEF services with respect to this illegal activity.

Of all the presumed authors cited in the above-mentioned letter, the mission was able to establish the involvement of Mr Mbida in the commission of some of these illegal acts.

Despite the insistence of the Independent Observer that these offences be officially noted, no official statement of offence was drawn up by the sworn officers who were members of the mission.

Considering the above, **the Independent Observer recommends** :

- That an official statement of offence be drawn up against Mr Mbida for non-authorized logging in a communal forest;
- That any physical or moral person cited in the denunciation and suspected of being involved in this activity be summoned for hearing and, where necessary, an official statement of offence be drawn up against each of the persons whose responsibility therein is established;
- That Mr Mbida be summoned for hearing in respect of other facts against him, notably the fraudulent marking of timber, the fraudulent use of transport permits and the misappropriation of seized goods;
- That the seized timber be sold by public auction;
- That appropriate administrative action be taken against the Ngoro local forest law enforcement official;
- That the Departmental Delegate be summoned with a view to a hearing related to the extent of the irregularities noted in the area under his responsibility.

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

From the work of the Reading Committee, the Independent Observer had confirmation that Mr Mbida was acting as manager of *Etablissements Nicole*, against whom an official statement of offence had indeed been drawn up.

2. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

The mission was composed of Mr. Djibrilla Hessana and Ms Dzana Margareth of the CCU; Mr. Eyaane Bannister, head of the Centre Province forest law enforcement Provincial Brigade (PB), and Mr. Reiner Tegtmeyer and Mr. Serge Moukouri of the Independent Observer. Mr. Nonga, Mbam and Kim Departmental Delegate, and Mr. Balibia, Ngoro local forest law enforcement official, joined the mission.

3. RESOURCES USED

- 1 Land Cruiser
- 2 Garmin GPS units
- 1 digital camera
- 1 Sony laptop computer
- 1 1:200 000 scale map of the Bafia zone

4. CONSTRAINTS

The poor circulation of information between the members of the mission was the main constraint during this mission. Despite the insistence of the Independent Observer that the offences be officially noted, no official statement of offence was drawn up by the sworn officers who were members of the mission

5. MISSION RESULTS

5.1 Summary

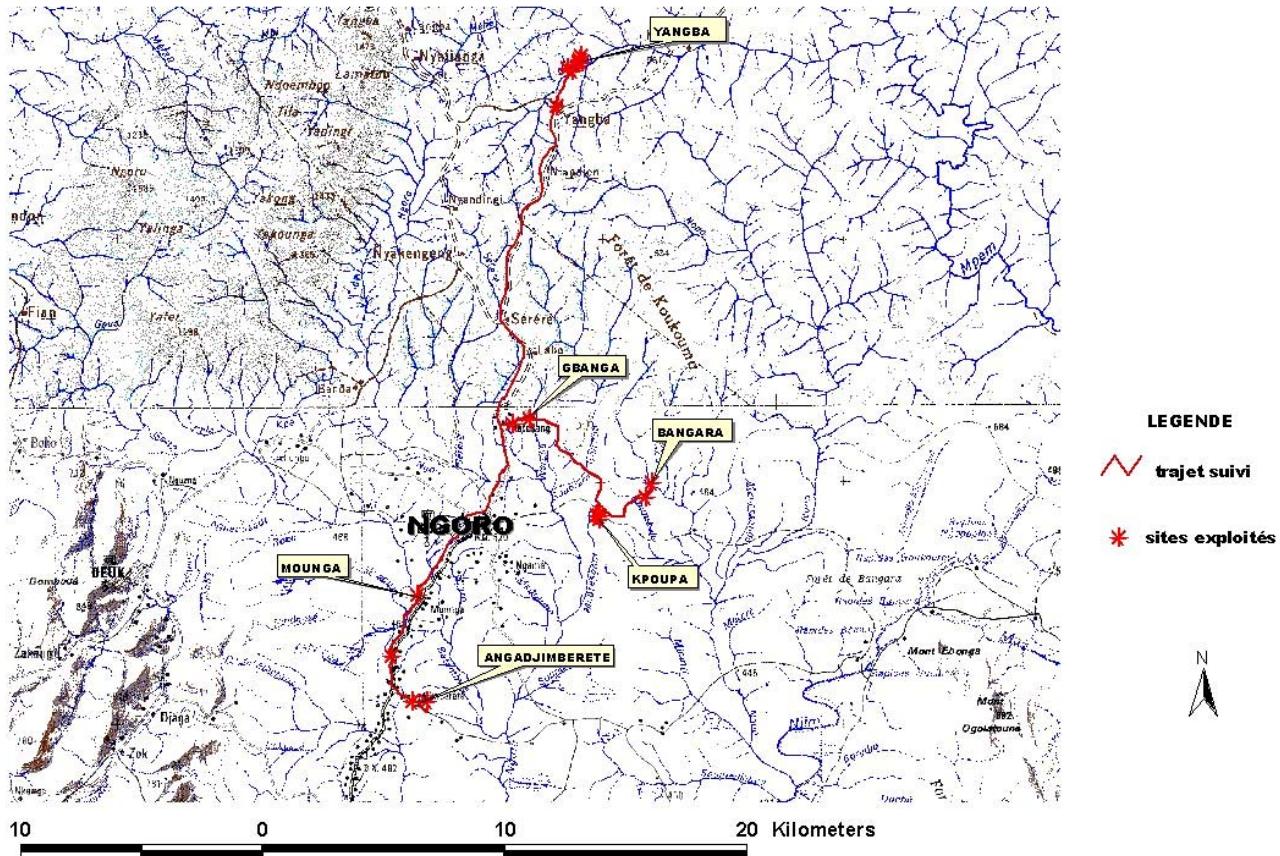
In Internal Memorandum N° 0294 of 25 February 2003, the Minister of the Environment and Forests created a logging control mission. In the context of this mission, a CCU team, accompanied by the Independent Observer, went to Ngoro, a district which has no forest title currently being logged. Despite this fact, the mission felt it timely to visit the area in order to verify the content of a denunciation which had reached the Minister's office, with copy to the Independent Observer. This letter, dated 7 February 2003, denounced the plundering of forests in the area, with the complicity of some local authorities (see Annex 1).

The mission had a working session with the Ngoro local forest law enforcement official. He was not able to provide satisfactory information concerning the action he had taken to put an end to the situation. Subsequently, the mission met with the mayor of Ngoro to inquire how the situation had evolved since the denunciation had been sent to the Minister. The mayor put himself at the disposal of the mission as a field guide.

5.2 Observations of the Independent Observer

The mission went through the villages of Yangba, Gbanga, Pkoupa, Mounga, Angandjimbéréte and Bangara. In all these villages, the observations made and photos taken confirm that felling and small-scale timber processing have taken place there. The map below shows the location of the sites of activity.

Map: The sites of illegal activities in the area around Ngoro



a) Forest near to Yangba village

The Independent Observer counted ten stumps of trees felled in the forest close to this village. The mission also noted signs of intensive timber processing activity and approximately 3m³ of abandoned waste from sawn *pachyloba* and *iroko*. Accessories from a “Lucas” saw (*fitter screw, rails, etc.*) were also found abandoned. The mission took possession of these.



b) Forest near to Gbanga village

Four felled and sawn trees were counted near to this village. The mission discovered and seized the frame of a “Lucas” saw. In the field, some m³ of reject sawn timber had been abandoned near to the stumps.



c) Forest near to Kpoupa and Mounga villages

At these two sites, empty storage lots and 3 stumps of felled trees were found by the mission. As with the other cases, significant amounts of timber were found abandoned in the forest.



d) Angandjimbéréte Village

In contrast to the situation in the other areas, activities would seem to have been interrupted in this village by the arrival of the mission. The proof of this statement lies partly with the identification of a complete “Lucas” saw in a bush not far from the stump of a *pachyloba* which was being sawn. Nearly 1000 pieces of sawn *pachyloba* representing approximately 35m³ were hidden/stored at various places on the edge of the village. Mr Mbida, the presumed author of these activities, met with the CCU head of mission. The Independent Observer cannot confirm whether an official statement of offence was drawn up against Mr Mbida.



e) Bangara Village

A significant stock of sawn timber awaiting removal was found and seized by the mission (see photo below). According to an approximate evaluation made in the field, the volume of this sawn timber might be estimated at 35m³ of *pachyloba* and 10m³ of *ayous*. This timber is being kept at the Ngoro forestry checkpoint.



5.3 Analytical note by the Independent Observer

Ngoro District is the departure point of what would seem to be an organised network of fraudulent logging. The extent of the illegal activities discovered in the area around Ngoro shows that the phenomenon has existed there for some time. The Independent Observer notes that the timber passes various forestry checkpoints without arousing the suspicions of the local MINEF officers. How can such large quantities of timber be transported in an area without the knowledge of the local forestry officials? What permits do the various transporters of the timber use? These are questions raised by the situation.

The Independent Observer also noted that several seizures of timber had been made without any official statement of offence being drawn up. Such procedural irregularities may compromise the chances of success of these forestry litigations. On some occasions, the seized timber was not even hammered, and this despite the fact that the acts concerned constituted an offence, that is, non-authorized logging in a communal forest. This offence is punishable under article 156 of law N° 94/01 of 20 January 1994.

Mr Mbida would seem to have taken advantage of this confused situation to remove the stock of approximately 35m³ of sawn timber after having met with the CCU head of mission. The Independent Observer had not taken part in the meeting between Mr Mbida and the CCU Head of mission.

Regarding the continuation of this investigation, the Independent Observer suggests that the persons cited in the denunciation which came to MINEF be summoned and heard with a view to furthering the inquiry.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main conclusion of the Independent Observer related to this mission is that intensive illegal logging and small-scale timber processing is taking place in the communal forests situated in Ngoro District. The facts observed in the field partly confirm the allegations of fraudulent logging made in the letter sent to MINEF. The mission “seized” around 50m³ of sawn *Ayous* and *Pachyloba* and equipment implicated in this offence. The Independent Observer also noted the almost complete inertia of the local MINEF services with respect to this illegal activity.

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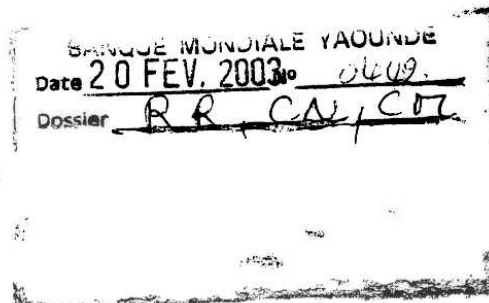
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From the work of the *Comité de Lecture*, the Independent Observer received confirmation that Mr Mbida was acting as manager of *Etablissements Nicole*, against whom an official statement of offence had indeed been drawn up.

ANNEXES

Annexe 1

Mr NGBONG ADJI LAZARE
Président de l'unique Sous-Section
R. D. P. C et 1^{er} Adjoint Au maire de
La Commune Rurale De NGORO
B P : 118 BAFIA



26 FEV. 2003

021/03

A Monsieur Le Ministre
De l'environnement et des Forêts
S / C le DIRECTEUR DES FORETS

Objet : Dénonciation des coupes frauduleuses
de Bois dans l'arrondissement de NGORO.

Excellence ,

J'ai l'honneur de vous saisir par la présente correspondance pour solliciter votre intervention dans le pillage de nos forêts par des hordes entières de nos compatriotes qui n'ont pour seule ambition que de s'enrichir illicitement en appauvrissant nos braves populations.

En effet , ayant tout essayé sans succès , car cette situation inadmissible semble trouver l'onction des autorités en place , nous avons cru devoir vous faire la liste de ces délinquants et les lieux (villages) où ils opèrent afin de vous aider à les traquer .

Voici donc cette liste :

1) FLAMBOYANT: Il se pourrait que cette société qui a gagné la forêt communautaire « GRAMONA » de MASSASSA et celle de FOCOTSONGO village de DEUK voisin , n'observe aucune trêve depuis la suspension non levée de MASSASSA . Sous le couvert des autorités (chef de poste et sous-préfet) , elle s'est installée à NYANGAFOCK où elle a introduit 10 « LUCAS MILLE » pour dévaster nos forêts . Plus de 3 à 4 plateaux y sortent par jour portant la marque FOCOTSONGO . A ce jour , on peut évaluer le nombre de camions à plus de 15 portant chacun entre 18 et 20m³ de bois (produit fini) prêt à l'export .

2) Un certain MBIDA qui serait contrôleur d'Etat au control supérieur de l'Etat à YAOUNDE et lui même pris dans le piège du faux . Il a installé 5 scieries mobiles à ANGANDJIMBERETE , village du SUD de NGORO à 7 KM en allant vers le fleuve « GUERIMA » . Malgré un effort de lui faire comprendre que cette zone est réservée en vente de coupe , il use de sa casquette de haut cadre de la Fonction Publique pour s'imposer . Tout ceci , sous le regard complice du sous-prefet qui de temps en temps se transforme en forestier quand son enveloppe tarde à arriver . Il saisit les scies mobiles contre une somme de

500 à 800 . 000 francs au retrait . Ce dernier sort deux (2) camions plateaux par semaines .

3) **Mr BIG -SHOP** serait un député suppléant de l'OUEST et dont la société se situerait vers l'hôtel le PARADIS à NGOUSSO - YAOUNDE . lui semble passé en tête des pilliers car il est installé dans plus de 4 villages depuis plus de 8 mois :

- Koundjougou NORD de NGORO 2 LUCAS- MILL
- Yangba au NORD de NGORO 2 LUCAS -MILL
- LABO à 7 KM au NORD de NGORO , 1 LUCAS - MILL
- A PKOUPA Foret du centre de NGORO , 1 LUCAS - MILL
- A MASSASSA à L'EST ils se payent 2 LUCAS -MILL avec la société ACACIA .

Vous pouvez donc imaginer combien de camions peuvent sortir de ces endroits par mois.

4) ~~Le député - maire~~ de BELABO Mr SALE , 2^e Vice Président de l'Assemblée Nationale , lui même n'est pas en reste à l'heure de la bonne gouvernance , avec ses 3 LUCAS -MILL , il s'en sort pas mal par le biais de son représentant NDZANA sur le terrain .

5) Plusieurs autres dont j'ignore les noms se sont installés dans les villages : BANGARA , à l' EST , NDJOMTSOUROUNG à L' OUEST vers la route de DEUK , à MOUNGA au SUD ainsi qu'à ONDOUANON , EGOUA II et NYAMONGO .

En vous promettant de collaborer avec vos collaborateurs que vous enverrez sur les lieux , nous vous prions de prendre au sérieux cette situation inacceptable qui condamne à terme à l'errance non seulement notre jeune commune , mais aussi l'ETAT et à l'heure du combat contre la pauvreté et la gestion rationnelle de nos forêts sous le regard vigilant des bailleurs de fonds internationaux .

Veuillez croire Excellence , aux assurances de ma parfaite considération.

Fait à NGORO Le 7 FEVRIER 2003

Le Président et Premier Adjoint au MAIRE .

Ampliation

- Présidence de la République.
- Services du PM.
- MINISTRE A.T
- GOUVERNEUR CENTRE
- COORDINATION DE LA GOUVERNANCE .
- BANQUE MONDIALE.
- W.W.F
- S.N.V
- CENNER.



POUR LE MAIRE
LE 1^{er} ADJOINT

Mr Lazare NGBONG Adji



global witness

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Yaoundé, 27 février 2003

**SON EXCELLENCE MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE
DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET DES FORÊTS
YAOUNDE - CAMEROUN**

N/Réf: GWC/DP/DPA/RU/29/03

OBJET: Requête de mission de contrôle forestier dans le Département de Mbam et Inoubou, Province du Centre

Excellence Monsieur le Ministre,

Le devoir nous échoit de requérir une mission de contrôle par vos services avec l'appui de l'Observateur Indépendant, en vue de vérifier les allégations d'activités forestières illégales dans les environs des villages de Ngoro, Arrondissement de Ngoro, dans le Département de Mbam & Inoubou, Province du Centre.

Fermeement assurés de votre prompt réaction, croyez, Excellence Monsieur le Ministre, en notre profonde considération.



Ampliations

- ◊ *Secrétaire Général*
- ◊ *Banque Mondiale*
- ◊ *DfID*
- ◊ *Union Européenne*

ci-joint

copie de lettre du Chef de l'Adjoint au Maire de Ngoro

