

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

**Validated by the Reading
Committee**

Report of the Independent Observer

No. 105En

Central Control Unit – Independent Observer Joint Mission

Objective of mission	Surveillance of the territory
Localisation	Mbam et Kim Division, Central Province
Mission dates	28 July, 02 and 04 August 2004
Company	None

Independent Observer Team (Global Witness):

*Mr Robinson Djeukam, Legal Consultant
Mr Serge C. Moukouri, Technical Assistant
Mr Emmanuel Tamounang, Driver*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2. RESOURCES USED.....	2
3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION	2
4. CONSTRAINTS	2
5. RESULTS OF THE MISSION	2
5.1 The absence of the transport documents	2
5.2 Unauthorised forestry exploitation	2
5.3. Special Timber transportation authorisation	3
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	3

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within the framework of the control mission that took place in the Mbam and Kim Division from the 28th of July to the 4th of August 2004, the Central Control Unit (CCU) and the Independent Observer (Global Witness) carried out several surveillance activities of the forestry sector. In line with the service notice creating the mission, this surveillance was carried out alongside the mission.

It revealed three main categories of illegal activities.

The first covers transportation of sawn timber without transport document. In this respect, the mission intercepted two Mercedes trucks on the Ngoro road transporting around 350 pieces of *iroko* and *bilinga*, respectively, and a trailer transporting about 600 pieces of *iroko* on the Yoko road.

The second one relates to timber extraction without authorization in portions of state forest, where 1,600 pieces of *iroko* were seized as well as material used in the exploitation activity.

The third concerns the trafficking of transportation documents issued by the Provincial Delegation of Central Province to people who do not have the access right to forest resources.

The extraction and sawing of timber without access right to the forest resources as well as the transportation of timber without documents constitute an offence; consequently the CCU established three official statements of offence and proceeded in the seizure of fraudulently acquired products as well as certain equipment used in those operations. The Independent Observer notes with deep concern that timber transportation documents are issued to persons who do not have any access right to the forest resources; thereby paving the way for legalizing timber originating from a doubtful source. As had been pointed out in different reports on missions conducted in the region, illegal forest operations seem to have found fertile ground in the Mbam and Kim Division. This phenomenon can only be effectively fought by sanctioning the principal actors of this sector who are the producers, the transporters and the buyers of fraudulent timber.

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

- o The pursuance of opened litigations;
- o The identification and summoning for charges of the owners of trucks with registration numbers CE 0793T and NW 4861C, for illegal transportation of timber;
- o The stopping of issuing of Special Authorisations for Timber Transport by the responsible people in the local administration;
- o The regular dispatching of control missions along the main roads in the Mbam and Kim Division and to the egresses where fraudulent timber is being evacuated (the Ngoro and Ntui ferries, the Pont de l'Enfance), and punishment of offenders of the regulations in force.

2. RESOURCES USED

- 1 Pick-up Nissan
- 1 Digital photo camera
- 1 Sony lap top

3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

Including Messrs Moukouri and Djeukam of the Independent Observer team, the mission was composed of: Mr Jean Avit Kongapé, Mr Samson Neckmen and Ms Marie Mahouli, of the Central Control Unit; as well as Mr Romuald Bikié of the IT unit of MINEF, and Mr Nonga, Divisional Delegate of the Environment and Forests of Mbam and Kim.

4. CONSTRAINTS

The mission did not encounter any difficulty in the field.

5. RESULTS OF THE MISSION

5.1 The absence of the transport documents

On 28 July 2004, at Talba on the road to Ngoro, the mission intercepted two Mercedes trucks with registration numbers CE 0793T and NW 4861C, respectively, transporting sawn timber of *pachy*, *iroko* and *bilinga* bearing no markings. Requested to present documents attesting the origin and authorising the transport of said timber, the persons in possession of the timber in question declared to not having them at their disposal. In view of absence of the required documents, the mission concluded that the timber was illegal and established, against each of the owners of the illegal timber, an official statement of offence for unauthorised forest exploitation and failure to produce lading documents. A fine was imposed on the offenders which they paid.

On the way to Yoko on August 2, 2004, the mission came upon a trailer which had got stuck on the way, transporting about 650 pieces of *iroko*. Since the driver of the vehicle was unable to produce documents to prove the legality of his cargo, the mission, as in the previous case, seized the timber and established an official statement of offence against the offender. The driver declared that the timber was destined for the NOUSSI carpentry based in Yaoundé.

5.2 Unauthorised forestry exploitation

On the 4th of August, the mission discovered a site where tree felling and artisanal transformation of timber took place. The workers met on the site affirmed to be working for the company ETC, whereas this company has no access right to forest resources in the area. It is for this reason that the mission proceeded in the seizure of equipment used in extracting the timber as well as the fraudulently produced

timber. A stock of about 1,500 pieces of *iroko* was seized as well as two chain saws and parts of a Lucal Mill™ (mobile saw) used by the company.

An official statement of offence was established by the CCU agents against the ETC company for unauthorised forestry exploitation in a state forest.

5.3. Special Timber transportation authorisation

The driver of one of the vehicles intercepted during the surveillance missions presented a Special Timber Transportation Authorisation (STTA) issued by the Provincial Delegation of the Environment and Forests of the Central Province. This authorisation gives the owner the right to travel with timber but does not precise the origin or the access right which permitted the acquisition of the said timber. This practice could open the way for legalising of timber originating from doubtful sources.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Two main conclusions can be drawn from the mission:

A significant timber extraction and sawing operation takes place in various localities in the Mbam and Kim Division. It is a recurrent phenomenon that has been deplored in various reports of the Independent Observer. Only scrupulous action against the different elements (officials of the administration, producers, transporters and buyers of fraudulent timber) involved in illegal exploitation can remedy the situation.

Timber from unknown sources circulates in entire legality thanks to timber transportation authorisations.

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

- o The pursuance of opened litigations;
- o The identification and summoning for charges of the owners of trucks with registration numbers CE 0793T and NW 4861C, for illegal transportation of timber;
- o The stopping of issuing of Special Authorisations for Timber Transport by the responsible people in the local administration;
- o The regular dispatching of control missions along the main roads in the Mbam and Kim Division and to the egresses where fraudulent timber is being evacuated (the Ngoro and Ntui ferries, the Pont de l'Enfance), and punishment of offenders of the regulations in force.