



Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in Lao PDR

Mr. Khamphachanh Bounnakeo
Deputy Director of the Investigation –
Interrogation Division
Department of Forest Inspection
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Lao PDR

Content

- Background to Department of Forest Inspection (DoFI)
- Legal framework
- DoFI tasks and activities
- Field investigations
- Links to China and regional cooperation
- Challenges
- Concluding remarks

Background

- Forests vital to Lao economy, environmental protection and people's livelihoods
- In 2001, forests contributed 3.2 % of GDP (based on log production)
- Around 80% of the population relies on the forest for timber, fuel, food, fibre, medicines and other products
- In rural areas, NTFPs often provide more than half a family's total income (GoL, 2005).

Background

- DoFI newly established in December 2007, after revision of the Lao PDR Forestry Law.
- GoL's primary agent to address the problems of illegal logging, smuggling of timber and wildlife, forestry-related corruption, and illegal land encroachment.
- DOFI is empowered to:
 - conduct forestry control operations
 - investigate allegations of illegal logging, make arrests and pursue prosecutions
 - collaborate with other agencies as well as the private sector and civil society in pursuit of forest law enforcement

Legal framework

- Forestry Law (2008):
 - Recently revised
 - Governs management and utilization of forest resources, and sets out forest categories (eg conservation forest, production forest)
 - Logging only in production forests with management plan and involving community management, according to quota system
 - Log export ban since 1999
 - Wood processing under MIC

Legal framework, cont.

All wildlife in Lao PDR is the property of the state; the use and protection of wildlife are regulated by:

- **Wildlife Law (2007)**
 - Governs conservation, breeding and utilization of wildlife and aquatic animals
 - MAF Regulation No 0360 (2003) on the management of NBCAs and Aquatic & wild Animals Conservation

Legal framework, cont.

CITES

- Lao PDR acceded the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2004.
- Two agencies responsible for implementation of CITES:
 - CITES Management Authority (in Dept. of Forestry), responsible for import permits, export permits and re-export certificates.
 - Scientific Authority (NSTA) is responsible for providing advice to the CITES MA

Tasks and activities



DOFI is responsible for the development of a comprehensive compliance system to prevent, detect, and suppress forest crimes over all forest landscapes, resources and supply chains.

Tasks, cont.

This will involve:

- (i) Intelligence Systems Development to establish information tools and capacity to manage and disseminate law enforcement intelligence.
- (ii) Interagency Agreements and Operations to develop partnerships and engage with other law enforcement agencies (e.g. Customs, Police, Anti-Money Laundering Unit, etc.) in their appropriate roles in forest law enforcement.

Tasks, cont.

- (iii) Forest Law Enforcement Training and Public Awareness including specialized training to DOFI and other agency staff at national, provincial and district levels, and development and dissemination of public awareness material; and
- (iv) Forest Law Enforcement Strategy integrating project experiences and other sources and the formulation of a long-term and formally endorsed strategy for forest law enforcement in Lao PDR.

Field investigations

- DoFI and IUCN conducted field investigations in 2008 in key provinces bordering China and Vietnam: Louangnamtha; Khammouane; Savannakhet; Champasack.
- Assessed border checkpoints and field offices; documented cases of illegal trade in timber and wildlife.

Investigations, cont.

164 cases of forest crime and violations for the whole country in 2007-2008.

- National Ad hoc committee: investigated 75 cases: of which 37 cases were prosecuted; 11 minor cases were resolved; and the other 31 investigated.
- DoFI and provincial offices: 89 cases, of which 38 were prosecuted; 20 minor cases were resolved and 31 cases investigated.



Links to China

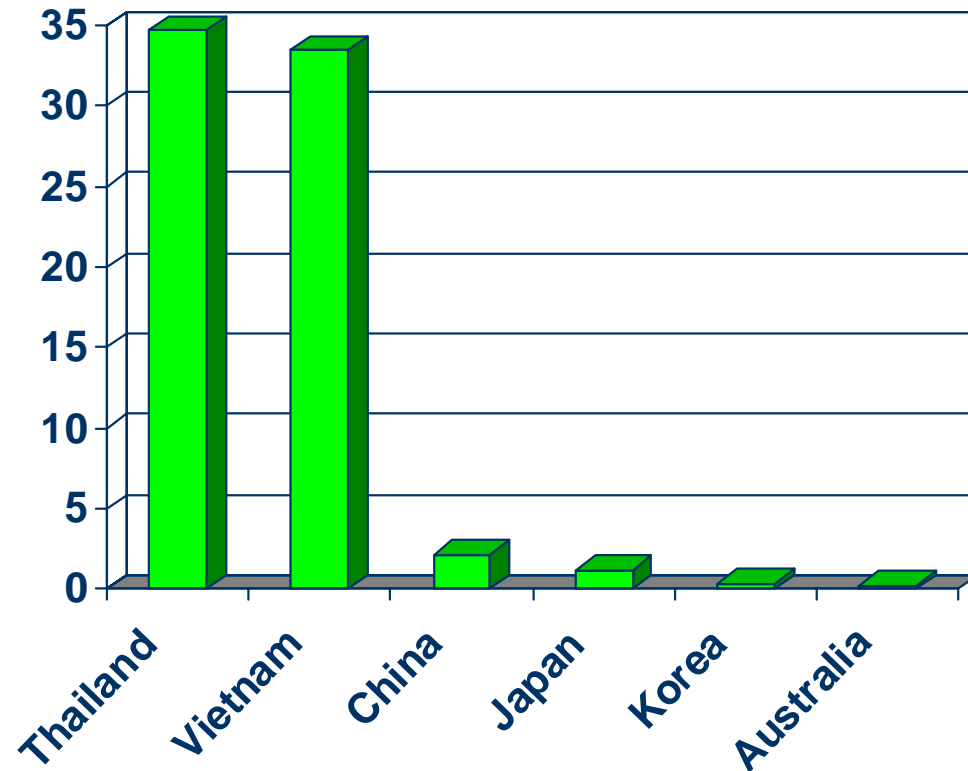
- Timber trade, both legal and illegal – direct and via Vietnam and Thailand.
- Wildlife trade, both legal and illegal - eg orchids, bears, macaques, turtles & tortoises, deer, pangolin, etc.

Timber trade

Top 6 buyers in 2007, according to value (million USD, MIC data)

China third largest buyer, purchased \$2.156 million

China's imports from Vietnam on the increase



Regional cooperation

- Lao RDR is a Member of ASEAN Wildlife Law Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN)
- Cooperative Action Plan (2005-2010) between Lao PDR and Vietnam to control illegal trans-boundary hunting, trading and transporting of wild fauna and flora

- GMS Countries Wildlife Enforcement cooperation

- 2004 Vientiane Action Plan agreed by Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam & Thailand, aim to eradicate unsustainable practices by 2010

- East Asia FLEG Ministerial, Bali Declaration, 2001



Challenges

- New department, still building capacity and lacking in funding, resources, staff and experience, especially in law enforcement
- Lao PDR a source country and a transit point for illegal forest products and wildlife, obtained in other parts of region
- Strong demand for wildlife products from consumers in neighbors, eg Vietnam and China

Conclusions

- GoL committed to protecting natural resources for future generations
- Numerous challenges, but taking steps to improve policy framework and enforcement
- DoFI looks forward to exchanges and collaboration with counterparts in China, region and globally

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Thank you!

Dept. of Forest Inspection,
Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry, Lao PDR

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