

AFP Dialogue, Peter Younger presentation

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Peter Young and I'm from New Zealand. I am an officer at the International Criminal Police Organization or Interpol, based at the General Secretariat in Lyon, France. I have been a law enforcement officer for 35 years.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank both the Asian Forest Partnership and the World Bank for asking Interpol to come here to Bali to speak to you all.

I've been asked to talk to you about project "Chainsaw" – Interpol's assessment of the Global Illegal logging problem, and to that end I had considered preparing a power point presentation full of charts and figures, but then I discovered I have only 15 minutes to make some hopefully useful points so that I thought it's better to just make some notes and chat to you all.

Let me also make it clear that I am no expert on the subject of logging as a business, although the more I examine the illegality surrounding it, the more I know.

So let's begin with a little about Interpol as an organization:

It was established in 1923 to FACILITATE cross-border police co-operation and to SUPPORT and ASSIST all organizations, authorities and services whose mission is to prevent or combat INTERNATIONAL CRIME.

Please note that this is very much a support role, rather than an operational one.

Interpol has 187 member countries which provide the bulk of our funding and which we serve. Our priorities are mostly determined by our members, through the mechanism of our annual General Assembly and the office of our Executive Committee.

*There is no international operational police force and it is important to remember that.

You will also note that the 'name above the door' of our organization contains the word 'police'. Not customs, not 'environmental' agency or anything else like that. This doesn't mean we don't work closely with a wide variety of other agencies and NGOs but all our processes and procedures are geared towards our police members. This impacts upon priority setting and how we hold and treat information.

One thing, however, to keep in mind is that we have a secure communication system via our NCBs to all our 187 member countries.

So, to move on to the reason we are all here this morning: REDD and combating illegal logging.

The work done to date on 'Project Chainsaw' largely confirms the widely-held belief that illegal logging and timber trafficking is, and continues to be, a significant global criminal problem, with links to other crime problems including, use of violence, murder, corruption, money laundering, tax

evasion and also showing links to armed conflict financing. For example, let me illustrate this by reading from just two examples.

READ A AND B.

What our study to date has also shown is:

1. Illegal logging as a crime type is large and complicated, to the point where many agencies simply are not skilled or resourced sufficiently to deal with it.
2. Hard end law enforcement is not the only way to deal with this problem. Compliance strategies, adoption of in-country green procurement policies, media, public awareness campaigns - just to name a few – all have a significant part to play.
3. There is almost no use, by those involved in policy, planning and management (and I refer here to the FLEG initiative as an example) of existing and established law enforcement practices and networks when initiatives to suppress illegal logging are discussed.
4. Dealing with those involved in this criminal activity, to date, has been patchy, uncoordinated and significantly under resourced.

Make no mistake, whether it be FLEG, REDD or some other acronym, sooner or later you WILL need to become involved, or factor into planning some hard law enforcement. This will involve arresting people, prosecutions (even of large companies), forfeiture of assets and it's highly likely significant levels of corruption and violence. This is what you can expect if you are serious about suppressing (and you will note I do not say 'stopping') this crime.

I've been asked about illegal logging as a crime type in comparison to other international crimes, such as terrorism, drug smuggling and the like.

This is a much harder question to deal with and the answer largely depends on your point of view and what 'value' you place on crimes' impact.

To the vast majority of the police there is no argument that crimes of violence, drug and human trafficking, and terrorism are (and should be) a high law enforcement priority. Illegal logging by comparison, to a large proportion of the population, simply doesn't rate.

Although I have to say the whole global warming issue is changing that slightly.

Police, on the other hand, set importance and priorities on the basis of public perception and political will and instruction. So simply, Illegal logging rarely hits the priority list in comparison to other immediate issues.

To give you examples of public perception and response, which in turn creates political imperatives and response:

1. September 11, 2001 compared to the amount of people killed on US roads
2. Troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan and call to "bring the boys home"

How do you get more law enforcement buy in to REDD, FLEG and the like?

1. Decide to make law enforcement part of the process EARLY.
2. Recognize that law enforcement is part of the solution and be prepared for what that entails.
3. Recognize that there is no International Operational Law Enforcement agency and that there are significant gaps in the current international forest law enforcement system.
4. Considering resourcing law enforcement, not just relying on NGOs and others e.g. Interpol will not specifically look at illegal logging as an issue because we simply do not have sufficient resources and are unlikely to get it from members, as it is not a priority.

So, to summarize the 'Chainsaw Project':

1. Confirm our suspicion the problem of illegal logging and associated crime is significant and organized.
2. As such, it requires an organized response and to date that hasn't happened at all.
3. Persons and agencies involved in forest governance issues and sustainability initiatives are simply not engaging sufficiently with law enforcement.
4. There is little or no use of international law enforcement tools, nor any attempt to plug gaps that exist.
5. What successes have been achieved in suppressing illegal logging have been achieved largely by adoption of trade or procurement policies or laws and by sporadic local law enforcement efforts.
6. By the very fact we are here today, speaking about this at all, indicates to me that we are winning this particular war and it maybe time to take a fresh look at it.

That must be well over my 15 minutes.

Thank you all for your patience in listening.