

# BRIEFING

## Update on Tanjung Puting National Park: A Report to the CGI Meeting, Jakarta, December 2003

### Executive Summary

Illegal logging in Tanjung Puting National Park, Central Kalimantan, has been adopted by the Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI) as a test case of the political will of the Indonesian government to tackle massive timber theft occurring across the country.

In January 2003 a joint operation was launched to eradicate logging within the park. This unprecedented enforcement sweep has led to a steep decline in logging activities in the west of the park, the dismantling of logging infrastructure, and the seizure of stolen timber. Yet in the more remote eastern area of the park logging activities continue unabated, beyond the reach of the enforcement operation. Latest information from the area indicates that following a lull during Ramadan, logging is increasing in the east and timber is flowing down the river systems again.

The Indonesian government deserves appreciation for the initial success of the operation in Tanjung Puting, but once again the powerful local timber bosses behind the destruction of the park have not been touched. EIA/Telapak have repeatedly provided information to the government exposing the link behind the Tanjung Lingga Group of companies and the illegal logging of Tanjung Puting. In August the company sent a shipment of illegal bengkirai timber from the park area to Vietnam, yet no action has been taken against the company or its directors. While the government continues to fail to tackle serial offenders like Tanjung Lingga, the prospects for Tanjung Puting and rest of Indonesia's forests remain bleak.



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### Progress in Tanjung Puting ...

EIA/Telapak first brought the plight of Tanjung Puting National Park to the attention of the international community in 1999. At that time the park, one of the last refuges for the highly endangered orangutan, was being devastated by massive illegal logging, coordinated by powerful local timber barons such as Abdul Rasyid and his Tanjung Lingga Group of companies.

At subsequent CGI meetings the dire situation in Tanjung Puting has been adopted as a test case, an indicator of the political will and ability of the Indonesian government to take firm measures against illegal logging and the main perpetrators. Until recently the government had clearly failed this

test. Field intelligence indicated that despite sporadic enforcement activities, logging continued unabated across the park. Sawmills operating outside the park reliant on illegal timber were left unscathed by enforcement operations, which tended to focus on loggers inside the park rather than the timber bosses orchestrating the plunder.

In early 2003 an unprecedented enforcement sweep of the park took place, under the Wanalaga I Operation. This joint operation, headed by Brigadier General Herman, a one-star police general from Jakarta, involved around 200 personnel from the police's mobile brigade unit taken from headquarters in Jakarta, and a military detachment from Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan. The operations team was supported by Ministry of Forestry personnel and equipped with two helicopters, three patrol vessels and 20 speedboats.

The initial phase of the operation, between January 29<sup>th</sup> and February 13<sup>th</sup>, had a dramatic impact on logging activities within Tanjung Puting. Focusing on the more accessible western region of the park, the enforcement personnel conducted a series of sweeps, seizing illegal timber and for the first time destroying logging infrastructure, such as logging camps and rails, within the park. This highly effective operation resulted in the seizure of 29 vessels transporting around 20, 000 m<sup>3</sup> of illegal timber from the park, and the destruction of over 35 kilometres of logging rails and numerous logging camps.

According to local press reports the intensive phase of the operation exposed 80 cases related to illegal logging, with 40 due to undocumented logs and 28 due to illegal timber transportation, and 27 arrests. It was also reported that some sawmills in the nearby towns of Pangkalanbun and Kumai were shut by the Wanalaga team, and that a few middle-level timber bosses, such as Yayan Imran from Kumai, were arrested. The outcome of these cases and the status of the sawmills remain unclear.

By mid-February the operation was scaled down, and the responsibility for enforcement passed to provincial police and a reduced number of army personnel. Despite this cutback, recent field reports indicate that the rivers in the western sector of the park, such as the Sekonyer

River, which formerly served as arteries for the transport of illegal timber, are still largely free of logs and the area in general has seen a sharp decline in logging activities. Security posts on rivers such as the Buluh Besar and Buluh Kecil are still manned by enforcement personnel, effectively deterring the transport of timber from the park to sawmills in Kumai or Pangkalanbun.

## **...But Further Action Needed**

While recognising the enduring impact of the Wanalaga I operation on logging in the west of Tanjung Puting, EIA/Telapak are concerned by the lack of attention to the east of the park and the failure of the operation to net any of the big players involved in ransacking the park.

Throughout the main phase of the operation logging continued unabated in the east of the park, with illegal logs seen stored along the main tributaries of the Seruyan River, awaiting transport to sawmills in the town of Kuala Pembuang. Nothing has been done to break up the logging infrastructure in the east, and unlicensed sawmills in the neighbouring regencies of Kotawaringin Timur and Seruyan remain untouched. It has been reported that of the 133 sawmills in Kotawaringin Timur, 95 are illegal. It is feared that with the rivers in the west of the park effectively blockaded, timber is increasingly being transported out through the unprotected east, where only 12 forest guards without a speedboat are stationed.

Doubts regarding the long term success of Wanalaga I are also raised by the resumption of illegal timber transport immediately after the operation, and the failure to apprehend the companies and individuals most closely linked to illegal logging in the area.

By May 2003 Kumai port was busy handling stolen timber again, with 11 ships seen loading over 3, 000 m<sup>3</sup> of illegal logs, reportedly bound for the Malaysian state of Sarawak. Of the 11 vessels, only two were intercepted by the authorities. Again in July four vessels were documented loading timber in Kumai, plus a barge carrying around 1, 000 m<sup>3</sup> of bengkirai timber from the park.

It comes as no surprise that in the wake of Wanalaga timber smuggling operations have recommenced in the Tanjung Puting area, given the failure of the Indonesian authorities to tackle the powerful local timber bosses.

In mid-February, at the height of Wanalaga I, EIA/Telapak were informed by officials closely involved in planning the operation that individuals linked to Abdul Rasyid's Tanjung Lingga Group would be arrested and questioned immediately upon their return from Mecca, where they had gone to perform the haj. This was echoed in comments made by Wanalaga I head Brigadier General Herman, who told journalists that the timber bosses, including Rasyid's nephews Sugianto and Agustiar, would be interrogated upon their return. Predictably this has not happened.

The Tanjung Lingga Group continues to derive huge profits from the plunder of Tanjung Puting National Park, and has now cornered the local market in illegal bengkirai timber as supplies of ramin have dwindled. As long as the company and its directors remain above the law, timber theft from the park will continue.

## Untouchables Unscathed

By August Tanjung Lingga was busily dispatching consignments of illegal timber from Pangkalanbun, as though Wanalaga I had never happened. In mid-August a barge carrying around 2,500 m<sup>3</sup> of illegal Indonesian bengkirai in the form of squared logs (flitches) berthed at Da Nang port in Vietnam. The timber on board was owned by PT Sinarut Wirya Perkasa, a subsidiary of the Tanjung Lingga Group. The shipment was held up in Da Nang due to a dispute between Sinarut Wirya Perkasa and the buyer's agents. By the time the dispute settled and the barge sailed for the final destination of Haiphong in Vietnam, details of the illegal shipment had leaked out, prompting the Indonesian authorities to request assistance from their Vietnamese counterparts in intercepting the shipment.

When the shipment arrived in Haiphong on 21<sup>st</sup> August, it was held by the Vietnamese authorities pending further

investigation and guidance from the Indonesian government. The timber was offloaded and held in the port, while the barge and tugboat were cleared to depart. Scrutiny of the paperwork accompanying the shipment revealed a series of false documents, designed to obscure the owner and origin of the cargo.

By early September the Vietnamese authorities decided to release the timber, as it had Indonesian papers and no clear offence had been committed in Vietnam. The bengkirai timber was released to the buyer, Nam Dinh Forest Products, which reportedly paid \$380,000 to Sinarut Wirya Perkasa for the shipment.

Despite clear evidence of the involvement of Sinarut Wirya Perkasa in the shipment of illegal bengkirai logs to Vietnam, and the use of false documents, the Indonesian authorities have failed to investigate the case.

EIA/Telapak have compiled compelling evidence of the involvement of Tanjung Lingga in a series of illegal timber shipments, but the Indonesian authorities have repeatedly failed to conduct proper investigations into this company and its directors.

In November 2001 three foreign cargo ships carrying over 25, 000 m<sup>3</sup> of illegal logs were detained off Pangkalanbun by the Indonesian navy. Documents revealed the central role played by the Tanjung Lingga Group in the

*Below:*  
Illegal Indonesian timber, Haiphong port, Vietnam, August 2003



illegal shipment, but the police manifestly failed to conduct a serious investigation into the case, and the company escaped justice again.

A key player in the three ships case was Agustiar, a nephew of Abdul Rasyid. He is also reportedly the main owner of the illegal bengkirai timber sent to Vietnam in August. Agustiar is one of the senior officials of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) in the regency of Kotawaringin Barat, adjoining Tanjung Puting, and is rumoured to be planning to stand for bupati of the regency. With the national election in 2004 looming, it is feared that illegal logging activities by groups like Tanjung Lingga will escalate in a bid to secure funds for political campaigning and pay-offs.

If Agustiar's political ambitions are realised it will merely formalise what most residents of Pangkalanbun already know – Tanjung Lingga's criminal enterprises are above the law and cannot even be touched by the

unprecedented scale of the Wanalaga I operation. In this context it should not be surprising that the company actually profited from the operation – one of the successful bidders at an auction for timber seized during Wanalaga I was Sinarut Wiryra Perkasa.



Above: Destroyed logging camp in Tanjung Puting, February 2003

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## Recommendations

- Wanalaga I operation should be revitalised and extended to the eastern part of Tanjung Puting National Park.
- The renewed operation should conduct a comprehensive audit of all sawmills in Kumai, Pangkalanbun and Kuala Pembuang
- A full investigation should be launched into the illegal shipment of bengkirai timber sent from Pangkalanbun to Vietnam in August
- A full disclosure of prosecutions resulting from Wanalaga I should be published by the Ministry of Forestry
- A full investigation into the business affairs of the Tanjung Lingga Group should be launched with particular emphasis on money laundering laws recently adopted by the Indonesian government.

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