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**Forest crime files:
The Queens Gallery, Buckingham Palace: fuelling the destruction of the world's ancient forests**

'The most serious threats to natural forests are the growing demand for timber and for land for agriculture and development. Among other threats is the award of felling licenses in sensitive areas; the lack of control over the management of felling concessions and the straight-forward illegal extraction of timber.

*Every government should ensure that an ecologically representative network of 10% of each natural forest type should be given protection in perpetuity. **Forests subject to commercial exploitation should be certified under the Forest Stewardship Council certification scheme.'***

Prince Philip, 1998ⁱ

The redevelopment of the Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace has just been completed. The Gallery, part of a £20 million Jubilee project, was designed by architects John Simpson & Partners and is the most significant addition to Buckingham Palace in 150 years. Incredibly, completely uncertified tropical timber has been used in the building. The use of such timber is fuelling the destruction of ancient forests in the Brazilian Amazon and in Central and West Africa.

Prince Phillip, the President Emeritus of World Wide Fund for Nature has called for commercial forestry operations to be certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC). This has been completely ignored in the Queen's Gallery, despite contractual obligations that all tropical timber used in the building should be certified. In at least one case the supplier has been unable even to identify from which country tropical timber was sourced.ⁱⁱ The Queen's Gallery has been renovated to mark the jubilee celebrations. Meanwhile, scientists warn that chimpanzees and gorillas, dependent on the forests of Central and West Africa, will disappear from the wild in the next 50 years if current rates of forest destruction continue.

Up to 100 doors have been manufactured for this project. African utile, sapele and iroko have been used in them and for other items of joinery such as the external louvres. Thirty-five or more doors have been veneered with Brazilian and African mahogany. African wenge has been used in flooring for the gallery.

The sapele and utile is being supplied from Cameroon and the Republic of Congo. The iroko is from the Ivory Coast. The African mahogany is from Ghana. The architects are unable to confirm the source of the wenge at this time.ⁱⁱⁱ

The joinery company producing the doors is Wallis Joinery. Wallis has three hardwood timber suppliers: Timbmet, Brooks Brothers and Smee. Brooks Brothers appear to have supplied most of the African timber for this project.

Brooks Brothers have bought sapele and utile from SCBT Pallisco as well as Industrie Forestière d'Ouessou (IFO), a subsidiary of Karl Danzer. It should be noted that Karl Danzer couldn't track all of the timber that they supplied for this project but believe that most came via IFO. The iroko has been sourced from Societe Industrielle Forestiere de Cote d'Ivoire (SIFCI), the African Mahogany from Logs and Lumber Ltd. The Brazilian Mahogany comes from Red Madeiras Tropicais Ltda and Bianchini & Serafim Ltda.^{iv}

Of the timber species used in the Queen's Gallery wenge is classified as endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature /World Conservation Monitoring

Centre, with a high risk of extinction in the wild.^v Brazilian mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) is listed as an appendix III species under the Convention on the Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Trade in mahogany was banned by the Brazilian Government in October 2001 due to illegality and corruption.^{vi} Utile, sapele, African mahogany (*Khaya ivorensis*) are all vulnerable species listed on the IUCN red list. Iroko is listed as near threatened.^{vii}

Buckingham Palace asked for any tropical timber used to be certified, yet the architects and contractors have actually procured this uncertified timber from regions notorious for illegality and corruption within the logging sector. In Central and West Africa there also are extensive links between logging and the slaughter of gorillas, chimpanzees and other forest animals for the illegal bushmeat trade.

Amazonian timber - Brazilian mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*)

"Despite various restrictions that IBAMA [the Brazilian Environment Agency] has imposed in recent years to prevent the cutting of mahogany in prohibited areas, the guidelines have been ignored. Unscrupulous loggers have felled trees in illegal areas and transported them clandestinely to other zones where their handling is permitted."
President Cardoso of Brazil, 9th April 2002^{viii}

"It seems that we were buying timber that was technically legal at the point of export but that had in most cases been primarily illegally cut, due to irregularities and corruption in the internal supply chain in Brazil"
Timbmet, UK timber trader, November 2001^{ix}

Despite many years of campaigning by Greenpeace and others and a plethora of domestic and international agreements, international demand for mahogany continues to drive the destruction of the rainforests of the Brazilian Amazon.

In 1996 mahogany was listed as an appendix III species under CITES to prevent its "unsustainable or illegal exploitation."^x However, as investigations by Greenpeace during 2001 confirmed, illegality remains the norm within the trade, with CITES documents often being sold on the black market. By the time it is exported, the illegal origins of most mahogany are untraceable.^{xi}

In October 2001, just after the mahogany for the Queen's Gallery was exported, the Brazilian Government acted to suspend the entire mahogany trade. Investigations by the Brazilian Environment Agency confirmed that upwards of 70% of mahogany extraction was illegal. This action was followed in December by a ban on mahogany logging.^{xii} The ban remains in place.

The Brazilian mahogany used in the Queen's Gallery was supplied by two companies, Red Madeiras Tropicais Ltda and Bianchini & Serafim Ltda. Red Madeiras have been identified as buying mahogany from companies linked to the two notorious "mahogany kings," responsible for much of the organised crime behind the illegal mahogany trade.^{xiii}

Incredibly, this is not the first time that Buckingham Palace has been caught using completely uncertified mahogany. In 1990 author and columnist George Monbiot exposed the purchase of mahogany furniture for both Buckingham Palace and Sandringham.^{xiv}

Central and West African Timber

"A disastrous partnership of loggers and hunters in the Congo basin... [means that] in as little as ten years... the world's second biggest tropical forest could be emptied of large mammals; and Africa's great apes – gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos – could become extinct."

The Economist, 12 January 2002

"Certification and chain of custody are good tools for many parts of the world but...are not available today from any West African country"

DLH, one of the world's largest timber traders, 2002 ^{xv}

The African Forest of the Great Apes is critical to the survival of three of our closest animal relatives; the gorilla, the chimpanzee and the bonobo. All depend on this forest for their survival in the wild. 85% has now been destroyed or severely degraded whilst illegal and destructive logging threatens most of what remains. Since the Rio Earth Summit, tropical Africa has seen almost a 25 percent increase in the rate of forest destruction. On average the region has seen its production of timber increase by more than half since the mid 1990s. ^{xvi}

Cameroon and Pallisco

The lowland rainforest of Cameroon is one of the world's last remaining strongholds of species such as lowland gorillas, chimpanzees and forest elephants. The forest supports thousands of species of plants and animals and is home to around 12 million forest-dependent people. But today, their future is under threat, as logging companies encroach deeper and deeper into this fragile forest.

The forestry sector in Cameroon is notorious for illegality and corruption – there is no certified timber available from the country. The Cameroon government has recently invited an independent monitoring body to help control the forestry sector and in the past 12 months has taken action against more than 60 companies found guilty of illegal logging. ^{xvii} Despite these developments, illegality and corruption remain the norm in the forestry sector.

The UK is a major importer of Cameroonian timber, despite industry acknowledgement of the problems in the country. Responding to news that Cameroonian sapele was being used for refurbishment of the Cabinet Office in Whitehall, the Timber Trade Federation (TTF) stated that *"there are probably worse offenders than Cameroon if you scrape around places like Liberia, which doesn't bear scrutiny at all, but it is one of the worst."* ^{xviii}

The suppliers of Cameroonian sapele to the Queen's Gallery were Pallisco, a subsidiary of the French company Pasquet. They operate in East Cameroon, an area of high conservation value for gorillas and chimpanzees and in the past 12 months have acquired new logging concessions in this region.

Pallisco have been linked on a number of occasions to the illegal bushmeat trade. In the last six months a BBC documentary team have filmed hunters on a Pallisco concession who kill gorillas and chimpanzees for commercial sale. The hunters had a camp on the concession and operated in view of the Pallisco manager. This is the latest in a line of documentation showing bushmeat operations connected to this company. ^{xix}

Karl Danzer, the Ivory Coast and Republic of Congo

The forests of West Africa, in countries such as Ivory Coast have all but been destroyed. Of the original forest cover less than 10% remains, with most heavily fragmented due to massive over exploitation.^{xx}

There is no independently certified timber available in the Ivory Coast. According to internal documents from one UK based timber trader, "it is amazing that they [Ivory coast] are still a timber producing nation."^{xxi} The same trader notes that significant amounts of the timber being cut in Ivory Coast are actually from Liberia, Guinea and Ghana. There is extensive evidence linking "conflict timber" from Liberia to arms trafficking and social repression^{xxii}

In the Republic of Congo significant volumes of timber remain available for extraction but following nearly a decade of civil wars forestry regulation, monitoring and enforcement are extremely poor, with corruption extensive in the country. There is no independently certified timber available from the country.

The Danzer Group, who supplied timber from this region, are one of the world's leading manufacturers and suppliers of veneers, producing around 150 million square metres per year in the early 1990s. Most of the tropical timber used in their veneers is from African species.

Danzer subsidiary IFO has supplied utile and sapele from Congo and SIFCI has supplied iroko from the Ivory Coast. Danzer's West African operations are primarily through SIFCI (Société Industrielle et Forestière de Côte d'Ivoire) in the Ivory Coast.

Ghana

Ghana's forests form part of the Upper Guinean Forest – ranking among the world's 25 hotspots for mammalian diversity. This already heavily fragmented forest is among the two highest-priority regions in the world for primate conservation. Threatened species that depend upon the Upper Guinean Forest include the Diana monkey, the western chimpanzee and the pygmy hippopotamus. Habitat loss and hunting for bushmeat have recently caused the extinction of the Miss Waldron's colobus, a primate whose range was restricted to the forests of the Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Logging roads open up these regions to increased exploitation.^{xxiii} Decades of destructive logging in Ghana have led to a serious scarcity of high quality hardwood timbers.

There is no independently certified timber available in the country. As one MP discovered on a recent visit to the country, "*The government of Ghana licences the extraction of one million cubic metres of hardwood a year- probably unsustainable- but the capacity of Ghana's sawmills is four times that amount and the sawmills are working to capacity. The timber trade is controlled by "vested interests in Government, timber industry and traditional authorities" and because it is largely illegal logging, involves a great deal of corruption and intimidation.*"^{xxiv}

Despite the lack of independently certified timbers from Ghana, Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and Cameroon, the architects and contractors for the Queen's Gallery have seen fit to procure endangered timber from these countries for its redevelopment. By doing this they have inexcusably linked the Gallery to the destruction of ancient forests in Central and West Africa and to the illegal bushmeat trade. They have further helped to legitimise a corrupt and illegal trade in Brazilian mahogany, by using it in the Gallery at a time when the true extent of the illegality within the industry has become clear.

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- ⁱ Interview from <http://www.upm-kymmene.com/upm/publications/watch/97/vol2.html>
- ⁱⁱ Letter from Weldon Flooring to Architect John Simpson and Partners, 22nd May 2002
- ⁱⁱⁱ Documents supplied by John Simpson and Partners, Architects
- ^{iv} *ibid.*
- ^v Details available at <http://www.redlist.org/search/details.php?species=33219>
- ^{vi} Decree signed by the Brazilian Environment Agency, IBAMA, IN17 of 19 October 2001
- ^{vii} Details at <http://www.redlist.org/>
- ^{viii} Brazilian National Radio Address, April 9th 2002. Entire text available from Greenpeace.
- ^{ix} Letter to Michael Meacher, November 6th 2001
- ^x <http://www.cites.org/eng/append/index.shtml>
- ^{xi} Greenpeace report, 'Partners in Mahogany Crime' (October 2001)
http://www.greenpeace.org/~forests/forests_new/html/content/reports/Mahoganyweb.pdf
- ^{xii} Ibama Decree IN22 of 5 December 2001.
- ^{xiii} More details on Ferreira from Greenpeace report, 'Partners in Mahogany Crime' (October 2001) *op cit.*
- ^{xiv} http://www.monbiot.com/dsp_article.cfm?article_id=93
- ^{xv} Letter to Greenpeace 25th April 2002
- ^{xvi} For more details and background documents visit www.greenpeace.org/forests
- ^{xvii} pg3, [hardwoodmarkets.com](http://www.hardwoodmarkets.com) Ltd, May 2002
- ^{xviii} Quote from Mark O'Brien, Timber trade federation, "Company logs up £1 million in fines over two years", *The Times*, 17th April 2002
- ^{xix} Other examples at <http://www.wspa-international.org/campaigns/bushmeat/bushmeat10.html>
- ^{xx} more information on west Africa's forests at <http://www.wri.org/wri/ffi/lff-eng/>
- ^{xxi} Document leaked to Greenpeace from January 2002
- ^{xxii} See for example the Global Witness report "Taylor Made" available at <http://www.globalwitness.org/campaigns/forests/liberia/downloads/taylormade2.pdf>
- ^{xxiii} See <http://www.conservation.org>
- ^{xxiv} Letter from Andrew Robathan MP to Clare Short, 18th April 2002, cc'd to Greenpeace.