



Media release
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Undercover investigation exposes shocking and expanding role played by Laos in the international trade in primates for research

The BUAV, a leading international animal protection organization, is calling on CITES (the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species) to take action following its investigation into a shocking and growing trade in primates from Laos to China and Vietnam for the research industry. BUAV investigators were able to secretly film inside the country's largest monkey farm (Vannaseng Trading Company) in the first exposé of the primate trade in Laos. We also uncovered the construction of a large new monkey farm due to open in March 2010.

What has emerged is a disturbing picture of animal suffering along with serious concerns over the conservation status of the long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*) in SE Asia and Laos's compliance with CITES. The investigation also raises questions about the role of primate farms in China in re-exporting primates from Laos to research laboratories in the USA and Europe.

Laos joined CITES in 2004. Between 2004 and 2008, according to the CITES database, over 20,000 long-tailed macaques were exported from Laos to China and Vietnam. Between 2003 and 2006, China also imported many thousands of long-tailed macaques from Vietnam although the animals had originated from Laos.

Vannaseng Trading Company reportedly houses over 10,000 monkeys including rhesus and long-tailed macaques. Every year, thousands of these animals are sold for around \$600 each to Vietnam and China. The monkeys are transported in shipments of 1000 or more by air or across the border by truck.

Main findings from the BUAV investigation:

- **Animal welfare:** The conditions at Vannaseng are in breach of the International Primatological Society (IPS) guidelines. Thousands of monkeys are kept in rows of small pens with no meaningful enrichment. The pen floors are either concrete or suspended wire. These conditions constitute overcrowding and are highly unnatural. They would be stressful for the monkeys and lead to fighting. In fact, BUAV investigators were told by farm management that injury due to fighting was one of the main conditions monkeys

were treated for. Diarrhoea was also a common condition and is consistent with highly stressful conditions.

- Conservation of long-tailed macaque in Laos: An official from the Laos Forestry Department admitted, during a meeting with BUAV investigators, that no population surveys for macaques have been carried out in Laos. Since at least 2003, however, many thousands of macaques have been trapped in the wild in Laos for export overseas or to establish breeding farms. According to the CITES export database, almost 8,000 wild caught long-tailed macaques were exported from Laos to Vietnam between 2004-2005.
- CITES concerns: The BUAV investigation raises concerns regarding the validity of the captive breeding claims in Laos and the misrepresentation of source codes on CITES export permits for the many thousands of long-tailed macaques who are exported from Laos. Furthermore, no annual report, which is a CITES requirement, has been submitted since Laos joined CITES in 2004.
- Re-export of Laos monkeys to the USA and Europe: Primates at the Vannaseng farm are not given a permanent identification such as a tattoo or microchip. Instead, the farm uses removable neck tags as a means of identification, a means that can be changed at will. According to the management, this is because China and Vietnam demand this method. The absence of a permanent method of identification for monkeys makes the credibility of any records kept seriously questionable. In fact, Vannaseng told the BUAV that monkeys sold to primate supply companies in China are either used for breeding purposes or re-exported to Europe and the USA.

BUAV's Director of Special Projects, Sarah Kite states: "The BUAV wants an end to this cruel and barbaric trade. We are calling for a full investigation into our findings. CITES and governments must start to address the growing concerns that surround the plundering of the macaque populations from their native forests in South East Asia to feed the international research industry."

For further information, photos and video footage, please contact Sarah Kite at sarah.kite@buav.org Visit the BUAV website at <http://www.buav.org>

NOTES:

This is the fourth such investigation in SE Asia carried out by the BUAV. In recent years, the BUAV has carried out investigations in Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia. In each case, we have uncovered evidence of the growing exploitation of indigenous populations of long-tailed macaques - the indiscriminate and intensive trapping of wild monkeys to establish the numerous factory farms in the region - the inadequacy of CITES to enforce its own regulations and the lack of action on the part of governments to protect its primate populations.