

Greenpeace Curbs Mahogany Logging in Brazil, 1999-2004

- [an example of paradox of repression](#) [1]

Timing

1999

to:

2004

Location and Goals

Country:

United States

Location Description:

The boarding of the APL Jade took place near Miami, Florida

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

To curb illegal logging of mahogany (and therefore reduce overall logging) in the Brazilian rainforest.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 162. Sit-in
- 170. Nonviolent invasion

Segment Length:

Approximately 8 months

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Democracy

Environment

Group characterization:

- Greenpeace activists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

John Passacantando (Greenpeace USA Executive Director)

Partners:

Hillary Hosta and Scott Anderson among other protesters

External allies:

IBAMA, NRDC, ACLU, People for the American Way, NAACP, American Friends Service Committee

Involvement of social elites:

Senator Patrick Leahy, Former Vice-President Al Gore

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Greenpeace
- IBAMA

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

- CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species)

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- ACLU
- American Friends Service Committee
- NAACP
- NRDC
- People for the American Way

Segment Length:

Approximately 8 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Moisés Carvalho Pereira and Osmar Alves Ferreira (mahogany kingpins), United States government

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

None known

Campaigner violence:

None known

Repressive Violence:

Arrests of protesters

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

4 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Total points:

7 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

Brazil acted to curb illegal logging of mahogany but it has not eliminated the practice

Greenpeace gained a number of new allies when attacked by the U.S. Government.

The problem of illegal mahogany logging was focused in the Brazilian state of Pará, especially in what is termed the “Middle Land”, a plot of Federal public land composed in large part of undisturbed rainforest. Known as “green gold”, mahogany is the most valuable natural resource in this region of the Brazilian Amazon. While there have always been legal avenues by which to utilize this resource, the Brazilian government estimated that as of 2001, 80% of all exported mahogany was being logged illegally. Loggers were bulldozing roads into previously untouched rainforests, home to many animal species as well as indigenous people groups, and taking advantage of the rich mahogany trees that had been growing undisturbed for years.

The Brazilian government was aware of these activities and therefore required that when shipping any mahogany timber, official documentation was necessary. It issued ATPF (Authorization for the Transport of Forest Products) documents in an attempt to control the timber trade. In theory, this would ensure that only mahogany of legal origin would be able to reach the international market. In practice, however, ATPF documents were being sold to companies involved in illegal logging operations and even being given to these companies by the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) when they would consciously overestimate the amount of mahogany growing in a specific plot of land that they were logging legally. By grossly overestimating these numbers, these companies were able to procure enough paperwork to export both their legally and illegally logged mahogany. In 1999 the international environmental group Greenpeace initiated a campaign to curb the illegal logging, in alliance with the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA).

On April 12, 2002, Greenpeace stepped up the campaign by boarding a ship at sea that was carrying a shipment of illegal mahogany. The APL Jade was a container vessel travelling to the port of Miami in the U.S. While other protesters circled the Jade in three smaller watercrafts, Hillary Hosta and Scott Anderson boarded the vessel wearing shirts inscribed “Greenpeace Illegal Forest Crime Unit”, and carrying a banner that read “President Bush, Stop Illegal Logging” which they were ultimately unsuccessful in unfurling.

These two, along with twelve fellow activists, were arrested; six were charged and eventually sentenced to time served. Though they did not ultimately stop the Jade from reaching port with its cargo, these protesters drew additional media and governmental attention to the problem.

In a Brazilian government crackdown, by October 2003 many companies that had been logging illegally lost their rights to land in the Brazilian rainforest and the moratorium on seized illegal mahogany was being enforced. What Greenpeace did not expect was retaliation from the U.S. Government.

In July of 2003 the United States Justice Department seized upon the boarding of the Jade to file a criminal indictment of Greenpeace Inc., the US affiliate of the global Greenpeace movement. Greenpeace was charged with "sailor-mongering," a law that had last been prosecuted in 1890, which disallowed persons from boarding ships about to arrive in to port because brothel and hotel owners once used to tactic to lure sailors to their establishments.

The case established Greenpeace as the first organization to be prosecuted federally by the U.S. for the nonviolent protest of some of its members. If the charges were upheld against them, it would have set a precedent for the curbing of the First Amendment free speech rights of all nonviolent protesters and organizations which advocated for such protests. When facing such charges, Greenpeace's campaign took on a fight for civil liberties on top of its environmental concerns as the organization's First Amendment rights were challenged.

In May of 2004, Greenpeace scored a second victory, as it was acquitted by Judge Adalberto Jordan on all charges against it regarding actions related to the APL Jade.

Research Notes

Influences:

Greenpeace used the same strategy of nonviolent protest as it had used in many other campaigns (1)

Sources:

Fuller, John R. (2005) "America's Unpatriotic Acts: The Federal Governments' Violation of Constitutional and Civil Rights," Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management: Vol. 2 : Iss. 3, Article 6.

"Partners in Mahogany Crime", Greenpeace 2001

<http://www.miaminewtimes.com/content/printVersion/247900/>

<http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/news-and-blogs/news/bush-vs-greenpeace-overview/>

Additional Notes:

Current information on the state of the moratorium on mahogany in Brazil would be interesting follow up.

Edited by George Lakey (17/08/2011)

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Noah Nance, 26/11/2010

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