

# By the rules of taiga and forest mafia

By Natalia Fonina, "Arsenyev News", April 5



This report was consulted and published by the initiative of BROCC and caused by the series of alarm phone calls, which we got during this winter from the most criminal logging area in Ussuri taiga – Dalnerechensk.

People reported about outrageous growing of illegal logging since 2007, when new Forest Code was implemented with cancellation of any forest inspection and control and replacement of former strict logging permits with declarations. The key result is complete strengthening of criminal timber business in remote forest areas and in Chinese export system. After sincere explanation of this criminal system, presented by the Chief of Primorye Forest Service Peter Diyuk to 1 national TV Channel about a year ago, series of inspections was conducted here. 120 group timber smuggling saw suits were passed in 2010 to the courts, and whole cost of sequestered timber increased 200 million rubles.

After publishing report on that in "Arsenyev News" people from Dalnerechensk called to BROCC and editor of paper and presented more details on the scale of criminal business. They simultaneously applied to the regional prosecutor with the following (shortened).

"There is a perfectly organized criminal group of timber smugglers operation in Dalnerechensk municipality. It's key dealer is Yurii Dub from Bogolyubovka village. Group includes well known municipal officials and businessmen, including people from law enforcement agencies. They keep all the local people in the constant fear, enforcing them to log by slavery mode for any contrived debts or obligations. Dub has tens of such brigades, working around local towns, and some of his "debtors" simply disappear. By the permit of Dub and his warrantee of protection, illegal loggers pick their tractors up to the forest for \$ 3000 per tractor. Now there are about 50 illegal tractors working in Dalnerechenski and Lesozavodski municipalities.

The next step is of law enforcement agencies, mainly criminal police, lead by Oleg Khan in Dalnerechensk. He gave direction to his policemen to the certain timber yards for riding and sequestering stolen timber. But, officially by documents, they register and fix only empty illegal logging site and empty timber yard, or at least register 109 times less volume of sequestered stolen timber. The same practice is used regarding to the illegally acting equipment – police may register it in the initial documents for law suit, but prefer not to do it for the certain back payment from the owner. To the other hand, there is always hundreds of arrested timber trailing machines and trucks on the arrest yard, while each of them cost minimum \$ 3500 – totally millions. They are waiting to be returned back by shady cash payment.

But, the core profit of illegal managers is coming from illegal timber sales. All sequestered timber, together with timber of Dub's brigades, from all Dalnerechensk municipality come also to arrest-point. Then Dub sell it to plenty of local Chinese sawmills as already legal. Then law enforcement teams arrest sawn wood second time and get back to arrest yard under official anti-poaching campaign "Forest". As a result,

Dub and his partners in police have triple profit from the same illegal timber if the form of penalties and sales incomes.

Those local citizens, who tried to turn situation to the legal and fair mode against Yurii Dub, got a set of problems. They used to be stopped on the roads, inspected and arrested, accused and taken under criminal investigation by Dub's allies. All that was officially presented as anti-poaching riding campaign of police. Practically, police created face protocols, sequestered equipment from local citizens without any serious justification. Some equipment sequestered by this campaign was never returned back to citizens.

Regarding criminal cases on illegal timber business I interviewed deputy Chief of Dalnerechensk police Department Oleg Khan. He was angry and said: "Everyone in this city are afraid of me ! And none can ask me any questions on police involvement into illegal timber business!"

When I tried to leave. Khan ordered his team to arrest me, get finger prints, identify my personality and "find something against me". He promised to do his best to stop my incentives to investigate illegal timber trade. He seemed to move from words to direct physical violence. I was released later that day without any explanations, but behavior of the chief of local police gives enough food for thinking over. This article was also passed to prosecutor as official appeal on unprecedented behavior of police.

BROC continue monitoring this situation, reaction of prosecutors and plan to organize joint ride to the area soon. Next publication in this newspaper will be devoted to comment of Anatoly Lebedev.