

# Sisserou Smuggling in Full Swing

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Information reaching MiTC indicate that government officials may be involved in the illegal export of our National Bird, the Sisserou. A press release reaching our inbox indicate that two senior administration officials may be involved. Here is the press release.

- There is reliable information concerning the involvement of two senior administrative staff within the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries who, on Saturday morning, directly facilitated and participated in the storming and entry into the Parrot Aviary in the Botanical Gardens with a known German parrot smuggler and his associates. 12 parrots (including 2 Sisserous & 10 Rednecks) that were hatched in the wild and housed at that facility were stolen. We are also reliably informed that the parrots were illegally exported out of Dominica via Douglas Charles Airport on Saturday on a chartered flight from Venezuela en route to Germany. There is also evidence that a Convention In Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) export permit was illegally signed and executed by one the senior staff engaged in the clandestine activity. Dominica's two endemic parrot species are listed on CITES Appendix 1 as endangered species and any legal export of such wildlife from Dominica requires a CITES export permit to be signed and issued by the Dominica CITES Management Authority -- the Environmental Coordinating Unit (ECU). The head of ECU was out-of-state on official business and was unaware of the removal of the parrots and their illegal export from Dominica. Additionally, we are reliably informed that the CITES Scientific Authority for Dominica-- the Forestry, Wildlife and Parks Division-- also was not informed of these activities and had not been given an opportunity to review or approve any proposal requesting exportation of any Dominican parrots. The fraudulent export permit references an agreement between the Government of Dominica and the receiving German entity, but Forestry has no record of any such agreement nor participated in the crafting of any such agreement. The Forestry Division is Dominica's governing authority for wildlife and must issue a formal recommendation for any and all CITES transactions prior to the ECU issuing a wildlife export permit. Further, the export permit process requires a fully authorized

and properly executed import permit from the receiving country prior to authorization from the ECU. None of these procedures were followed, nor properly vetted and reviewed by Forestry or the ECU, representing criminal breaches in both CITES protocol and legal wildlife authority as specified in Dominica's Wildlife Act.

We immediately reached out to our correspondent on the ground, Lizzy, in an effort to gain more information. Lizzy has informed us that the report is credible and that the officials involved appear to be Reginald Thomas, acting PS in the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries and his counterpart in the ministry, Lennox St. Aimee, acting Chief Veterinary Officer. The parrots were handed to a Mr. Martin Guth. A quick Google search revealed that Mr. Guth runs a parrot breeding facility in Germany, the Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots.



Martin Guth (Left) seen here with St. Lucia officials.

This illegal act by officials of the Roosevelt Skerrit administration must be arrested. We have just experienced a disastrous hurricane and undoubtedly, we have lost many of our prized parrots. We cannot continue to have government officials robbing us of our national treasure. We call on the police to step in and pursue this vigorously.

MiTC has dispatched an urgent email to Ms. Svenja Schulze, the German Minister of the Environment and Nature Conservation alerting her of our situation. We have reminded Ms. Schulze, who is new to the job, that the German government has historically taken a strong stand against illegal wildlife trade and the smuggling of endangered species. We hope that the German officials will step in where ours have failed.

*Report edited with photograph of Martin Guth. Our German contacts originally sent over the wrong image of Mr. Guth.*