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## Village forest activists strike back at 3 firms

Thu, 4 April 2013 [May Titthara](#)



Community forest depart to patrol illegal logging in Prey Long Kampong Thom province. Photograph: May Titthara/Phnom Penh Post

A community forest patrol group trying to fight the destruction of protected forest in Kratie province's Snuol district have, for the second time in two weeks, seized equipment from those they accuse of illegal logging.

About 100 people from Svay Chreah, Snuol, Sre Cha, Pi Thnou and Khyoem communes launched a five-day patrolling mission on Monday to stop three Vietnamese companies with economic land concessions within the Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area from logging.

Sorn Siyan, 66, accused the firms Binh Phuoc Kratie Rubber 1 Company, Binh Phuoc Kratie Rubber 2 Company and Eastern Rubber (Cambodia), which have adjacent 10,000-hectare concessions in the SBCA, of cutting forest beyond the areas they were authorised to log.

"They log illegally and now are using [Cambodian] people to log. They hire people to ruin the forest. They take all the land to plant rubber trees, so if we prevent them, some can remain," he said.

"During days of patrolling, we have found countless cases of logging. They have logged and piled it, and we have seized six chainsaws and one bulldozer as well."

Siyan said the equipment had been handed over to the district Forestry Administration Department, along with more chainsaws and a bulldozer that the activists seized late last month.

It is the third time in the past month that the community patrol group has seized equipment from loggers.

Siyan said the loggers included both company employees and migrants who had started coming to the area to settle after the national land titling scheme was initiated midway through last year.

In June, Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered the three firms to stop logging some 85 per cent of their concessions that remained evergreen or semi-evergreen forest, a decision that district officials have told the Post was subsequently overruled.

Men Vanna, deputy governor of Snuol district, alleged it was migrant villagers, not the companies, who are to blame for the deforestation and warned the activists they were acting outside of the law.

"The activity of the community that has gone too far is that they not only prevent illegal logging, but they also confiscate the chainsaws of people to keep at their homes," he said.

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