

Dilemma

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south, but as peace spreads through the north, so do the lumber companies.

In recent years, logging companies have contributed about 7 percent of the country's foreign earnings, second only to the oil industry.

"In the long term, the situation risks becoming critical for the population, because all the forest in northern Republic of Congo has already been assigned to the logging companies," said Paul Elkan, an official for the U.S.-based Wildlife Conservation Society based in the Republic of Congo.

The logging has denuded swaths of the forest, and conservation groups say it endangers rare animals including gorillas, whose numbers have dwindled to only a few thousand in Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

But conservationists say companies are trying to help the Pygmies and reduce the environmental damage. Selective logging allows companies to fell choice trees without denuding whole tracts of woodlands.

In January, the United States announced a 4-year, \$53 million donation to help protect the forests in the Congo basin. France has offered a similar amount.

In July 2001, about 100 square miles of Republic of Congo rain forest were declared protected land in an agreement reached by government officials, the Wildlife Conservation Society and CIB, the country's largest logging company.

But that isn't much compared to the size of the entire basin - 840,000 square miles, a fourth the size of the United States. It spans parts of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Republic of Congo.

Pygmies make up about 10 percent of CIB's 1,600-person work force here, said Patrick Geffroy, a top company official in Pokola, 720 miles north of the capital, Brazzaville.

The company has built housing for its employees, although many Pygmies have shunned it in favor of their own huts - squat shelters of sticks, leaves and mud. CIB has also constructed a school in Pokola, with about 1,100 pupils, although only two are Pygmies, according to Geffroy.

The company is trying to help protect Pygmy culture, he said.

Braun

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fight this fight," she says. "It should be done through diplomacy and through a world-wide effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power."

Democrats, who normally attract 80 percent to 90 percent of the Black vote in national elections, also hope that Republicans have been damaged by Mississippi Sen. Trent Lott's belated support of retired Sen. Strom Thurmond's 1948 segregationist campaign for president and the Bush's administration's opposition to affirmative action programs at the University of Michigan.

"The Republicans have been nothing but hostile," McAuliffe says. "I don't know where to stop on these issues."

Jackson

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Jackson's British publicist said over the weekend that the footage "clearly shows that Bashir was actually continuing to praise Michael's abilities as a father and Bashir making many statements about how he feels it is a pity that the world is so quick to criticize Michael."

Fox spokesman Scott Grogin said he didn't know how much the network paid Jackson for the video. ABC reportedly paid a British television company nearly \$5 million to show the Bashir interview.

Fox's special does not feature any new interviews with Jackson, Grogin said.

A Jackson spokesman, Stuart Backerman,

said Fox was selected because it was he network "that packaged it with the best sensitivity to Michael Jackson." There were several who were interested, including the other top three broadcast networks, he said.

He would not comment on whether there was a payment to Jackson.

The footage also includes an extensive interview with Debby Rowe, Jackson's former wife, he said.

Jackson was reportedly ready to give an interview to CBS "60 Minutes" correspondent Ed Bradley over the weekend.

But the singer got cold feet, and Bradley left Jackson's Neverland ranch in California empty-handed.



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