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Associates**More financiers of illegal logging put under arrest****Eva C. Komandjaja**, The Jakarta Post, Jakarta

The National Police said on Monday they had arrested three more suspects allegedly financing the illegal log trade in Papua, only two days after a joint team launched an operation to curb the crime in the province.

National Police chief of detectives Comr. Gen. Suyitno Landung said the three suspects, identified only by their initials as AS, ML and EH, were nabbed in Sorong, Papua, at the weekend.

Police data shows that AS is a director of timber company PT Djayanti Group and ML a field coordinator with PT Budi Jaya, while EH is employed as a manager with PT Budi Nyata.

"We have also confiscated 46,175 cubic meters of logs, four barges, 96 pieces of heavy machinery from the three suspects," Suyitno said after a hearing with the House of Representatives' Commission III and Minister of Forestry M.S. Kaban.

Suyitno said the three suspects were all Indonesian citizens, although the police had earlier said that most of the financiers of illegal logging in the country were Malaysians.

However, he declined to say whether any of the suspects were on the list of 32 names reported to the police by the Ministry of Forestry for their alleged key roles in illegal logging.

Last week, the police captured one of those on the list, identified as Asoy, who has been accused of financing illegal logging in Sampit, Central Kalimantan.

Asoy has been taken to Sampit for further questioning. However, it remains unclear whether he is linked to illegal logging in Papua.

Last month, Britain-based NGO, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), and its Indonesian partner, Telapak, revealed their findings that Malaysian businessmen along with Chinese and Hong Kong companies collaborated with the Indonesian Military and government officials to illegally ship 300,000 cubic meters of Merbau timber to China every month.

During Monday's hearing, National Police chief Gen. Da'i Bachtiar pledged to arrest both civilians and military and police personnel involved in illegal logging.

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He claimed, however, that the police faced difficulties in cracking down on timber theft as most officers had little knowledge on national timber legislation.

They also lacked the courage to take action when high ranking government officials and military/police officers were involved, Da'i added.

He said the absence of an established system on how to handle illegal logging operators in the field was also part of the problem.

He blamed a lack of commitment from 12 other state institutions, including the forestry ministry, military, and the Attorney General's Office, as well as local administrations, for the lack of progress in the fight against illegal logging to date.

Commission III urged the government to draw up tighter regulations on illegal logging so that it would be easier for the authorities to take action against those involved.

It also asked the police to work together with the Financial Transaction and Report Analysis Center (PPATK) to look into suspicious bank accounts belonging to the financial backers of illegal logging in order to charge them also with money laundering and corruption.

During a visit to East Kalimantan on Monday, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono pledged to wage war on illegal logging, which continues to destroy massive areas of woodland annually.

Both Indonesian and foreign perpetrators must be "severely punished" as they caused millions of dollars in losses to the country, he said.

"Our patience has run out. Our environment has been destroyed, our economy is suffering," Susilo added.

His vow came less than a month after he formed a joint team aimed at halting illegal logging in Papua and to hunt down the illicit timber barons believed to be running sawmills across Indonesia.

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