



NEWS RELEASE

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THREE MEN INDICTED BY FEDERAL GRAND JURY FOR FEDERAL WILDLIFE CRIMES

Anchorage, Alaska – United States Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced today that three men were indicted by the federal grand jury in Anchorage in separate indictments for violations of federal wildlife crimes.

George D. Jia, 43, a resident of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, is charged with illegally selling a raw walrus tusk, illegally purchasing and selling a polar bear hide, and selling the foot of a black rhinoceros in 2009. The black rhinoceros is one of the most endangered animals in Africa and an animal protected by the Endangered Species Act. Currently, there are less than 3700 black rhinoceros left in the wild, down from a population of over 70,000 in the late 1970s. Jia is charged with violations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Lacey Act for engaging in the illegal sale of protected wildlife parts. The polar bear was listed as an endangered species in 2008, the black rhino has been listed as an endangered species since 1980.

Michael E. Smith, 36, of Sitka, Alaska, is charged in a separate indictment with a violation of the Lacey Act for illegally selling two tanned sea otter pelts. In 2008, it is alleged that Smith, an Alaska native, illegally sold two whole sea otter pelts for \$800 in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The indictment charges that tanned pelts were then shipped outside of Alaska to the undercover agent in violation of the Lacey Act. The investigation is the result of a year and half undercover investigation conducted against illegal sea otter hunting and trafficking in Southeast Alaska, Anchorage and Fairbanks. The investigation has documented numerous individuals involved in the illegal activity and to date, two individuals have pled guilty to illegal sea otter commercialization and are serving their sentences in federal prison.

Jack V. Dickerson, 35, a resident of Springhill, Florida, is charged in a third indictment with two counts of violating the Lacey Act and two counts of Identity Theft in connection with two Alaska brown bear hunts. The indictment charges that in 2007, Dickerson legally took a brown bear in Alaska Game Management Unit 9. Following this successful hunt in 2007, Dickerson was prohibited by Alaska law from hunting again in Game Management Unit 9 for the next four regulatory years. In 2008, and then again in 2009, it is alleged that Dickerson returned to Alaska and hunted brown bears in Game Management Unit 9 using the name and date of birth of another person. The indictment charges that Dickerson used the assumed identity to purchase fraudulent nonresident Alaska hunting licenses and contract guided hunts. In connection with these offenses the indictment seeks forfeiture of Dickerson's hunting rifle and brown bear trophies.

Alaska Wildlife Troopers assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in this investigation. An arraignment has not been set for any of the defendants.

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