



NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GLENALLEN RESIDENTS AND ANCHORAGE RESIDENT INDICTED BY FEDERAL GRAND JURY FOR ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING AND FIREARMS VIOLATIONS

Anchorage, Alaska – United States Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced today that three people were indicted by a federal grand jury in Anchorage for one count of felony conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act, six counts of Lacey Act violations, one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm, one count of illegal possession of a machine gun, and one count of possession of an unregistered machine gun.

The 10-count indictment names as defendants, Jesse Joseph Leboeuf, also known as Wayne Gerrard Christian, 47, Loretta Audrey Sternbach, 52, both residents of Glenallen, Alaska, and Anchorage resident Richard Blake Weshenfelder, also known as Rick Weshenfelder, 50.

The three defendants will be arraigned today, April 28, 2011, before United States Magistrate Judge John Roberts.

The indictment charges that Leboeuf, Sternbach, and Weshenfelder conspired to illegally sell and transport walrus tusks and polar bear hides in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act, all in violation of the Lacey Act, from July 2010 to April 2011. The indictment alleges that Leboeuf and Sternbach purchased walrus parts and tusks and polar bear hides from individuals in Savoonga, Alaska and transported the items to their home in Glenallen, Alaska. The indictment further alleges that Leboeuf and Sternbach paid the Savoonga-based walrus ivory and polar bear hides sellers either with money or in trade for items such as firearms, ammunition, marijuana, cigarettes, snow machines, and other items of value. The indictment states that in July and August 2010, Leboeuf and Sternbach made two trips to Savoonga and purchased more than 500 pounds of walrus tusks. Leboeuf made two trips to Savoonga without Sternbach in September 2010 and March 2011. The indictment also alleges that Weshenfelder marketed the walrus tusks via the internet and contacted potential buyers to purchase the walrus tusks. According to the indictment, Leboeuf negotiated the unlawful sales of the walrus tusks. The allegations also include that in an attempt to conceal the illegality of the walrus tusk sales to non-Alaska-native buyers, Sternbach wrote and signed a "gift" letter to the buyers purchasing walrus tusks to make it appear that the walrus tusks were acquired legally. The "gift" letter stated that the tusk was a gift from Sternbach and included her Bureau of Indian Affairs number, the walrus tusk tag number, and the home phone number for Leboeuf and Sternbach. Leboeuf and Sternbach asked buyers to send checks or money orders or to deposit payment for the unlawfully sold walrus tusks and polar bear hides into Sternbach's bank account or other bank accounts as directed by them.

According to the indictment, from September 2010 to March 2011, Leboeuf, Sternbach, and Weshenfelder illegally sold and transported to a non-Alaskan Native buyer approximately 230 pounds of walrus tusks valued at approximately \$22,000 and two polar bear hides for \$2,700.

The indictment also charges Leboeuf with being a felon in possession of a firearm and charges Leboeuf and Sternbach with illegal possession of a machine gun and possession of an unregistered machine gun. In December 2010, Leboeuf and Sternbach sold to an undercover agent, a fully automatic machine gun. In February 2011, Leboeuf and Sternbach sold an undercover agent a fully automatic machine gun with a silencer.

On April 26, 2011, a search warrant was executed at Leboeuf and Sternbach's home in Glenallen. Just prior to his arrest and the execution of the search warrant, Leboeuf exited his residence and fired a shot. At arrest, Leboeuf was wearing a .22 caliber belt buckle firearm. Leboeuf and Sternbach had numerous firearms in their house, including a machine gun, more than 30 marijuana plants, coca plants, stolen art, and hundreds of pounds of walrus ivory.

Assistant United States Attorneys Yvonne Lamoureux and Steve Skrocki, who presented the case to the grand jury, indicated that the law for conspiracy to Violate the Lacy Act and the Lacy Act violations as alleged in counts 1-7 provides for a statutory maximum sentence of five years in prison as well as fines up to \$250,000.00, and three years of supervised release following service of a prison sentence. The law for felon in possession of firearm, illegal possession of machine gun, and possession of unregistered machine gun as alleged in counts 8-10 provides for a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in prison as well as fines up to \$250,000, and three years of supervised release following service of a prison sentence. Under federal sentencing statutes, the actual sentence imposed will be based upon the seriousness of the offense and the prior criminal history, if any, of the defendants. All three defendants are presently in custody awaiting trial.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives conducted the investigation leading to the indictment in this case. The United States Postal Inspection Service assisted with the investigation. Alaska State Troopers assisted with the arrests and execution of the search warrant. The National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also assisted with the search warrant.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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