



**U. S. Department of Justice**  
*United States Attorney*  
*Eastern District of Washington*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  Monday, December 08, 2008	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:  Thomas Rice, First Assistant U.S. Attorney (509) 353-2767
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### **“MOTHER AND DAUGHTER CONVICTED OF SMUGGLING MONKEY FROM THAILAND”**

Spokane – Today, James A. McDevitt, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, announced that a federal jury returned guilty verdicts against Gypsy Lawson, age 28, a resident of Spokane, and her mother Fran Ogren, age 56, of Northport. Both women were found guilty of two crimes; smuggling and conspiring to smuggle a rhesus macaque monkey into the United States contrary to the Endangered Species Act and other federal laws. Sentencing has been scheduled for March 3, 2009.

Airline flight itineraries for Gypsy Lawson and her mother, Fran Ogren, showed they traveled from the Spokane International Airport on November 4, 2007, with connections in Seattle, Washington, and Inchon, Korea, arriving at their final destination of Suvarnabhumi International Airport, in Bangkok, Thailand, on November 5, 2007. They left Thailand on November 28, 2007, arriving at Los Angeles International Airport that same day. Customs declarations for both Lawson and Ogren showed neither declared bringing in any animals into the country.

On January 11, 2008, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in executing a federal search warrant at Fran Ogren’s Northport, Washington residence. Pursuant to the search warrant, several pieces of documentation, including photographs and handwritten notes were seized confirming how Fran Ogren and Gypsy Lawson obtained the monkey in Thailand and smuggled it into the United States.

That same day, agents also executed a federal search warrant at Gypsy Lawson’s Spokane residence where the Rhesus Macaque monkey was found and taken into quarantine. Among the items seized, were handwritten travel journals detailing Fran Ogren’s and Gypsy Lawson’s attempts to acquire a monkey for Gypsy. A cursory review of the journal describes their various attempts to acquire a monkey, specifically one small enough to conceal for the

journey back. The journal describes the acquisition of a small monkey and their experimenting with different medicines to sedate the monkey for their journey home. Also seized are photographs of Gypsy Lawson with a loose fitting clothing, standing outside an airport. In a photograph, Gypsy appears to have a protruding abdomen, as if she were pregnant. There was also a photograph of Gypsy Lawson sitting in an airplane in the same attire, as well as a photograph dated November 28, 2007, of her outside of an airport, still in the same attire. The journal confirms that she and her mother smuggled the monkey into the United States by hiding it under her shirt, pretending she was pregnant in order to get past authorities.

Co-defendant James Edward Pratt, age 34, of Spokane, previously pleaded guilty to possession and transportation of prohibited wildlife, a misdemeanor, for his role in the case. He is scheduled to be sentenced in January 2009.

James A. McDevitt, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, said, "The investigation and prosecution of this case highlights the partnerships between this Office, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as well as our international partner, the Royal Thai Police. These defendants purposely undertook a course of action which could well have endangered many citizens, as well as the life of the animal in question."

"The callousness and intent these people showed in carrying out their plan was egregious and placed at risk not only wildlife but potentially the health of other passengers on the plane and in their community," said Paul Chang, Special Agent in Charge of Law Enforcement for the Pacific Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "These animals are known carriers of viruses and parasites that can be transmitted to humans, although this particular animal tested negative."

Chang said he was very appreciative of the work of the U.S. Attorney's Office and the cooperation of other agencies during the investigation. The monkey is now at rescue center for abandoned primates, he said, "but it could have been living out its life with its family in its native habitat."

A conviction for smuggling goods into the United States carries a maximum penalty of 20-years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and up to 3 years of court supervision after release. A conspiracy conviction carries up to 5-years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and up to 3 years of court supervision after release, as well.

During the past one hundred years, the United States has enacted wildlife laws and ratified international treaties to protect our heritage of wild animals and plants and their habitats. The Nation's wildlife laws and treaties embody a collective commitment to conserve wildlife and to maintain the biodiversity of animals and plants to be enjoyed by people today and by future generations. The Endangered Species Act (1973) protects endangered and threatened animals and plants and their habitats. Permits are issued for scientific research and enhancement activities, and conservation activities. Permits are also issued for zoological, horticultural, or botanical exhibition purposes for threatened species. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (1975) monitors and regulates global

trade in many species of animals and plants through a system of permits to ensure that commercial demand does not threaten their survival in the wild.

Additionally, all wildlife, including rhesus macaques, must be declared to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the port of first arrival in the United States. When importing any wildlife, importers or their agents must file a completed Declaration for Importation or Exportation of Fish and Wildlife. For more information on what permits are available go to [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

This investigation was conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Immigration and Customs Enforcement with assistance from the Royal Thai Police and Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division, which is based in Bangkok, Thailand, which are part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN). The ASEAN-WEN works closely with the CITES Secretariat, Interpol, World Customs Organization (WCO), and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). This case is being prosecuted by Stephanie Van Marter, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington.

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