Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown
Eastern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, May 12, 2009
www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae
Docket #: 2:07-cr-573-LKK

CONTACT: Lauren Horwood
PHONE: 916-554-2706
usacae.edcapress@usdoj.gov

CHICO MAN SENTENCED IN SCHEME TO SMUGGLE TORTOISES INTO THE U.S.

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown announced today that this morning Senior United States District Judge Lawrence K. Karlton sentenced GARRETT SMITH, 40, of Chico, Calif., to three years probation, six months home detention, 144 hours of community service, and a fine of $2,000, in connection with Smith's conviction for engaging in an international conspiracy to smuggle protected tortoises into the United States.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

According to Assistant United States Attorney S. Robert Tice-Raskin, who prosecuted the case, SMITH and an unknown conspirator known as Turtle Man, believed to reside in Singapore, engaged in a conspiracy to obtain wild tortoises protected under international and United States law illegally and smuggle the same into the United States for sale. Defendant Unknown Conspirator, aka Turtle Man, and others acting at his direction, obtained wild tortoises in Asia, specifically Burmese Star Tortoises and Indian Star Tortoises, which were protected under an International Treaty known as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. He sold such species to SMITH ordinarily by means of e-mail transactions.

Both defendants unlawfully imported these tortoises into the United States without required licenses or documentation and caused international wire transfers of money to be made from the United States to Turtle Man, as payment for the tortoises and to facilitate the carrying on of the wildlife smuggling. SMITH then sold and distributed the tortoises to distributors and customers throughout the United States. In total, defendants caused the unlawful importation of 30 Indian Star Tortoises and five Burmese Star Tortoises.

The Unknown Conspirator, aka Turtle Man, remains at large.

# # # #