



The United States Attorney's Office

## Central District of California



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Thom Mrozek  
Public Affairs Officer

(213) 894-6947  
thom.mrozek@usdoj.gov

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### **LONG BEACH MAN INDICTED FOR SMUGGLING RARE AND ENDANGERED IGUANAS INTO U.S. IN HIS PROSTHETIC LEG**

[Iguana Photo]

A resident of Long Beach, California was indicted today on federal smuggling charges for bringing into the United States several extremely rare iguanas after stealing them from a nature preserve in the Republic of the Fiji Islands and concealing them in his prosthetic leg.

Jereme James, 33, was named in a one-count indictment returned this afternoon by a federal grand jury in Los Angeles. The smuggling charge, which carries a penalty of up to five years in federal prison, alleges that James stole three hatchling Fiji Island banded iguanas (*Brachylophus fasciatus*) and brought them to the United States in violation of federal and international law.

The Fiji Island banded iguana is threatened with extinction and is protected under an international treaty known as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. While on a trip to Fiji in September 2002, James allegedly abducted three young iguanas from an ecological preserve. He then allegedly brought them into the United States by concealing them in a special compartment he had constructed in a prosthetic leg that he uses.

After receiving a tip that James possessed several specimens of the endangered species, the United States Fish & Wildlife Service opened an undercover investigation. During the investigation, James told an undercover operative that he sold a trio of Fiji Island banded iguanas four years ago for \$32,000. After a series of meetings with the defendant, Fish & Wildlife Service agents executed a search warrant at James' house in July and recovered four Fiji Island banded iguanas.

James will be summoned to appear for an arraignment in United States District Court in Los Angeles next month.

*An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in court.*

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