



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Louisiana

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ILLINOIS MAN SENTENCED FOR VIOLATING THE LACEY ACT

NEW ORLEANS – U.S. Attorney Kenneth A. Polite announced that **KEITH CANTORE**, age 35, from Monee, Illinois, was sentenced today for violating the Lacey Act by attempting to purchase threatened turtles that were captured in violation of state law.

U.S. District Judge Kurt D. Engelhardt sentenced **CANTORE** to 41 months incarceration, to be followed by three years of supervised release and \$100 special assessment. Additionally, **CANTORE** was ordered to pay approximately \$41,000 in restitution.

According to court records, **CANTORE** was charged with three counts of purchasing and/or attempting to purchase threatened species of turtles that were illegally captured from the wild. **CANTORE** pled guilty to attempted purchase of 100 North American Wood Turtles for \$40,000.

According to court documents, the charges against **CANTORE** stemmed from undercover operations conducted by agents from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Homeland Security Investigations, and the United States Postal Inspection Service. Court documents also note that **CANTORE** was previously convicted of federal charges related to the illegal sale of turtles and that he continued to illegally sell turtles while on bond for the current charges.

“The illicit trade in threatened and endangered species represents the destructive results of unfettered greed,” said Special Agent in Charge Raymond R. Parmer, head of ICE Homeland Security Investigations in New Orleans. “The poaching of Wood Turtles has had a significant negative impact on its population in the wild. In effect, this defendant was willing to help drive this species to extinction to make a few bucks. Law enforcement agencies like HSI and our partners at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Postal Inspection Service are eager to

work with conservation services to stop the illegal trade in wildlife to ensure future generations get to enjoy these species in their native habitats.”

“The U.S. Postal Inspection Service has sought for hundreds of years those who use the Postal Service for illegal gain,” stated Inspector in Charge Adrian Gonzalez. “The ability to use the mail in a safe and secure manner is at the core of the Postal Inspection Service’s mission. When wildlife traffickers use the mail to further their criminal activity in an inhumane manner, Postal Inspectors will work tirelessly to ensure they are brought to justice. The investigators of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Homeland Security Investigations, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service deployed innovative criminal investigative techniques to this case, bringing all those involved to justice and should be commended.”

"This case illustrates our commitment to fighting the illegal wildlife trade," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Assistant Director Ed Grace. “The unlawful international trade in turtles fuels an unsustainable market that will drive our wild native species to extinction. I would like to commend investigators with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Department of Justice for their dedication in this investigation.”

U.S. Attorney Polite praised the work of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Homeland Security Investigations, and the United States Postal Inspection Service in investigating this matter. Assistant United States Attorney David Haller was in charge of the prosecution.

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