



Department of Justice

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ALLEGED HEAD OF WILDLIFE SMUGGLING RING **EXTRADITED FROM AUSTRALIA**

WASHINGTON – Guan Zong Chen (“Graham Chen”), a Chinese national was arraigned today in federal court in Boston, Massachusetts on charges that he led a conspiracy to illegally export (smuggle) \$700,000 worth of wildlife items made from rhinoceros horn, elephant ivory and coral from the United States to Hong Kong. Chen was arrested last year when he traveled from China to Australia and today’s hearing was his first court appearance on an indictment returned by a Boston grand jury in 2015 and unsealed in anticipation of the hearing.

According to the eight-count indictment, Chen purchased the wildlife artifacts at U.S. auction houses located in California, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Texas. He conspired with another Chinese national, a recent college graduate in China to travel to the United States to pick up the purchased items and either hand carry or arrange for them to be mailed to another co-conspirator that owned a shipping business in Concord, Massachusetts. The shipper then repacked the wildlife items and exported (smuggled) them to Hong Kong with documents that falsely stated their contents and value and without obtaining required declarations and permits. In April 2014, Chen visited the United States and visited the shipper in Concord, Massachusetts. During the visit with the shipper, CHEN instructed the shipper to illegally export (smuggle) a sculpture made from elephant ivory to Hong Kong on Chen’s behalf and falsely declared it to be made of wood and worth \$50.

The unsealing of the indictment and court appearance were announced today by Acting Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey H. Wood of the Justice Department’s Environment and Natural Resources Division and Acting U.S. Attorney William D. Weinreb of the District of Massachusetts. In announcing the case today, Acting Assistant Attorney General Wood and Acting U.S. Attorney Weinreb expressed their appreciation to the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Attorney-General’s Department for their help in apprehending Chen and extraditing him to the United States.

Trade in rhinoceros horn, elephant ivory and coral have been regulated since 1976 under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a treaty signed by over 175 countries around the world to protect fish, wildlife, and plants that are or may become imperiled due to the demands of international markets. Animals listed under

CITES cannot be exported from the United States without prior notification to, and approval from, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Chen was apprehended as part of Operation Crash, an ongoing effort by the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, in coordination with the Department of Justice to detect, deter, and prosecute those engaged in the illegal killing of and trafficking in protected species including rhinoceros and elephants.

An indictment contains allegations that crimes have been committed. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation is continuing and is being handled by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement and the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section, with assistance from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts and support on the extradition from DOJ's Office of International Affairs. The government is represented by Senior Litigation Counsel Richard A. Udell and Trial Attorney Gary N. Donner of the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section of the Environment and Natural Resources Division.

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