

Operation Crash

Current as of January 10, 2018

Operation Crash is an ongoing nationwide criminal investigation led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Office of Law Enforcement. The investigation focuses on the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory in response to international poaching and smuggling syndicates. Charges filed against defendants include violations of the Endangered Species Act, the Lacey Act, Conspiracy, Smuggling, Money Laundering, International Money Laundering, Mail Fraud, Tax Evasion, Bribery, and False Documents.

Demands for Rhino Horn

- Hunting Trophies
 - Some hunting trophies are legal to import for non-commercial purposes with CITES documents and FWS Declaration.
- Traditional Asian Medicinals
 - Traditional Asian medicinals are used for many ailments, including anxiety; dysentery; vomiting; food poisoning; arthritis; sexual vigor; and in Vietnam as a cancer cure, even though rhino horn is made from keratin, the chief component found in human hair, fingernails, and animal hooves.
- Horns and Carved Horns
 - Horns in a home are viewed as “good luck” pieces.
 - Carved horns are collectors’ objects and a sign of wealth.

Launching the Initial Nationwide Take-down

- February 17-18, 2012 - The “take-down” involved more than 140 law enforcement officers from multiple regions and supporting Federal agencies.
- Search warrants were executed in 13 States along with 8 arrests.
- This effort led to multiple indictments and convictions of numerous individuals who were operating large-scale rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory smuggling networks.

Types of Investigations

- Trade in raw horns
- Trade in carved items
- Illegal hunting
- Unlawful Exportation

Sentences/Fines/Forfeiture/Restitution

- Total prison sentences to date: 38 years
- Total fines to date: \$2,128,000
- Total forfeiture and restitution to date: \$7.87 million

Sentencing Summary

Subject	Sentencing Date
Michael Hegarty	November 14, 2017
Fengyi Zhou	September 18, 2017
Cyril D'Souza	July 27, 2017
Fang Jie "Richard" He	April 20, 2017
Donnie Kim	November 14, 2016
888 Auctions, Inc.	November 14, 2016
Robert Wes Newman	November 8, 2016
Joseph Chait	June 22, 2016
Carla Marsh	April 26, 2016
Wanting Shao	April 22, 2016
Patrick Sheridan	January 13, 2015
Lumsden Quan	December 16, 2015
Linxun Liao	November 12, 2015
James Hess	October 20, 2015
John Brommel	August 26, 2015
Christopher Hayes, d/b/a, Elite Decorative Arts	May 20, 2015
Elite Estate Buyers, Inc, d/b/a, Elite Decorative Arts	May 20, 2015
Ning Qui	May 14, 2015
Jin Jie Yang	April 30, 2015
Xiao Jun "Tony" Guan, d/b/a, Bao Antiques	March 25, 2015
Xian Fang "Bill" Wu	October 23, 2014
Quality Work Group	October 23, 2014
Gene Harris, d/b/a, ART by GOD	October 1, 2014
Zhifei Li	May 28, 2014
Michael Slattery	January 10, 2014
Qiang "Jeffrey" Wang	December 5, 2013
Felix Kha	May 15, 2013
Vinh Chuong "Jimmy" Kha	May 15, 2013
Win Lee Corp	May 15, 2013
Jin Zhao Feng	October 12, 2012
David Hausman	February 14, 2013
Shusen Wei	April 29, 2013
Tielman Erasmus	April 11, 2013
Luther Edward Jones, d/b/a, The Minnow Bucket	September 23, 2013

Subject	Convicted Date
Edward Levine	September 15, 2017
Jarrold Wade Steffen	June 14, 2012

Subject	Charged Date
Guan Zong "Graham" Chen	July 24, 2017
Jake Chait	February 15, 2017
James Steffen	January 31, 2017

Subject	Charged Date
Merrily Steffen	January 31, 2017
Molly Jo Blackburn-Steffen	January 31, 2017
Lance Jowers	January 31, 2017
James Lolli	December 20, 2016
Lolli Brothers Auctions	December 20, 2016
Darren Ziebarth	December 20, 2016
Dawie Groenewald	October 16, 2014
Janneman Groenewald	October 16, 2014
Valinor Trading CC, d/b/a, Out of Africa Adventurous Safaris	October 16, 2014
Richard Sheridan	May 15, 2014
Nhu Mai Nguyen	February 23, 2012

Prosecutorial Partners

- U.S. Department of Justice's Environmental and Natural Resources Division
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Texas
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Nevada
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Hampshire
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Alabama
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Iowa
- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Missouri