



**U.S. Department of Justice**

*United States Attorney  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**PHILADELPHIA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO SMUGGLING AFRICAN ELEPHANT IVORY**

The owner of a Philadelphia African art store, Victor Gordon, pleaded guilty today to smuggling African elephant ivory into the United States. Gordon entered his plea before the Hon. Robert M. Levy, United States Magistrate Judge, at the United States Courthouse in Brooklyn.

The guilty plea was announced by Loretta E. Lynch, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and Deputy Chief Edward Grace of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement.

Gordon was arrested in July 2011, following the seizure from his Philadelphia store of approximately one ton of elephant ivory – one of the largest U.S. seizures of elephant ivory on record. As part of his plea agreement, Gordon has agreed to forfeit all of the seized ivory and \$150,000. The value of the ivory Gordon has agreed to forfeit is estimated to be in excess of \$400,000.

Illegal trade in African elephant ivory is a major threat to elephant populations in Africa, particularly in the hardest hit poaching regions of West and Central Africa, where the ivory in this investigation originated. African elephants are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ("CITES"), an international treaty that entered into force in 1975 to prevent species from becoming endangered or extinct due to international trade. The African elephant is also listed as a threatened species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

The global demand for elephant ivory led to devastating declines in the elephant population, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Despite international efforts to control the ivory trade and stop the killing of elephants, prices and demand remain high, causing continued elephant poaching and the flow of illegal ivory into the global marketplace.

“Gordon engaged in an illegal business that directly threatens a protected species. Worldwide demand for illegal ivory continues to drive the plunder and exploitation of the African elephant population,” stated United States Attorney Lynch. “This conviction sends a message that we are committed to investigating and prosecuting those who would stoke that demand by smuggling elephant ivory into the United States.” Ms. Lynch commended the agents and inspectors of the Fish and Wildlife Service for their exceptional efforts in leading this investigation.

The government’s ongoing investigation into the importation of elephant ivory from Africa into the United States has already resulted in the convictions of nine defendants for federal smuggling and/or Lacey Act violations.

The defendant faces a maximum sentence of 20 years’ imprisonment on the charge to which he has pleaded guilty.

The criminal case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Darren A. LaVerne, Vamshi Reddy and Claire Kedeshian.

**The Defendant:**

VICTOR GORDON

Age: 68

Residence: Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania