



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Distribution

September 26, 2005

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SAN DIEGO MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR SELLING PROTECTED SPECIES, INCLUDING GILA MONSTERS

A San Diego man was sentenced today to 15 months in federal prison for unlawfully selling endangered and protected species that were transported from Los Angeles to Las Vegas, Nevada.

Hiroshi Motohashi, 36, was sentenced this morning by United States District Judge Ronald S.W. Lew, who also ordered the defendant to pay a \$3,000 criminal fine and to perform community service during a period of supervised release.

Motohashi pleaded guilty on April 6, 2004, the day he was scheduled to go on trial, to three felony counts of violating the Lacey Act by selling and transporting protected and endangered species in interstate commerce without the requisite permits. In September 1997, Motohashi, who is in the reptile business, sold Gila Monsters (which are indigenous to Mexico and the Southwestern United States), San Esteban Island Chuckwallas (which are indigenous to Mexico) and Yellow-Spotted Sideneck Turtles (which are indigenous to Brazil) to an agent with the US Fish and Wildlife Service who was acting in an undercover capacity.

This case is one of several around the nation resulting from a multi-year investigation run by the United States Department of Justice and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, which operated an undercover business in Reno, Nevada.

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