

News Release

For Release: August 11, 2010

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El Paso man Sentenced in Exotic Leather Smuggling Attempt

El Paso, Texas - The United States Attorney's Office and the Fish and Wildlife Service announced that Jose de Jesus Barba, 44, of El Paso, Texas, was sentenced on August 5, 2010, by U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone.

Barba, was arrested on March 13, 2010, for attempting to smuggle several exotic leather products across the international border at the Zaragosa Port of Entry in El Paso. He later pled guilty for smuggling goods into the U.S., a felony under United States law. Following his plea, Barba was sentenced to serve six months home confinement, 91 days of jail time already served, three years of supervised probation, and 100 hours of community service, and was fined \$250 with a \$100 special assessment fee.

At the time of his arrest, federal agents found skins from ostrich, caiman, stingray, python, monitor lizards and tegu concealed on Barba and his father and within their vehicle. Some of these products are regulated by the Endangered Species Act as species listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Barba admitted to having smuggled exotic leather products from Mexico into the U.S. in a similar fashion for the past three (3) years. During a search of Barba's El Paso storage unit, located at the Bronco swap meet, federal agents seized 254 pairs of exotic leather boots, 185 exotic leather belts, and 298 other miscellaneous exotic leather products with an estimated value of \$48,000.

Barba's father, a Mexican national, was allowed to return to Mexico after having his border crossing privileges revoked by U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Barba was detained at the El Paso County Detention Center.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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