



# Department of Justice

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## **ILLEGAL IMPORT OF SKULL & LEOPARD SKIN LEADS TO \$20,000 FINE FOR VIOLATING ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT**

Atlanta, GA - WAYNE TALIAFERRO, 56, of Alpharetta, Georgia, was sentenced today by United States Magistrate Judge Alan J. Baverman on his guilty plea to a misdemeanor charge of illegally importing a leopard skin and skull from South Africa, a violation of the federal Endangered Species Act.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "This case reflects our commitment to the protection of the planet's limited wildlife resources. We treat seriously violations of federal wildlife laws, and we are especially concerned about violations that involve endangered species."

"This investigation illustrates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's vital role in maintaining the integrity of the 'CITES' treaty's permitting process," said James R. Gale, Special Agent in Charge of the Service's Southeast Region. "That process allows protected species to be legally imported only if permits are obtained and other procedures are followed. That did not happen in this case. We will continue to work to protect the world's wildlife species by investigating those who attempt to circumvent this important system."

TALIAFERRO was sentenced to pay a fine of \$20,000, and was placed on probation for one year. TALIAFERRO was convicted of these charges on February 11, 2008. The guilty plea required TALIAFERRO to forfeit the leopard skin and skull to the United States Government.

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: Leopards and other species are protected under the Endangered Species Act through an international treaty known as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ("CITES") The United States is one of 163 nations currently party to the CITES treaty. CITES treaty partners cooperatively protect fish, wildlife and plant species on a global scale from over-exploitation through international trade. Federal regulations related to the CITES treaty require that protected species may be legally imported only after certain permits are obtained, the importation

into the U.S. occurs at designated ports of entry, and the importation is declared to, and inspected by, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Customs. TALIAFERRO admitted that on March 21, 2005, he submitted to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service false documents, including a wildlife declaration form and CITES export and import permits, for the purpose of unlawfully importing the leopard skin and skull into the United States.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement.

Assistant United States Attorney Mary C. Roemer prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).