



NEWS RELEASE

**KAREN L. LOEFFLER
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
DISTRICT OF ALASKA**

Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse • 222 W. 7th Avenue • Room 253 • Anchorage, AK 99513 • (907) 271-5071

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2011**
www.usdoj.gov/usao/ak/

**Contact: Yvonne Lamoureux
Assistant U.S. Attorney
907-271-5071**

TWO GLENNALLEN RESIDENTS AND ONE ANCHORAGE RESIDENT SENTENCED FOR ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING AND FIREARMS VIOLATIONS

Anchorage, Alaska – United States Attorney Karen L. Loeffler announced today, November 29, 2011, that three people have been sentenced in federal court in Anchorage for felony violations of the Lacey Act for illegally selling and transporting walrus ivory and polar bear hides between July 2010 and April 2011. The defendants participated in a conspiracy involving marine mammal parts purchased in Savoonga, Alaska, transported to Glennallen, Alaska, and illegally sold and transported to non-Alaska-Native buyers in Alaska, Colorado, and other states and countries. One of the defendants was also sentenced for being a felon in possession of firearms and two of the defendants were sentenced for illegal possession of machine guns and possession of unregistered machine guns and silencer.

Jesse Joseph Leboeuf, 37, also known as Wayne Gerrard Christian, of Glennallen, was sentenced to 108 months in prison. Loretta Audrey Sternbach, 52, also of Glennallen, was sentenced to 42 months in prison. Both defendants' terms of imprisonment will be followed by a three-year term of supervised release during which the defendants will be prohibited from hunting, any guiding related to wildlife, conducting any business related to wildlife, and assisting others with the same. In addition, Leboeuf abandoned any interest in the marine mammal parts, migratory bird parts, and stolen artwork found in his residence in Glennallen. Anchorage resident Richard Blake Weshenfelder, 50, also known as Rick Weshenfelder, was sentenced to three years of probation during which the defendant will be prohibited from hunting, any guiding related to wildlife, conducting any business related to wildlife, and assisting others with the same.

On July 15, 2011, Leboeuf pled guilty before United States District Judge Timothy M. Burgess to one felony count of conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act, two felony counts of Lacey Act violations, one felony count of illegal possession of a machine gun, and one felony count of felon in possession of a firearm. Also on July 15, 2011, Weshenfelder pled guilty before United States District Judge Timothy M. Burgess to one felony count of conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act. On July 19, 2011, Sternbach pled guilty before United States District Judge Timothy M. Burgess to one felony count of conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act, six felony counts of Lacey Act violations, three felony counts of illegal possession of a machine gun, and three felony counts of possession of unregistered machine gun and silencer.

Leboeuf, Sternbach, and Weshenfelder conspired to illegally sell and transport walrus tusks and polar bear hides in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act, all in violation of the Lacey Act. Leboeuf and Sternbach purchased walrus parts and tusks and polar bear hides from individuals in Savoonga, Alaska and transported the items to their home in Glennallen. Leboeuf and Sternbach paid the Savoonga-based walrus ivory and polar bear hides sellers either with money or in

trade for items such as firearms, ammunition, marijuana, cigarettes, snow machines, and other items of value. In July and August 2010, Leboeuf and Sternbach made two trips to Savoonga and purchased more than 500 pounds of walrus tusks. Leboeuf made two trips to Savoonga without Sternbach in September 2010 and March 2011. Weshenfelder marketed the walrus tusks via the internet and contacted potential buyers to purchase the walrus tusks. Leboeuf negotiated the unlawful sales of the walrus tusks. In an attempt to conceal the illegality of the walrus tusk sales to non-Alaska-native buyers, Sternbach wrote and signed a false "gift" letter to the buyers purchasing walrus tusks to make it appear that the walrus tusks were acquired legally. The "gift" letter stated that the tusk was a gift from Sternbach and included her Bureau of Indian Affairs number, the walrus tusk tag number, and the home phone number for Leboeuf and Sternbach. Leboeuf and Sternbach asked buyers to send checks or money orders or to deposit payment for the unlawfully sold walrus tusks and polar bear hides into Sternbach's bank account or other bank accounts as directed by them. Between September 2010 and March 2011, Leboeuf, Sternbach, and Weshenfelder illegally sold and transported to a non-Alaska-native buyer approximately 230 pounds of walrus tusks valued at approximately \$22,000 and two polar bear hides for \$2,700.

Leboeuf, a convicted felon, possessed at least 25 firearms, which he sold for money, traded for ivory, or kept throughout his residence in Glennallen. Leboeuf and Sternbach illegally possessed at least three machine guns, including one with a silencer, none of which were registered to either of them. In December 2010, Leboeuf and Sternbach sold an undercover agent a fully automatic machine gun. In February 2011, Leboeuf and Sternbach sold an undercover agent a fully automatic machine gun with a silencer. Leboeuf and Sternbach were in negotiations to sell another fully automatic machine gun, which was found in their residence in Glennallen.

On April 26, 2011, a search warrant was executed at Leboeuf and Sternbach's home in Glennallen. Leboeuf and Sternbach had about 19 firearms throughout their house, a machine gun, more than 30 marijuana plants, coca plants, five pieces of stolen artwork, migratory bird parts, and numerous marine mammal parts, including approximately 93 walrus tusks.

Prior to imposing sentence, Judge Burgess noted the seriousness of the offenses, particularly the Lacey Act violations.

Ms. Loeffler said that "It is important to protect Alaska's resources. The defendants' illegal wildlife trafficking scheme harmed not only the wildlife protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act, but also the resource management goals of those statutory schemes."

Ms. Loeffler commended the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Alaska State Troopers for the investigation leading to the successful prosecution of Leboeuf, Sternbach, and Weshenfelder.

###

usao/ak/11-122

Prepared by Jennifer Lotz, 907-271-5071