



# Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Alex G. Tse  
Northern District of California

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January 11, 2018

## **MENDOCINO COUNTY RESIDENT INDICTED FOR ILLEGALLY IMPORTING LEOPARD HUNTING TROPHY FROM SOUTH AFRICA**

OAKLAND - A federal grand jury indicted Adam Thatcher Lawrence today with importing wildlife contrary to law and mislabeling wildlife intended for importation, announced Acting United States Attorney Alex G. Tse and United States Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement Region 8 Assistant Special Agent in Charge Daniel Crum.

According to the indictment, Lawrence, 38, of Willits, Calif., traveled to the Republic of South Africa in August 2011, where he hunted and killed a leopard. Leopards are a protected species under both the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1531 *et seq.*, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international treaty to which the United States, South Africa, and Mozambique are signatories.

The indictment alleges Lawrence did not have the required permits to kill the leopard in South Africa, or to bring the leopard back into the United States. Lawrence allegedly secretly transported the leopard's skin and skull into the Republic of Mozambique in May 2012 and thereafter falsely claimed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that he had hunted and killed the

leopard in Mozambique in 2012. Lawrence then allegedly applied for permit paperwork from Mozambique, South Africa, and the United States in order to import the leopard skin and skull into the United States; each document falsely stated that the leopard was killed in Mozambique. The indictment alleges that in April 2013, Lawrence imported the leopard parts into the United States based on his false statements. In sum, Lawrence was charged with one count of importing wildlife contrary to law, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 545 and 18 U.S.C. § 2(b), and one count of mislabeling wildlife intended for importation, in violation of 16 U.S.C. §§ 3372(d) and 18 U.S.C. § 2(b).

Lawrence is scheduled to make his initial appearance in federal court in Oakland on January 18, 2018.

An indictment merely alleges that crimes have been committed, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. If convicted, Lawrence faces a maximum sentence of twenty years' imprisonment, and a fine of \$250,000, plus restitution, for a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 545 and a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment, and a fine of \$250,000, plus restitution, for a violation of 16 U.S.C. §§ 3372(d). However, any sentence following conviction would be imposed by the court after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal statute governing the imposition of a sentence, 18 U.S.C. § 3553.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Katherine Lloyd-Lovett is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Vanessa Quant. The prosecution is the result of a three-year investigation by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement.

**Further Information:**

Case #: 18-0014 HSG

A copy of this press release will be placed on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/can](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/can).

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at [www.cand.uscourts.gov](http://www.cand.uscourts.gov).

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