

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FIRST AIRBORNE HUNTING PROSECUTION IN EASTERN UNITED STATES

Two Pennsylvania men have been fined \$750 each after pleading guilty to using a helicopter to harass a deer while hunting in violation of the Airborne Hunting Act of 1971, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced.

This is the first case of its kind in the Eastern United States and represents the largest fine ever imposed for a violation of the Airborne Hunting Act.

On December 3, 1976, a man and his son were hunting on a farm in Pennsylvania when they heard shots fired from a blue and white helicopter that was chasing a buck deer.

They watched the helicopter land and saw two men emerge, one with a rifle who then shot and killed the deer. The witnesses approached the scene, had a heated encounter with the helicopter occupants, seized the deer carcass and took it to the farmer on whose land they were hunting. They called authorities from the farm house.

Subsequently, an extensive investigation was conducted by special agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and State game protectors which led to the June 20 conviction of Felix Pitzerel, 47, and John J. George, 45, both of Indiana, Pennsylvania. Each was fined \$750 in Federal District Court in the Western District of Pennsylvania by Judge Daniel J. Snyder, Jr. Prosecution was deferred with respect to the pilot.

"Although deer are not a federally protected species," Greenwalt said, "they are protected in this case by a law which prohibits the airborne hunting or harassing of any animal, except under Federal or State permit for the protection of wildlife, livestock, and human health and safety. We hope that the swiftness and severity of this conviction will serve as a deterrent to others who would engage in such a practice."