



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release: March 20, 1991

Steve Goldstein (O) 202/208-6416  
(H) 202/887-5284

### INTERIOR AND COMMERCE CERTIFY JAPAN FOR ILLEGAL TRADING IN SEA TURTLES

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan and Secretary of Commerce Robert A. Mosbacher today certified Japan under the Pelly Amendment of the Fishermen's Protective Act of 1967 for commercial trading in endangered sea turtles.

Upon certification of Japan, the two cabinet members may recommend sanctions to President Bush restricting the importation of wildlife products from Japan into the United States.

The certification comes after separate investigations by Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service and Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found that Japan's continued trade in sea turtles worldwide has severely diminished the effectiveness of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international conservation program. Under CITES, all species of sea turtles are listed as endangered. CITES is designed to protect sea turtles and other endangered species from all commercial international trade.

Japan's hawksbill sea turtle importation has had serious effects on this species' worldwide population. From 1981 to 1989, Japan imported at least 234,000 hawksbill shells from more than 20 countries. It is estimated that over 18,000 more were imported in 1990. The shells are used primarily for fabrication of eyeglass frames, jewelry and folk art. Japan has also been a major importer of skins of endangered olive ridley sea turtles, which are used in the manufacture of leather goods.

Under the Pelly Amendment, the President has 60 days to notify Congress of his decision on what sanctions, if any, will be imposed against Japan.