



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

Office of the Secretary

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Steve Goldstein 202-208-6416 (w)  
202-887-5248 (h)

### INTERIOR SECRETARY LUJAN ANNOUNCES BAN ON WILDLIFE TRADE WITH THAILAND

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today announced that the United States is banning trade with Thailand in wildlife protected under an international treaty that regulates trade in endangered species.

"This trade ban will protect wildlife by denying a market for illegally taken animals," Lujan said. "Through this action, the United States is living up to its responsibility as part of the international environmental community."

Lujan's action, which takes effect July 30, bans imports and exports of all wildlife protected under the 111-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The action affects an estimated \$18 million in annual trade in CITES-regulated wildlife between Thailand and the United States. The vast majority of the trade is wildlife exported from Thailand to the United States.

The ban follows an April 22, 1991, notification from the CITES Secretariat asking all party nations to "take all measures" to prohibit trade with Thailand, recognizing that the country is unable to control wildlife trade as a result of inadequate laws and ineffective enforcement. Twelve European community nations have also taken steps to restrict wildlife trade with Thailand, and similar action is under consideration in Japan.

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In 1990, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service seized illegal Thai shipments of ivory jewelry, sea turtle products, leopard and tiger parts and products, and a wide range of reptile products such as shoes and belts. The seizures represented more than three times the normal rate of noncompliance in shipments of wildlife from other countries.

Thailand serves as a staging point for shipments of live cheetahs, tigers, bears, orangutans, and gibbons. Thailand is a signatory to CITES but has no effective means of enforcing CITES regulations and no laws to protect wildlife that enters Thailand from other countries. In practice this has meant that smugglers may obtain CITES permits from Thailand in an effort to slip illegal wildlife shipments past Customs and Fish and Wildlife Service inspectors.

Under the ban, the Fish and Wildlife Service will not clear for importation shipments of CITES wildlife that originate in Thailand or are re-exported to or through that country regardless of the documentation provided. Furthermore, the United States will not approve for export to Thailand from the United States any CITES-listed species. Shipments may be returned to Thailand or seized if they violate United States law.

Lujan said the United States will consider lifting the ban when sufficient evidence indicates that Thailand complies fully with treaty requirements.