



NEWS

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KINGPIN OF PARROT SMUGGLING RING
SENTENCED TO NEARLY 7 YEARS WITHOUT PAROLE

On November 18, a Federal court in Chicago sentenced Tony Silva, an internationally recognized expert and outspoken protector of exotic birds, to nearly 7 years of imprisonment without parole for leading an international parrot smuggling conspiracy and a related income tax violation.

In addition to the 82-month incarceration, U.S. District Court Judge Elaine Bucklo fined Silva \$100,000 and ordered him to perform 200 hours of community service during a 3-year supervised release program following the prison term. This is one of the most severe sentences ever imposed for bird smuggling.

Also sentenced was Gila Daoud, Silva's mother. She will serve a 27-month prison term to be followed by a one-year supervised release program with concurrent 200 hours of community service.

As she handed down the sentences, Judge Bucklo said, "The real victims of these crimes were the birds themselves and our children and future generations who may never have the opportunity to see any of these rare birds."

On January 30, 1996, Silva pled guilty to a far-reaching conspiracy to smuggle or attempt to smuggle into this country some of the world's most endangered, beautiful, and highly protected wild birds. The value of the smuggled wildlife totaled \$1,386,900. Included in these illegal shipments were substantial numbers of extremely rare hyacinth macaws. Silva also pled guilty to filing a false income tax return in connection with his sale of birds.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Law Enforcement's Branch of Special Operations spearheaded "Operation Renegade," a 3-year international probe to stem illegal trade in wild birds. "The severity of the sentence in this case sends a clear signal that the United States will absolutely not tolerate the depletion of irreplaceable natural resources for personal gain," said John Rogers, acting Service director.

The hyacinth macaw, found primarily in Brazil, has a wild population numbering between 2,000 and 5,000. One of these birds can command a price of \$5,000 to \$12,000. Because of this and

the bird's precarious status in the wild, the hyacinth macaw has been accorded the highest level of protection provided under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), an international wildlife treaty to which the United States and 131 other nations are parties. Worldwide, the illegal wildlife trade is a multi-billion-dollar-a-year business, second only to illegal drug trade.

"The United States takes its obligations and responsibilities under CITES very seriously," said Rogers. "This case reflects the Service's deep commitment to safeguarding the global community's natural resources."

The prosecution was led by the United States Attorney's Office in Chicago and assisted by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the Wildlife and Marine Resources Section of the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.