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PRESS RELEASE

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Tuesday, April 28, 2009	Thomas Rice, First Assistant U.S. Attorney (509) 353-2767

“MOTHER AND DAUGHTER SENTENCED TO JAIL FOR SMUGGLING MONKEY FROM THAILAND”

Spokane – James A. McDevitt, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, announced that Gypsy Lawson, age 28, a resident of Spokane, and her mother Fran Ogren, age 57, of Northport, were both sentenced to 60 days in jail. Additionally, both will be under court supervision for 3-years and must pay \$4,507 in restitution. In December 2008, both women were found guilty of smuggling and conspiring to smuggle a rhesus macaque monkey into the United States contrary to the Endangered Species Act and other federal laws.

Airline flight itineraries for Lawson and Ogren showed they traveled from the Spokane International Airport on November 4, 2007, with connections in Seattle, Washington, and Inchon, Korea, arriving at their final destination of Suvarnabhumi International Airport, in Bangkok, Thailand, on November 5, 2007. They left Thailand on November 28, 2007, arriving at Los Angeles International Airport that same day. Customs declarations for both Lawson and Ogren showed neither declared bringing in any animals into the country.

On January 11, 2008, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in executing a federal search warrant at Ogren’s Northport, Washington residence. Pursuant to the search warrant, several pieces of documentation, including photographs and handwritten notes were seized confirming how Ogren and Lawson obtained the monkey in Thailand and smuggled it into the United States. That same day, agents also executed a federal search warrant at Lawson’s Spokane residence where the Rhesus Macaque monkey was found and taken into quarantine. Among the items seized, were handwritten travel journals detailing Ogren’s and Lawson's attempts to acquire a monkey for Lawson. A cursory review of the journal describes their various attempts to acquire a monkey, specifically one small enough to conceal for the journey back. The journal describes the acquisition of a small monkey and their experimenting with different medicines to sedate the monkey for their journey home. Also seized are photographs of Lawson with a loose fitting

clothing, standing outside an airport. In a photograph, Lawson appears to have a protruding abdomen, as if she were pregnant. There was also a photograph of her sitting in an airplane in the same attire, as well as a photograph dated November 28, 2007, of her outside of an airport, still in the same attire. The journal confirms that she and her mother smuggled the monkey into the United States by hiding it under her shirt, pretending she was pregnant in order to get past authorities.

James A. McDevitt, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, said, "The investigation and prosecution of this case highlights the partnerships between this Office, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as well as our international partner, the Royal Thai Police. These defendants purposely undertook a course of action which could well have endangered many citizens, as well as the life of the animal in question."

"The callousness and intent these people showed in carrying out their plan was egregious and placed at risk not only wildlife but potentially the health of other passengers on the plane and in their community," said Paul Chang, Special Agent in Charge of Law Enforcement for the Pacific Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "These animals are known carriers of viruses and parasites that can be transmitted to humans, although this particular animal tested negative. The monkey is now at rescue center for abandoned primates."

During the past one hundred years, the United States has enacted wildlife laws and ratified international treaties to protect our heritage of wild animals and plants and their habitats. The Endangered Species Act (1973) protects endangered and threatened animals and plants and their habitats. Permits are issued for scientific research and enhancement activities, and conservation activities. Permits are also issued for zoological, horticultural, or botanical exhibition purposes for threatened species. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (1975) monitors and regulates global trade in many species of animals and plants through a system of permits to ensure that commercial demand does not threaten their survival in the wild.

Additionally, all wildlife, including rhesus macaques, must be declared to U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the port of first arrival in the United States. When importing any wildlife, importers or their agents must file a completed Declaration for Importation or Exportation of Fish and Wildlife. For more information on what permits are available go to www.fws.gov.

This investigation was conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Immigration and Customs Enforcement with assistance from the Royal Thai Police and Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division, based in Bangkok, Thailand. This case was prosecuted by Stephanie Van Marter, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington.

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