January 20, 2005

FISH DEALER INDICTED ON FEDERAL CHARGES OF ILLEGALLY IMPORTING AND EXPORTING MEXICAN ANGELFISH

A San Pedro man was indicted today on federal smuggling charges for illegally importing into the United States at least 160 Clarion angelfish, which are indigenous to Mexico and are protected under Mexican law.

Craig ████████ 40, was named in a seven-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Los Angeles. ████████ is currently in state custody for allegedly violating the terms of his probation on an unrelated case, so it is unknown when he will make his first court appearance in United States District Court.

████████ allegedly arranged for the angelfish to be shipped from Mexico to Los Angeles International Airport. The indictment alleges that he failed to disclose the shipment to either U.S. Customs and Border Protection or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The indictment also alleges that ████████ illegally shipped approximately 20 of the angelfish to Hong Kong, approximately 50 to Japan and another shipment of eight to Hong Kong.

Clarion angelfish are prized for their rarity and their brilliant orange color. Because they are protected in their native habitat, they have a retail value of between $1,000 and $2,500.

████████ is charged with two counts of smuggling, four counts of making false statements to federal authorities for failing to report the four shipments and one count of obstruction of justice for instructing one of his customers to conceal angelfish from agents of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

If convicted of the seven counts in the indictment, ████████ would face a maximum possible sentence of 35 years in federal prison.

This case is the result of an investigation by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

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