



Department of Justice

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**ATLANTA PIANO COMPANY AND ITS C.E.O. PLEAD GUILTY TO
CHARGES RELATING TO THE SMUGGLING OF ILLEGAL ELEPHANT IVORY INTO THE
UNITED STATES**

ATLANTA, GA - "A-440 PIANOS, INC.," a Georgia corporation, and its Chief Executive Officer, PASCAL VIEILLARD, 49, of Lilburn, Georgia, today pleaded guilty to charges stemming from involvement in illegally shipping internationally protected elephant ivory into the United States.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said, "Those who trade in wildlife products such as elephant ivory must comply with federal and state statutes and regulations intended to protect these important natural resources. Those who willfully ignore the laws face the possibility of fines and prison sentences."

Southeast Region U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement, Special Agent in Charge James Gale said, "We are proud of the coordinated investigative work of our agents, the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and Customs and Border Protection Agriculture Specialists and Officers. This case is an excellent example of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's commitment to investigate and interdict the commercialization of protected wildlife species."

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: A-440 PIANOS, based in Atlanta, Georgia, imports, exports, and sells pianos to domestic and international customers. In September 2009, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Special Agents received information from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species ("CITES") Secretariat's office in Geneva, Switzerland that a representative of "A-440 PIANOS" had made an inquiry regarding CITES documentation requirements. Within a few weeks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agents and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agriculture Specialists inspected a piano shipment imported by A-440 PIANOS. The invoice accompanying the U.S. Customs and Border Protection entry packet declared ten of the eleven pianos in the shipment as having "no ivory keys." No CITES permits or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declarations accompanied the shipment. Two pianos had the keyboards removed and five pianos had the individual keys removed. Investigators noted that two piano keyboards were located in the bottom of a crate under furniture and personal effects. The individual keys were located in a crate under a tray of marking pens. The keyboards and

individual keys were positively identified to be covered with elephant ivory, which requires a permit to be imported or exported.

Today A-440 PIANOS pleaded guilty in federal district court to one felony count of smuggling elephant ivory into the United States. In addition, VIEILLARD, its C.E.O., pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor count of violating the Lacey Act, by illegally importing pianos that contained elephant ivory.

The Lacey Act, enacted in 1900, is the first national wildlife law and was passed to assist states in enforcing wildlife laws. It provides additional protection to fish, wildlife, and plants that were taken, possessed, transported or sold in violation of state, tribal, foreign, or federal law. The Endangered Species Act is the U.S. domestic law that implements the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild Fauna and Flora. Each of two species of elephant is listed in a CITES appendix, is subject to strict trade regulations, and requires permits to be imported or exported.

A-440 PIANOS, INC., faces a maximum fine of \$500,000 and probation for five years. VIEILLARD faces a maximum sentence of one year in federal prison and a fine of up to \$100,000. A sentencing date for A-440 PIANOS, INC. and VIEILLARD has not yet scheduled before United States District Judge Richard W. Story. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

This case was investigated by Special Agents with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agriculture Specialists and Officers, Office of Field Operations, Charleston, S.C.

Assistant United States Attorney Mary C. Roemer is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.