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**SKOKIE COMPANY FINED \$150,000 FOR ILLEGALLY EXPORTING AFRICAN
ELEPHANT IVORY AND OTHER PROTECTED WILDLIFE PARTS USED IN
MAKING BILLIARD CUE STICKS**

CHICAGO — A Skokie company pleaded guilty today and was fined \$150,000 for illegally exporting African elephant ivory, as well as products made from other protected wildlife, to foreign customers, federal law enforcement officials announced. The defendant, **Atlas Fibre Company**, pleaded guilty to a single misdemeanor count of violating the federal Endangered Species Act by failing to obtain an export permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Atlas, which manufactures and distributes fiber, plastic and other materials for industrial applications, had a division called Atlas Billiard Supplies that sold parts involved in fabricating billiard cue sticks, including African elephant ivory, shell products and leathers made from the hides of elephants, monitor lizards, kangaroo, ostrich and shark.

Atlas, which was charged in a criminal information filed last month, pleaded guilty today at its arraignment before Magistrate Judge Sidney I. Schenkier in U.S. District Court. Magistrate Schenkier immediately sentenced Atlas under the terms of a plea agreement, placing the company on probation for one year, in addition to imposing the \$150,000 fine, which will be paid to the Fish and Wildlife Service's Lacey Act Reward Fund. He also ordered Atlas to pay the Fish and Wildlife

Service \$12,273 in restitution and \$1,428 in funds the agency used to purchase products that were illegally shipped by Atlas.

“Failing to obtain necessary export permits is not merely a technical violation of the law,” said Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. “It is a crime to intentionally export protected wildlife parts and products without a permit to ensure that we protect, not profiting from, threatened or endangered species.”

Atlas admitted that its billiard supplies division sold approximately 61 pieces of worked African elephant ivory valued at \$3,057 to a customer in Japan in October 2006 without a U.S. export permit required under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Atlas intentionally removed from the shipping invoice any reference to “ivory” to help the shipment move through Japanese customs.

Atlas also admitted as relevant conduct that, without a CITES permit, it exported African elephant ivory products valued in excess of \$93,000 on approximately 129 separate occasions to customers primarily in Japan and Germany between January 2002 and November 2006. Also without a permit, Atlas exported monitor lizard and African elephant leather valued in excess of \$11,700 on approximately 53 occasions between September 2005 and October 2009, as well as mother of pearl and abalone shell products and leathers made from various other protected wildlife species valued in excess of \$3,799 on approximately 37 occasions between January 2005 and October 2009.

In total, Atlas’ failure to obtain export permits and to pay inspection fees deprived the Fish and Wildlife Service of \$12,273 in revenue.

The government was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy Chapman.

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