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## EIA scoops two gongs for undercover spywork

*THE Environmental Investigation Agency's success in exposing the global smuggling of banned ozone-depleting chemicals has won it two top awards.*

Ten years of undercover work to expose and close down an illicit international trade in CFCs and other chemicals that damage the ozone layer earned the UK and US-based group the awards at the Montreal Protocol meeting.

The Environmental Investigation Agency used spy techniques including setting up fake companies, surveillance, secret filming and data analysis to identify and expose criminals engaged in smuggling between several Asian countries, Europe and the US.

The EIA received the 'Best-of-the-Best' Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), its work selected from among more than 500 projects between 1990 and 2007. EIA also received a Partners Award from the United Nations Environment Programme for its exposure of the illegal trade.

Both awards were presented in Montreal on September 19, during the 20th anniversary meeting of the 191 participating countries of the Montreal Protocol, which works to phase out production of ozone-layer destroying chemicals.

Allan Thornton, EIA chairman, who collected the 'Best-of-the-Best' award at an EPA dinner yesterday said: "EIA evidence exposes the environmental criminals whose activities threaten children with increased skin cancers caused by elevated levels of radiation reaching the earth's surface. We are honoured to receive these awards and salute the enforcement authorities around the world who take action to protect the world's ozone layer."

EIA is the only environmental group to investigate CFC and other ODS smuggling. In 1997, the EIA revealed widespread smuggling of CFCs into Europe and inaction by European governments. The report led to the introduction of a licensing system for CFCs.

In subsequent reports EIA revealed large scale illegal CFC exports from China with companies circumventing international controls on CFC production, and an illegal trade route from China through Singapore and South Africa to the United States. Another smuggling route was exposed between India and Nepal.

EIA gathered conclusive evidence against several Chinese brokers who were exposed as selling newly-produced CFCs as 'recycled'.

On numerous occasions, EIA was invited to present its evidence to US enforcement authorities, including the FBI, Internal Revenue Service, customs and other agencies.

In 1999, EIA provided intelligence to the Dutch police that resulted in the disruption of a smuggling ring that had been trafficking illegal CFCs from China to Italy through the port of Rotterdam.

As a result of EIA lobbying, China agreed to phase out its legal production of CFCs in August of this year, three years ahead of the original phase-out schedule.

As a result of EIA's work, governments were forced to tighten up regulations and retrain police and customs officers to recognise and enforce rules restricting international trade in ozone-depleting substances (ODS). Several smugglers were brought to trial, and tons of ozone-depleting substances have been intercepted and destroyed before they could be released into the atmosphere.

The organisation was praised for "Close collaboration between EIA and enforcement agencies has led directly to seizures, regional investigations, focused enforcement activity and more responsible practices by ODS exporters".