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The Environmental Investigation Agency Wins Award for Protection of the Ozone Layer

The US Environmental Protection Agency's *2006 Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award* Presented to the Environmental Investigation Agency for its Work to Expose Illegal Trade In Ozone-Depleting Substances

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), an independent, international non-profit organization committed to investigating and exposing environmental crimes around the world, has been presented with the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) prestigious *2006 Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award* for "leadership and collaboration in preventing smuggling of ozone-depleting chemicals." The award was bestowed upon EIA at a ceremony held on May 17 at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC.

EPA commended the organization, noting that, "The Environmental Investigation Agency is remarkably brave and successful in exposing illegal trade and use of ozone-depleting substances, in motivating policy makers to take action, and in providing assistance to combat smuggling operations. EIA tells all, naming companies and individuals in its reports, and its work with enforcement agencies has led directly to the seizures of illegal chemicals. EIA's actions have also resulted in more responsible practices by ODS exporters and raised awareness of the thinning ozone layer."

Allan Thornton, President of EIA, thanked EPA for the award stating, "We are honored to receive this prestigious award from EPA which validates our work and the importance of the international community's continued commitment to protection of the ozone layer."

EIA carries out major undercover investigations into the black market for CFCs, halons and other ozone depleting substances (ODS), exposing the methods and routes used by ODS smugglers and the operations of their partners. It has been actively tracking the global illegal trade in ODS since the mid-1990s to inform and counsel the Montreal Protocol treaty and other relevant parties.

In July of 2005, EIA revealed massive secret stockpiles in the US of methyl bromide, a powerful ozone layer destroying pesticide. As a result of EIA's latest report uncovering widespread illegal exports of CFC (chlorofluorocarbons) from China, the Chinese government has made a commitment to change their domestic export policy, take action against the smugglers and implement measures to put a stop to the black market operations.

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Editor's Notes:

- The ozone layer, which protects the Earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation, is currently in its most fragile state in recorded history due largely to human-caused emissions of ozone-depleting chemicals, such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochloro-fluorocarbons (HCFCs), halons, and methyl bromide.
- The Montreal Protocol was agreed on January 1, 1987 and is now ratified by 188 countries. Under the Montreal Protocol and its amendments, ozone-depleting substances are to be reduced and eliminated through the development of chemical substitutes and alternative manufacturing processes (elimination is the final objective). Methyl bromide was scheduled to be phased out in 2005 in developed countries, but the U.S. has taken advantage of a treaty loophole to continue using excessive quantities of methyl bromide beyond the phase-out date.
- Children are most vulnerable to elevated levels of radiation from ozone thinning. Childhood skin cancer incidence in the United States has more than doubled in the last two decades, while U.S. skin cancer rates are increasing by 3% a year, according to the American Cancer Society. Last week scientists with Canada's environmental agency warned the public that harmful ultraviolet rays are expected to rise 4% this year because the ozone layer across Canada has thinned by 4-8% over winter and spring.