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U.S. Seizes Wood Under New Law to Fight Illegal Logging

Washington DC--Local news sources reported Tuesday that agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service searched the Tennessee manufacturing facility of Gibson Guitars as part of an investigation under the Lacey Act into harvested wood from Madagascar. This search represents the first use of a landmark 2008 amendment to the Lacey Act prohibiting trade in illegally sourced wood products. The Lacey Act is a 100-year-old statute that restricts traffic in illegally harvested species.

"This action is an important signal that U.S. law enforcement is taking the amended Lacey Act seriously," said Alexander von Bismarck, Executive Director of the non-profit Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA). Last year, EIA led an unprecedented coalition of industry, environmental, and labor groups in support of the new amendment to address the U.S.'s role in illegal logging worldwide.

"Illegal logging around the world destroys lives, jobs, forests, our climate, and biodiversity," added von Bismarck. "And unfortunately the American consumer has so far been an unwitting accomplice in this destruction—but this can change. Implementing and enforcing this law is critical to the U.S. government's efforts to reduce our role in deforestation worldwide."

Following political turmoil in Madagascar earlier this year, loggers invaded Madagascar's national parks and plundered valuable hardwoods, such as rosewood and ebony, for export to international markets. EIA recently completed a joint report on the logging crisis for Madagascar National Parks with the UK-based watchdog organization Global Witness. The report will be made public next week.

Notes:

The Environmental Investigation Agency investigates and exposes environmental crime around the world. Intelligence reports, documentary evidence, campaigning expertise and an international advocacy network enable EIA to achieve far-reaching environmental protection by spurring changes in market demand, government policy, and enforcement related to global trade in wildlife and environmental products.
