

Man Arrested on Cat Smuggling Charges

Two newborn Asian leopards were brought into the United States illegally, authorities contend.

Posted: September 20, 2006, 5 a.m. EST

A Southern California man was arrested Sept. 18 on cat smuggling charges from when he snuck two protected newborn Asian leopards from Thailand into the United States through Los Angeles International Airport.

Chris Mulloy of Palm Springs, Calif., brought the protected cats into the United States on a June 13, 2002, flight from Thailand, federal authorities contend.

Mulloy made it past airport customs agents, but his traveling companion Robert Cusack was arrested after inspectors found four bird of paradise flowers and several orchids of a threatened species in his baggage. Cusack was also found to have two smuggled pygmy monkeys in his pants.

Cusack plead guilty to cat smuggling charges in 2003 and was later sentenced to 57 days in jail. The animals were confiscated and taken to the Los Angeles Zoo.

Mulloy, who allegedly was hiding the two Asian leopard newborns in his backpack, slipped past inspectors at the airport while Cusack was being searched, according to the U.S. Attorney's office. Authorities did not explain why Mulloy's arrest came more than four years after the incident.

Mulloy faces counts of cat smuggling, fraudulently concealing a protected species and lying to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Customs officials. He could face up to 20 years in prison and fines up to \$1 million if convicted of all charges, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph O. Johns.

Mulloy surrendered his passport and was released on \$50,000 bond. His arraignment is set for Sept. 25.