



News

Sergio Acosta Speaks With BBC World Service About High-Profile Endangered Bird Smuggling Criminal Case

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Sergio E. Acosta, the Chicago-based chair of the Government Practice Group at Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, appeared on the November 18, 2016, edition of the BBC World Service radio program *Witness*. The program focused on the 1996 conviction of Tony Silva, an ornithologist and world-renowned alleged defender of exotic birds, for smuggling more than 100 endangered birds into the United States. Mr. Acosta, together with now federal district court Judge Jay Tharp, were the lead Assistant U.S. Attorneys on the team that prosecuted Mr. Silva, who was sentenced to seven years in prison and a fine of \$100,000.

Said Mr. Acosta in the story, "I believe that at the time . . . it was the most severe sentence imposed in the United States for wildlife smuggling. . . . I don't believe Silva or his lawyer saw it coming. The particular judge that we were in front of was Elaine Bucklo, who is not necessarily known as being a severe sentencer in criminal cases. But I think she was moved by the evidence in the case and the suffering that many of the creatures went through as result of the smuggling plot." Noting the great significance of the case at the time, Mr. Acosta said "I think what it highlighted for people was the size of the market that exists for smuggled wildlife."

Listen to the story, "[Smuggling Endangered Birds](#)," on the BBC website.

Sergio Acosta is an experienced criminal litigator and investigator. He has represented companies, government entities and individuals in matters involving the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, complex financial fraud, criminal tax violations, export regulations and criminal forfeiture. His practice also encompasses corporate governance, corporate internal investigations, regulatory enforcement, commercial litigation and gaming law. Before joining Hinshaw, Mr. Acosta held leading roles in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois; served as Administrator of the Illinois Gaming Board; and was a prosecutor in the Miami-Dade County State Attorney's Office.

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