



HORN PROBE

Lawyer for alleged rhino horn smuggler tells of client's 'complete shock and surprise' of being extradited to the US

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A LAWYER for alleged rhino horn smuggler John Slattery has told of his client's "complete shock and surprise" at being "taken away from his family" at 2am to be extradited to the US.

The Irish Sun revealed on Monday how [US authorities sent a private jet costing €200,000 to Dublin to pick up the Rathkeale-based Traveller, 31](#), and others following his arrest for extradition.



Alleged rhino horn smuggler John Slattery



The horns can fetch up to €200,000 each in the Far East

Dad-of-two Slattery had consented to being sent to Texas to face charges of trafficking in rhino horns, an offence under US wildlife protection legislation.

‘SHOCK AND SURPRISE’

Slattery’s American lawyer J. Michael Price II told the Irish Sun: “While Mr. Slattery was aware of the indictment and charges against him, his arrest in the middle of the night was a complete shock and surprise.

“He was in compliance with all the release conditions and was even preparing to be in court the same morning he was suddenly awakened by 20 armed Irish ‘gardai’ officers and taken away from his family.

“The inferences by the Irish media that Mr. Slattery was involved in the recent illegal slaughter of animals and the trafficking of these horns from the illegal poaching of these rhinos is false.

“While the purchasing and interstate transport and re-selling of these taxidermy mounts and horns is illegal and Mr. Slattery intends to plead guilty and accept his punishment for these crimes, this occurred 10 years ago and the rhinos in question were legally harvested and mounted decades ago.

“We look forward to working with the United States Attorney’s Office to accept responsibility for these charges and return Mr. Slattery to his wife and two young children in Ireland as soon as possible.”

TAXIDERMY SHOP

The High Court here has heard US authorities allege Slattery and two others travelled to a taxidermy shop in Austin, Texas, to buy the horns for \$18,000 and then travelled to New York and sold them for \$50,000, using a local “straw buyer” to complete the purchase.

It is alleged that between April 2010 and November 2010, Slattery, of Old Barrack View, Fairhill, Rathkeale, bought two further horns from an individual for \$10,000.

The horns can fetch up to €200,000 each in the Far East, where they are used in traditional medicine to treat erectile dysfunction and other conditions, despite having no medical value whatsoever.

Both of Slattery's co-accused have already been sentenced in the US and it was "virtually certain" that Slattery was facing a one year sentence in America, the court heard.