

WASHINGTON, October 14 (RIA Novosti) – A major US wood flooring chain has been accused in a [report](#) by an environmental advocacy group of knowingly purchasing lumber illegally harvested from protected forests in Russia that are home to the endangered Siberian tiger, of which only about 450 remain in the world.

As part of a three year probe, the Washington-based Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) traveled to the Russian saw mills of one of Virginia-based Lumber Liquidators' Chinese-owned suppliers, the Suifenhe Xingjia Economic and Trade Co., according to the report released last week.

Posing as potential buyers, EIA operatives secretly videotaped conversations with Xingjia executives who openly admitted to supplying Western clients with wood products that had been illegally logged in Russia's Far East.

The EIA said it also photographed pallets of wood products labeled with a Lumber Liquidators house brand and tracked their passage through Russian, Chinese and US customs records.

The Lacey Act, a 113 year-old US federal conservation [statute](#) prohibiting trade in endangered fish, wildlife and plants that have been illegally acquired was amended in 2008 to include certain wood types to protect against illegal logging. Under the statute, US companies face criminal penalties of up to \$500,000 per violation, [according to The Wall Street Journal](#).

Lumber Liquidator's headquarters in Toano, Virginia, and another location in Richmond, Virginia were raided [last month](#) by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations department, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Justice Department according to The Wall Street Journal.

The EIA said it had handed its findings to federal authorities before the raid, and agents were looking for evidence that the company had imported wood from Russia's Far East, the Journal reported last week, quoting a person familiar with the matter. A Lumber Liquidators spokesman [told Home Channel News](#), a home improvement building material industry news website, on Friday that the EIA report contained “unsubstantiated claims” and “numerous inaccuracies.”

The spokesman added, "We support protection of the environment and responsible forest management, and if we find that any of the company's suppliers are not adhering to our standards, we will discontinue sourcing from those suppliers."