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Former San Antonio Zoo Veterinarian Joins In Defense of Animals in Blasting Controversial Elephant Move Exhibit is far too small and jeopardizes both elephants

San Rafael, Calif. – In Defense of Animals (IDA), joined by a former San Antonio Zoo veterinarian, is blasting the zoo for placing a second elephant in its small and outdated display. The zoo today announced that it has acquired an Asian elephant named Queenie who has been the focus of an intense campaign to send her to a California sanctuary. The zoo was already under pressure for keeping a solitary Asian elephant, Lucky, in the unnatural display.

“This is a losing proposition for both Lucky and Queenie, who should be living in a natural-habitat sanctuary with room to roam and companions of their own choosing,” said Catherine Doyle, IDA elephant campaign director. “The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the San Antonio Zoo should be ashamed of this disgraceful outcome that completely ignores the welfare of these elephants by forcing them into a tiny and grossly inadequate display that is unfit for one elephant, much less two.”

Dr. Mel Richardson, a captive wildlife consultant and veterinarian who worked at the San Antonio Zoo from 1991 through 1995, expressed concerns for the elephants’ safety. In a statement released today he said: “Both Lucky and Queenie have histories of not getting along with other elephants. Putting them together in an antiquated and too-small display is a recipe for disaster. The key to safely and successfully integrating elephants starts with space and plenty of it.”

IDA is further appalled that, according to knowledgeable sources, the zoo did not fully evaluate Queenie to determine any behavioral or health issues that would impact the elephants’ safety and ability to integrate.

“Queenie should be allowed to retire to the PAWS Sanctuary where she would have the best possible quality of life, including a 50-acre habitat to roam, high quality care, and the peace and quiet she deserves after a lifetime of suffering in the circus,” said Doyle. “The San Antonio Zoo is just the wrong place for Queenie or any other elephant.”

The San Antonio Zoo acquired Queenie as part of a USDA settlement agreement that waived \$85,000 out of \$100,000 in fines against Queenie’s handler in exchange for the elephant’s transfer to the zoo. He had been charged with multiple violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act.

For more information, please visit www.HelpElephants.com

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In Defense of Animals is an international animal protection organization located in San Rafael, Calif. dedicated to protecting animals' rights, welfare, and habitat through education, outreach, and our hands-on rescue facilities in Mumbai, India, Cameroon, Africa, and rural Mississippi.

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