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A Christmas query: Will the feds bust Santa Claus for his many crimes?

WASHINGTON, DC — When Santa Claus comes to town this week, he'd better watch out — because the federal government may be making a list of his crimes (and checking it twice), the Libertarian Party warned today.

"Hark the federal agents sing, Santa is guilty of nearly everything," said the party's press secretary, George Getz. "The feds know when Santa's been bad or good — and he's been *bad*, for goodness sakes."

Does Santa belong in the slammer? Instead of stuffing stockings, should he be making license plates? Yes, said Getz, if he's held to the same standard as a typical American. For example:

■ Every December 25, the illegal immigrant known as Santa Claus crosses the border into the United States without a passport. He carries concealed contraband, which he sneaks into the country in order to avoid inspection by the U.S. Customs Service.

■ Look at how this international fugitive gets around: Santa flies in a custom-built sleigh that hasn't been approved by the FAA. He never files a flight plan. He has no pilot's license. In the dark of night, he rides the skies with just a tiny bioluminescent red light to guide him — a clear violation of traffic safety regulations.

■ Pulling Santa's sleigh: Eight tiny reindeer, a federally protected species being put to hard labor. None of these reindeer have their required shots, and Santa never bothered to get these genetically-engineered animals registered and licensed.

■ But Crooked Claus harms more than just animals — he's hurting hard-working American laborers, too. Isn't Santa's Workshop really Santa's Sweatshop, where his non-union employees don't make minimum wage and get no holiday pay? It's a Third-World elf-exploitation operation that only Kathy Lee Gifford could love.

■ No wonder Santa is able to maintain his monopoly over the toy distribution industry: He's cornered the Christmas gift market. Santa dares to give away his products for free in a sinister attempt to crush all competition — just like Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Antitrust Lawsuit Memo to Janet Reno: *Is Santa Claus the Bill Gates of Christmas?*

The bottom line, said Getz: "It might be tough sledding for Jolly Saint Nick this Christmas if the government decides to prosecute him.

"We're just surprised it hasn't already happened. After all, Santa Claus is everything that politicians aren't: He's popular, reliable, and gives us something for nothing every December 25th — instead of taking our money every April 15th."

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