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IPR Center Celebrates World IP Day by seizing \$263 million in counterfeit goods

Federal, state and local law enforcement team up in anti-counterfeiting sweeps around the U.S.

WASHINGTON — The federal partners of the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) announced April 26 that more than \$263 million worth of counterfeit merchandise was seized by law enforcement around the country this month. John Morton, assistant secretary of Homeland Security for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), revealed these results at an observance of World Intellectual Property Day at the IPR Center in Arlington, Va.

More than \$44 million was seized in “Operation Spring Cleaning,” a massive nationwide joint enforcement operation involving federal, state and local partners of the IPR Center. An additional \$219 million was seized this month as part of a long-term ICE investigation worked with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) of counterfeit products manufactured in Asia and smuggled through the Port of Baltimore.

In “Spring Cleaning,” 45 persons were arrested on federal and state counterfeiting charges and 703,684 items of counterfeit merchandise were seized in operations in dozens of cities across the United States, including Seattle, Dallas, Houston, New York, Miami, Detroit and Norfolk, Va. The seized counterfeit merchandise includes everything from counterfeit DVDs, circuit breakers, pharmaceuticals, video games and controllers, exercise equipment, sportswear and luxury goods.

“The smuggling and trafficking of counterfeit goods pose a triple threat to the United States,” said ICE Assistant Secretary John Morton. “It robs Americans of jobs, it diverts legitimate revenue from responsible industries to the pockets of organized crime and it creates great risks for the American consumers – encouraging the cheap production of everything from substandard goods to tainted pharmaceutical products.”

The IPR Center, which has united the U.S. government agencies that combat intellectual property theft, welcomed three significant new partners to the center at the ceremony: the U.S. General Services Administration, Office of the Inspector General (GSA-OIG), Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS). NCIS and DCIS will focus on the protection of the U.S. military from counterfeit and substandard products while GSA’s Office of the Inspector General will focus on protecting the federal civilian supply chain.

They join ICE, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the FBI, the Department of Commerce, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Postal Inspection Service (P.I.S.) and the Government of Mexico Tax Administrative Service.

“The infrastructure of government is threatened when the United States purchases counterfeit products. Working with the IPR Center is a unique opportunity that will strengthen the GSA Office of Inspector General’s efforts to better protect the government supply chain,” said GSA Inspector General Brian D. Miller.

“The IPR Center will be a valuable tool for the Defense Criminal Investigative Service in our efforts to protect America's war fighters,” said James B. Burch, Deputy Inspector General for Investigations, Office of Inspector General, Department of Defense. “Crimes such as product substitution, sub-standard parts and loss or compromise of sensitive military technology to potential adversaries directly impacts the safety and welfare of our service men and women, especially in areas where we have ongoing overseas contingency operations.”

“The Naval Criminal Investigative Service is fully committed to combating the infiltration of counterfeit electronics and other substandard materiel into the military system. Product substitution — using counterfeit parts — is a crime. It degrades the quality of equipment used by the armed forces, and poses an unacceptable safety and security risk for members of the Department of Defense. NCIS recognizes the need to work collaboratively with other agencies and private industry in our effort to ensure the highest possible quality of technology used by our service members and to pursue those individuals and companies who are engaged in this criminal activity,” said Mark Ridley, NCIS Deputy Director for Operations.

At the event, the IPR Center also announced the formation of 22 IP Theft Enforcement Teams (IPTETs) with 70 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies around the country to join the 10 federal partners of the IPR Center in collaborating on activities to more effectively combat IP theft nationwide.

World IP Day was instituted by the World IP Organization to raise awareness of the threat posed globally by the theft of trademark and intellectual property rights and the dangers posed by counterfeit and substandard products.

The IPR Center is one of the U.S. government's key weapons in the fight against counterfeiting. The IPR Center offers one-stop shopping for both law enforcement and the private sector to address the growing transnational threat of counterfeit merchandise. The IPR Center coordinates outreach to U.S. rights holders and conducts domestic and international law enforcement training to stem the growing counterfeiting threat as well as coordinating and directing anti-counterfeiting investigations. To learn more about the IPR Center go to www.ice.gov. Report information on counterfeiting and trademark violations at (866) IPR-2060.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit: www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.