



The United States Attorney's Office

Eastern District of California

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Bakersfield Business Owner Indicted for Trafficking in Counterfeit Goods

FRESNO, Calif. — United States Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner announced that a federal grand jury returned an indictment today against Eric Huggins, 51, of Bakersfield, charging him with one count of trafficking in counterfeit goods.

This case is the result of an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). Assistant United States Attorney David Gappa is prosecuting the case.

“Vendors who sell counterfeit products are stealing - they’re robbing from law-abiding merchants, from the legitimate companies that make these products, and from the men and women who depend on those legitimate companies for their livelihood,” said Michael Toms, resident agent in charge for ICE HSI in Bakersfield. “Trafficking in counterfeit goods is a serious crime, which is why ICE HSI will continue to target retailers and websites that engage in this type of activity.”

According to court documents, Huggins has operated a business called Girlfriends by Design at two different locations in Bakersfield. When undercover investigators visited the business, Huggins told one of them that he could put “any logo,” such as Prada or Gucci, on numerous plain purses that he was selling. In addition to the two stores, the affidavit alleges Huggins also sold counterfeit goods from the back of a vehicle in various parking lots around Bakersfield. Much of that merchandise was counterfeit professional sports apparel such as NBA and NFL jerseys.

Searches in March 2010 at the Girlfriends by Design stores on Ming Avenue and 19th Street and at Huggins’s Bakersfield home resulted in the seizure of more than \$140,000 in counterfeit clothing and accessories bearing the labels of well-known designer brands such as Chanel, Coach, Prada, Dooney & Bourke, Burberry, True Religion, Kate Spade, Juicy Couture, as well as counterfeit sports apparel and merchandise, some with Adidas and Reebok labels. The estimated value of the seized goods is based upon what the items would have sold for had they been genuine.

Huggins has been released on numerous pretrial conditions, and his next court appearance is March 1, 2011, at 1:30 p.m. before a federal magistrate judge in Fresno. If convicted, Huggins faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, a \$2 million fine, and a three-year term of supervised release. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory sentencing factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

A charge in an indictment is only an allegation, and a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.