



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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**U.S. ARRESTS ARMY PILOT FOR DEALING
IN STOLEN EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and SALVATORE DALESSANDRO, the Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the Department of Homeland Security's United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), announced today the arrest of EDWARD GEORGE JOHNSON, an active U.S. Army helicopter pilot, on charges relating to his sale of stolen Egyptian antiquities. According to the Complaint unsealed earlier today in Manhattan federal court:

In late September 2002, approximately 370 pre-dynastic artifacts were stolen from the Ma'adi Museum near Cairo, Egypt. The artifacts, dating to 3000 B.C. and earlier, were originally discovered during an excavation in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s.

JOHNSON -- a Chief Warrant Officer with the United States Army whose duties include piloting and commanding attack and scout helicopters -- was deployed to Cairo from February to October of 2002. In January 2003, JOHNSON contacted an art dealer in Texas and offered to sell the dealer a collection of Egyptian antiquities. JOHNSON told the art dealer that his grandfather had acquired the antiquities when he worked in Egypt in the 1930s and 1940s, and that the antiquities had remained in the family ever since. Based on JOHNSON's representations regarding the antiquities' provenance, the art dealer paid approximately \$20,000 to JOHNSON for approximately eighty pieces. The art dealer later consigned pieces from that collection to galleries and collectors in New York, London, Zurich, and Montreal.

Two experts, after examining photographs of the antiquities that JOHNSON sold, have determined that, contrary to JOHNSON's representations, the majority of the pieces are part of the lot that was stolen from the museum near Cairo in September

2002.

JOHNSON was arrested yesterday in Enterprise, Alabama, and is expected to be presented today at 4 p.m. in federal court in Montgomery, Alabama. JOHNSON is 44 years old and resides in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

JOHNSON was charged with one count of transportation of stolen property and one count of wire fraud. If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of ten years' imprisonment on the stolen property count and five years' imprisonment on the wire fraud count.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative work of ICE.

This case is being prosecuted by the Major Crimes Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office. Assistant United States Attorney SARAH LAI is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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