



Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, November 29, 2010

Federal Courts Order Seizure of 82 Website Domains Involved in Selling Counterfeit Goods as Part of DOJ and ICE Cyber Monday Crackdown

WASHINGTON – Seizure orders have been executed against 82 domain names of commercial websites engaged in the illegal sale and distribution of counterfeit goods and copyrighted works as part of Operation In Our Sites v. 2.0, Attorney General Eric Holder and Director John Morton of the Department of Homeland Security’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced today.

The coordinated federal law enforcement operation targeted online retailers of a diverse array of counterfeit goods, including sports equipment, shoes, handbags, athletic apparel and sunglasses as well as illegal copies of copyrighted DVD boxed sets, music and software.

During the course of the operation, federal law enforcement agents made undercover purchases from online retailers suspected of selling counterfeit goods. In many instances, the goods were shipped directly into the United States from suppliers in other countries using international express mail. If the goods were confirmed as counterfeit or otherwise illegal, seizure orders for the domain names of the websites that sold the goods were obtained from U.S. magistrate judges. Individuals attempting to access the websites will now find a banner notifying them that the domain name of that website has been seized by federal authorities.

"By seizing these domain names, we have disrupted the sale of thousands of counterfeit items, while also cutting off funds to those willing to exploit the ingenuity of others for their own personal gain," said Attorney General Holder. "Intellectual property crimes are not victimless. The theft of ideas and the sale of counterfeit goods threaten economic opportunities and financial stability, suppress innovation and destroy jobs. The Justice Department, with the help of our law enforcement partners, is changing the perception that these crimes are risk-free with enforcement actions like the one announced today."

"The sale of counterfeit U.S. brands on the Internet steals the creative work of others, costs our economy jobs and revenue and can threaten the health and safety of American consumers," said

ICE Director John Morton. “The protection of intellectual property is a top priority for Homeland Security Investigations and the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center. We are dedicated to protecting the jobs, the income and the tax revenue that disappear when counterfeit goods are trafficked.”

The operation builds upon Operation in Our Sites I, which was announced in June 2010. In that first action of this broader law enforcement initiative, authorities executed seizure warrants against nine domain names of websites offering pirated copies of first-run movies.

The nationwide operation was spearheaded by the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) led by ICE’s Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), in coordination with the Criminal Division’s Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section and nine U.S. Attorneys’ Offices including the Southern District of New York; District of Columbia; Middle District of Florida; District of Colorado; Southern District of Texas; Central District of California; Northern District of Ohio; District of New Jersey; and the Western District of Washington. The Criminal Division’s Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section also provided significant assistance.

The IPR Center is one of the U.S. government’s key weapons in the fight against criminal counterfeiting and piracy. The IPR Center is led by ICE’s HSI and includes partners from U.S. Customs and Border Protection; the FBI; the Department of Commerce; the Food and Drug Administration; the Postal Inspection Service; the General Services Administration, Office of the Inspector General; the Naval Criminal Investigative Service; the Defense Criminal Investigative Service; the Army Criminal Investigative Division’s Major Procurement Fraud Unit; the Consumer Product Safety Commission, INTERPOL; and the Government of Mexico Tax Administrative Service. The IPR Center allows law enforcement and the private sector jointly to address the growing transnational problem of counterfeit products. The IPR Center coordinates outreach to U.S. rights holders and conducts domestic and international law enforcement as well as coordinates and directs anti-counterfeiting investigations. To learn more about the IPR Center, visit www.ice.gov.

The enforcement actions announced today are an example of the type of efforts being undertaken by the Department of Justice Task Force on Intellectual Property (IP Task Force). Attorney General Eric Holder created the IP Task Force to combat the growing number of domestic and international intellectual property crimes, protect the health and safety of American consumers, and safeguard the nation’s economic security against those who seek to profit illegally from American creativity, innovation and hard work. The IP Task Force seeks to strengthen intellectual property rights protection through heightened criminal and civil enforcement, greater coordination among federal, state and local law enforcement partners, and increased focus on international enforcement efforts, including reinforcing relationships with key foreign partners and U.S. industry leaders. To learn more about the IP Task Force, go to www.justice.gov/dag/iptaskforce/.