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## Recent Releases

Library

Images and Videos

Fact vs. Fiction

Legal Notices

Media Kit

Widgets

Find releases based on

Location (State)...

Month...

Topic...

Search all news releases

## Tags

287g Immigration and Nationality Act; Contraband; Counter Proliferation Investigations; Cultural Property, Art and Antiquities Investigations; Document & Benefit Fraud; Enforcement & Removal Federal Protective Service; Financial Crimes/Cornerstone; Gangs; Human Rights Violators; Human Trafficking/Smuggling; Intellectual Property Rights; Predator; Secure Communities; Student and Exchange Visitor Information System; Worksite; Other

Newsroom » Recent Releases

## News Releases

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JUNE 30, 2010 LOS ANGELES, CA

### "Operation In Our Sites" targets Internet movie pirates ICE, Manhattan U.S. Attorney seize multiple Web sites for criminal copyright violations

LOS ANGELES - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York (SDNY) announced the launch Wednesday of "Operation In Our Sites," a new initiative aimed at Internet counterfeiting and piracy.

In the first action carried out as part of the initiative, authorities executed seizure warrants against 10 domain names of Web sites that were offering first-run movies, often within hours of their theatrical release. Eight of those sites were targeted for seizure by the SDNY. Agents from ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) also seized assets from 15 bank, Paypal, investment and advertising accounts, and executed four residential search warrants in several states.

ICE Assistant Secretary John Morton, joined on a Los Angeles soundstage by senior representatives from major movie studios, entertainment unions and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), made clear that the theft of such intellectual property is a serious crime and one the U.S. government has made a priority combating.

Copyrighted material is known as intellectual property (IP) under the law.

"ICE and our partners at the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center are targeting pirate Web sites run by people who have no respect for creativity and innovation," said ICE Assistant Secretary Morton, who was in Southern California to meet with the leaders of the movie industry. "We are dedicated to protecting the jobs, the income and the tax revenue that disappear when organized criminals traffic in stolen movies for their own profit."

"Criminal copyright infringement occurs on a massive scale over the Internet, reportedly resulting in billions of dollars in losses to the U.S. economy," said Preet Bharara, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, whose office handled the seizure warrants of seven domain names Wednesday. "That translates into lost jobs and real hardships for ordinary working people. That's why we took the actions we did. If your business model is movie piracy, your story will not have a happy ending."

"Content theft online has become increasingly ubiquitous as technology and software improve and access to the Internet increases," said Mike Robinson, chief of operations, content protection for the MPAA. "We are committed to working with law enforcement to get the illegal choices out of the marketplace and instead focus on continuing to offer more innovative and flexible legal options to consumers to enjoy the movies and TV shows that we all love. The American motion picture and television industry is one of our nation's most valuable cultural and economic resources. We are grateful to ICE, the Obama Administration, and the federal agencies that have made the protection of intellectual property a priority for the United States."

"We are facing a dramatic rise in the number of foreign and domestic Web sites that are in the business of making films and television shows - created by our members - available for illegal download or streaming," said Kathy Garmez, associate executive director of government and international affairs for the Directors Guild of America. "If left unchecked, this illegal activity threatens the very ability of filmmakers to both earn a living and create the content that is enjoyed by billions around the world."

"We commend the action of ICE and the IPR Center in striking a significant blow against those who seek to profit from the copyrighted intellectual property of others," said Matthew D. Loeb, president of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE). "Intellectual property is the basis of our modern economy. The stealing of digital content is not a victimless crime; it's also the theft of tens of thousands of American jobs."

The National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center), based in Virginia and managed by ICE, is directing the government's response to a crime that is estimated to cost American industry billions of dollars and hundreds of jobs every year. Its "Operation In Our Sites" is targeting not only films and music, but other items distributed over the Internet, such as counterfeit pharmaceuticals, software, electronics, games and other products that threaten public health and safety.

The investigation involving SDNY together with the ICE New York Special Agent in Charge and the IPR Center resulted in the seizure warrants for eight domain names: TVSHACK.NET, TVSHACK.CC, MOVIES-LINKS.TV, FILESPUMP.COM, NOW-MOVIES.COM, PLANETMOVIEZ.COM, THEPIRATECITY.ORG, and ZML.COM. In an undercover capacity, investigators downloaded various newly released movies from the Web sites and their affiliates, to identify those Web sites that were involved in the distribution of stolen content.

Also on Wednesday, as a result of a months-long operation, the IPR Center seized the domain names and Web site content of NinjaVideo.net and NinjaThis.net, both of which generated revenue from donations and advertising. These sites allowed visitors to stream or download popular television shows and movies. Over the course of the investigation, agents observed links to more than 200 movies and more than 300 television programs on the NinjaVideo site. This investigation resulted in the execution of federal search warrants for their content and domain name at servers in the United States and the Netherlands. HSI agents also executed four residential search warrants in North Carolina, New Jersey, New York and Washington. The case is ongoing.

The IPR Center has united the U.S. government agencies that combat intellectual property theft. In addition to ICE, the partners include: 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; and the Government of Mexico Tax Administrative Service.

The IPR Center is one of the U.S. government's key weapons in the fight against counterfeiting and piracy. The IPR Center offers assistance 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](http://www.ice.gov).

Report information on counterfeiting and trademark violations at (866) IPR-2060.

For more images from Operation In Our Sites, visit the [ICE media gallery](#).

You may also visit us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE is a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit [www.ICE.gov](http://www.ICE.gov). To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423 or complete our [tip form](#).

