



National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center

# Stakeholder Update

from the IPR Center's

## Outreach and Training Section



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### HSI-led investigation leads to \$300K worth of counterfeit goods



NEW ORLEANS – When it comes to college football playoff games, sports fans are passionate about their sports apparel, especially when purchasing national championship gear to help preserve the thrill of victory. However, in New Orleans, the agony of defeat is being felt among a handful of vendors caught selling counterfeit merchandise during the 2020 College Football Playoff National Championship Game between LSU and Clemson.

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in New Orleans – working cooperatively with state and local law enforcement agencies – seized more than 700 counterfeit items, including championship rings and necklaces with New Orleans Saints, LSU and Clemson markings. Agents also seized shirts, bracelets, patches and scarves bringing the total retail value of the goods – had they been real – to more than \$300 thousand dollars.

The enforcement effort, dubbed “Operation College Football Gold 20,” targeted goods being sold in violation of federal law concerning the illegal importation and sale of counterfeit goods in the United States. The HSI-led investigation was conducted jointly with assistance from the Louisiana State Police, Louisiana Attorney General’s Office, Customs and Border Protection, and the New Orleans Police Department.

Public safety representatives from the Mercedes-Benz Superdome also provided assistance, along with private investigators and intellectual property rights experts from Prudence Investigative Organization which is contracted by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to combat the trafficking of counterfeit goods bearing NCAA and associated members’ markings.

Operation College Football Gold 20 is part of the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center’s *Operation Team Player* that targets the sale and trafficking of counterfeit sports merchandise, apparel, equipment, and tickets. Because this is a multi-million dollar criminal industry, the trafficking of these items is extremely lucrative and becomes more profitable in markets involving successful and popular teams. The culmination of a sports season involving playoffs and championship games are events that stimulate the sale of counterfeit items.

To learn more about Operation Team Player, please visit <https://www.iprcenter.gov/file-repository/ipu-operation-team-player.pdf/view>

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