



Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center Stakeholder Update

May 2, 2019

IPR Center partners with VA to fight counterfeits



WASHINGTON – The National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) today expanded its partnerships to include the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG). The VA OIG became the 25th partner after its leadership signed an agreement with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)-led IPR Center to enhance collaboration in the fight against intellectual property theft.

IPR Center Director Steve Francis and Joseph Oliver, deputy assistant inspector general for investigations, pledged to open the lines of communication regarding the illegal importation and distribution of counterfeit goods – including pharmaceuticals – that could threaten the protection of VA programs and the health and safety of veterans.

“We are pleased to welcome the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General to our growing family of agencies and organizations that have joined us to stand united in the ongoing fight against counterfeit goods and fraud,” Francis said. “We are especially grateful for the opportunity to expand our collaboration with the VA to address the challenges we face to ensure the safety and well-being of our veterans.”

“Partnering with the IPR Center and other federal law enforcement agencies presents an excellent opportunity for our office to meet our commitment to protecting veterans from counterfeit pharmaceuticals and medical devices or other goods that pose a threat to their safety,” Oliver said.

A signing ceremony was hosted by the IPR Center, which also counts the Mexican Revenue Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, INTERPOL, Europol and the United Kingdom as international members. In addition to the five international organizations, there are 20 other partnerships aligned with the IPR Center including U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the FBI.



The addendum signed today builds a strong relationship much like the one the IPR Center enjoys with other partners, including the U.S. Department of Defense. In June 2011, HSI initiated Operation Chain Reaction to combat the proliferation of counterfeit goods into the Department of Defense and federal government supply chains. While individual agencies have focused on counterfeit and misbranded items entering the federal supply chain, Chain Reaction was the first operation that IPR Center partners collectively addressed in this ongoing problem.

The new partnership with the VA strengthens the mission of the IPR Center – established in 2008 – that continues to serve as one of the U.S. government's key weapons in the fight against criminal counterfeiting and piracy. The Center uses the expertise of its member agencies to share information, develop initiatives, coordinate enforcement actions, and conduct investigations related to intellectual property theft. Through this strategic interagency partnership, the IPR Center protects the public's health and safety, the U.S. economy, and warfighters.

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