



IPRC Connections

National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center

A Special Edition: Super Bowl LIV (54)

Volume 2 Issue 2

February 2020



“Every day, cargo containers containing billions of dollars’ worth of counterfeit goods enter the United States through its land, sea and air ports of entry.

This year’s record-breaking ‘Operation Team Player’ results affirm HSI’s commitment to protecting American consumers, the economy, and legitimate business, by ensuring Super Bowl 54 is not compromised by transnational criminal networks exploiting fan enthusiasm for illicit profits.

Sports fans from around the world, who’ve spent their hard-earned money to support their favorite NFL team, deserve to receive genuine, high-quality officially licensed merchandise in return.”

Steve K. Francis



Operation Team Player seizes record-breaking \$123M worth of counterfeit sports gear

MIAMI – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) teamed up to announce the seizure of more than 176,000 counterfeit sports-related items with a street value of an estimated \$123 million, through a collaborative enforcement operation targeting international shipments of counterfeit merchandise into the United States.

The seizures were part of Operation Team Player (OTP), an ongoing effort developed by the HSI-led Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) to target the illegal importation and distribution of counterfeit sports merchandise.

IPR Center Director Steve Francis joined federal, state



and local law enforcement officials to announce details of the operation during a joint press conference with the National Football League (NFL), HSI, CBP and the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD).

Special agents from HSI teamed with industry, CBP, Miami-Dade police officers and other partner agencies to identify flea

markets, retail outlets and street vendors selling counterfeit goods during the week leading up to Super Bowl LIV (54). They seized fake jerseys, jewelry, hats, cell-phone accessories and thousands of other bogus items prepared to be sold to unsuspecting consumers. You can read the news release on Operation Team Player on www.iprcenter.gov

NFL supports Operation Team Player

During a joint press conference in Miami, the NFL commended law enforcement for their cooperative efforts to keep the Super Bowl safe.

“Operation Team Player remains one of the most important national initiatives for protecting sports

fans from the sale of counterfeit products and counterfeit tickets. The joint efforts of the NFL, the IPR Center, HSI, CBP, and Miami area law enforcement have helped ensure that Super Bowl LIV remains an authentic and outstanding experience for our fans,” said

NFL Vice President of Legal Affairs, Dolores DiBella. “The NFL is committed to supporting these anti-counterfeiting and consumer protection measures, and extends its gratitude for the year-round support of law enforcement partners...in Operation Team Player.”

Operation Team Player: a record of success

The IPR Center initiated Operation Team Player in June 2013 to target 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.

Throughout the year, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) field offices determine the most effective mechanisms to initiate enforcement operations in their area of responsibility. This year, the Super Bowl shifted to Miami, Florida, where federal, state and local law enforcement have a rich history of allied cooperation.



Additionally, HSI in Orlando also supported the multi-faceted law enforcement efforts during the 2020 National Football League (NFL) Pro Bowl on January 26.

HSI Orlando, working with the assistance of the office of the special agent in charge in Tampa, coordinated with the NFL; Customs and

Border Protection; the Orlando Police Department; the Orange County Sheriff's Office; the Seminole County Sheriff's Office and the Oviedo Police Department, targeting importers of suspected counterfeit merchandise.

Last year, HSI announced that enforcement actions related to Operation Team Player resulted in the seizure of \$24.2 million worth of counterfeit sports-merchandise. Enforcement actions related to this year's operation led to a 400 percent increase in the overall MSRP of seized goods from Super Bowl 53.

Throughout the year, the IPR Center led coordinated efforts with major sporting leagues to target contraband that impacts the economy, enables additional criminality and poses potential health and safety hazards to the public.

Last year, HSI announced that enforcement actions related to Operation Team Player resulted in the seizure of \$24.2 million worth of counterfeit sports-merchandise. Enforcement actions related to this year's operation led to a 400 percent increase in the overall MSRP of seized goods from Super Bowl 53.

"To protect both private industry and consumers, CBP has made IPR enforcement a priority trade issue. We have developed a multi-layered, strategic approach to IPR enforcement, that uses technology to increase interdiction of fake goods, facilitate partnerships with industry and enhance enforcement efforts through the sharing of information and intelligence," said Christopher D. Maston, CBP Miami International

Airport port director. "We are honored to be working with a far-reaching network of law enforcement partners, public safety agencies and stakeholders to support efforts enforcing the nation's Intellectual Property Rights laws in Miami for Super Bowl 54." "When fans spend their hard earned money on NFL tickets and mer-

chandise, they deserve the real deal," said MDPD Maj. Eric Garcia. "The Miami-Dade Police Department is fully committed to collaborating and partnering with our local, state and federal law enforcement partners to proactively enforce laws related to counterfeit merchandise in order to protect businesses and consumers."



For more information, please visit our website, www.iprcenter.gov. You can also follow the IPR Center on Twitter: @IPRCenter