



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations



SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

OPERATION TEAM PLAYER

The National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) initiated Operation Team Player in June 2013 to target the sale and trafficking of counterfeit sports merchandise, apparel 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. The IPR Center works with the appropriate HSI office to assist in coordinating operations, related press releases and press events for significant sporting events involving all major sports organizations to include the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, and National

Collegiate Athletic Association. The IPR Center coordinates with the NFL and the host HSI office for the Super Bowl to announce annual seizure numbers for Team Player, and inform the public of the threat counterfeit items present to the U.S. economy and public health and safety.

Past successful operations have included the targeting of retail stores, flea markets and vendors. Additional targeting is coordinated with U.S. Customs and Border Protection as well as the National Targeting Center to target inbound shipments of counterfeit sports apparel and other items at ports of entry across the United States. The IPR Center also strongly encourages HSI offices to coordinate operations with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and state and local law enforcement agencies.

