



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

HSI, local partners seize nearly \$4 million in counterfeit pharmaceuticals, goods

COLUMBIA, S.C.—Special agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), working jointly with the South Carolina Secretary of State's Office, Blazer Investigations and Pfizer, seized approximately \$4 million in counterfeit goods and pharmaceuticals during a two-week operation that ran from Feb. 19 through Wednesday.

“The illegal importation and sale of counterfeit goods is a significant problem that affects our economy, impacts American jobs and innovation, puts the public's health and safety at risk, and at times, threatens our national security,” said Brock D. Nicholson, special agent in charge for HSI Atlanta. “Consumers should know that if they buy pirated, counterfeit and/or unlicensed products, they are hurting legitimate businesses, and they may also be facilitating criminal activity. Imposter drugs like those seized during this operation pose a serious threat to buyers who mistakenly assume these substances are safe.”

“Counterfeit merchandise is a lose-lose situation, harming those retailers who play by the rules and cheating consumers out of the quality products they need or deserve,” said South Carolina Secretary of State Mark Hammond. “Fake medicine takes this harm to another level because it can literally kill you. Consumers need to be aware that just because a counterfeit pill looks like a name-brand product, the chemicals and by-products it contains may be dangerous to ingest. Passing off so-called ‘pharmaceuticals’ as a cheap alternative to name-brand medicine is a prescription for disaster. I am very pleased that these fakes are off of our streets.”

During the two-week operation, HSI special agents and partner law enforcement officers seized approximately \$3.6 million in counterfeit pharmaceuticals including Viagra, Cialis and Proscar shipped from India to a warehouse in Columbia. The operation also netted the seizure of more than \$290,000 of counterfeit and pirated goods infringing on trademarked brands like Coach, Prada, Ray Ban, Golf Pride and TaylorMade. Allegedly, the counterfeit and pirated goods were shipped from China to the same reshipping warehouse in Columbia.

The total manufacturer's suggested retail value of the seized goods is approximately \$3.9 million.

As the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security, HSI plays a leading role in targeting criminal organizations responsible for producing, smuggling and distributing counterfeit products. HSI investigations focus not only on keeping counterfeit products off U.S. streets, but also on dismantling the criminal organizations behind such activity.

This investigation was supported by the HSI-led National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Coordination Center in Washington. The IPR Center is one of the U.S. government's key weapons in the fight against criminal counterfeiting and piracy. As a task force, the IPR Center uses the expertise of its 21-member agencies to share information, develop initiatives, coordinate

enforcement actions and conduct investigations related to IP theft. Through this strategic interagency partnership, the IPR Center protects the public's health and safety and the U.S. economy.

For more information on the IPR Center, please visit www.IPRCenter.gov.

HSI encourages the public to report intellectual property rights violations and related information by calling at 1-866-DHS-2ICE or by visiting www.ICE.gov/tips. For more information, visit www.ice.gov.

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ICE

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. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.