



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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News Releases

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ICE returns stolen cultural religious artifacts to Peru

MIAMI - Eight Peruvian cultural religious artifacts previously seized by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) were returned to the government of Peru yesterday by ICE's Office of Investigations in Miami.

The artifacts, which were seized in 2007 and 2008, include two small wooden statutes, a metal statue, two pendants, a crucifix, a painting and a church vestment.

The investigation, which was headed by the ICE Office of Investigations in Miami, began in October 2007 after the Peruvian government contacted ICE special agents about the alleged illegal sale of Peruvian cultural property. ICE special agents initiated an investigation and obtained information that a Miami resident was allegedly selling the items on eBay.

ICE special agents subsequently interviewed the Miami resident regarding a Peruvian trunk which he had for sale on eBay. The eBay advertisement stated that the trunk was an eighteenth century vestment chest, full of real gold and silver church vestments that would be auctioned separately. ICE special agents seized the trunk and church vestment items pending their authentication.

On Nov. 2008, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at Miami International Airport encountered the same Miami resident after arriving from Peru. An inspection of the individual's luggage revealed multiple items believed to be part of the cultural patrimony of Peru. CBP officers detained all the items and contacted ICE.

A subsequent inspection of all the items revealed that they were authentic and a part of the cultural patrimony of Peru. Under Peruvian law, all of the items seized are protected and cannot be exported without the proper documentation which includes the written permission from the Institute of National Culture (INC) in Peru.

Peru's patrimony laws prohibit the illicit export and transfer of ownership of cultural property. Items must be presented to the INC for their approval prior to being exported. If the item is not part of the cultural patrimony of Peru, the INC will issue a certificate stating that it is appropriate for the piece to be exported. An item deemed to be cultural patrimony is owned by Peru. If a cultural piece is illegally exported, it is considered stolen from Peru under Peruvian cultural patrimony laws.

The U.S. violation is for importing stolen property. Cultural items that arrive in the United States without permission are subject to seizure and forfeiture and the importer could face criminal charges.

"The artifacts we have recovered are a significant part of the cultural history of Peru and no one should profit from smuggled antiquities," said Anthony V. Mangione, special agent in charge of ICE's Office of Investigations in Miami. "This repatriation demonstrates the success of cooperative efforts among foreign governments and U.S. law enforcement authorities."

Deputy Consul General of Peru Jaime Arrospe said, "Thanks to ICE's successful work, the cooperation of the U.S. government through the application of the Memorandum of Understanding between our two countries, Peru is once again recuperating archeological pieces being part of our cultural patrimony."

"The artifacts are priceless to Peru's cultural history and the seizure and return for repatriation is significant in that it highlights the cooperation and efforts taken by our agencies and governments to protect human history for future generations," said Director of Field Operations in Miami Harold Woodward.

ICE, the largest investigative agency of the Department of Homeland Security, handles investigations into stolen or illegally exported cultural artifacts that show up on the world market.

For more about ICE's cultural heritage investigations, please go to: <http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/factsheets/index.htm> (<http://www.ice.gov/news/library/factsheets/>).

For the most up-to-date ICE information, [sign up \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=USDHSICE\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=USDHSICE) for ICE e-mail alerts. You may also visit us on [Twitter \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://twitter.com/wwwicegov\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://twitter.com/wwwicegov) and [YouTube \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://www.youtube.com/wwwicegov\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://www.youtube.com/wwwicegov).

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.