

The United States Attorney's Office

## Eastern District of New York



[\[Back to Press Releases - Main Page\]](#)

United States Attorney's Office  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **GOVERNMENT SETTLES WITH ART COLLECTOR, ALLOWING TWO RARE CERAMIC ANTIQUITIES TO BE REPATRIATED TO GOVERNMENT OF PERU**

The United States entered into a settlement agreement today with a New York-based collector of Peruvian pre-Columbian antiquities that will allow two rare ceramic pieces to be returned to the government of Peru. The Peruvian government considers the items part of the country's cultural patrimony and believes they were unlawfully exported from Peru. The settlement agreement was approved today by United States District Judge Roslynn R. Mauskopf.

The settlement was announced by United States Attorney Loretta E. Lynch; Robert E. Perez, Director, New York Field Office, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); and James T. Hayes, Jr., Special Agent-in-Charge of United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), in New York.

Acting on information from Peru, the two antiquities, and several others, were seized on August 5, 2009, by CBP and HSI at John F. Kennedy International Airport as they entered the country on a Swiss Air flight from Zurich, Switzerland. HSI and CBP promptly began an investigation into their provenance.

Working closely with leading experts in Peruvian pre-Columbian ceramics, law

enforcement established that the two items had likely originated from the Jequetepeque Valley in Peru from La Mina or another archaeological site nearby in the Lambayeque area. The ceramics experts date the two pieces from between 300 and 360 A.D. These sites were looted in the late 1970s, and items from this area did not reach the art market until the early 1980s. The investigation led law enforcement to conclude that invoices created by the seller and exporter of record, Anton Roeckl, which indicated that Roeckl had purchased the property in Germany in the late 1960s, were untrue.

As part of the settlement agreement, the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York agreed to ask counsel for the Peruvian government to place the two repatriated items in a museum or other cultural institution in Peru.

The seized items are described as: (1) Pot With a Feline on One Side is a whole bottle with a tubular gullet, beveled lip, and stirrup handle. The body of the vase has a globe-like shape and flat base. It shows pictorial decoration and the image of a feline in a lateral position standing up showing its teeth with a spotted body, in high relief. It is an original pre-Hispanic piece of Peruvian origin in the Dos Cabezas (formerly La Mina) sub-style; and (2) Standing Feline is a whole sculpted bottle with tubular gullet and reinforced lip, stirrup handle in the back side of the piece. The feline represented is standing up on his posterior hinds while the arms in the front are held high, showing its palms. The face of the feline shows it with eyes open, mouth open, and tongue on display. It is an original pre-Hispanic piece of Peruvian origin in the Dos Cabezas (formerly La Mina) sub-style.

"We are committed to returning stolen antiquities and artifacts of cultural patrimony to their country of origin," stated United States Attorney Lynch. Ms. Lynch expressed her grateful appreciation to CBP and ICE, the agencies responsible for leading the government's investigation.

"The artifacts we have recovered are a significant part of the cultural history of Peru and will now be returned to their rightful owners," said ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Hayes. "This agreement demonstrates the continued success of cooperative efforts among foreign governments and U.S. law enforcement authorities in returning cultural artifacts and antiquities to their native countries."

CBP Director Perez stated, "On behalf of the United States and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, CBP is honored to have assisted in repatriating these artifacts to the people of Peru. CBP will continue to vigorously enforce international law in the recovery, seizure, and return of stolen antiquities which represent our shared connection as world citizens."

The government's case was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Duncan Levin.