



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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ICE delegation travels to Asia to build on international investigative enforcement cooperation

ICE Director Morton signs critical agreements with China, South Korea officials, furthering international cooperation on intellectual property theft enforcement and other matters

On Sept. 10, 2010, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton began the first leg of an historic trip to Asia. The trip was the first for any ICE director to South Korea and China. Director Morton visited Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou over six days. The focus of the trip was to build international investigative cooperation, especially with regard to intellectual property rights (IPR) enforcement between ICE, the principal investigative arm within the Department of Homeland Security, and law enforcement authorities in China and South Korea.

The first stop was Seoul, where Morton and South Korean Prosecutor General Joon Gyu Kim signed a memorandum of understanding on Sept. 13 to increase cooperation and collaboration on some of the most pressing investigative issues under ICE's jurisdiction. These include intellectual property rights enforcement, counter-proliferation, cyber crime, money laundering and human trafficking and smuggling.

Director Morton also visited the Korea Immigration Service and the Korean National Police headquarters where he met with top law enforcement officials from each of these agencies.

In Beijing, China, Morton signed a letter of intent (LOI) on Sept. 14 with China's Economic Crimes Investigation Department Director General Meng Qing-feng. Under the LOI, ICE and China agree to cooperatively fight IPR crimes and work together on other matters. IP theft is a serious crime of a predatory nature that undermines innovation and costs jobs throughout the world. IP theft threatens our economic stability and national security, restricts the competitiveness of U.S. industry in world markets and places the public's health and safety at risk.

The conduit for cooperation on IP theft enforcement with the Chinese Government is to be the ICE-led National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) in Arlington, Va. The IPR Center is a true task-force, consisting of 13 domestic and foreign investigative agencies dedicated to IP theft enforcement.

At another major event in Beijing on Sept. 15-the Quality Brands Protection Committee (QBPC) meeting-Morton emphasized the need for U.S. law enforcement and Chinese companies to partner together to thwart IPR crimes. The QBPC includes representatives of more than 180 multinational companies, representing more than \$700 billion in investment and thousands of employment opportunities in China. Morton said that IPR crimes cross international borders and pose problems for both China and the United States. He also said private industries have a strong incentive to protect IPR.



"You've made significant investments-but counterfeiters and pirates attempt to hijack that investment for their own gain. Even worse, shoddy or unsafe knock-offs can damage your company's reputation for quality and customer service," said Morton.

Morton also addressed the American Chamber of Commerce of South China, where he was able to meet with representatives of dozens of American companies with interests in China. Morton's message was that the IPR Center and ICE are working tirelessly to address IP theft enforcement so that American companies can focus on innovation and productivity as opposed to spending capital protecting their products.

The China trip also included a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice in Beijing, meetings with the Public Security Bureaus of Shanghai and Guangzhou and a tour of a U.S. company's manufacturing plant in Guangzhou.

Morton visited the customs agencies in each place they visited, including the Korea Customs Service, China Customs in Beijing and Shanghai Customs.

"It has been a tremendous privilege to visit both South Korea and China on behalf of ICE," said Morton. "Meeting with our counterparts in law enforcement in Asia proved that we share common goals and often face a common enemy in organized criminal enterprises, especially those engaged in IP theft. The agreements we reached truly made this trip highly productive and served as another step toward conducting investigations with the coordinated global enforcement necessary to combat transnational crime."