



CASE HIGHLIGHTS

Fiscal Year 2025

Department of the Treasury

Executive Office for Asset Forfeiture

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The following case highlights are intended to give the reader an idea of the types of investigative cases worked by the Treasury Forfeiture Fund's law enforcement agencies that resulted in the seizure and forfeiture of assets during fiscal year 2025. Such cases as those profiled below are consistent with the Strategic Mission and Vision of the Treasury Forfeiture Program, which is to use high-impact asset forfeiture in investigative cases to disrupt and dismantle criminal enterprises.

Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations (IRS-CI) Department of the Treasury

IRS-CI's Historic Bank Case Leads to a \$1.8 Billion Fine

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: Cusack, John. "TD Bank USA AML Fines & Penalties – A Deep Dive," Financial Crime News, October 21, 2024. <https://thefinancialcrimenews.com/td-bank-usa-aml-fines-amp-penalties-a-deep-dive/>; Dobby, Christine. "How an Ambitious Prosecutor and the IRS Caught TD Bank," Bloomberg, March 21, 2025. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2025-03-21/how-an-ambitious-prosecutor-and-the-irs-caught-toronto-dominion-bank>; "FinCEN Assesses Record \$1.3 Billion Penalty against TD Bank," Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, October 10, 2024. <https://www.fincen.gov/news/news-releases/fincen-assesses-record-13-billion-penalty-against-td-bank>; "TD Bank agrees to pay \$3.1 billion to resolve AML allegations," ABA Banking Journal, November 1, 2024. <https://bankingjournal.aba.com/2024/11/td-bank-agrees-to-pay-3-1-billion-to-resolve-aml-allegations/>; "TD Bank Pleads Guilty to Bank Secrecy Act and Money Laundering Conspiracy Violations in \$1.8B Resolution," Office of Public Affairs, U. S. Department of Justice, October 10, 2024. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/td-bank-pleads-guilty-bank-secrecy-act-and-money-laundering-conspiracy-violations-18b>; and information provided by IRS-CI to TEOAF.

In October 2024, an IRS-CI investigation led to TD Bank becoming the first bank in the U.S. to plead guilty to conspiracy to commit money laundering. The investigation revealed a pattern of negligence towards U.S. anti-money laundering (AML) standards. Illicit actors, such as narcotics traffickers, used TD Bank and even complicit employees to integrate their illegal proceeds into the U.S. financial system.

Financial institutions, such as TD Bank, are required to maintain "reasonably designed" procedures that comply with the Bank Secrecy Act to avoid becoming complicit in laundering "dirty money." For example, financial institutions are meant to file currency transaction reports (CTRs) for each cash transaction (or multiple cash transactions split throughout a single day) of more than \$10,000. The CTRs and other AML standards limit criminals' abilities to utilize traditional banking and give law enforcement officials needed information to detect suspicious patterns.

The investigation found consistent issues, from January 2014 to October 2023, in TD Bank's AML program, leading to multiple systematic deficiencies in compliance with U.S. AML standards. A significant factor was the "flat cost paradigm," an internal budget mandate requiring TD Bank's budget not increase despite the evolution of money laundering risks.

TD Bank had been informed about AML problems regarding TD Bank's transaction monitoring program by both federal regulators and their internal audit group. However, no changes were made as a response to those concerns, and, for almost a decade, there were no material changes in the transaction monitoring systems even as TD Bank implemented new services, with new risks, like Zelle. Because TD Bank did not adjust to automatically monitor ACH and certain other transactions, 92% of TD Bank's total transaction volume, approximately \$18.3 trillion, was unmonitored from January 1, 2018, to April 12, 2024.

U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger for the District of New Jersey stated, "TD Bank prioritized growth and convenience over following its legal obligations. As a result of staggering and pervasive failures in oversight, it willfully failed to monitor trillions of dollars of transactions – including those involving ACH transactions, checks, high-risk countries, and peer-to-peer transactions – which allowed hundreds

of millions of dollars from money laundering networks to flow through the bank, including for international drug traffickers. The bank was aware of these risks and failed to take steps to protect against them, including for two networks prosecuted in New Jersey and elsewhere – one that dumped piles of cash on the bank’s counters and another that allegedly withdrew amounts from ATMs 40 to 50 times higher than the daily limit for personal accounts.”

Multiple money laundering networks were identified taking advantage of TD Bank’s AML deficiencies with investigators identifying more than \$670 million of illicit funds transferred through TD Bank accounts between 2019 and 2023. A leader of one of the involved money laundering operations told investigators that TD Bank “had by far the most permissive policies and procedures” of financial institutions the illicit actor had tried.

The criminal actors even directly bribed TD Bank employees. A money laundering network that processed more than \$470 million through TD Bank gave bank employees gift cards worth more than \$57,000. In return, the bank employees filed cash well above the \$10,000 threshold for CTRs without proper documentation. Despite that, TD Bank failed to identify complicit bank employees even when an employee was funneling millions in narcotics proceeds in a high-risk area where the bank did not even maintain operations.

On October 10, 2024, TD Bank pled guilty to conspiring to fail to maintain an AML program that complies with the BSA, fail to file accurate CTRs, and launder money. In their plea agreement, TD Bank agreed to forfeit \$452,432,302.00 and pay a criminal fine of \$1,434,513,478.40, for a total financial penalty of \$1,886,945,780.40. Within ten days of the judgement, TD Bank wired \$328,932,302 for the forfeiture payment and the remaining \$123,500 was credited against the money judgement due to a concurrent settlement.

Corrupt School Official Sentenced to Six Years in Federal Prison for Embezzling \$16 Million Dollars

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: “Former Orange County Education Official Sentenced to Nearly Six Years in Federal Prison for Embezzling More Than \$16.6 Million from School District.” United States Attorney’s Office, Central District of California, July 25, 2024. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdca/pr/former-orange-county-education-official-sentenced-nearly-six-years-federal-prison>; “Former Orange County Education Official Pleads Guilty to Embezzling Nearly \$16 Million from School District That Employed Him.” United States Attorney’s Office, Central District of California, March 28, 2024. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdca/pr/former-orange-county-education-official-pleads-guilty-embezzling-nearly-16-million>; Cormaci, Carol. “Stung by a \$16-million embezzlement, school district sues former official who pleaded guilty to it.” Los Angeles Times, April 3, 2024. <https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/newsletter/2024-04-03/tn-dpt-me-timesoc-latest-news-in-orange-county-embezzlement-magnolia-school-district-timesoc>; and information provided by IRS-CI to TEOAF.

In 1931, IRS-CI took down one of the most famous violators of the Internal Revenue Code, gangster Al Capone, for tax evasion, but violators of the Internal Revenue Code aren’t always mob gangsters or drug traffickers. Sometimes, they are someone the community selects to act as a public servant but fall into greed. In these cases, it is important IRS-CI take down the perpetrators who are depriving families and children of crucial resources.

One such case is that of Jorge Armando Contreras, who worked as a senior director of fiscal services in Orange County, California and was found guilty of embezzling \$16,694,942 through his position. For several years, Contreras knowingly defrauded unsuspecting children and school district employees out of funding and used the money to purchase lavish items and a house.

Contreras first began working for the Magnolia School District in 2006, where 81% of the student population is classified as socio-economically disadvantaged. Contreras managed the district's fiscal operations and had access to, and stole from, several school district and student body bank accounts. Between 2016 and 2023, Contreras used his position to falsify checks meant for the district by initially writing down small dollar amounts and making them payable to "M.S.D.", the initials for Magnolia School District, intentionally leaving the letters spaced out. After receiving the appropriate approvals, he increased the amounts on the checks and input fake names that matched the initials, such as "Maria Socorro Dominguez," and deposited them into his personal bank account. To cover up his tracks, Contreras provided false bank statements and records to school district officials.



Figure 1. Contreras making a deposit at a Wells Fargo ATM in Brea, California.

In March 2024, Contreras pled guilty to one count of embezzlement, theft and intentional misapplication of funds from an organization receiving federal funds.

“Instead of using his job at a public school district to help socio-economically disadvantaged children, Contreras embezzled millions upon millions of dollars, which he flagrantly spent on a luxury home, car, and designer clothes and accessories,” stated U.S. Attorney Martin Estrada in a Department of Justice Press Release from July 2024.

On November 4, 2024, the District Court for the Central District of California issued a Final Order of Forfeiture for various items of property including a 2021 BMW X5, over 90 pieces of designer items from various brands such as Louis Vuitton, Prada, Versace, and Fendi, a property located in Yorba Linda, California, and eight bottles of Clase Azul Ultra tequila.



Figure 2. Real property located in Yorba Linda, California that was previously owned by Contreras and forfeited to the United States.

In July 2025, Contreras was sentenced to 70 months in federal prison and ordered to pay \$16,694,942 in restitution.

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)

Department of Homeland Security

Brinks the First Armored Car Company to Face Enforcement Action for Operating as an Unlicensed MSB

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: “Brink’s Forfeits \$50 Million for Failing to Register as a Money Transmitting Business.” United States Attorney’s Office, Southern District of California, February 6, 2025. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdca/pr/brinks-forfeits-50-million-failing-register-money-transmitting-business>; “FinCEN Announces \$37,000,000 Civil Money Penalty Against Brink’s Global Services USA, Inc. for Violations of the Bank Secrecy Act.” United States Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, February 6, 2025. <https://www.fincen.gov/news/news-releases/fincen-announces-37000000-civil-money-penalty-against-brinks-global-services-usa>; and information provided by HSI to TEOAF.

In February 2025, HSI San Diego, in collaboration with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and FinCEN, concluded a landmark investigation into Brink’s Global Services USA, Inc. (BGS), a subsidiary of Brink’s, Inc. and The Brink’s Company. The investigation uncovered systemic violations of the Bank Secrecy Act (BSA) and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) regulations, resulting in BGS agreeing to a \$50,391,143.22 forfeiture (which was later reduced) and a \$37 million civil penalty.

According to FinCEN, money service businesses (MSBs) are non-bank financial entities that offer currency exchange and transmission services. In the United States, any person or entity considered to be an MSB is a financial institution and, therefore, must register with the Department of the Treasury within 180 days of establishment. BGS is a logistics company that specializes in the transportation of valuable goods and assets, such as cash and precious metals and stones, popularly known by their armored trucks. By FinCEN’s definition, the services offered by BGS classifies them as an MSB.

The investigation revealed that BGS transported over \$15 million across 12 transactions between money service businesses in San Diego and Florida without verifying the final beneficiaries of the transactions. Additionally, BGS facilitated the cross-border transshipment of over \$35 million in currency from Mexico into the United States, involving multiple transporters and third-party beneficiaries. These actions fell outside the regulatory safe harbor provided to armored car companies by FinCEN, rendering BGS an unlicensed money transmitter.

BGS admitted to operating as an unlicensed money transmitting business, failing to register with FinCEN, and neglecting to implement adequate AML controls. These failures allowed hundreds of millions of dollars in bulk currency shipments to cross the Southwest Border on behalf of high-risk entities.

A Non-Prosecution Agreement was signed on January 31, 2025, in which BGS agreed to forfeit funds in the amount of \$50,391,143.22. Part of the forfeiture resolution included forgiveness of approximately \$25 million from that total amount for their cooperation, anticipated enhanced compliance program, and consideration of the parallel resolution with the FinCEN civil case. Per the agreement, BGS also agreed to enhance its AML compliance program, increase compliance personnel, and implement stricter controls to prevent future violations.

The forfeiture agreement was finalized on June 24, 2024, and on February 14, 2025, BGS made its first payment of \$12.5 million via wire transfer. The remaining payment of \$12.5 million is scheduled for a future date.

In a parallel enforcement action, FinCEN assessed a \$37 million civil money penalty against BGS for willful violations of the BSA. According to FinCEN, BGS failed to register as a money services business, develop and maintain an effective AML program, and file suspicious activity reports.

The forfeiture and penalties underscore the importance of regulatory compliance in safeguarding the financial system from illicit activity.

Joint Investigation Led to Money Laundering Charges for Businesses in Popular L.A. District

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: “FinCEN Issues Geographic Targeting Order Covering the Los Angeles Fashion District as Part of Crackdown on Money Laundering for Drug Cartels,” Financial Crimes Network, October 2, 2014. <https://www.fincen.gov/news/news-releases/fincen-issues-geographic-targeting-order-covering-los-angeles-fashion-district>; “L.A. fashion district faces closer scrutiny in money laundering probe,” Reuters, October 2, 2014. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/us/la-fashion-district-faces-closer-scrutiny-in-money-laundering-probe-idUSKCN0HR20Z/>; “L.A. Garment District Money Laundering Cartel Scheme Exposed,” United States Drug Enforcement Administration, September 10, 2014. <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2014/09/10/la-garment-district-money-laundering-cartel-scheme-exposed>; “Large-Scale Law Enforcement Effort Targets Downtown Los Angeles Businesses Linked to Money Laundering For Drug Cartels,” United States Attorney’s Office, Central District of California, September 10, 2014. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdca/pr/large-scale-law-enforcement-effort-targets-downtown-los-angeles-businesses-linked-money>; “Los Angeles Fashion District company owner sentenced to prison for committing customs violations and tax offenses following HSI probe,” U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, December 6, 2021. <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/los-angeles-fashion-district-company-owner-sentenced-prison-committing-customs>; and information provided by HSI to TEOAF.

In September 2014, a large-scale collaborative law enforcement action occurred when over 1,000 law enforcement officials from the HSI El Camino Real Task Force and its federal, state and local partners executed dozens of search and arrest warrants in the Los Angeles Fashion District, seizing over \$90 million. Businesses in the L.A. Fashion District had used their strategic location, with its high cash activity and existing international trade connections, to launder money for Mexican and Colombian drug cartels.

These businesses used trade-based money laundering (TBML) and black-market peso exchange (BMPE) to integrate billions of dollars from cartel activities into the United States’ financial system. TBML is a money laundering technique where illicit proceeds are moved through the international trade system to legitimize the funds. For example, complicit businesses may misrepresent the value or quantity of their imports/exports, such as by under-invoicing, to transfer that value through their trade transactions and obscure the money trail.



Figure 3. Cash from the Los Angeles Fashion District seizures in front of the HSI symbol.



Figure 4. Bulk cash seized from the Los Angeles Fashion District seizures.

Investigators began scrutinizing the financial activity of specific L.A. Fashion District businesses in 2012 as these businesses were the largest recipients of bulk cash linked to narcotics proceeds in the area. They were receiving this bulk cash as payment for customer invoices but would then fail to comply with federal reporting requirements for cash transactions exceeding \$10,000. Despite having 314 qualifying transactions, and even a warning from HSI in 2013, one business, Ambiance Apparel, did not file a single of the required forms, known as Form 8300s, between 2012 and 2014.

Much like Ambiance Apparel, C'est Toi Jeans Inc, a wholesale clothing importer, failed to file Form 8300s and even concealed cash receipts from their accountant to falsify C'est Toi Jeans Inc's tax returns. Both businesses also submitted fraudulent invoices to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) with Ambiance Apparel's invoices reflecting only 60-70% of the actual value of its clothing purchases from Asian manufacturers. Over four and half years, Ambiance undervalued imports by \$82.6 million, evading more than \$17.1 million in tariffs, and C'est Toi Jeans Inc evaded \$8.4 million in tariffs and duties.

These two L.A. Fashion District businesses, and more, faced criminal prosecution for their role in money laundering over the last decade. In October 2020, Ambiance Apparel pled guilty to eight criminal counts, including conspiracy, money laundering, and customs offenses. Ambiance Apparel was later sentenced to five years of probation and was required to have an external compliance monitor oversee the implementation of an effective anti-money laundering compliance and ethics program. As part of the sentencing, Ambiance Apparel was also required to pay restitution totaling \$35,227,855 to CBP and the IRS, as well as a forfeiture of \$81,564,856.

In October 2024, Si Oh Rhew, C'est Toi Jeans Inc's president and majority owner, and the business itself, were found guilty by a jury of two conspiracies and multiple counts of failure to file reports of currency transaction over \$10,000 in a trade or business. Si Oh Rhew and two other defendants were also found guilty of three counts of entry of falsely classified goods, three counts of entry of goods by means of false statements, three counts of passing false and fraudulent papers through a customhouse, and two counts of international promotional money laundering. Si Oh Rhew was then sentenced to 103 months in federal prison.

"These arrests and seizures should serve as a sobering warning to companies that seek to bolster their bottom line by doing business with drug traffickers – you will pay a high price for your complicity. Unscrupulous companies that help cartels cover their financial tracks by laundering their illicit funds are contributing to the devastation wrought by the international drug trade," the then Special Agent in Charge for L.A. HSI, Claude Arnold, said in 2014.

United States Secret Service (USSS)
Department of Homeland Security

USSS Forfeits \$7 Million from Bahamian Bank in Pig Butchering Scheme

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: “United States uses civil asset forfeiture to recover \$7M of investment fraud proceeds.” United States Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of Virginia, March 21, 2025. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edva/pr/united-states-uses-civil-asset-forfeiture-recover-7m-investment-fraud-proceeds>; “Deltec Bank & Trust Limited Official Statement on Recent Actions by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.” Deltec Bank, July 18, 2023. <https://www.deltecbank.com/news-and-insights/deltec-bank-trust-limited-official-statement-on-recent-actions/>; Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3). Internet Crime Report 2024. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, April 23, 2025. https://www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports/2024_IC3Report.pdf; and information provided by USSS to TEOAF.

As an integral part of their mission, the United States Secret Service (USSS) is dedicated to protecting the United States’ financial infrastructure from cybercrime. According to their 2024 Internet Crime Report, the FBI reported a total of \$50.5 billion in victim losses from 2020 to 2024 from cybercrime and an estimated \$16.6 billion in losses in just 2024, an increase of 33% from 2023. Of that \$16 billion, \$5.8 billion stemmed from victims of cryptocurrency investment fraud, accounting for over a third of total reported losses.

In a typical pig butchering scheme, scammers gain the trust of their victims and instruct them to invest in fraudulent investment platforms purporting to be legitimate cryptocurrency trading platforms. The spoofed websites falsely display a significant increase in the victim’s account balance, encouraging them to make additional investments. At the time of withdrawal, victims are unable to retrieve any funds, with scammers having stolen all the “invested” funds.

In 2022, USSS began an investigation into a crime syndicate laundering millions of dollars through various fraud schemes, including cryptocurrency investment. Their investigation revealed an estimated \$80 million stemming directly from victim losses by this syndicate alone. The syndicate employed various money laundering methods to conceal the origin and trail of the funds, such as utilizing fake companies, money couriers, pooling the monies, and using over 75 bank accounts to collect and funnel victims’ funds.

In June 2023, USSS issued three seizure warrants which led to the ultimate forfeiture of \$7 million from Mitsubishi UFJ Trust and Banking Corporation in the name of Deltec Bank & Trust. In December 2023, through their investigative efforts, USSS was able successfully indict and arrest multiple money launderers involved in the scheme. In May, April, and December of 2024, additional arrests of individuals also involved were made.

On March 13, 2025, a Default Judgment was entered in which the \$7 million was officially forfeited to the United States, allowing victims the opportunity to recover any losses through a valid petition. The USAO EDVA received a total of 91 petition packages from victims in this case requesting the recovery and return of their assets. The packages will ultimately be ruled on by the Department of Justice.

Multi-Agency Collaboration Leads to the Sentencing of Identity Theft Suspect

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to information provided by USSS to TEOAF.

Through their collaboration and diligence, the United States Secret Service (USSS), the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), the U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General (OIG), Riverside Police Department, Beverly Hills Police Department, and City National Bank were able to act swiftly to take down an individual who stole almost one million dollars.

In April 2023, the perpetrator opened a business account under a fake name at City National Bank with a New York driver's license and State of California LLC documents, and later deposited a U.S. Treasury Check in the amount of \$931,436.59.

In May 2023, City National Bank suspected fraud based on the unusual activity that would not normally be associated with a business account and notified USSS in Riverside. The unusual activity included several high end-purchases in Beverly Hills, California and a request to withdraw \$200,000 in cash.

USSS was able to confirm that the check was valid, but that the actual intended recipient had filed a report to Treasury for non-receipt, which indicated something suspicious was at play.

Since the perpetrator had utilized a New York driver's license, USSS Riverside connected with USSS New York for further details who confirmed the license number was invalid. They had stolen someone's identity and company information to create the fraudulent document and open the account. After being located by USSS NY, the victim of the identity theft confirmed they did not know the perpetrator nor was the perpetrator in any way authorized to conduct transactions on behalf of the company.

Meanwhile, the perpetrator had an appointment to withdraw \$200,000 for May 26, 2023, at 10:30 am, and USSS needed to act quickly. Through visual evidence obtained by the Beverly Hills Police Department, which showed the suspected account holder was in Beverly Hills the day of the suspicious high-end purchase transactions, the United States Attorney General of the Central District of California authorized a Probable Cause arrest of the perpetrator for that same day.

The perpetrator arrived at City National Bank for their appointment and presented the fraudulent NY license as proof of identity, which was all the proof USSS needed to make an arrest on the spot.

In June 2023, a judge authorized a seizure warrant for the fraudulent account and USSS was able to successfully seize funds from the account via a cashier's check pursuant to the warrant.

In June 2025, a Judgement and Probation/Commitment Order was issued in which the defendant was found guilty of 1 count of Bank Fraud and ordered to pay restitution in the total amount of \$47,060.90.

United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Department of Homeland Security

CBP Seizes Unlawful Items of Values Exceeding \$6 Million

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: Bourque, Katie. “CBP seizes \$6M Egyptian statue, other smuggled artifacts destined for Maryland collector,” ABC News, September 29, 2025. <https://wjla.com/news/local/illegal-smuggled-egyptian-artifacts-egypt-amulets-stone-figurines-vase-old-kingdom-limestone-funerary-statue-edgewater-maryland>; “Government Secures Forfeiture of Illegally Smuggled Ancient Egyptian Artifacts,” United States Attorney’s Office, District of Maryland, September 29, 2025. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/pr/government-secures-forfeiture-illegally-smuggled-ancient-egyptian-artifacts>; and information provided by CBP to TEOAF.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) safeguards the health and welfare of the American public by monitoring imports and exports to ensure their integrity and deter unlawful trade. This mission can include preventing harmful products from entering the U.S. marketplace. Beyond protecting the health and safety of American consumers, CBP also enforces federal regulations by seizing items used in illegal trade.

On March 14, 2025, CBP in Miami, Florida intercepted a shipment that allegedly contained “Atomizer HS 392,” a device that emits a liquid as a fine spray, and “Empty Bottles.” Upon inspecting the 80 containers, CBP found the boxes in fact contained e-cigarettes, otherwise known as electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). It is unlawful to a falsely declare an item, and further when the shipment was referred to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the FDA found that the e-cigarettes were also mislabeled and did not meet federal standards for safe use. CBP’s discovery of the shipment – 24,000 of those devices, estimated at a value of \$345,360 – saved U.S. consumers from inhaling harmful materials.



Figure 5. Boxes of adulterated e-cigarettes

CBP's inspections can also discover some unusual items in their efforts to protect human health. On December 13, 2024, CBP officials in Cincinnati, Ohio intercepted a shipment manifested as a "decorative drum." Instead of a normal drum, CBP officers found a partial human skull and animal bones. CBP referred the animal bones to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for review. The FWS identified one of the bones as a wolf mandible. Since the shipment lacked the proper permits and even tried to obscure the very presence of the bones, CBP seized the shipment and HSI began a collateral investigation into the potential violation of wildlife conservation laws.



Figure 6. A human skull made to resemble a drum with animal bones.

CBP's efforts also deter illicit trade, such as the illegal smuggling of cultural artifacts. On July 14, 2020, CBP intercepted a package from Bangkok, Thailand, that was manifested as a "stone garden sculpture," worth only \$1,200. Upon inspection, CBP officers discovered an Egyptian stone statue depicting a seated male figure, approximately 80 pounds and two feet tall, that they immediately suspected to be illegally trafficked cultural property.

Historians and antique appraisers identified the artifact as authentic, and it was valued to be worth \$6 million. The statue most likely dated to the Old Kingdom, making the statue over 4,000 years old, and it likely originated from an archeological dig site in a royal cemetery near the ancient city of Memphis. Thirteen other falsely labeled items were seized as well, including amulets, other stone figurines, and a vase.

The sculpture was judicially forfeited on September 25, 2025, and the Department of Justice will work to return it and the other items to their country of origin. The Executive Director of the National

Targeting Center, Stephen Maloney, stated: “This case exemplifies the fine work of the women and men of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and our National Targeting Center in identifying and dismantling illicit networks that exploit global trade routes. The recovery of this ancient Egyptian statue, valued at \$6 million, underscores CBP’s commitment to protecting cultural heritage and, working collaboratively with our partners, to identify those who seek to profit from theft and smuggling.”



Figure 7. An Egyptian artifact worth \$6,000,000.

USBP Intel Leads to Seizure of 3,495 kg of Methamphetamines

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: “Narcotics Seizure - South Bay,” San Diego County Sheriff’s Office, June 4, 2025.

<https://www.sdsheriff.gov/Home/Components/News/News/3487/16#:~:text=Sheriff%27s%20Detectives%20and%20Border%20Patrol,Border%20Crimes%20Suppression%20Team>; “Three Foreign Nationals Charged with Conspiracy and Possession with Intent to Distribute Almost Four Tons of Methamphetamine,” United States Attorney’s Office, Southern District of California, June 5, 2025. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdca/pr/three-foreign-nationals-charged-conspiracy-and-possession-intent-distribute-almost>; and information provided by CBP to TEOAF.

In June 2025, the Intel Unit of the U.S Border Patrol (USBP) accurately identified a suspected trafficker’s vehicle, a Nissan Sentra. This allowed USBP agents and local San Diego County Sheriff detectives to track the driver to an open parking lot. Three other vehicles joined the Sentra, and the agents watched as unknown bundles were moved from a commercial truck to three passenger vehicles.

The USBP Intel Unit agents notified local police of the vehicles’ descriptions, and they intercepted the vehicles when the drivers stopped at motels in San Ysidro and Chula Vista. After detaining the drivers and searching three of the vehicles, the Sheriff’s detectives found a combined total of 61 bundles of methamphetamines. The drivers were then arrested and charged with conspiracy, transportation and possession of controlled substances for sales.

The partnerships between federal agencies and local police, as part of the new Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) San Diego, were central to the successful seizure. The USBP Intel Unit also plays an

indispensable role in identifying viable leads on active smugglers as agents comb through interviews, confidential information, public tips, electronic surveillance records, and more.

At an estimated value of \$5.5 million, this event was one of the largest seizures of methamphetamines for both the newly minted HSTF and the Southern District of California during fiscal year 2025. “Collaboration between law enforcement agencies greatly helps to effectively combat transnational criminal organizations,” said Acting Chief Patrol Agent Jeffrey Stalaker. “The leveraging of our unique capabilities amplifies our ability to safeguard the nation.”



Figure 8. The vehicles that were used in the drug smuggling event with the 3,495 kg of methamphetamine seized by CBP laid out before them.

United States Coast Guard (USCG) Department of Homeland Security

Joint Operation Leads to Record Drug Interdictions

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: Breen, Kerry. “Coast Guard reels in bales of cocaine from Pacific Ocean after suspected drug boat capsizes,” CBS News, October 15, 2025. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/coast-guard-cocaine-seizure-eastern-pacific-ocean-operation-viper/>; “Coast Guard offloads nearly \$510 million in illegal narcotics interdicted in Eastern Pacific Ocean,” United States Coast Guard News, April 9, 2025. <https://www.news.uscg.mil/Press-Releases/Article/4150439/coast-guard-offloads-nearly-510-million-in-illegal-narcotics-interdicted-in-eas/>; Haworth, Jon. “Over 50 tons of cocaine seized by US Coast Guard in Pacific since August,” ABC News, October 15, 2025. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/50-tons-cocaine-seized-us-coast-guard-pacific/story?id=126536035>; “Operation Pacific Viper: U.S. Coast Guard Announces Largest Drug Offload in its History,” Department of Homeland Security, August 25, 2025. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/08/26/operation-pacific-viper-us-coast-guard-announces-largest-drug-offload-its-history>; “Pentagon Announces a New Counternarcotics Task Force in the Caribbean,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 23, 2025. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/pentagon-announces-new-counternarcotics-task-force-caribbean>; Rumpf-Whitten, Sarah. “Coast Guard nabs 50 tons of cocaine bound for posh coastal enclaves as cartel ops ‘rival Amazon’: expert,” Fox News, October 23, 2025. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/coast-guard-nabs-50-tons-cocaine-bound-posh-coastal-enclaves-cartel-ops-rival-amazon-expert>; “U.S. Coast Guard’s Operation Pacific Viper Records Seizure of 100,000 Pounds of Cocaine,” Department of Homeland Security, October 15, 2025. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/10/15/us-coast-guards-operation-pacific-viper-records-seizure-100000-pounds-cocaine>; and information provided by USCG to TEOAF.

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) is the lead federal agency for maritime drug interdictions, operating an expansive fleet of cutters, aircraft and drones to help detect and interdict narcotics traffickers. In August 2025, the USCG began support of Operation Pacific Viper, a historic partnership between the USCG and the U.S. Navy in the Eastern Pacific, to enhance the USCG’s fight against narcotics smuggling.

Before the end of the 2025 fiscal year, the operation led to 34 drug interdictions, more than 100,000 pounds of cocaine seized, the detainment of 86 suspected drug smugglers, and the largest drug offload in USCG history. In U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (CGC) Hamilton’s historic offload, there was approximately 61,740 pounds of cocaine and approximately 14,400 pounds of marijuana, all valued to be worth \$473 million.

“The fight against drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations doesn't begin at our U.S. maritime borders. Our efforts to defend Americans at home begins with denying drug traffickers access to maritime routes and disrupting the flow far out at sea where we operate alongside interagency and strategic regional partners like Costa Rica,” Commander David Ratner said.

Just two of the USCG units, CGC Stone and CGC James, participating in the counter drug interdiction missions, interdicted over 20 “go-fast” vehicles, which are typically lightweight powerboats capable of high speeds. CGC Stone’s 14 interdictions led to seizures of illegal narcotics valued at more than \$517.5 million and the detainment of 35 suspected smugglers for U.S. prosecution. On one occasion, the CGC Stone interdicted 4 go-fast vessels in less than 15 minutes, seizing 11,000 pounds of cocaine.



Figure 9. A narcotics offload that was seized by the USCG.

The USCG National Security Cutters employ maritime and aerial surveillance technologies, as well as intelligence professionals, to enhance their ability to find illicit actors in a search area the size of the continental United States. For CGC Stone's interdictions, USCG employed helicopter squadrons, aircrews, unmanned aircraft systems and the crews of other vessels to successfully identify suspicious marine activity.



Figure 10. The crew of the CGC Stone stands before narcotics offloaded from smuggling vessels, as well of a helicopter used for aerial view during interdiction operations.

As a result of the USCG's drug interdictions, the USCG has denied transnational criminal and foreign terrorist organizations, including the Clan del Golfo, Sinaloa Cartel, and Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion organizations, more than \$1.5 billion dollars in narcotics revenue by seizing over 509,783 pounds of cocaine and 39,727 pounds of marijuana. After a USCG seizure of \$510 million, Attorney General Pamela Bondi said: "What they did saved countless American lives. This cocaine would have been distributed throughout our country and perhaps throughout our world."



Figure 11. The USCG scuttling a “go-fast” vessel after seizing the narcotics onboard and detaining the crew.

Four Men Face Charges under the Lacey Act

Information included in the following forfeiture article is attributed to: Mexican commercial fishermen plead guilty to illegal red snapper harvesting.” United States Attorney’s Office, Southern District of Texas, June 9, 2025. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdtx/pr/mexican-commercial-fishermen-plead-guilty-illegal-red-snapper-harvesting>; “Mexican fishermen indicted for illegal red snapper harvesting in U.S. waters.” United States Attorney’s Office, Southern District of Texas, May 13, 2025. [Southern District of Texas | Mexican fishermen indicted for illegal red snapper harvesting in U.S. waters | United States Department of Justice](#); and information provided by USCG to TEOAF.

In June 2025, four Mexican fishermen pled guilty to illegally transporting red snapper fish from U.S. waters into Mexican territory under the Lacey Act, a conservation law that prohibits the trafficking of fish, wildlife, or plants that have been illegally taken, possessed, transported, or sold. They are the first fisherman to face federal criminal charges under the Act and face a potential sentence of up five years in federal prison and a maximum fine of up to \$250,000, marking a new, more aggressive policy for prosecuting these violations. Previous actions primarily involved seizing the catch and destroying the vessel.

In April 2025, the U.S. Coast Guard came upon the four fishermen in possession of approximately 693 pounds of red snapper fish and four sharks. They were found to be illegally fishing in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, with their gear set up approximately 18 miles north of the U.S.-Mexico maritime boundary line and 25 miles east of South Padre Island. The crew operated in an unmarked vessel with no fishing permit in the dead of night attempting to go undetected, intending to transport their illegally harvested red snapper back to Mexico and sell it. The Department of Justice reported that the stolen fish had an estimated retail value of \$9,000 dollars.

In May 2025, they were formally charged with attempting to illegally transport fish taken from the Gulf of America (renamed by Executive Order 14172 [2025]), and, in June 2025, all four men pleaded guilty and now await sentencing.



Figure 12. The U.S. Coast Guard offloads fish from a stationed lancha (a small, motorized boat) at South Padre Island.