

Joint Press Release

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,  
Homeland Security Investigations, and Indian  
Arts and Crafts Board

# News Release



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and Indian Arts and Crafts Board  
Joint Press Release**

*For Immediate Release*

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## **Three Sentenced for Conspiracy to Sell Jewelry from the Philippines as Native-American Made**

*PHOENIX* — On Oct. 2, U.S. District Judge Douglas L. Rayes of the District of Arizona sentenced three for conspiring to fraudulently sell imported jewelry from the Philippines as Native-American made, in violation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, which prohibits misrepresentation in marketing of American Indian or Alaska Native arts and crafts products within the United States.

Laura Marye Wesley, 32, Christian Coxon, 46, and Waleed Sarrar, 44, were each sentenced to 36 months of probation, and ordered to together pay \$30,000 in restitution to the store "The Humiovi," and a fine of \$5,000 to the Indian Arts and Crafts Board. Each are also ordered to pay a \$100 special assessment fee.

Through Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)'s border search authority and financial investigations, additional individual sentence details include: for Wesley, forfeiture of \$4,087 seized from Richard Nisbet's (her father's) bank account; Sarrar forfeited 314 pieces of counterfeit Native American style jewelry that was seized during the execution of a search warrant on from Scottsdale Jewels in Scottsdale, Arizona; Coxon forfeited 623 pieces of counterfeit Native American style jewelry that was seized during the execution of a search warrant on Turquoise River Trading in San Antonio, Texas.

The charges, convictions, and sentencings are a result of a years-long, multi-agency investigation, led by special agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) with assistance from the HSI Phoenix Office, U.S. Department of the Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB) and Office of Law Enforcement and Security, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations, and the Texas Game Wardens. The U.S. Department of Justice Criminal Division of Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section and the U. S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona prosecuting the case.

*In March 2012, the FWS OLE entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the IACB <https://www.doi.gov/iacb> for OLE to conduct criminal investigations of alleged violations of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA). The IACB is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior created by Congress in 1935 to promote the economic development of federally recognized Indians (American Indians and Alaska Natives) through the expansion of the Indian arts and crafts (art) market. A top priority of the IACB is the implementation and enforcement of the IACA. This legislation was passed by Congress to counteract the growing sales of counterfeit Indian art. The Act is a truth-in-advertising law that provides criminal and civil penalties for marketing products as Indian made when such products are not made by Indians, as defined by the Act. The MOA's mission is to conserve, protect, and enhance the cultural tradition for all Native Americans and Alaskan Natives.*

*The mission of the FWS is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.*

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**Previous news on this case:**

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/three-defendants-plead-guilty-conspiring-fraudulently-sell-imported-jewelry-philippines>

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/seven-people-including-three-filipinos-charged-fraudulently-selling-jewelry-imported>

**FWS OLE:** <https://www.fws.gov/le>

**To Report a Wildlife Crime:**

**Email:** [fws\\_tips@fws.gov](mailto:fws_tips@fws.gov) or **call:** 1-844-397-8477

**Photo:** These three turquoise bolo tie pieces were marketed as Native American-made items, but were actually imported from the Philippines, violating the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, along with smuggling laws. These crimes resulted in federal felony charges, several years of probation, and tens of thousands of dollars in restitution and fees. Credit: USFWS Office of Law Enforcement.

