



# NATIONAL IPR COORDINATION CENTER



## Operation Apothecary Fact Sheet

The National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) is leading the government's response to intellectual property theft (IP theft), a crime that costs American industries lost revenue and jobs every year. Operation Apothecary (*Apothecary*) targets unapproved, counterfeit, or adulterated pharmaceuticals.

*Apothecary* was initiated in fiscal year (FY) 2004 under the auspices of Operation Guardian to combat the growing problem of Internet crime. Particular emphasis is placed on the use of the Internet as the primary means of communication and ordering of pharmaceuticals. Criminals, posing as legitimate pharmaceutical providers, advertise prescription grade drugs and/or inexpensive alternatives without requiring a valid prescription. The consumer purchases the pharmaceutical with the belief that the product advertised is a legitimate product, but in fact, is often purchasing a counterfeit or unapproved version of the drug that has often been manufactured in unsanitary conditions or not subjected to any safeguards or quality control regimes.

*Apothecary* provides for a two-pronged attack on pharmaceutical smuggling: detecting violations at the border; and providing opportunities for investigations and enforcement actions against traffickers of counterfeit drugs and medical devices. *Apothecary* specifically measures and attacks vulnerabilities in the entry process, which allow for the smuggling of commercial quantities of unapproved, counterfeit, or adulterated pharmaceuticals. *Apothecary* seeks to identify and dismantle domestic organizations that illegally import and/or distribute pharmaceutical and scheduled drugs in the U.S. In addition, *Apothecary* identifies and dismantles foreign organizations that sell and ship pharmaceuticals that are illegally imported into the U.S. Lastly, *Apothecary* detects, seizes, and forfeits commercial shipments of illegally imported pharmaceuticals.

*Apothecary* combines the expertise of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations (ICE-HSI), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Food and Drug Administration, Office of Criminal Investigations (FDA-OCI), and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), and consists of mail surge operations conducted at International Mail Branches, International Courier Hubs and ports of entry throughout the United States. In addition, HSI field offices in conjunction with Operation Guardian member agencies, conduct surge operations in an attempt to secure new intelligence, investigative leads, and/or assess the deterrent effect of prior surges.

For more information about the IPR Center's Operation Apothecary, please contact the Outreach & Training Unit by phone at 1-866-IPR-2060, by email at [IPRCenter@dhs.gov](mailto:IPRCenter@dhs.gov), or by U.S. mail at National IPR Coordination Center, 2451 Crystal Drive Stop 5105, Arlington, VA 20598-5105 attn: Outreach & Training Unit Chief.

### **Quick Facts:**

**Purpose:** To combat pharmaceutical smuggling by:

- detecting border entry vulnerabilities;
- dismantling illegal domestic and foreign producers and distributors; and
- seizing and forfeiting shipments of illegal pharmaceutical imports

**Start:** FY 2004

**End:** Ongoing

**Agency Involvement:**  
ICE-HSI, CBP, FDA-OCI,  
USPIS

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