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ALEXANDRIA NEWPORT NEWS NORFOLK RICHMOND

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY CHUCK ROSENBERG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 7, 2007

Jim Rybicki
Public Information Officer
Phone: (703)842-4050 Fax: (703)549-5202
E-Mail: usavae.press@usdoj.gov
Website: www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae

Eight Arrests in Multi-State Counterfeit Goods Trafficking Ring

(Richmond, VA) – Eight arrests were made today in Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, and New York, as part of a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) led investigation into trafficking in counterfeit goods and copyright infringement. The arrests were announced by Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; and Charles Cunningham, Special Agent-in-Charge, Richmond Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Abbas Chouman, age 43, of Astoria, New York, was indicted on March 6, 2007, and charged with conspiracy and trafficking in counterfeit clothing. Chouman was arrested today at his clothing store on West 27th Street, New York, New York. According to the indictment, Chouman and his fellow conspirators operated a wholesale counterfeit clothing business under various names, offering fake “brand-name” goods at prices significantly lower than those charged by the holders of the trademarks in question.

According to the indictment, trusted buyers could purchase counterfeit clothing in person at Chouman’s store. Buyers also ordered counterfeit clothing by telephone from Chouman, and received it via United Parcel Service shipments. Buyers throughout the United States paid C.O.D. for shipped counterfeit clothing with money orders they remitted to UPS. UPS, in turn, regularly deposited the proceeds of counterfeit clothing sales in a bank account held by Chouman’s business. In the period between December 1, 2004, and September 1, 2006, UPS deposited almost \$19 million in payments in the account. The United States seeks to forfeit the contents of the account. Chouman faces 15 years in federal prison and \$2,250,000 in fines if convicted on the charges. Chouman’s initial appearance was held today in the Southern District of New York. His arraignment will be held in Richmond on a date to be scheduled.

Also arrested today was Ishoc Uthman Ibn-Abdus Salaam, age 26, of Pamplin, Virginia, who was indicted on March 6, 2007. The indictment charges that in August 2005, Salaam

trafficked in counterfeit clothing. Salaam could be sentenced to ten years in federal prison and fined \$2,000,000 if convicted.

Agents also arrested six others on two complaints charging conspiracies to traffic in counterfeit goods. In one case, Ronald Roundtree, age 51, of Lynchburg, Virginia; Terri Singleton, age 34, of Beckley, West Virginia, and William Statts, age 37, of Harrington, Delaware, were charged with conspiracy to traffic in counterfeit clothing, including jerseys and jeans, sneakers, and pirated movies and music.

The second criminal complaint alleges a conspiracy to sell pirated movies and music subject to copyright. Agents arrested Eric Harmon, age 40, of Richmond, Virginia; Cherubin Pierre, age 31, of Richmond, Virginia; and Ismail Haqq, age 32, of Meherrin, Virginia, on the conspiracy charge. According to the complaint, Harmon sold pirated versions of new-release movies from his store, The Big EZ, on Lombardy Street in Richmond.

The investigation of the cases and the arrests were conducted by the FBI, Virginia State Police, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, United States Secret Service, Internal Revenue Service, United States Marshals Service, Henrico County Police Department, Chesterfield County Police Department, and Richmond Police Department. Assistant United States Attorney John S. Davis; Special Assistant U.S. Attorney and Assistant Virginia Attorney General Matthew C. Ackley; and, Senior Counsel Scott L. Garland, Department of Justice, Criminal Division, Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, are prosecuting the cases on behalf of the United States.

All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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