



News Release

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Tax Recovery and Criminal Enforcement (TRaCE) Task Force

For Immediate Release

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Designer Watch and Sunglasses Counterfeiter Taken Down by TRaCE

Los Angeles - An investigation by the state's Tax Recovery and Criminal Enforcement (TRaCE) Task Force led to the arrest of Armando Robledo, 34, of Los Angeles, on five felony counts of counterfeiting. The Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) Piracy Unit arrested Robledo on November 21, 2014. Robledo was arrested and booked into the Los Angeles County Jail, where he posted \$50,000 bail. He is ordered to appear in Sacramento County Court this month, with Deputy Attorney General and TRaCE prosecutor Peter Williams leading the prosecution.

In April, Investigative Consultants (IC), a private investigation company specializing in intellectual property investigations and enforcement, contacted TRaCE to initiate a criminal investigation of Robledo. He is suspected of retailing high-end counterfeit goods and was selling thousands of watches with brand names such as Rolex, Breitling, and Chanel. TRaCE and IC together purchased several of these watches, with a total retail value of more than \$100,000, while undercover in Sacramento. They also purchased counterfeit Ray Ban, Luis Vuitton, and Chanel sunglasses from Robledo during the course of several months.



High-end Counterfeit sunglasses and watches seized from Robledo's business



Counterfeit sunglasses seized from storage locker

On October 7, 2014, TRaCE and the LAPD served a search warrant on Robledo's business and nearby storage locker in the Santee Alley area of Los Angeles. The locker contained an estimated \$300,000 worth of counterfeit Gucci, Dior, Prada, and other high-end brand sunglasses which were confiscated as evidence – one of the largest seizures of its kind in California in the last few years.

Consumers should take care to avoid counterfeit merchandise. It is often inferior, and its purchase supports those who steal designers' ideas and take jobs from workers who manufacture legitimate products.

“Not only does the underground economy cost all taxpayers roughly \$8.5 billion every year in funds for public services, but also thousands of jobs which could further help our state's economy,” said Chairman Jerome E. Horton. “Consumers can help TRaCE combat the underground economy – Report it, Don't ignore it!”

“Local law enforcement and public involvement are vital in our fight against the underground economy,” said Board of Equalization Member George Runner. “We welcome all leads and tips, as they are essential to our efforts to protect law-abiding business owners and taxpayers.”

To download a form to report criminal activities such as tax evasion and counterfeiting, visit www.boe.ca.gov/trace. The TRaCE Task Force reviews all leads reported for full investigation, or as applicable, referral to the appropriate state, local, or federal law enforcement agency to address.

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The Tax Recovery and Criminal Enforcement Task Force (TRaCE) is comprised of public officials from the Department of Justice, Board of Equalization, Franchise Tax Board, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Employment Development Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations.

The mission of the TRaCE Task Force is to combat organized elements of the underground economy engaged in the manufacture, importation, distribution, and sale of pirated intellectual property, and other economic crimes resulting in the evasion of business, payroll and/or income taxes.

For more information about TRaCE or to report a crime, visit www.boe.ca.gov/trace.

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