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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES CIVIL ACTION SEEKING
FORFEITURE OF 10TH CENTURY SANDSTONE STATUE LOOTED
FROM CAMBODIAN TEMPLE**

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and James T. Hayes, Jr., the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's ("ICE") Homeland Security Investigations ("HSI"), announced today the filing of a civil complaint seeking forfeiture of a 10th Century sandstone statue – the Duryodhana – for the purpose of returning it to Cambodia. The statue had been stolen from the Prasat Chen temple at Koh Ker in Cambodia. The Koh Ker site is very significant from a religious, historical, and artistic perspective, and the Duryodhana is considered to be a piece of extraordinary value to the Cambodian people and part of their cultural heritage.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: "The Duryodhana statue is imbued with great meaning for the people of Cambodia and, as we allege, it was looted from the country during a period of upheaval and unrest, and found its way to the United States. With today's action, we are taking an important step toward reuniting this ancient artifact with its rightful owners."

ICE-HSI Special Agent-in-Charge James T. Hayes, Jr. said: "The Sandstone Statue represents a part of Cambodia's national cultural heritage. This artifact is not a souvenir to be sold to the highest bidder. Using our unique customs authority we are retrieving this stolen piece of cultural history and will return to its rightful owners – the people of Cambodia."

According to the complaint which was filed today in Manhattan federal court:

From 928 to 944 A.D., Koh Ker was the capital of the ancient Khmer empire in Cambodia and had a vast complex of sacred monuments that included dozens of temples, sanctuaries, a terraced pyramid-temple, and towers. Prasat Chen is a temple at Koh Ker that is dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu. The Duryodhana once stood on a pedestal near the entry to the western pavilion of Prasat Chen, and the feet of the statue remain there today.

The Duryodhana is believed to have been looted from Prasat Chen during periods of extreme unrest in Cambodia during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1975, a private collector in Belgium purchased the Duryodhana from an auction house in the United Kingdom. Under the laws of French Indochina and Cambodia, the Duryodhana has been the legal property of Cambodia since at least 1900, if not earlier.

The statue remained in the possession of the private collector and his/her heirs until March 2010 when Sotheby's entered into a consignment agreement to sell the statue at auction in the United States. In April 2010, Sotheby's imported the Duryodhana into the United States and made arrangements to sell the statue, despite knowing that it was stolen from Koh Ker. In March 2011, immediately before the planned auction of the Duryodhana, the Cambodian Government asked Sotheby's to pull the statue from auction. Sotheby's withdrew the statue from the auction, but it remains in their possession.

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The civil forfeiture complaint seeks the forfeiture of the Duryodhana on several bases, including that it constitutes stolen property introduced into the United States in violation of U.S. law.

Mr. Bharara praised the investigative work of ICE HSI in this matter, as well as its ongoing efforts to find and repatriate stolen and looted cultural property.

The case is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sharon Cohen Levin and Sarah R. Krissoff of the Office's Asset Forfeiture Unit.

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