

President Obama Signs Bill Boosting Customs Funding

by Kristi Ellis

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WASHINGTON — President Obama signed a \$42.8 billion bill Wednesday that boosts funding for the Customs & Border Protection agency and could potentially delay a 100 percent cargo scanning deadline.

The measure provides funds for the Department of Homeland Security, which includes Customs, for the 2010 fiscal year that began Oct. 1. Retailers praised language in the bill that calls into question the feasibility of meeting the 2012 deadline to scan all U.S.-bound cargo containers at foreign ports to determine if they contain terrorist weapons.

Meanwhile, U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized counterfeit designer sunglasses worth \$7.7 million at retail last Friday. Officers confiscated 97 parcels with sunglasses and reading glasses bearing fake Christian Dior, Chanel, D&G, Burberry and XOXO trademarks in Miami, authorities said. The seizure had a wholesale value of \$388,000.

The agency said the fake merchandise was discovered during a routine search at the seaport in Miami and the goods were identified as fakes because the designer brands had registered their trademarks with Customs.

“The people who traffic in this type of crime not only steal from legitimate companies, but they also dupe the unknowing consumer into buying items that are substandard,” said Harold Woodward, director of field operations in Miami for the federal agency.

The most recent Customs statistics show seizures of counterfeit sunglasses in 2008 netted merchandise with a total wholesale value of \$7.9 million, almost double the value of seizures of sunglasses in 2007.