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Homeland Security Investigations Participates in the Cultural Repatriation of a Manuscript Signed by Napoleon

On September 24, 2012, agents of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in New York received a request for assistance from Interpol Washington with regards to a letter entitled “Napoleon’s Commission of Appointing Toussaint Louverture Captain of the French Port of Saint Domingue” dated March 4, 1801, which was stolen from the French Navy-Archival Depository Fund and was intended for sale at Sotheby’s in New York. The letter was scheduled to be auctioned off by Sotheby’s New York on September 24, 2012 as part of the “Property from the Estate of Brooke Astor” collection. On October 24, 2012, HSI New York reported the seizure of a manuscript for violations of Title 19 USC 2606, Cultural Property Implementation; 19 USC 1595a(c), Introduction Contrary to Law; 18 USC 54, Smuggling. On August 13, 2014, the Paris-based office of HSI took part in the repatriation of this manuscript which was returned to the Bureau de la Politique des Archives et des Bibliothèques. This repatriation is another example of the ongoing close cooperation between France and the U.S., particularly between HSI, the French Ministry of Defense, the French National Police and Interpol to return stolen cultural patrimony.