



# FIFA WORLD CUP

## Live Streaming Sites Seized



FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022



### PROTECTION IS OUR TRADEMARK

**AS PART OF THE NATIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS COORDINATION CENTER (IPR CENTER) DIGITAL PIRACY INITIATIVE, "IN OUR SITES,"** Special Agents from Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Baltimore seized a total of 71 separate internet domains between December 9 and 18, 2022 for live streaming World Cup matches, an infringement of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) copyrights. Individuals visiting the sites will now see a message that the site has been seized by the US Government and be redirected to additional information. These seizures were the result of a joint investigation called Operation Offsides between IPR Center, HSI Baltimore, Department of Justice, International Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property (ICHIP) Offices, United States Attorney Office, District of Maryland and Computer Crimes and Intellectual Property Section (CCIPS).

"Consumers are harmed when accessing illegal content – one-third of pirate sites target consumers with malware that can lead to a range of problems, including identity theft and financial loss," said James R. Mancuso, the Director of the IPR Center. "Our partnership with FIFA provides critical new opportunities to assist law enforcement in their investigations of persons and criminal organizations involved in the illegal act of duplicating, copying, or sharing digital works without the legal permission of the copyright holders."

Operation Offsides began in September 2022, when HSI received information from a representative of FIFA identifying several sites being used to distribute copyright infringing content without FIFA's authorization. FIFA is the international governing body of association football (soccer) and holds the exclusive rights to sanction and stage the FIFA World Cup 2022, which was hosted in multiple cities in Qatar. Prior to the World Cup, in the month of November 2022 alone, the top ten of the seized domains had over 210 million visitors.

HSI Baltimore agents reviewed numerous examples of infringing content accessible from each of the subject domain names. Each domain was associated with a website offering free access to copyrighted digital media content – specifically, live streamed sessions of World Cup soccer matches. HSI Baltimore's seizure of those sites prevented unauthorized third parties from financially benefitting from the illegal broadcasts. "Operation Offsides, is a great example of how HSI partners with the private sector to ensure that their Intellectual Property is protected from online piracy," said Special Agent in Charge James C. Harris III of HSI Baltimore.

The social media impact of Operation Offsides was vast. A search of Twitter for the names of the seized domains generated thousands of tweets across all users during the active phase of this operation.

THIS DOMAIN HAS BEEN SEIZED



This domain name has been seized by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) pursuant to a warrant issued by the United States District Court for the District of Maryland under the authority of, inter alia, Title 18, United States Code, Section 2323. It is unlawful to reproduce or distribute copyrighted material including movies, music, software, or games without authorization. Individuals who do so risk criminal prosecution under Title 18, United States code, Section 2319. First time offenders convicted of a criminal felony copyright violation face up to five years in prison, fines, restitution, and forfeiture.

