

Florida fossils dealer seeks dinosaur's NY return

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(AP) — A fossils dealer whose dinosaur was seized by the U.S. government so it could be given to the government of Mongolia wants it back.

Lawyers for Eric Prokopi said in court papers filed Monday that he was victim of a media campaign stirred up by academic paleontologists.

The [government](#) seized the Tyrannosaurus bataar skeleton, known as Ty, in June. It had sued to obtain the bones, which had been sold at an auction for \$1.05 million.

According to the court papers, Prokopi and Dallas-based auction house Heritage Auctions were in negotiations with Mongolia's president to settle the dispute when the U.S. filed a seizure lawsuit to obtain the dinosaur.

The government had no immediate comment on Monday. The auction house has said it wants a "fair and just resolution."

A judge had ordered the U.S. government to seize the dinosaur from a storage facility in New York after the U.S. claimed it had been brought into the country with bogus documents. The U.S. said the documents disguised the dinosaur skeleton, which originated in Mongolia, as reptile bones from Great Britain.

Prokopi has said in a statement that he brought the bones into the

country in March 2010 when they were just chunks of rocks and broken bones. He said he turned them into "an impressive skeleton."

According to the court papers, about 25 percent of the dinosaur is made of inorganic, plastic material molded from other fossil specimens while 50 percent is from one bataar specimen and the rest is from other specimens.

The court papers called the effort to return the 70 million-year-old skeleton to Mongolia unprecedented, saying fossils from China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia have been openly sold on the international market and collected in the United States by people and museums for generations.

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