

US seizes fossil in latest dinosaur smuggling case

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US authorities said Friday they are pursuing a fossil import company over the alleged smuggling of 70-million-year-old dinosaur bones from Mongolia.

The skull and vertebrae of an *Alioramus* dinosaur were initially presented to customs officials as a French reproduction, the US Attorney's office said in a statement,

Later, the importer, French company Geofossiles, admitted they were genuine and presented forged Mongolian export documents, including a fake sales contract for \$250,000, the prosecutors said.

Now the federal attorney's office has filed a [civil complaint](#) in federal court alleging that "the dinosaur skull is the property of Mongolia and that it was imported into the United States contrary to law."

The remains of the *Alioramus*, a relative of the *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, are the latest fossils seized by the US government as illegal imports from Mongolia.

In June, Eric Prokopi was sentenced to three months in jail for smuggling dinosaur skeletons, one of which, a *Tyrannosaurus Bataar* sold at auction in New York in May 2012 for \$1.05 million before being confiscated by authorities on a tip from Mongolia.

The fossils were ultimately repatriated to Mongolia.

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