

Spanish website fighting domain name seizure

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Computers hooked up to the internet. A popular Spanish website whose .com and .org domain names were seized by the US authorities for alleged copyright violations is challenging the move in a US court.

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Puerto 80 Projects, owner of Rojadirecta.org and Rojadirecta.com, filed a petition with a [US District Court](#) in New York this week seeking the return of the [domain names](#) seized on January 31.

Rojadirecta.org and Rojadirecta.com were among 10 websites seized by US agents in January for allegedly linking viewers to pirated telecasts of live sporting events including professional basketball, hockey, wrestling, and other sports.

Visitors to Rojadirecta.org or Rojadirecta.com are met with an official notice stating that the domain had been seized because of criminal copyright violations punishable by prison time and fines.

In the petition filed on Monday, Puerto 80 Projects said Rojadirecta hosts forums in which users post

messages on sports, politics and other topics.

"The Rojadirecta site does not host copyrighted videos or streams of sporting events, and the government does not allege that it does," it said. "It indexes links to streams of sporting events that can already be found on the Internet."

"By hosting discussion forums and linking to existing material on the Internet, Puerto 80 is not committing copyright infringement, let alone criminal [copyright infringement](#)," the [petition](#) said.

Puerto 80 also argued that the seizure of the domain names constitutes "an unlawful prior restraint on speech, in violation of Puerto 80's First Amendment rights."

The January seizure of the domain names is part of a controversial initiative known as "Operation in Our Sites," an ongoing investigation into websites that illegally offer copyrighted and counterfeited goods.

US authorities in November shut down 82 websites selling mostly Chinese-made counterfeit goods, including golf clubs, Walt Disney movies, handbags and other items.

"Operation In Our Sites" began in June 2010 with the closure of nine websites offering pirated movies.

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