



Department of Justice

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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For Immediate Release

LUNAR MATERIAL RECOVERED

St. Louis, MO - The United States Attorney's Office announced that what is believed to be lunar material stolen from National Aeronautics and Space Administration decades ago was safely returned on Monday of this week to its laboratories at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

The material consists of moon dust removed from the film cartridge of a camera used by astronauts on the surface of the moon during the Apollo 11 Mission. The moon dust is believed to have been smuggled out by a NASA employee that had access to the camera that was used on the Apollo 11 Mission. NASA investigators believe that the employee removed the moon dust using a 1-inch piece of tape and that the tape was later sold in 2001 to a German national who deals in space-related memorabilia. Since then the trail has grown cold as it is believed the tape was cut into several smaller segments and sold to unknown purchasers. This would be the first of the segments to be recovered.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for Eastern Missouri first learned in early June that the dust was going to be listed for auction by Regency-Superior Auctions in its St. Louis office. Regency is the oldest and one of the largest auctioneers of space and aviation memorabilia in the world. Investigators from NASA's Office of Inspector General out of the Kennedy Space Center then contacted Regency who cooperated with the investigation and, with the permission of the consignor, withdrew the material from auction. The name of the consignor is not being released. She had not been involved in its purchase and was unaware of its history or how it had been acquired by her late husband. Upon learning that the material had been stolen from NASA years earlier, she immediately and graciously agreed to relinquish it back to the American people.

Investigators from the U.S. Attorney's Office retrieved the material from the Regency Superior Auctions last Friday. On having the lunar material in his office for a day, United States Attorney Richard Callahan quipped, "It wasn't much to look at, but I will never be that close to the moon again!"

Preliminary testing by the Johnson Space Center laboratory late yesterday confirmed that the material is in all likelihood lunar, although it will take another 2-3 weeks to complete full testing.

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*IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
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