

U.S. Doubles Down and Seizes ‘Comeback’ Domains of Pirate Sites

December 19, 2022 by **Ernesto Van der Sar**

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Leading up to the FIFA World Cup final this weekend, U.S. law enforcement seized 23 domains operated by pirate sports streaming sites. The domains in question were used by sites targeted in a similar action a week earlier. This triggered a game of whack-a-mole that's not over yet. Meanwhile, other sites are being targeted, including the popular Soccerstreams portal.

Earlier this month, we reported on a series of FIFA World Cup-themed [domain name seizures](#) by US law enforcement.

In the initial wave, Homeland Security Investigations [took down 55 domain names](#) operated by pirate sports streaming sites.

Many of the sites had millions of regular visitors who were confronted with a seizure banner featuring seals of prominent law enforcement outfits. This action was later officially confirmed by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland.



As expected, the crackdown was related to the FIFA World Cup. The authorities confirmed that they were tipped off by a FIFA representative in September. Homeland Security Agents in Maryland subsequently picked up the case and confirmed that the sites were indeed linked to infringing World Cup streams.

Comebacks

The seizures affected a wide variety of sites with Hesgoal and Weakstreams as prominent targets. While these domains indeed became inaccessible, the streaming portals were not easily deterred and swiftly switched to new domain names.

Taunting U.S. law enforcement was a bold move but not without consequences.

Maryland's U.S. Attorney's Office kept a close eye on the action and conducted a follow-up seizure round, starting last Friday.



This new action, now officially [confirmed](#), targets several 'comeback' domains including hesgoal.pro, hesgoal.me and weakstream.net which had only been actively used for a few

days.

“After the initial round of seizures executed on December 10, HSI Agents in Maryland observed public internet messages and social media posts identifying additional, alternative sites offering illicit streams of World Cup matches.

“Agents then reviewed World Cup games and other infringing content being offered through these sites and confirmed a list of additional domain names subject to seizure,” the Attorney’s Office adds.

Whack-A-Mole Continues

The new seizures are a setback for the site operators, but not all are so easily deterred. At the time of writing, Weakstreams already appears to have made a comeback at a .org domain.

Hesgoal also had its [Twitter handle suspended](#) over the past few days. While that was replaced with a new one, it didn’t immediately launch a backup domain name as far as we can see.

The follow-up seizure round timed right before the World Cup final, also targeted some streaming platforms that hadn’t been listed before. This includes Soccerstreams.net, which has a dedicated following [on Reddit](#).

The seizure banner shocked many regular visitors but, like some of the other platforms, Soccerstreams isn’t throwing in the towel. Instead, it appears to have moved to reddit-soccerstreams.net.



Other new domains that were seized include releasesky.com, wizwig1.com and futbollatam.com. We haven't examined all of these domains in detail but the latter has a Twitter account that promoted the comeback domain.



The above suggests that Maryland's U.S. Attorney's Office has more work to do, but since the FIFA World Cup ended yesterday, priorities may change.

High Stakes Power Play

These types of piracy-related domain seizures are not a new phenomenon, but they are quite unusual. It remains unclear what specifically prompts criminal law enforcement agencies to take action.

The sports streaming sites were obviously problematic, but there are thousands of pirate sites. Some have been around for nearly two decades without running into trouble with U.S. law enforcement.

This includes Hollywood nemesis The Pirate Bay, which actually [moved to a Swedish \(.se\) domain name](#) over a decade ago when it feared a domain seizure by U.S. law enforcement.

That seizure never came. On the contrary, its .se domain name was [taken over](#) by Swedish law enforcement following a lawsuit. Ironically, this prompted the torrent site to return to its original .org domain.

It's unclear why U.S. law enforcement agencies decided to take action against sports streaming sites. Apparently, FIFA had a rather convincing case and perhaps it doesn't hurt that the United States is co-hosting the next World Cup.

Thus far, no arrests or indictments have been announced in relation to the seizures. That said, the seizures are definitely a warning that U.S. law enforcement can take the matter rather seriously.

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U.S. authorities haven't identified any of the additional 23 domain names that were seized but information obtained by TorrentFreak suggests that it likely includes the following.

- *hesgoal.pro*
- *hesgoal.me*
- *weakstream.net*
- *vipleagues.net*
- *soccerstreams.net*
- *rojadirectatvonline.net*
- *futbol.tv.live*
- *rojadirecta.global*

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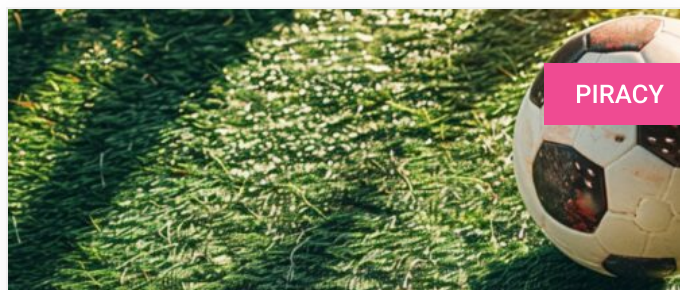
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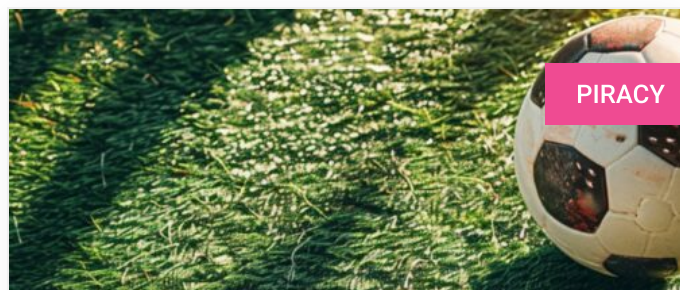
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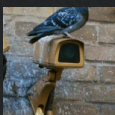
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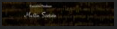
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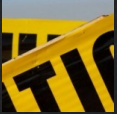
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