

# INTERNATIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ALLIANCE

## 2004 SPECIAL 301 REPORT

# BOLIVIA

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**Special 301 recommendation:** IIPA recommends that Bolivia be kept in the Special 301 Watch List.

**Overview of key problems:** Bolivia has shown no progress on copyright reform in the past seven years. Bolivia currently does not meet its current bilateral and multilateral obligations in that it fails to provide a TRIPS-compliant copyright law and adequate and effective copyright enforcement. If the requisite improvements are not forthcoming swiftly, we will request that the U.S. government initiate a review of Bolivia's eligibility to obtain trade benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program, the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA), and the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA). Some of the problems that the copyright industries face in Bolivia include—

- Bolivia fails to meet basic TRIPS standards. The lack of civil *ex parte* measures remains a major problem in enforcing copyright in Bolivia.
- Significant improvements are needed to strengthen civil enforcement mechanisms, criminal enforcement and border measures.
- Copyright legal reform has been considered for years. A comprehensive intellectual property rights bill was introduced to the Bolivian Congress in early February 2001 but the Bolivian Congress has yet to commence its review, despite several requests from the copyright industry.

**Actions that the government of Bolivia should take:** To improve the copyright law and enforcement in Bolivia, we recommend the following actions for 2004—

- TRIPS- and WIPO treaties (WIPO Copyright Treaty and WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty) law reform must be considered and approved. Passage of the pending bill will not suffice because it is not even TRIPS-compliant in its current form.
- Ratification of the WCT and WPPT and their implementation in the copyright law reform referenced above.
- Increase term of protection for copyright and neighboring rights to life plus 70, or to 95 years from publication in the case of neighboring rights and works whose term is measured other than by reference to the life of the author.
- Reform penal code to provide deterrent level penalties for copyright infringement.
- Include in the civil code statutory damages provisions for copyright infringement.

Bolivia is long overdue in meeting its bilateral and multilateral obligations regarding copyright protection and enforcement. In June 2001, the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) between Bolivia and the U.S. entered into force. At the time of the BIT signature in April 1998,

Bolivia was required to have TRIPS-level protection by the end of April 1999, both in terms of its substantive intellectual property law requirements and the requisite enforcement obligations.

Bolivia currently participates in the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program, the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA), and the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA), U.S. trade programs that offer preferential trade benefits to eligible beneficiary countries; all these programs have standards of intellectual property rights which must be afforded to U.S. copyright owners.<sup>1</sup>

## **COPYRIGHT PIRACY IN BOLIVIA**

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Business software piracy by both resellers and end-users is widespread in Bolivia. In addition, music piracy is so rampant in Bolivia that most international companies have no local presence in the country. Bolivian artists and composers have very little chance to record their music and develop a career. For the same reasons, U.S. artists and their music cannot be adequately promoted and commercialized in Bolivia.

## **COPYRIGHT ENFORCEMENT IN BOLIVIA**

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### **Failure to Provide TRIPS-compatible Civil *Ex Parte* Search Measures**

Concerning civil actions, the BSA has encountered a legal obstacle when trying to procure judicial search measures and/or inspections in Bolivia. Article 326 of the Civil Procedure Code states that the defendant must be notified prior to the execution of any preparatory proceedings (e.g., judicial inspections). Upon receiving notice, the defendant is entitled to object to the search, thus impeding execution of the search order until a judge rules on the objection. Many potential defendants have taken advantage of this process to destroy the evidence that the search was intended to discover. Failure to comply with this notification requirement makes the proceeding null *ab initio*. This prior notification requirement clearly violates TRIPS Article 50.2.

During 2002, BSA conducted ten civil inspections. In all of these cases, the BSA had the obligation to notify the defendants at least 24 hours prior to the inspection. In many cases the only evidence that the BSA found was the traces of software that was previously installed but deleted a few hours before the inspection. BSA settled seven of these cases. In 2003, BSA conducted only three civil raids and it could not settle any of these cases.

### **Unwarranted Delays in Civil and Criminal Enforcement**

The Bolivian Civil Procedure Code fails to impose any time limits for courts to review and approve civil search requests. On average, it takes 45 days to obtain a civil search and seizure

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<sup>1</sup> During the first 11 months of 2003, \$7.8 million worth of Bolivian goods (or 4.7% of Bolivia's total exports to the U.S. from January to November) entered the U.S. under the duty-free GSP code, representing a 74.5% decrease over the same period in the previous year. Another \$85 million worth of Bolivian goods entered the U.S. under the ATPA in the first 11 months of 2003, representing an increase of 159.3% from the same period in 2002. For more information on the history of Bolivia under Special 301 review, see Appendix D (<http://www.iipa.com/pdf/2004SPEC301USTRHISTORY.pdf>) and Appendix E (<http://www.iipa.com/pdf/2004SPEC301HISTORICALSUMMARY.pdf>) of this submission.

order, by which time news of the raid may have leaked to the defendant or BSA's evidence may have grown stale or simply disappeared. This unwarranted delay, which is far longer than the average authorization process in other countries in Latin America, violates Article 41 of TRIPS, which requires that remedies for copyright infringement be "expeditious."

Depending on the city in which the civil complaint is filed, it could take up to four to five weeks to obtain a search order. As if the delay itself were not detrimental enough, once the court issues the order, the court must notify the defendant, as per the prior notice requirement discussed above.

In some cases, civil suits in Bolivia can take up to five years of court proceedings just to determine if there was a copyright infringement. Bolivian civil courts use a bifurcated system, meaning that even if the court finds an infringement, there has to be a separate damages trial. This new trial on damages may take up to eight months. All of these factors make it extremely difficult to settle cases successfully, as defendants would rather wait for five or six years and take their chances than settle a case in which the law is unclear at best. In fact, BSA has only settled five cases in Bolivia during 2003. To make matters even worse, because Bolivian law only allows the recovery of direct damages (see discussion below), the potential award of damages in a civil suit fails to provide a meaningful deterrent.

### **Inadequate Civil Copyright Damages**

The Bolivian copyright law permits only the recovery of direct economic damages for civil copyright violations and prohibits punitive, consequential, or statutory damages. Without the threat of a damages award significant enough to create a meaningful deterrent to illegal activity, the copyright law fails to meet the requirements of TRIPS Articles 41 and 45.

In contrast, other countries have legislated a system of statutory damages that provide for an effective deterrent mechanism to combat piracy. In Brazil, for instance, the unauthorized reproduction or publication of a protected work may be subject to statutory damages equivalent to up to 3,000 times the retail value of the protected work.<sup>2</sup> The same solution has been adopted by the United States (up to a maximum of \$30,000 per protected work).<sup>3</sup> IIPA is encouraged that the overhaul of the intellectual property laws submitted to the Bolivian Congress adds a statutory damages provision of between three to five times the retail value of the protected work,<sup>4</sup> but as indicated above, other provisions of the copyright reform bill fail to meet TRIPS and WCT/WPPT standards.

### **Inadequate and Ineffective Criminal Enforcement**

Enforcing copyrights through the Bolivian criminal system has proven to be totally ineffective.

BSA filed two criminal complaints in 2000 against software resellers for hard disk loading in the city of Santa Cruz. Although these cases were filed in September 2000, the Judicial Technical Police (*Policía Técnica Judicial*) took over four months to prepare the investigative reports of the cases and request the issuance of a search and seizure order. The order granting the search in one of these cases was finally issued in February 2001. Despite the

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<sup>2</sup> Ley de Derechos de Autor, No. 9610, Article 103.

<sup>3</sup> 17 U.S.C § 504 (c).

<sup>4</sup> Anteproyecto de Código de Propiedad Intelectual, Article 175 I.

unwarranted delay, during the raid the prosecutor and the Judicial Technical Police seized extensive evidence of copyright infringement. Among other items, they seized six burned CDs loaded with software from BSA member companies, and a PC loaded with unlicensed software. Two expert witness reports were submitted to the file, one of them from the Judicial Technical Police. Both reports indicated, among other things, that the six burned CDs had been loaded with illegal software, and that the seized PC also had unlicensed software installed in its hard disk.

Because under Bolivian law a party filing a criminal complaint has the right to review the case file, after the raid, local counsel for BSA visited the Prosecutor's Office and the Court several times to have access to the file and ascertain the case's status. In both places, local counsel was denied access to the file every single time because the file was under "review." When he finally had the ability to examine the file a few weeks later, he learned that the Prosecutor's Office and the Court had summarily dismissed the case for lack of evidence. To make matters worse, local counsel noticed that the decision was dated several days before, and that the time to appeal the decision had already expired. BSA was never served with a copy of the judge's decision, although the Court was required to do so under Bolivian law.

TRIPS and the basic principles of due process mandate that "...[d]ecisions on the merits of a case [...] shall be made available at least to the parties to the proceeding without undue delay. Decisions on the merits of a case shall be based only on evidence in respect of which parties were offered the opportunity to be heard" (TRIPS Articles 41.1 and 2). Needless to say, the Court did not observe any of these due process guarantees in this case.

In 2002, one of the BSA member companies brought 10 criminal search and seizure raids in the cities of Cochabamba, Santa Cruz and La Paz against resellers who were selling computers with pre-installed unlicensed software. In most of these cases, the BSA member company faced significant problems to enforce its copyrights. In Cochabamba, for instance, the prosecutor handling the case (*fiscal*) let the statute of limitations run out in three of these cases, despite local counsel's frequent requests to act. In another case, also in Cochabamba, another prosecutor recommended to local counsel that the action be transformed into a private action because he did not have the time, interest, or resources to spend prosecuting a copyright infringement case. In Santa Cruz, the prosecutor in charge of two cases decided, notwithstanding local counsel's objections, to return to the defendants the computers that were seized as evidence of the crime. According to the prosecutor, pursuant to Article 189 of the New Code of Criminal Procedure, he may return any seized materials to a defendant provided that the defendant exhibit the seized evidence whenever required by the prosecutor or a judge. With this decision, the prosecutor created a situation in which the evidence seized will probably be destroyed by the time of the trial putting at risk the rightsholder's ability to demonstrate that his copyright has been infringed. In 2003, one of the illegal software resellers prosecuted in 2002 was sentenced to one year imprisonment and to pay damages. Another raid conducted during 2002 resulted in criminal prosecution and a public hearing has been scheduled for 2004. Unfortunately, in this case, the computers that were seized during the raid as evidence of the crime mysteriously disappeared from the police warehouse in which they were stored.

The music industry is not aware of any actions by the local authorities to investigate or raid replication facilities and warehouses dedicated to distribution of pirate product. The same can be said about actions against the network of street vendors offering pirate CDs.

## **Border Measures in Bolivia Must Be Strengthened**

Bolivia continued to serve as an alternate route for product controlled by Paraguayan pirates. Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia is a link between Paraguay's Ciudad del Este and Chile, Peru, Ecuador and the Far East. Given the growing problem with piratical and counterfeit materials in the Andean Region, it is imperative that Bolivian law satisfy the TRIPS enforcement text on border measures. Bolivian laws and/or regulations should contain provisions under which the competent authorities can act on their own initiative and suspend the release of suspect goods (TRIPS Article 58).

## **COPYRIGHT LAW REFORM AND RELATED ISSUES**

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### **Copyright Law of 1992**

Bolivia passed a copyright law on April 29, 1992, which replaced its antiquated 1909 law.<sup>5</sup> While the 1992 law was a vast improvement in legal protection, it left the implementation of many of its provisions, including enforcement, to subsequent regulations. For example, under the 1992 copyright law, computer programs are protected but not as "literary works," and are subject to regulations. A first set of draft software regulations was proposed in 1993, and there were several rounds of revisions, as well as numerous delays. Finally, a set of regulations providing the basic foundation for copyright protection of software and including provisions that specifically permit criminal actions to be undertaken against copyright infringers was implemented by presidential decree on April 25, 1997, five years after the original law. With respect to films, the copyright law's protection is limited to works registered through CONACINE (Cámara Nacional de Empresarios Cinematográficos), a government/industry organization responsible for title registration, or, for works shown on television, through the Ministry of Telecommunications. The CONACINE registry has proven to be highly susceptible to fraudulent registration of titles by parties other than the legitimate rightsholder.

### **2001 Bill to Amend the Copyright Law**

Efforts to overhaul the 1992 copyright law have been underway for years. In 1996, the National Secretary of Culture and the National Secretary of Industry and Commerce started to develop a proposal for a special law on intellectual property protection which would complement the existing copyright law. The objective of this project was to increase the level of IP protection, streamline judicial proceedings relating to the enforcement of intellectual property rights, and otherwise improve enforcement efforts to combat piracy and counterfeiting of IPR-protected works in order to encourage the economic development of these industries in Bolivia. Due to funding problems, a final draft of this project was not originally expected until August 1997. At that time, IIPA received mixed reports on whether the project was abandoned in 1998

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<sup>5</sup> Bolivia's copyright regime must also comport with decisions made by the Andean Community. In December 1993, the five Andean Pact countries, including Bolivia, approved Decision 351, a common regime on copyright and neighboring rights, including an obligation to provide for injunctive relief, seizure and confiscation of unlawful copies and devices, and damages. Some very preliminary discussion has taken place regarding the modification of Decision 351 to make it TRIPS- and WIPO treaties-compatible, but no resolution has been taken at this point by the Andean Community Copyright Office Directors.

or whether the Ministry of Justice took over drafting, with a goal of releasing a draft in the March-April 1999 time frame.

On February 1, 2001, the Bolivian Ministry of Justice and Human Rights presented a comprehensive package of proposed legislation on intellectual property rights, including a chapter on copyright, to the President of the Bolivian Congress. The copyright chapter contains over 200 articles which propose to expand the scope of exclusive rights, prescribe statutory damages for copyright violations, establish civil *ex parte* search procedures, add more enforcement powers to the Copyright Office, and create a special police force exclusively for intellectual property enforcement. Unfortunately, this bill has been stalled in Congress since its submission. Furthermore, there have been reports that Congress does not intend to pass the bill.

## **WIPO Treaties**

Bolivia is a signatory to the WIPO treaties — the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT). Ratification of these treaties by Bolivia, followed by deposit of instruments of ratification with WIPO, would show the Bolivian government's support for raising the minimum standards of copyright protection, particularly with respect to network-based delivery of copyrighted materials, and fostering the growth of electronic commerce. Bolivia should ensure that any amendments to its copyright law incorporate the substantive obligations of the two WIPO treaties in order to respond to the challenges of the rapidly evolving marketplace for copyrighted materials.

## **Criminal Procedure Code Reform**

The Bolivian government published amendments to its criminal code on March 10, 1997. The amended Article 362 of the Penal Code eliminates the previous requirement that works of intellectual property must be registered in Bolivia in order to be legally protected, and expands the scope of activities deemed as crimes against intellectual property rights. This amended article now matches the 1992 copyright law, which also establishes that registration is not required for the work to be protected by law. Importantly, the amended Article 362 of the Penal Code now allows the police to take enforcement actions against pirates. Previously, the code had required that copyright infringements be prosecuted and tried under rules for "private" penal actions, without the intervention of the state prosecutors. There are apparently two types of sanctions — "fine days" and "seclusion" (imprisonment) — but no range of fines appears to be specified in the code for copyright infringement. Because the use of these sanctions is not clear, the Supreme Court reportedly issued an administrative resolution in an attempt to provide better guidance.

## **Copyright and Regional Trade Negotiations**

The United States has announced its intention to launch FTA negotiations with Bolivia.<sup>6</sup> IIPA will be looking for an agreement that achieves the same high substantive standards as were achieved in the recently concluded FTA with Central America.

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<sup>6</sup> See Press Release 2003-74, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, "USTR Notifies Congress of Intent to Initiate Free Trade Talks with Andean Countries," November 18, 2003, at <http://www.ustr.gov/releases/2003/11/03-74.pdf>; and President Bush's Letter to Congress, November 18, 2003, at [http://www.ustr.gov/new/fta/Andean/2003-11-18-notification\\_letter.pdf](http://www.ustr.gov/new/fta/Andean/2003-11-18-notification_letter.pdf).