

1	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT		
2	SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS HOUSTON DIVISION		
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4	ATLANTIC WAVE HOLDINGS, LLC, 4:25-CV-00626 and SECURE COMMUNITY, LLC,		
5	Plaintiffs/Judgment-		
6	Creditors,		
7	VS. HOUSTON, YEXAS		
8	CYBERLUX CORPORATION and		
9	MARK D. SCHMIDT, Individually,		
10	Defendants/Judgment-		
11	Debtors. PARCH 26, 2025		
12	*****************		
13	TRANSCRIPT OF MOTION HEARING PROCEEDINGS HEARD BEFORE THE HONORABLE LEE H. ROSENTHAL UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE		
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16	ADDEADANCEC.		
17	APPEARANCES:		
18	FOR THE PLATNITIFFS: MR. DAVID ALAN WALTON  Bell Nunnally & Martin LLP		
19	FOR THE PLAINTIFFS:  MR. DAVID ALAN WALTON Bell Nunnally & Martin LLP 2323 Ross Avenue Suite 1900 Dallas, Texas 75201  MR. DAVID M. KEITHLY Mortenson Taggart Adams LLP 300 Spectrum Center Drive Suite 1200		
20	Dallas, Texas 75201		
21	MR. DAVID M. KEITHLY Mortenson Taggart Adams LLP		
22	300 Spectrum Center Drive Suite 1200		
23	Irvine, California 92618		
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25	Proceedings recorded by mechanical stenography, transcript produced via computer.		
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FOR THE DEFENDANTS: MR. GABE WRIGHT Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP One America Plaza 600 West Broadway Suite 1500 San Diego, California 92101 Lanie M. Smith, CSR, RMR, CRR Official Court Reporter Official Court Reporter: United States District Court Southern istrict of Texas 515 Rusk Room 8004 Houston, Texas 77002 

PROCEEDINGS 1 THE COURT: Good afternoon. Are we ready to proceed? 2 3 MR. KEITHLY: Yes, Your Honor. 4 MR. WRIGHT: Yes, Your Honor. MR. WALTON: Yes, Your Honor. 5 02:00PM THE COURT: All right. Go ahead and state your 6 7 appearances, please. MR. WALTON: Your Honor, David Walton on behalf of 8 Atlantic Wave Holdings, LLC, and Secure Community, LLC. 9 I also have with me David Keithly, who you 02:00PM 10 11 recently pro hac admitted, from California; and we have a 12 client representative, William Welter. THE COURT: All ght. Very good. 13 14 MR. WRIGHT: Good afternoon, Your Honor. Gabe Wright for Defendants Cyberlux Corporation and Mark D. Schmidt. 02:00PM **15** 16 THE COURT: All right. Thank you. 17 So this is your motion to remand for Cyberlux. 18 Go ahead. MR. WALTON: Your Honor, just for clarity, it's our 19 02:01PM **20** mot for remand, which is Atlantic Wave Holdings. 21 THE COURT: Oh, that's right. I'm sorry. I was 22 looking at the wrong -- yes, go ahead. 23 MR. WALTON: Your Honor, I'm going to let Mr. Keithly 24 start with argument; and then I'll be here to answer any 02:01PM **25** questions that may follow.

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THE COURT: So I do have one preliminary question that may help the argument that would be clearer to me. The order that Cyberlux has cited as its basis for removal includes nonexempt property. That's all -- that's the language used.

What is nonexempt property in this context?

MR. WALTON: Mr. Keithly, do you want to --

MR. KEITHLY: I'm not familiar with what would be exempt versus nonexempt; but what I can tell you, Your Honor, is that the state court was managing this effectively and wasn't going to sell any government property without making a determination of who the property belongs to.

As you know, receivers can't just, you know, go in and sell property willy-nilly. And the Court -- the state court was working with us to appoint a receiver who could then determine what properties were available to satisfy the judgment.

THE COURT: I understand that Mr. Berleth -- or Berleth (pronouncing), if that's how you pronounce his name -- was going to fill that role and he made statements disavowing any intent to sell government property.

But I guess my question is: Does nonexempt refer to government property within the Cyberlux Texas warehouse or to something else?

MR. KEITHLY: I'm not sure what nonexempt property refers to in the order for the receiver.

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THE COURT: Mr. Wright, do you know?

MR. WRIGHT: Your Honor, that goes right to the heart of the issue; and I think that the receiver's letter on February 3rd is what gave us clarity on what they considered to be nonexempt property, which is that Cyberlux Spring, Texas, facility, you know, soaking wet and with my thumb on the scale, has about a hundred thousand dollars worth of nonexempt property. He believes there's seven to eight and that that number only can be derived from the drones. And so the question of whether or not those drones are nonexempt property and whether or not they're government property is a purely federal law question.

THE COURT: We what does nonexempt mean? Is that -- I mean, in Texas that might mean something other than a homestead.

MR. WRIGHT: It would, Your Honor, but I would submit that the risk is that the nonexempt property is going to include these drones and that's what that letter indicates.

what nonexempt as used in this case and used in the order means?

MR. WALTON: Your Honor, what I can say -- and I think I'm the Texas lawyer here present. What I can say, nonexempt would be defined under Texas law and as under Texas law when it reaches that definition is anything that the creditors can

reach.

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As you know and you made reference, that homestead is exempted. There are certain things under Texas law that are exempted. So it would be anything that the creditor could reach that is not otherwise exempted under some other law or statute.

It doesn't mean that it can be anything and everything that the government may stake claim to. It's simply what can the creditors reach; and that's a determination that the Texas state court and the receiver were intending to undertake in this case as to what in that warehouse, what within Cyberlux's possession, custody, or control can a creditor reach when it's trying to enforce the judgment. Whether it includes everything in that warehouse or whether it includes a small portion of the assets in that warehouse, that's a determination that needs to be undertaken by the state court as well as the receiver.

It doesn't trigger any federal law or federal issue just because the exemption may be premised upon some type of federal regulation or federal law. Which again we don't concede that is triggered here, but that would be the only circumstance that that would be in play.

But nonexempt is just a general reference to anything that the creditors can reach in enforcing the judgment.

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Do you have a cite that I could use for THE COURT: that proposition?

MR. WALTON: Your Honor, I apologize. I don't have a cite off the top of my head, but I'm glad to supplement or provide a notice to the Court with those citations.

THE COURT: That would be great. Thank you.

And the other side can respond or provide me something on the same day.

MR. WRIGHT: We would be happy to provide something on the same day, and I believe that exemptions are under the Texas Property Code Chapters 41 and 42.

> THE COURT: Okav. 🔆

All right You can start your argument now. Sorry.

MR. KEITHLY Okay. Your Honor, this case presents an example of procedural abuse. The removal wasn't filed to really vindicate any legitimate federal interest. It was filed to obstruct what the state court was doing, the state court enforcement action midstream.

Shortly before the state court had said, as we submitted to the Court, that it was going to appoint a receiver, compel depositions, and allow the collections process to proceed, the night before the CEO was scheduled to be deposed, seven months after this case was initially filed, it was removed to federal court.

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It's part of a well-documented and ongoing pattern of delay that I don't really want to spend too much time on.

But the main issues here are that the removal is procedurally defective, it's untimely for the reasons that we've stated in our motion. More importantly, there's no federal jurisdiction under either Section 2410 or Section 1442(a)(2).

To take the first, Section 2410 doesn't apply because there is no lien. So this statute applies only where the United States has asserted a lien or an interest in property. The United States has not interpled. They have not asserted that they have a lien on such property. All we have are the statements of the judgment debtors.

Moving to 1442(a)(2), so the argument there, as I understand it, is that Cyberlux believes that it is acting under a federal officer; but it really brushes over what a federal officer is. What it really is is a subcontractor under a prime contractor that has a contract with the federal government.

This fails the acting-under test that's outlined in Watson versus Phillip Morris that we cited in our papers.

There is no direct supervision or delegation by the federal government. Drone equipment is not classified. Documents at issue are not sensitive and --

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THE COURT: We've been hearing a lot about that today in different contexts.

MR. KEITHLY: That's certainly right.

Our concern, Your Honor, is that this removal is a continuation of a pattern of delay and obstruction. been trying to collect on this judgment, which is a final judgment from the State of Virginia, now@for over a year, in three different jurisdictions and we've been stymied at every opportunity until the Texas state court judge denied a motion to vacate the judgment and said he was going to appoint a receiver, compel depositions, and compel discovery. And as soon as he did that, they removed it to federal court.

We think this is an abuse of the removal statute, that it was inapproproately removed, and that it should be remanded as soon as possible so that the state court judge can continue his efforts of helping us to collect on a judgment.

THE COURT: Is the relevant question for the role of the receiver -- that is, whether the receiver is an officer of the Court -- is that a federal law question or a state law question?

MR. KEITHLY: Whether the receiver is an officer of the Court?

THE COURT: Yes, sir.

MR. KEITHLY: My understanding is that's a question of state law.

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THE COURT: I would think that's right.

MR. KEITHLY: Yeah, we cited in our papers as well that the receiver is generally working for the Court. He's not a representative of the plaintiffs. He's there to determine on behalf of the Court what assets are available, which are exempt, which are nonexempt, which are subject to levy under the judgment.

THE COURT: All right. Mr. Wright.

MR. WRIGHT: Your Honor, thank you.

I want to first address the characterization that our actions are designed to obstruct or delay or obfuscate because that is simply not the case; and the fact that Cyberlux may have asserted its procedural and legal rights in California, Virginia, and Texas, is not tantamount to delay or obstruction. It's just exercising its rights to defend itself and make sure that things are appropriately complied with.

required to remove within 30 days of, you know, the federal question issue coming up; and that issue became crystalized between January 20th and February 3rd, between the broad-sweeping order for all nonexempt property and the proposed receiver -- and I think we need to be clear about that -- the proposed receiver saying that he believes there's seven to eight digits' worth of equipment that he can sell in order to satisfy this judgment.

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THE COURT: Well, let me back up a minute, Mr. Wright.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

THE COURT: So you've said that your motion was timely. So the motion to quash was filed on January 6th and it seems clear from the record that you knew at that time that there was U.S. Government property in the Texas facility at that time and you also knew from the original petition that the plaintiffs were going to collect -- were trying to collect the judgment from Cyberlux or levy on and sell Cyberlux's property.

So what new information relevant to triggering a right to remove did the proposed order add?

MR. WRIGHT: Because we had telegraphed and even as was stated in the hearing on the appointment of receiver, we had been saying that, you know, government property is involved here and --

THE COURT: Right.

MR. WRIGHT: -- the indications we were given were that they weren't going to go after the government property.

So we didn't think that there was a ripe issue to remove and it would have been premature for us to do it just on the hunch, for lack of a better term. There was no longer a hunch once the January 20th order and the February 3rd letter were issued which made it clear that the intent was to seize U.S. Government property to satisfy this judgment.

MR. KEITHLY: And, Your Honor, to be clear, that was

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never ever the intent of plaintiffs; and I would be absolutely shocked if the receiver or the judge, subject to the requirements that they are, would sell U.S. Government property. That was never our intention.

I think what Mr. Wright is referring to is an inspection that plaintiffs did just to go and look and see what was there at the property. And the proposed receiver, Mr. Berleth, was there as well and he listed what he saw there.

There have been no determinations of what was exempt versus nonexempt, what was going to be subject to sale or not.

And they've known from the very beginning, as Your Honor pointed out the only assets that have any real value or catalyst are those drones. So, you know, if there were a federal question, they've known from the very beginning since we initially brought this action.

THE COURT: And my understanding was that the receiver disavowed any intent to levy on and sell the government property so --

MR. KEITHLY: 100 percent.

THE COURT: So square that peg for me in the round hole of your contention that they're just a valid trigger for removal.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, again, Your Honor, the February 3rd letter submitted by the receiver to the Court is in evidence.

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It's part of our motion. And it indicates that he thinks there's seven to eight digits' worth of assets there, which clearly is the drones.

And I want to be very clear about this receiver --

THE COURT: But that's not equivalent to saying, "And those are the assets I intend to levy on and sell, all of those assets."

MR. WRIGHT: In mentioning those assets, Your Honor, he says that he will be able to satisfy the judgment with them.

That is in the February 3rd letter.

MR. KEITHLY: And that's assuming they're -- you know, assuming they're nonexempt.

THE COURT: "Could" versus "would."

MR. KEITHLY. What we need to understand, Your Honor, is that this was a very preliminary analysis. This was the first time the receiver had ever been into the warehouse, or plaintiffs, for that matter, although we've been trying to get in for months and months now. So this was just our first look at what was there and essentially an inventory of what we saw there.

We're at Step 1 of determining, you know, whose assets are these. If indeed they are the federal government's assets, then the receiver, my understanding would be that he would contact the federal government and say, "How can I get

these to you as quickly as possible?"

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We have no interest in selling assets that belong to the federal government.

MR. WRIGHT: Your Honor, they're making representations back to the would-or-could thing. If this is remanded and the receiver moves on those assets and tries to liquidate them, we have an issue where U.S. Government property prepared for the military is being put out on the open market.

THE COURT: Well, if the receiver did that, then you might have a trigger for removal.

MR. WRIGHT: Right.

THE COURT: But that's not what happened. And it might and I'm not sure that even then it would because I'm not sure that federal officer removal, as broadly as that's construed, would apply, but that's not -- the record as to what documents were filed or presented and when in relation to your time of removal, I'm trying to nail down which particular -- you're relying on the proposed order.

PMR. WRIGHT: The proposed order and the January 3rd letter, which I want to clarify again for the receiver. The receiver was nominated by the plaintiff. He has not been --

THE COURT: He's appointed by the Court.

MR. WRIGHT: He was not yet appointed by the Court.

THE COURT: But that was the mechanism that had to occur to make him the receiver, correct?

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MR. WRIGHT: Correct. And that had not occurred. and we did not invite him to the Spring facility inspection. Plaintiffs --

THE COURT: Of course not. You're in no turry to get the preliminary work done that would enable the other side to levy on your property to satisfy their judgment.

MR. WRIGHT: We made the inspect@on available, Your Honor, to Atlantic Wave, as was ordered, and when that receiver showed up, who was not appointed by the Court and was not instructed by the Court to do that, we let him in as well and that led to the triggering event for us, which is his identification of these assets as something that he can use to satisfy the judgment. He's not acting for the Court at that point; and he's certainly not acting for us, as you pointed out.

MR. KEITHLY: And he's not actually empowered to do anything at that point aside from look at what's there and make a list of it so that the Court can determine --

OFHE COURT: He was basically conducting an inventory at that point.

MR. KEITHLY: Exactly, yeah.

THE COURT: Is that wrong, Mr. Wright?

MR. WRIGHT: It's my position that he wasn't conducting an inventory because he was not appointed by the Court yet, and he was acting in furtherance of the plaintiffs' interests at

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that point.

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MR. KEITHLY: But he wasn't acting at all except to create an inventory.

THE COURT: Make a list.

MR. KEITHLY: Which the judgment debtons have known what's in that warehouse for months and months. We haven't. This --

THE COURT: And so have you.

MR. KEITHLY: -- is our first opportunity.

THE COURT: Mr. Wright, you knew about it -presumptively you knew what was in that warehouse, your client knew what was in that warehouse --

MR. KEITHLY: For months.

nong before the other side did. THE COURT:

MR. WRIGHT But if he's not appointed by the Court and he's submitting letters to the Court not on behalf -- not in furtherance his duties to the Court or us, it's in furtherance of the plaintiffs' interests, Your Honor.

FHE COURT: It may have had the effect since it is the identification of assets that might, depending on what category they fell into, be subject to levy and execution sale to satisfy the outstanding judgment that had been, as I understand it, domesticated and reduced to an enforceable judgment in Texas.

But the fact that it's -- the whole point of the

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exercise was to figure out assets on which the judgment -against which the judgment could be enforced. So in that sense it favored the plaintiff, but the judge -- it's a fairly ministerial exercise: Make a list, figure out whether that's any basis for taking items off of that list, and go forward.

MR. WRIGHT: Your Honor, the reason why we allowed this inspection to happen is because --

THE COURT: You didn't have a choice, Mr. Wright, as best I can tell. They had plenty of Texas remedies to require that inspection and levy on the

MR. KEITHLY: It was court ordered.

THE COURT: -- recoverable property.

MR. WRIGHT: We're operating under the impression that these assets are not going to be identified as something that is going to be levied on and they -- following that hearing and that inspection, the letter submitted identifying those as assets that could be levied upon is what has triggered this. We have an obligation to protect these assets once we understand that this is what their intent is.

THE COURT: What is the statutory basis that was cited for removal?

MR. WRIGHT: 1442, Your Honor, and that's the federal officer removal statute.

So where is your authority that this kind THE COURT: of collection attempt would have fallen under the federal

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officer removal statute?

MR. WRIGHT: The fact that the federal officer removal statute -- and I'm actually glad that they mentioned Watson versus Phillip Morris because there is a Fifth Carcuit case that distinguishes that called Wilde versus Huntington Ingalls.

> THE COURT: Cite?

MR. WRIGHT: 616 F. App'x 710. The pinpoint cite is 713.

And in that case there was discussion about whether Huntington Ingalls, or HD in our case, was a federal officer; and I think the Court put it best in that case when it said presumably the federal government would have had to build those ships itself had Huntington not done so and that therefore meets the requirements of 1442.

And we re in that same position. The federal government isn the one that's --

THE COURT: But you didn't cite that in your notice of removal, did you -- or did you?

√MR. WRIGHT: I believe we cited 1442(a) and another case called -- just bear with me for a second, Your Honor, because I always -- Latiolais versus Huntington Ingalls.

And if you would like the cite, I can give you that one as well, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Yes, please.

MR. WRIGHT: 951 F.3d 286, 292.

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And those are both cases out of the Fifth Circuit where HII was found to be a federal officer under 1442 and then by extension -- there's two arguments. There's two ways to skin this cat here.

We are by extension a federal officer since we're working for HII in performing the manufacturing of these drones and drone components for the federal government or aiding the federal officer in the manufacture of these drones and drone components for a U.S. Government contract for the United States Government.

There's still a 30-day deadline to remove THE COURT: on that basis, correct?

> There is, Your Honor. MR. WRIGHT:

THE COURT: Okay.

MR. WRIGHTON Once the federal question arises.

THE COURT: So I'm looking for your notice of removal to see what the statutory basis you cited, but I'll find it.

MR. WRIGHT: Your Honor, our statutory basis -- we did a notice of removal and an amended notice of removal, Your Honor.

MR. WALTON: Yes, Your Honor. In their original notice of removal, they only relied on Section 2410. It wasn't until the amended notice of removal that they then brought in 1442.

Obviously we would take the position that the amended notice of removal was something beyond just curing a

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procedural defect in their original motion and should be disregarded in its entirety; but nonetheless, we still tried to address 1442 just in case the Court was curious about it.

And what's being left out of this discussion -obviously we don't believe that they've jumped the first
hurdle, but there is a second hurdle on 1442 that they can get
nowhere near and that is the issue must affect the validity of
law of the United States.

And the validity factor is not just someone may argue something inconsistent with U.S. law. It has to be the person is taking a challenge as to the validity of U.S. law. In other words, U.S. law is invalid for these reasons. And nobody in this enforcement proceeding has taken that position.

So we believe 1442 falls on its face not only because of the first hurdle, but certainly because of the second hurdle as well.

THE COURT: So if I were to grant your motion and remand, presumably what you're telling me is that you would proceed to enforce your judgment against the nongovernment property in that warehouse?

MR. KEITHLY: Yes.

THE COURT: And only that property?

MR. KEITHLY: Yes.

MR. WALTON: That's right, Your Honor. And we would have the expectation that they would have the burden to prove

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what is government property and what is not government property, which they have failed to do to this date.

THE COURT: Well, I assume that the position is you know a drone when you see a drone.

MR. WALTON: Yeah, but just because it's a drone doesn't mean it's government property, right? They have to demonstrate that, in fact, the government does, in fact, have a property interest in the inventory in that warehouse; and they've not done that to date. If they're able to satisfy that burden and the Court and the receiver accepts that they have satisfied that burden, then of course. We can only --

THE COURT: These are military drones, aren't they?

MR. WRIGHT: They are manufactured for military purposes, Your Honor in accordance with the United States Navy's request and it falls under Federal Acquisition Regulation 52.249-6(c). And upon termination of the contract, the drones - title to the drones go over to the federal government.

nothing to worry about it. It sounds like you will be able to satisfy your obligation to point out what is government property and why it is therefore not subject to collection efforts in the state court and whatever is not government property in that warehouse and not otherwise exempt from collection would be all that would be seized.

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MR. WRIGHT: Your Honor, I would love to believe that that is the case, but I am in a bit of a double bind here because we have taken this position that that position has been rejected by the plaintiff and we have --

THE COURT: I just heard them accept (it

MR. WRIGHT: We have the documentation and all we need is for them to sign a protective order for us to be able to provide them that documentation that shows -- because it's subject to a confidentiality obligation that we have to HII.

MR. KEITHLY: Well, Your Honor, all of that is incorrect. There's already a protective order in place in the state court proceeding. We've been in contact with HII, and they say the only reason the documents haven't been released is because Cyberlux will not allow HII to release contract documents to us.

MR. WRIGHT: I don't believe that that is the case, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Well, it sounds like from the representations made in this hearing by lawyers who are officers of the Court that the only levy and execution will be on whatever is in that warehouse that is not government property or otherwise exempt from the levy and execution process under the state court law.

So I think you are where you wanted to be to protect your client's interest and obligation to protect the

1 government's interest. 2 3 4 mean where you want to be in the state court. 5 02:28PM 6 that. 7 8 9 02:28PM 10 property. 11 THE COURT: 12 13 14 02:29PM **15** 16 17 improvident removal. 18 MR. KEITHLY: Understood, Your Honor. 19 20 02:29PM of no colorable basis at all. 21 22 Understood, Your Honor. MR. KEITHLY: 23 THE COURT: 24 MR. WRIGHT: Understood, Your Honor. 02:29PM **25** All right. Well, thank you all very much. THE COURT:

MR. WRIGHT: I appreciate that, Your Honor, and I --THE COURT: And when I say "where you want to be," I MR. WRIGHT: And I understand the Court's position on I do appreciate the Court getting the express commitment out of the plaintiff that they're not goting to move on the government property which we believe we do have an obligation to protect, which is why we removed no order to protect that So I am going to remand because I don't find that this was timely removed because you knew that there was government property in there; you knew that the plaintiffs were going to levy on your Texas facility; and you knew that more than 30 days before you filed your motion, your removal.  $\mathfrak{S}$  think this is appropriate to remand, but I'm not going to mpose attorneys' fees for what we used to call THE COURT: I think there was -- it's not a situation So no fees, but back in state court.

This has been an interesting case. Thank you for your time. 1 2 MR. KEITHLY: Thank you, Your Honor. 3 MR. WRIGHT: Thank you, Your Honor. 4 THE COURT: Thank you. MR. WALTON: May we be excused? 5 02:30PM THE COURT: You as well. 6 7 MR. WALTON: Thank you. 8 (The proceedings were adjourned.) 9 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE 10 I, Lanie M. Smith, CSR, RMR, CRR, Official 11 Court Reporter, United States District Court, Southern District 12 of Texas, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript, to the best of my ability and understanding, from the ecord of the proceedings in the 13 above-entitled and numbered matter. 14 15 /s/ Lanie M. Smith Official Court Reporter 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

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