simply have been afraid to ask McKeon for permission to send materials to others. And many scientists say young researchers are not always aware of the intricate laws governing commercial applications of their work. "Intellectual property in the United States is a bit of the Wild West," says David Zapol, who co-chairs a Web site set up to help Hiroaki Serizawa, a researcher accused last year of helping a colleague steal lab secrets. To Zapol, the new case smacks of racial profiling of Asians.

Next week the government will seek to extradite the defendants to Massachusetts, the first step in preparing for a trial. The prospect of a courtroom battle disturbs Wang, who says, "I don't think we want the federal government to sniff around in our business." In the meantime, the case might prompt postdocs and their mentors to re-examine who owns their work.

–ANDREW LAWLER

PALEONTOLOGY

China Regains Fossils Seized in California

BEIJING—Fourteen tons of Chinese fossils are back in their native country after a failed attempt to smuggle them into the United States. The shipment, which includes a 225-million-year-old ichthyosaur and a large number of exquisite crinoids—a kind of echinoderm called a sea lily—dating from the same period, arrived here earlier this month after being seized a year ago in San Diego, California. Chinese officials described the incident for the first time on 11 June.

The reshipment, which Chinese officials say is the largest of its kind, is part of the country's ongoing campaign to protect its cultural and scientific relics against looters. "They are very precious fossils," says Li Jianjun, executive deputy curator of the Beijing Natural History Museum, where the fossils are now housed. "To our joy, we have found that 90% of the fossils" have not been tampered with.

Almost all of the 110 pieces of fossils, which arrived in 93 boxes, are believed to have originated in Guizhou Province in southern China. They date from the early part of the late Triassic period, 227 million to 220 million years ago, when reefs in the region were drowned by anoxic, 500-meter-deep water—ideal conditions for preservation. "As crinoids go, they're pretty stunning," says paleontologist Chris Maples of Indiana University, Bloomington. Crinoids are relatively rare in Triassic rocks, and the meter-tall specimens of the enigmatic *Traumatocrinus* are important for evolutionary studies because the group survived the Permian mass extinction some 20 million years earlier, notes Dan Lehrmann, a geologist at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. In addition to the 4- to 5-meter-long ichthyosaur and the crinoids, the cache includes 10 specimens of a marine reptile called *Keichousaurus* and some fish fossils.

Science was not able to piece together the circumstances that led U.S. officials to act. Officials from China's State Administration of Cultural Heritage say that the fossils were seized in June 2001 by the U.S. Customs Service as they arrived in San Diego and that customs officials contacted Chinese diplomats in New York to arrange for the return of the material. An agency spokesperson declined to provide any information about the case, however, saying that "it is the long-standing policy of the U.S. Customs Service to not discuss matters that may relate to investigation."

The fossils will be stored in a just-completed warehouse and exhibited once they are curated, says the museum's Li, who adds that the fossils will also be made available to outside collaborators for comparative studies. In the meantime, Chinese paleontologists welcome the windfall. "I am happy to see them back," says Wang Xiaofeng of the Yichang Institute of Geology and Mineral Resources in Hubei Province. Wang's team has studied fossils of crinoids, *Keichousaurus*, and other marine creatures at a site in the Guanli area of Guizhou.

–DING YIMIN AND ERIK STOKSTAD

Ding Yimin writes for *China Features* in Beijing.

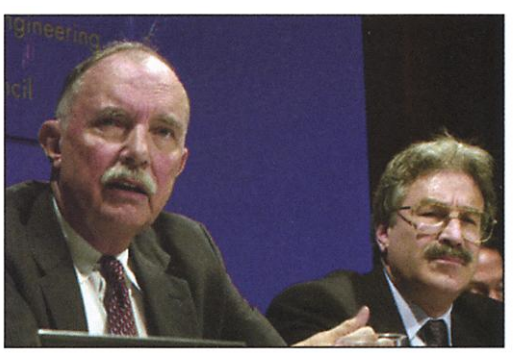
Back home. The U.S. government has returned to China these crinoids and 14 tons of other smuggled fossils.

CREDITS: (TOP TO BOTTOM) RICK KOZAK; *CHINA FEATURES*

COUNTERTERRORISM

Academies Weigh In on Homeland Defense

Get better organized, get more outside help, and get going—immediately. That's what the U.S. government must do to develop and deploy the technologies needed to fight terrorism, says a blue-ribbon scientific panel this week in a report likely to influence the shape of the Department of Homeland Security, proposed earlier this month by the White House (*Science*, 14 June, p. 1944). In particular, the panel says, the government needs a new institute to help it chart and coordinate counterterrorism research.



Terror talk. Lewis Branscomb (left) and Richard Klausner see science playing a major defense role.

That idea and other recommendations are getting guarded reviews in Congress. But the chair of the House Science Committee, before which the report was unveiled this week, welcomes the report. "This report helps ensure that R&D stays high on the homeland defense agenda," says Representative Sherry Boehlert (R–NY). Some biomedical researchers, meanwhile, are criticizing the White House's blueprint for the department, saying that it could complicate antibioterrorism efforts.

The report* is the first public product of a crash effort by the U.S. scientific community to respond to the 11 September terrorist attacks. On its own initiative—and using its

* *Making the Nation Safer: The Role of Science and Technology in Countering Terrorism* (National Academy Press, 2002).