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October 23, 7:25 a.m.

Media Executive Arrested in Selma

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A new Alabama law designed to keep our state's historic artifacts from being sold by bounty hunters is getting its first test. The chairman and CEO of the Outdoor Channel was arrested in Selma Monday for allegedly taking a Civil War relic from the Alabama River.

It was a perfect day to dive on the Alabama River, and two men did that, diving and surfacing several times. What they may not have realized is someone was watching. Conservation officers say they had them under surveillance for about 6 or 7 hours that day.

They had been tipped off by a man concerned the two were taking Civil War relics. They watched as the men brought up - four buckets of what most people would consider garbage. But there was something else, too.

Lt. Mark Rouleau says, "Inside of a wet suit in a dry compartment of the boat, we found a Civil War or pre-Civil war musket." It's the exact kind of artifact the new law is supposed to protect. Anyone can prospect for relics but the law says you have to get a permit to look for them, and if you dig up any, it belongs to all Alabamians.

Suspect Steve Phillips owns one of Birmingham's oldest dive shops. He says he did nothing wrong in the river and that they had permission from the Alabama Historical Commission to dive in the Alabama River.

Perry Massie, Chairman-CEO of The Outdoor Channel was also arrested for taking artifacts. A spokesman for the company released a statement saying, "Based on guidance from Mr. Phillips, Massie believed there was no problem prospecting where they were in the Alabama River. He was very surprised when he learned their activities were apparently not legal."

However officers say Phillips knew all about the law. He had protested it to legislators and state historians in 1999. And, law enforcement officers say both men have reputations for recovering artifacts and selling them on the internet.

Produced by [Vanessa Staples](#)

Defeat



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Get Out



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