



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

**OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. 20530**

**REMARKS BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**OPERATION MOUNTAIN EXPRESS**

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 1, 2000**

Good afternoon. I am pleased to be here today with Administrator Marshall and Commissioner Kelly to announce the results of a law enforcement operation that is part of our ongoing efforts to keep a dangerous drug off the streets of America. That drug is methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine poses a very serious threat to our communities. It is threatening to follow in the footsteps of crack cocaine, and in some communities, it already has. Like crack, meth is often associated with violent and erratic behavior, and its chronic use leads to destructive addiction causing the user to forgo everything but the drug.

Like crack, methamphetamine has the potential to destroy lives, families and entire neighborhoods.

Although its precursor chemical, pseudoephedrine has legitimate pharmaceutical uses, when this chemical is diverted for use in the manufacture of methamphetamine, the safety and well-being of our communities is threatened.

That is why we are fighting methamphetamine at every level - from the organizations that operate "super labs" producing massive quantities of meth to the individuals who produce it in make-shift home labs. We are also targeting the wholesalers and retailers who distribute the drug throughout the United States.

And today we are expanding our efforts by charging those individuals who distribute the chemicals needed to produce methamphetamine in the first place.

During the past several days, more than 140 individuals have been arrested in culmination of the investigation known as Operation Mountain Express. The operation focused on the illegal trafficking of the precursor chemical pseudoephedrine.

During the investigation, agents learned that wholesalers in a number of states were shipping multi-ton quantities of pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine production organizations in California. These wholesalers included DEA-registered distributors of lawful pharmaceuticals, who investigators believe were illegally diverting pseudoephedrine to California for sale on the black market. There the chemical was to be used to produce meth.

As a result of this investigation, agents have seized approximately 10 tons of pseudoephedrine tablets which are capable of producing about 10 tons of methamphetamine. That's 10 tons that won't be hitting the streets of America.

I want to thank DEA Administrator Donnie Marshal and Customs Commissioner Kelly, as well as the law enforcement agents and Assistant United States Attorneys who brought this investigation to its successful conclusion and the Department's Narcotic Section attorneys who were responsible for coordinating this effort nationwide.

Today we have taken a major step in our efforts, but there is much, much more to do. This operation should send a message to anyone involved in methamphetamine production and distribution that we are committed to continuing this fight in every way we know how.

Whether you are a dealer, a manufacturer, or one who makes it all possible by providing the chemical ingredients, you will be held accountable. Thank you.