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Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at the Intellectual Property Theft Campaign Launch

Washington, DC, ~ Tuesday, November 29, 2011

Thank you, Denise, for your kind words, for your outstanding leadership of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and for your commitment – and front-line efforts – to protect the rights, safety, and best interests of American consumers, innovators, and entrepreneurs.

This is critical – and increasingly complex – work. And it has become a priority – not only for the Department of Justice, but for our colleagues across the Administration, our law enforcement and industry partners, and – of course – for President Obama. His commitment to preventing and combating intellectual property theft is clear. And it's perhaps most evident in his support for the groundbreaking work being done by the White House Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator, Victoria Espinel, and her team.

So it's fitting that we've gathered here at the White House to launch a new, cutting-edge campaign to raise awareness about the threat and impact of IP crimes. And I want to thank Victoria – as well as ICE Director John Morton; Acting Deputy Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank; and Ann Harkins, the President and CEO of the National Crime Prevention Council – for lending their voices and expertise to this important public education effort, and for helping to bring so many essential partners into this work.

I'm pleased to see several of these key partners with us today – including my colleagues Tony West, Assistant Attorney General for the Department's Civil Division, and Laurie Robinson, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs. And I am proud to stand with you all as we begin a new chapter in our nation's fight against intellectual property crimes.

As our country continues to recover from once-in-a-generation economic challenges, the need to safeguard intellectual property rights – and to protect Americans from IP crimes – has never been more urgent. But, in many ways, this work has also never been more difficult.

Recent technological advances – particularly in methods of manufacturing and distribution – have created new opportunities for businesses of all sizes to innovate and grow. But these quantum leaps have also created new vulnerabilities, which tech-savvy criminals are eager to exploit. As a result, we're seeing an alarming rise in IP crimes – illegal activities that can not only devastate individual lives and legitimate businesses, but undermine our nation's financial stability and prosperity.

Make no mistake: IP crimes are anything but victimless. For far too long, the sale of counterfeit, defective, and dangerous goods has been perceived as "business as usual." But these and other IP crimes can destroy jobs, suppress innovation, and jeopardize the health and safety of consumers. In some cases, these activities are used to fund dangerous – and even violent – criminal enterprises and organized crime networks. And they present a significant – and growing – threat to our nation's economic and national

security.

But we are fighting back – in bold, comprehensive, and collaborative ways.

In fact, just yesterday – on what’s known as “Cyber Monday” and billed as the busiest on-line shopping day of the year, leaders from the Justice Department, the FBI, ICE, and our U.S. Attorney community announced the results of our latest effort to disrupt the online sale of counterfeit goods. As part of a long-running law enforcement operation, known as “In Our Sites,” we seized 150 domain names of websites engaged in the illegal sale and distribution of counterfeit goods and copyrighted works. To date, our joint enforcement activities have shut down 350 websites. And our vigilance in stopping the sale of illegal goods will continue.

Through these and many other efforts, it’s been an honor to build on the work that I began more than a decade ago, when – in 1999, during my tenure as Deputy Attorney General – I helped to launch the Department’s first intellectual property initiative. Over the last 12 years, this effort has evolved into what is now a wide-ranging IP criminal enforcement program. And, today, thanks to the hard work of key leaders, investigators, and law enforcement officials at every level – including many of the people in this room – I’m pleased to report that this work has never been more aggressive, strategic, or effective.

We’ve devoted more resources than ever before to identifying and defeating IP criminals. We’re seeking new ways to share information – and to leverage expertise – with a variety of private sector partners, as well as government and law enforcement officials across the country. And we’re using every tool and resource at our disposal to help secure our nation’s economic well-being and to protect the safety and interests of American consumers.

Under the Obama Administration, these efforts have led to a number of significant steps forward – from the development and implementation of the government-wide Joint Strategic Plan that was released last summer; to the formation of a Justice Department Task Force on Intellectual Property, which is being led by Deputy Attorney General Cole; to important international partnerships and joint initiatives that have enabled us to train or educate more than 2,500 foreign judges, prosecutors, investigators, and other officials from more than 30 countries on IP protection.

Along with the strategies put in place by the Department – within the Civil Division’s Consumer Protection Branch and the Criminal Division’s Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section – and with the success of our ongoing law enforcement actions – I believe that we are heading in the right direction.

But our efforts at the federal level are only part of the answer – and, frankly, just a small part. The work that state and local law enforcement agencies do to uncover and address IP crimes is essential. And, ultimately, the responsibility for protecting citizens and consumers rests with them. Of course, the Justice Department will continue to make every possible effort to support their work. In fact, as Denise just mentioned, over the last two years, our Office of Justice Programs has awarded nearly \$11 million to help states and local jurisdictions fight intellectual property theft and provide training to investigators, prosecutors, and advocates.

Despite these critical investments, it’s clear that government won’t be able to win this fight – and keep pace with today’s criminals – alone. Our efforts will always depend not only on law enforcement activity and industry partnerships, but also on robust public engagement – and the vigilance of the American people.

That’s what this new campaign is all about.

In just a few moments, we’ll be unveiling a series of television, radio, and Internet messages designed to help get the word out about the dangers of buying counterfeit goods, and the seriousness of intellectual property theft. These public service announcements will raise awareness about the ways in which members of the public can help us to more effectively prevent and combat these crimes, protect potential victims, and bring criminals to justice. And, with holiday shopping season now upon us, this information could hardly be hitting the airwaves at a more appropriate time.

So, I’d like to take this opportunity to remind consumers to exercise caution when looking for bargains and discounts on the Internet. To put it simply: If a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Fortunately, we can all be part of the solution. Anyone who suspects an IP crime can visit cybercrime.gov, fbi.gov, or iprcenter.gov to report suspected offenses. The public’s proactive attention to these issues can help us to disrupt the sale of illegal goods; to prosecute the individuals, gangs, and international criminal organizations that profit from these activities; and to stop those who would exploit the ingenuity of others for monetary gain.

Of course, despite our best efforts, I realize that the progress we seek will not be easy – and that we may not be able to achieve the necessary results as quickly as we might like.

But, if we keep working together – in partnership with industry leaders, law enforcement officials, IP crime victims, and members of the public; and if we continue to shine a light on the threat and impact of intellectual property theft – I have full confidence in our ability to bring those who violate intellectual property laws to justice, and to protect the rights and best interests of the citizens we are privileged to serve.

Once again, I'd like to thank today's speakers and their colleagues for the critical work they're leading – and for the opportunity to join them here this morning.

Speaker:

Attorney General: Eric H. Holder, Jr.

Topic(s):

Consumer Protection

Component(s):

Office of the Attorney General



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