



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, June 13, 2008

For Information Contact Public Affairs
SANDY RAYNOR
Telephone: (602) 514-7625
Cell: (602) 525-2681

FEDERAL, TRIBAL, STATE, AND LOCAL OFFICIALS TAKE ON METH TRAFFICKING IN FOUR CORNERS

HOLBROOK, Ariz. – Tribal, state, local, and federal law enforcement officers and leaders from the Four Corners Region gathered today at the Northland Pioneer College in Holbrook with a mission: to confront the challenge of methamphetamine trafficking in Indian Country. In a full day of training, law enforcement officers learned about how to conduct undercover investigations, surveillance techniques, highway interdiction, and gun crimes. In a special strategy session, executive law enforcement officials explored better ways of coordinating their efforts and achieving a united front against a menacing trade in methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs.

U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona Diane J. Humetewa said in opening remarks, “The meth trade has done so much damage to communities all over Arizona. We want to send a strong message to those who deal in meth that they cannot operate in any of our communities with impunity - that they will face major consequences for this despicable trade that destroys lives and families. The commitment of drug trafficking organizations to moving this terrible product into our communities is formidable. Our commitment must be stronger. We must be smarter, better organized, better trained and equipped, and do a better job of talking to one other. With the power of this partnership, we can strike a blow to this evil trade.”

U.S. Attorney Humetewa was joined by the U.S. Attorney from New Mexico Greg Fouratt, Deputy Director David Murtaugh of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, and Navajo County Sheriff Gary Butler. Senior officials from the New Mexico and Arizona Department of Public Safety were also present, as well as county and local police departments across the Four Corners region which includes Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah.

Acting Deputy Director David Murtaugh for State, Local and Tribal Affairs in White House Office of national Drug Control Policy who attended stated “Working together we are committed to stopping drug use before it starts, intervening and healing drug users, and disrupting the drug market. This conference is an excellent example of state, local, tribal and federal agencies coming together to combat drug abuse.”

Terry Azbill, Executive Director, Arizona Region of the Southwest Border High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) commented from Tucson, Ariz. that a primary focus of the HIDTA Program is to establish law enforcement task forces comprised of federal, tribal, state and local agencies, working together to improve their investigative abilities. The HIDTA Program goals focus on disrupting the market for illegal drugs by dismantling or disrupting drug trafficking and/or money laundering organizations, and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HIDTA Task Forces.

-MORE-

The U.S. Attorney's Offices in the Four Corners region, in partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), HIDTA Southwest Regional Meth Program, and the Arizona Department of Public Safety, have begun an initiative to strengthen cooperative law enforcement efforts among federal, state, local and tribal agencies to better identify, interdict, and prosecute drug traffickers using Indian Country as a destination, distribution, and transit route for methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs. In this initiative, targeted training will complement high-level coordination summits in the Four Corners area.

Today's training in Holbrook included training by the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO), DEA, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Arizona and New Mexico Departments of Public Safety (DPS), and HIDTA.

Participants in today's event included USAO, DEA, ICE, ATF, Ariz. and New Mexico DPS, HIDTA, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services plus tribal law enforcement representatives from many Indian Tribes and Nations including Navajo, White Mountain Apache, Hualapai, Tonto Apache, Salt River-Pima Maricopa, and Zuni. Meth task forces from Navajo, Apache, Coconino, and McKinley Counties, local police departments, and coalition partners in the Four Corners region were also present.

Today's summit was the first of several planned training and coordination conferences in the four-corners area targeting methamphetamine trafficking. Future summits will be used to bring together key partners, identify problems, share information and intelligence, and seek opportunities for enhanced coordination, identify future training needs, and to implement coordinated action.

Methamphetamine dealers have been a target for joint efforts by federal and tribal agencies to reduce violent crime on Arizona's 21 Indian reservations. Two years ago, a well-established correlation between substance abuse and violent crime and the particularly devastating effects of methamphetamine on Indian reservations, led federal agencies to join with tribal law enforcement to investigate methamphetamine dealers in Arizona Indian Country. Two major take-downs in the Navajo Nation and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and dozens of prosecutions resulted in 2006. The success of the Methamphetamine Eradication in Indian Country Program opens a door for greater regional coordination between federal, state, and tribal players.

RELEASE NUMBER: 2008-152(Meth Summit)

###

For more information on the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, visit <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/az/>