



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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HODEL VOWS ACTIVE SUPPORT BY INTERIOR IN PRESIDENT'S WAR ON DRUGS

Secretary of the Interior Don Hodel today pledged DOI support and active participation in President Reagan's war on drugs.

"The land managing agencies of the Interior Department long have waged a battle of eradicating marijuana growing on Federal lands. Now, as a result of the impetus given the war on drugs by the President, we have added incentive to continue our efforts. We are going to fight this battle until it is won, because we are going to return our national parks and public lands to the American people."

"Americans take great pride in their parks, wildlife refuges, and public lands. The public's awareness of the threats by drug abuse to values we cherish has been accentuated by last night's appeal by the President and Mrs. Reagan. Those of us responsible for the maintenance of our lands are going to make sure this public trust is upheld.

Hodel noted that his Department spent almost \$17 million last year in "widespread and successful" efforts to rid public lands of marijuana and to carry out other anti-drug efforts.

A summary of the most recent significant activities undertaken by the various agencies of the Interior Department is attached.

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT -- More than 14,000 marijuana plants have been found and destroyed on public lands so far in 1986 as a result of 53 raids in California, Colorado, and Oregon. This effort continues a 1985 program that resulted in the destruction of more than 50,000 marijuana plants growing on public lands. BLM is a full partner in the Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP), a coordinated Federal, State, and local effort to eliminate marijuana growing in California.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS -- More than 7,000 high grade marijuana plants have been located and destroyed by BIA police teams in cooperation with Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies. Working in the States of North Carolina, California, South Dakota, and Oregon, BIA police destroyed harvest-ready marijuana plants, some of which were 15 feet high and would have produced 10 pounds of marijuana each. The Bureau is working with the Indian Health Service to develop anti-drug programs for Indian schools.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE -- National Park Rangers and Police have arrested those growing marijuana on park lands, those trying to smuggle drugs into the country across a national seashore, and those selling or using drugs in parks and recreation areas. For example, Park Rangers in Biscayne National Park in Florida have recovered four tons of marijuana and almost a ton of cocaine in five incidents in the park. The drugs had a street value of \$800 million. Park Police helicopter patrols have discovered and destroyed marijuana growing in parks within Washington, D.C.

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY -- USGS scientists working with Federal and State officials, developed geographic criteria for finding the public lands most likely to be used for growing marijuana. These criteria -- such as access to transportation, water availability, topography -- were plotted in several areas, including Ozark National Forest in Arkansas and national forests in Northern California, and correlated with land cover data and aerial photography to pinpoint the most likely marijuana growing sites.

BUREAU OF MINES -- The Bureau of Mines has provided the U.S. Customs Service with the helium necessary to deploy large balloons along the Mexican border. The balloons provide a floating platform for 1,000 pounds of sophisticated radar equipment used to detect the low-flying aircraft often used by drug smugglers.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Photos, transparencies, and video footage on marijuana eradication activities are available from the Bureau of Land Management, 202/343-9435.