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Attorney General
John Ashcroft
Washington, D.C.
Attorney General John Ashcroft Announces Recommendations of The Justice Department's Intellectual Property Task Force (OCTOBER 12, 2004)

LOS ANGELES - Attorney General John Ashcroft and U. S. Attorney Debra W. Yang today announced the recommendations of the Justice Department's Intellectual Property Task Force, created by the Attorney General on March 31, 2004 to examine all aspects of how the Department handles intellectual property issues and report on proposals for future activity.

"Intellectual property theft is a clear danger to our economy and the health, safety, and security of the American people," said Attorney General Ashcroft. "The enforcement of our intellectual property laws is among the highest priorities of the Justice Department, and I created the Intellectual Property Task Force to explore ways for us to strengthen our protection of the nation's valuable intellectual resources. With the recommendations put forward by the Task Force, the Department is prepared to build the strongest, most aggressive legal assault against intellectual property crime in our nation's history."

"I am confident that our nation's creative and intellectual resources will be better protected when the recommendations of the Task Force report are implemented. The Justice Department will have additional tools to fight movie theft and product counterfeiting," said U.S. Attorney Yang. "With the increased protection and new law enforcement resources, our nation's intellectual property will continue to enhance our daily lives and play a role in the continued growth of the American economy."

The Intellectual Property Task Force examined intellectual property (IP) issues as they relate to criminal law, civil law, international treaties and obligations, legislative and regulatory proposals, and overall public awareness. David Israelite, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Attorney General, served as chairman of the Task Force and led its six-month investigation.

In addition to recommendations regarding civil and antitrust enforcement of IP laws, the Task Force's proposals include:

- Charging and prosecuting all intellectual property crimes whenever federal law applies, including organized crime, fraud, and illegal importation cases, in addition to strengthening the Justice Department's ability to bring those cases;
- Updating the legal tools that help the United States to charge IP criminals overseas under American law;
- Encouraging respect for intellectual property rights through youth education programs; and
- Increasing cooperation with individuals, businesses, and industries that have been victimized by IP theft.

Intellectual property industries play a significant role in the American economy. They make up approximately six percent of the gross domestic product, employ more than five million people, and contribute $626 billion to the U.S. economy. The increasing value of intellectual property, coupled with the ease and low cost of copyright infringement, has significantly increased the destructive consequences of intellectual property theft.

Well-organized criminal enterprises have recently begun to increase the scale, scope, and sophistication of international theft and counterfeiting. Given the simplicity of disseminating millions of copies of stolen software, music, video, and other products and programs around the globe with a single computer click, and given the inconsistent enforcement of existing laws worldwide, it is imperative that intellectual property rights be reaffirmed and vigorously protected.

The Department of Justice has been committed to the prevention of theft and counterfeiting of copyrighted hard goods and online materials. Operation Fastlink - announced in April 2004 and led by the Department's Criminal Division and the FBI - constituted the largest international law enforcement effort ever undertaken against online theft. Operation Digital Gridlock, announced in August 2004, targeted IP theft over peer-to-peer networks and resulted in the seizure of more than 40 terabytes of material. The Justice Department's Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property (CHIP) Units have been expanded according to the Attorney General's directive to prosecute those who are responsible for cybercrime. The Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section (CCIPS) of the Department's Criminal Division has also been expanded, providing additional resources to fight theft.

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