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Press Release - Senator Edmund S. Muskie on Turkey's Opium Ban

Edmund S. Muskie

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Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) and Rep. James H. Scheuer (D-New York) issued the following statement today on Turkey's decision to ban all opium production after 1972:

"We welcome Turkey's decision to ban all opium production after 1972. We had urged the Administration in our letter of April 29, to negotiate with the Turkish Government a reduction this fall of the opium producing provinces to 3 or 4 and a total ban of all production by 1972. We congratulate the Administration for its success in arriving at just such an agreement. And Turkey must be praised for this major step in helping to curb the world-wide heroin trade.

"We hope the Administration will follow up on this agreement by assisting Turkey in the difficult task of enforcing such a ban. The problem of law enforcement is all the more difficult when one considers that enough opium to supply all addicts in America today could be produced in a 5 to 10 square mile area. The United States is in a unique position to give Turkey the technical and financial assistance necessary to enforce the opium production ban.

"And even if today's agreement has the result of stopping the illegal opium traffic out of Turkey, we must still concentrate our efforts on the control or elimination of opium production in other parts of the world. There is increasing evidence that Southeast Asia has become a prime supplier of illegal drugs to the United States. We must, therefore, increase our efforts to combat the international opium trade as provided in legislation we introduced this spring (S. 1944 in the Senate and H.R. 7492 in the House).

"S. 1944 authorizes the President to furnish bilateral assistance to any friendly foreign country, and to international organizations -- such as the United Nations Special Fund for Drug Abuse Control -- for the control or elimination of the production, processing, or distribution of narcotic and psychotropic drugs. It

emphasizes crop substitution in opium-producing nations; new employment opportunities for those now engaged in opium production; assistance to law enforcement and government regulatory agencies; and treatment, rehabilitation, and preventive education programs suitable to diverse cultures."

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