

TOPIC No. 10

OPERATION TOPAZ

DURATION OF SESSION:	30 MINUTES
SUGGESTED METHOD:	LECTURE
TRAINING AIDS:	OHP, POWERPOINT PRESENTATION
AIM OF THE SESSION:	

The session will familiarise the participants with international community's effort to stem the flow of Acetic Anhydride to traffickers through this international tracking system called Operation Topaz, its goals, achievements and results.

OBJECTIVE OF THE SESSION:

At the end of this session, participants will appreciate the significance of international cooperation in preventing the precursor chemicals from reaching the illicit laboratories manufacturing heroin.

POINTS TO BE COVERED:

- Global illicit production of heroin currently stands at a very high level.
- In order to produce heroin in the first place, traffickers require quantities of a common 'industrial' chemical - acetic anhydride.
- This chemical is produced by legitimate industry in vast quantities and is used extensively to produce cellulose acetate, dyes, pharmaceuticals and many other 'commercial' products.
- Unlike potassium permanganate, acetic anhydride is commercially produced in many regions of the world, including several parts of Asia.
- Diversion of acetic anhydride by traffickers is well established and is virtually global in nature.
- Diversion attempts and seizures have occurred over many years in and through China, India, Pakistan, Turkey and many countries in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.
- 'Operation Topaz' is the international community's effort to stem the flow of this key chemical to traffickers through an organized and coordinated system of cooperation, similar to Operation Purple, but with a specific emphasis not just on 'tracking' consignments, but on the investigation of diversion attempts and seizures.

GENESIS

- Enthused by the success of Operation Purple, the INCB, in October 2000, convened an international meeting in Antalya, Turkey with a focus on acetic

- anhydride. The government of Turkey hosted the meeting: 27 states and a number of international bodies attended the meeting.
- The objective of the meeting was to evolve, plan and launch an operation to tackle the problem of diversion of acetic anhydride for illicit manufacture of heroin. It is from the deliberations in this meeting that there emerged the operation called 'Operation Topaz'.

STEERING COMMITTEE

- A Steering Committee was also established during the meeting in Antalya. Currently 12 States, European Commission and three international organisations are members of this Committee. Committee was mandated to take decision on the following:

 - Technical details of the operation.
 - Consolidation of the investigations.
 - Sharing of intelligence and findings among the participants.
 - Determination of the duration of the operation:
 - Designing of forms to be used for reporting individual transactions/interceptions/seizures during the operation.
- The Steering Committee was earlier co-chaired by U.K and India. In February 2002, India has been replaced by Turkey.
- Currently, 36 countries and three international organisations (INCB, WCO and Interpol) are participating in this operation.
- The operation commenced on 1 March 2001 and began monitoring all consignments of acetic anhydride over 100 kilos - as agreed by the Steering Committee.
- Operation Topaz was launched with four basic objectives, which are as under:

 - Focusing on international tracking of shipments of acetic anhydride;
 - Detection and seizure of smuggled substances;
 - Investigation of seizures with a view to identifying the traffickers involved therein;
 - Identification of points where the diversion of acetic anhydride took place.
- Operation Topaz has taken off well, and will continue for some time to come. A number of detections have been made. Achievements during 2001 may be displayed on a slide during presentation.
- Under Operation Topaz, countries intercepting or seizing acetic anhydride are being advised that on a real-time basis, they should share relevant information with the countries from where a consignment originated, or to where a consignment is to be transported.
- This rapid exchange of information is essential in order to track back intercepted/seized consignments, to identify the traffickers involved and to determine the point from where the diversion took place.
- Cooperation is the key to success.