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HEADLINE: U.S. officials vow to step up fight against counterfeit goods

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U.S. cabinet members on Monday announced a new, inter-agency programme to combat international violations of intellectual property.

The **initiative** is dubbed the Strategy Targeting Organized Piracy (**STOP**).

Commerce Secretary Donald Evans said that the measure has been planned for more than a year and is meant to combine the resources and expertise of several federal agencies as part of President George W. Bush's "aggressive trade-enforcement agenda".

"We've been pushing the door closed on fakes for three years," Evans said, "and today we're working toward slamming it shut."

The **STOP initiative** includes measures to make it easier for smaller firms to report overseas violations of their intellectual property rights and to help the U.S. Customs service block such imports at border crossings, harbours and airports.

"We will empower small businesses to secure and enforce their rights. We will **stop** trade in fakes at American borders," Evans said.

"We will raise the stakes for international intellectual property thieves. We will work closely with the private sector to keep fakes out of the global supply chains. We will dismantle criminal enterprises that steal intellectual property. And we will reach out to our trading partners and build international coalitions to block bogus goods."

He was joined for the announcement by Attorney General John Ashcroft, Homeland Security Undersecretary Asa Hutchinson and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick.
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