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KIA ASSAULTS THE PARIS-DAKAR-CAIRO 2000

PARIS, France, Dec. 28, 1999 - Today two Kia Sportages, entered by Baja Automotive Adventures and sponsored by Kia Motors America, passed technical inspection and are officially ready to begin the Paris-Dakar-Cairo 2000 rally. Following today's parade of rally vehicles from the Eiffel Tower to Le Havre, the Sportages were placed on a freighter for shipment to Dakar, Senegal, where the rally begins on Jan. 6. As the only all-American team entered, the Kia crew will represent the United States in what is usually acknowledged to be the world's most grueling test of automotive machinery.

Darren Skilton, Kia race team leader and driver of one of the Sportages, enlisted several pro racers to assist him in his quest to enter Kia into the elite group of those who have successfully competed in this race. Skilton, a three-time SCORE Class 3 desert racing champion, has been successfully off-road racing for the past eight years.

Former SCORE Trophy Truck champion Curt LeDuc will be driving the second Sportage entered in the rally. LeDuc brings with him mechanical expertise gained from over 20 years of building and racing off-road vehicles.

Professional rally co-driver Giorgio Albiero was recently brought on-board the two-vehicle Kia effort for his expert navigational skills and to assist journalist Sue Mead to reach her goal of being the first American woman to co-drive for a rally finisher. Other Kia crewmembers include off-road veterans Troy Johnson, Glen Plake, Larry Hawkins, James Fisher and Gavin Skilton.

"The Dakar Rally is the ultimate challenge for me as an off-road racer and something I have been preparing myself for since 1993," Skilton says. "I believe I have assembled a team that has the expertise and determination to finish the rally successfully."

As the actual start of the race nears, the Kia race team continues with last-minute adjustments and the mental preparation it will take for a race encompassing 18 days, 10,000 kilometers and six countries.

Kia Motors America is the U.S. sales, marketing and service arm of Kia Motors Corp. in Seoul, South Korea.