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The Arizona Daily Star

Tucson, Monday, March 31, 1997

Colombian heroin is making inroads into U.S. market

SAN JOSE DE LAS HERMOsas, Colombia (AP) — Standing waist-high in red, pink and violet poppy flowers, a peasant delicately aims a plant bulb with a razor. Milky-white opium gum, the key ingredient in heroin, oozes from the gash.

"This work is innocent because I'm just making a few pesos," says a man, who sells the opium in San Jose de las Hermosas, a "ranchable" village an hour's walk down the valley.

It is stage one in the making of high-purity Colombian heroin that in the last few years has grabbed a big chunk of the U.S. East Coast market for the drug. Some Colombian heroin is also reaching Europe.

Drugs

Continued from Page One cause they're not accessible. It is too costly.

A month's supply of AZT in northern Mexico ranges from \$150 to \$448, putting it out of reach of nearly everyone, including the government.

In the United States, federal assistance or health insurance picks up the pharmaceutical tab of most AIDS treatments. But a month's supply of AZT costs about \$290. The so-called AIDS "cocktail," a mixture of AIDS-fighting medications, including the promising new protease inhibitors, can run \$1,200 a month, depending on the combination.

Last month, the CDC reported that the number of AIDS deaths in the United States had fallen significantly for the first time since the epidemic began in 1981. Statistics from San Diego County reflect the nationwide figures, with deaths dropping from 615 in 1996 to 362 in 1997.

Experts say it is too early to link the dropoff to protease inhibitors because the drugs were introduced only a year ago. But Schell and Mexican health care providers say whatever the reasons, the good news north of the border may mean increasing tragedy to its south.

"We've had people who come with prescriptions that we just can't fill," said Jose Navarro, another AUCSIDA founder. "It's going to be very critical for us the more medication they have up there, the less resources we'll have down here."

While Mexico's lagging AIDS treatment can largely be attrib-

uted to economic drawbacks, patients and caretakers must also battle an entrenched "machismo" culture that associates AIDS with homosexuality and responds with denial or denial.

In Mexico, no one can state the incidence of AIDS because the government doesn't collect such statistics. In Tijuana, a city of 1.7 million, about 100 in Houston, no hospital has an AIDS ward.

At funerals for people with AIDS, caskets are closed because morticians will not prepare the corpses.

The taboo against even talking about it is unbreakable," said Skip Rosenthal, who works for the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Association in El Paso, Texas. He has taken donated medicine to neighboring Ciudad Juarez for about five years.

While he has been able to tuck away some pharmaceutical prices for his 150 patients, Rosenthal knows the donations could stop anytime.

"We've even been able to get some protease inhibitors, but we're not successful," he said, "because we can never guarantee they will continue coming down."

In Tijuana, Schell's patients quietly wait in line for the protease AIDS-fighting drugs. Leaning on a wooden cane, 26-year-old Eliazar, who is wading away with full-blown AIDS. When his turn comes, he'll be given a plastic bag filled with bottles of medicines from dead patients.

It is illegal in the United States to redistribute or administer medicine prescribed to another person. But for Schell, it is a "no brainer" to bring them to Mexico.

the price of a kilo of Colombian heroin in the United States is as low as \$85,000, a kilo from Southeast Asia might cost twice as much.

Unlike their counterparts in Asia and the Middle East, Colombian heroin traffickers employ few middlemen who must share in the profits, enabling them to keep prices down, said Anthony Seneca, acting chief of the New York office of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Thousands of miles from New York, the production chain begins in remote places such as San Jose in Colombia's Tolima province.

There is no police station. Army patrols rarely venture here. Leftist rebels who tax opium buyers rule the hills.

An Associated Press reporter and

photographer reached San Jose on horseback, riding for five hours into a canyon of dense forest. A traditional, brightly painted bus called a "chiva" offered another way out: five more bone-crunching hours on a winding mountain road to a nearby town.

Armed guerrillas in civilian clothing who belong to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the country's biggest rebel band, monitor traffic and make sure opium traders do not get snagged.

At a roadside kiosk where travelers buy food and drink, a visitor asked to talk to the local guerrilla commander. "Did you come to buy?" replied the young vendor, signaling how deeply rebels are involved in the business.

Colombians started growing poppies

in the late 1980s, and heroin cooks were brought in from Asia to teach them how to make heroin. High prices encouraged a planting boom in the early 1990s, which in turn produced a big supply that has pushed down the average periodic crop-poisoning raids by police forces.

In San Jose, a kilo of opium gum costs 500,000 pesos (\$500) or less, well under half the price five years ago. Many poppy harvesters are paid just \$8 a day with food.

Still, that is enough in this impoverished land to keep farmers growing poppy, and the DEA warns of a growing Colombian plague: Sixty-two percent of the heroin seized at U.S. airports in 1996 was from Colombia. Five years ago, the percentage was negligible.

Arab leaders OK resolution urging freeze with Israel

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — After hearing an emotional appeal by Yasser Arafat yesterday, Arab foreign ministers approved an Egyptian-sponsored resolution that recommends halting all steps toward normalizing relations with Israel.

The Arab League meeting followed protests by Arab and many Muslim countries against Israel's plans to build a 6,500-unit housing project for Jews in historically Arab East Jerusalem.

"The Arab League recommends that all Arab countries, which have established normal ties with Israel, freeze relations until Israel agrees to implement its peace agreements with all Arab sides and stops violating the accords," said the resolution, adopted after a four-hour debate.

Delegates said the resolution does not obligate any Arab country to suspend ties with Israel, and leaves it to individual states to decide on their future relations.

"This means that each Arab country will decide on the best way that is in its interest to implement the resolution," said a senior Arab League official who attended the meeting and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The recommendation was not expected to affect Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, which were officials said it was aimed more at countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and the Persian Gulf states of Qatar and Oman, which have opened fledgling trade links.

Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said before the vote that a tough stand by the 22-member league could save the Middle East peace process by making Israel rethink its plans. The planned housing project has stalled peace talks and kindled new violence.

Arafat, the Palestinian leader, drew on the Muslim attachment to Jerusalem repeatedly in his speech opening the league meeting. At one point, he interrupted a sentence to say, "Oh Jerusalem, Oh Jerusalem, Oh Jerusalem."

I appeal to your conscience," Arafat told the ministers. "I am sure that you will resolve this issue by getting back to normal public life... and to your brothers in Palestine."

Purring

Continued from Page One

spect" for each other's "programs." They see each other's tennis as "well-organized, respectable, conditioned athletes."

They point out that their opponents have "destroyed" some of the best teams in the nation.

"And, like the fans, they want to win so bad they can taste it."

All the talk comes mercifully to an end this evening when a ref will walk a basketball into the air and 10 worthy Wildcats will go at it with heart, desire and maybe even a bit of something called joy.

never winning a championship was that his timing was all wrong. He leaped into Turk on the wrong day at the wrong place. Mookie Blaylock was too quick. Ronnie Lester had a bum leg. He caught Seton Hall on an upswing and Arkansas at full gallop.

But this year Arizona arrives on the Big Stage with a fresh and fearless team. The time is now for Luke Olson, ready or not.

Star sports columnist Greg Hansen can be reached at 622-4641. His e-mail address is ghanen@azstar.com.



The Associated Press

Land confiscations remembered
A Palestinian student burns the Israeli flag together with the remains of an American flag at the University in Hebron, a city on the West Bank. Israeli Arab and Palestinian took part in marches commemorating Land Day, an annual remembrance of Israeli land confiscations.

Hansen

Continued from Page One

strudent of game. He was almost unambitious.

Q. Do you have to win the title to carry?

"Absolutely not.... I'm just pleased we've got the kind of jogs that have given me the opportunity to find out what I'm like to play on Monday."

Q. What about Arizona's NCAA failure?

"I am more intrigued by one question that wasn't asked. Why did you quit?"

Why not the '93 Wildcats, who finished the regular season at 22-1 and whose active roster included Chris Mills, Khalid Rivers, Ed Stokes, Reggie Gray, Danon Shodorikian and Steve Bluer?

Why not any of the elegant teams of the late '80s, two of which were ranked No. 1.

After a calm day, Tucson cops prepare for worst from fans

By Laura Brooks

The Arizona Daily Star

There was no music playing on either in the streets of Tucson yesterday.

No synchronized marching, no spirited marches, and no exaggerated displays of red.

In other words, Easter Sunday brought a bit to celebrations over the Wildcats and their fans.

"I think everybody's saving their energy for (tomorrow)," said Stacy Higgins, 19, a University of Arizona freshman.

"There's probably a lot of people who would be going out and doing things in sup-

port of the Cats," said Whitney Grese, 20, a UA junior.

"But since it's Easter, they're probably a little bit more subdued."

Tamso Devoet, a UA junior, was resting yesterday morning — but said he planned later to make a huge sign supporting the Cats.

"It's kind of calm right now," said Devoet. "I think Easter has something to do with it."

Easter, or exhaustion and alcohol.

Saturday night, thousands of fans turned out over the win into a night of prolonged

drinking and public exuberance.

Tucson police sent officers into the streets, but there were no celebration-related arrests, an official said.

However, they are still geared for the worst day, representing 21 extra patrol officers equipped with helmets and batons to squelch any riots.

"They're doing this thing full-down," said Wensley Adkisson, referring to police preparations.

But she acknowledged, "Tucson isn't like L.A."

Say it with flowers. Inglis Florists 622-4641

FUNERAL NOTICES

APPROBATO, Frank A., 80, of Tucson, entered into serene peace March 29, 1997. Buried by wife, Therese, son, Wayne, son-in-law, Robert, of his wife, Nancy, daughter, Rose. He is leaving behind a loving wife, Rose, and a loving son, Robert. He was preceded in death by his wife, Therese. Burial services Tuesday, 10:30 a.m., Evergreen Cemetery, 4700 N. Oracle Rd., Tucson. Donations to the American Cancer Society, 1375 S. Camino Seco, will be gratefully accepted.

BERNARD, Dorothy Tracy, 87, died March 27, 1997. She was a native of Ohio. She was preceded in death by her husband, Frank. She is survived by her son, Robert, and her daughter, Rose. Burial services Tuesday, 10:30 a.m., Evergreen Cemetery, 4700 N. Oracle Rd., Tucson. Donations to the American Cancer Society, 1375 S. Camino Seco, will be gratefully accepted.

BOND, Marion A., 84, of Tucson, died March 29, 1997. Preceded in death by her husband, Richard. She is survived by her daughter, Betty, and her son, Robert. Burial services Tuesday, 10:30 a.m., Evergreen Cemetery, 4700 N. Oracle Rd., Tucson. Donations to the American Cancer Society, 1375 S. Camino Seco, will be gratefully accepted.

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