

Dope trade flourishes as FBI blocks President Reagan's war on drugs

by Marilyn Murray

When 31 members of the heroin-trafficking network known as the "Pizza Connection" were indicted and arrests were made last April, Rudolph Giuliani, U.S. attorney general for New York's Southern District, hailed the case as "a wonderful opportunity to crack organized crime, maybe permanently." Attorney General William French Smith and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director William Webster chimed in with exuberant statements of their own. French Smith praised federal law enforcement efforts, particularly those of the FBI, and stated his belief that such efforts have brought about the "decimation of the organized crime leadership."

Nothing could be further from the truth.

"At no time in our nation's history have so many organized crime leaders in so many of the nation's largest cities been indicted or convicted," said French Smith. "It's going to have a very debilitating effect when you combine what is happening in Italy and what is happening in the United States." But Italian Interior Minister Oscar Luigi Scalfaro was not so optimistic, warning that there are no "30-second" solutions. "I don't want to be carried away by those who say that the mafia is decapitated," he said.

The multibillion-dollar international drug trade is thriving—only some of the names have changed. FBI Director Webster boasts of 700 narcotics convictions for the fiscal year ending September 1983, but their impact has been nil. Many of the Bureau's prize convictions against the mafia have been for noncooperation with grand jury investigations, kickbacks, bribery, or racketeering. The celebrated downfall of the Pizza Connection, even when taken in tandem with the mass arrests in Italy that occurred when Sicilian mafia "don" Tommaso Buscetta turned informant last year, have had no real impact on the narcotics trade.

Giuliani credited the Pizza Connection with supplying the bulk of heroin peddled in the northeast corridor that runs

from New York to Washington, D.C. and to the Midwest, but despite the mass arrests it's been business as usual. In reading the celebrated Pizza Connection indictments, it becomes clear that the only impact of that investigation was to take out some of the players—not one aspect of the real trafficking infrastructure was affected. The supply base in Southwest Asia's Golden Crescent (where the bulk of opium cultivation is located in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan) remains unscathed, as do the refineries, and—most glaringly—the "respectable" financial institutions that funnel the narcodollars into safe havens, like Citibank, Chemical Bank, Irving Trust, Deak-Perera, E. F. Hutton, Merrill-Lynch, and the First Bank of Boston. Webster's leadership in the Bureau's organized crime and narcotics endeavors has done little except to bolster the Bureau's public relations ratings.

Informed sources report that the sweeping arrests against the Sicilian Connection may have facilitated the long anticipated reorganization of organized crime. Since the death of narcotics kingpin Meyer Lansky, there has been a trend toward decentralization, as the drug trade in particular has come under the nominal control of "ethnic separatist" groupings or, more correctly, narco-terrorist organizations, many of which also control primary regions of cultivation.

Meanwhile, the FBI's much heralded expertise in wire-

FIGURE 1
Sources of the U.S. heroin supply (1983)

	Percent
Golden Crescent (Southeast Asia)	48
Golden Triangle (Far East)	19
Mexico	33

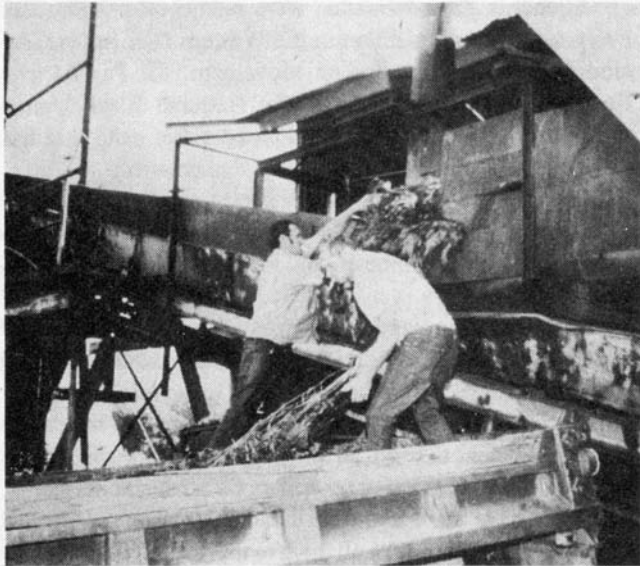
FIGURE 2
U.S. cocaine consumption (metric tons)

1981	34-45
1982	45-54
1983	50-61

FIGURE 3
Coca production (1983)

	Gross coca cultivation (hectares)	Estimated coca leaf yield (metric tons)	Maximum cocaine capacity
Peru	30-60,000	30-60,000	60 to 120
Bolivia	25-40,000	25-40,000	50 to 80
Colombia*	15-17,000	12-14,000	25 to 27

*Colombia controls 75% of the traffic.



California attorney general's office

Law enforcement officials burn marijuana seized in California—but the dope mafia is way ahead of them.

taps and financial tracking—the major pretexts for the Bureau's takeover of the beleaguered Drug Enforcement Administration—has allowed those financial vehicles, without which profits from the narcotics trade could not be realized, to prosper. Illicit drug prices in the United States have remained relatively stable and in some areas the prices have actually

fallen, due to the abundance of supply. As the accompanying tables clearly demonstrate, across-the-board production and consumption have either remained stable or steadily climbed.

Clearly the United States cannot realistically expect to take on the narcotics trade with the relative pennies it has appropriated for the "war" against drugs. Nor can the "alternatives" being offered by pro-dope lobbyists be considered viable solutions. Arnold Trebach, director of the Institute on Drugs, Crime, and Justice at American University, said recently that the year-end report of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force—in which the FBI plays a leading role—is actually a detailed description of failure. Said Trebach, "Any business executive who turned in a report like that would accompany it with an apology and a letter of resignation. It is saying, 'We're trying very hard, but we're getting nowhere.'" Trebach, an advocate of heroin legalization, has recently begun calling for a "drug truce" as a solution.

Kevin Zeese, national director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), believes that "we're seeing the last gasps of the war on drugs." In a recent interview, Zeese declared, "Law enforcement people are getting desperate. I think after four more years of Reagan's war on drugs, things will be much worse—not better. People will finally say, 'We've given it all we had and it's not working.'"

FIGURE 6

The drug trade in Mexico

Marijuana	1984	1985
Hectares cultivated	8,734	9,000
Hectares eradicated	3,575	3,600
Hectares harvested	5,159	5,400
Cannabis yield (metric tons)	5,850	6,124
Loss factor (10%)	1,000	750
Cannabis seized*	2,400	NA
Domestic consumption	100	100
Available for export	2,350	5,274

Opium

	1984	1985
Hectares cultivated	5,238	5,200
Hectares eradicated	3,190	3,190
Hectares harvested	2,048	2,010
Yield (metric tons)	20.5	20.1
Opium seized	.004	.004
Opium available for refining	20.5	20.1
Opium available for export	2.05	2.01

*Seizures are reported as metric tons of processed marijuana, consistent with yield estimate of one metric ton of processed marijuana per hectare. Estimate includes equivalent of processed marijuana (2,400 metric tons) seized at Chihuahua.

FIGURE 4

Total U.S. marijuana consumption

(metric tons)

1981	9,600-13,900
1982	12,300-14,100
1983	13,600-14,000

FIGURE 5

Marijuana supply to the United States

(1983)

	Metric tons	Percent of U.S. marijuana imports	Percent of U.S. marijuana supply
Colombia	6,900-9,300	66	59
Jamaica	1,750	14	13
Mexico	1,300	11	9
Domestic*	1,150	0	11
Other	1,150	9	8

*Based on government figures. NORML estimates are significantly higher; a source at the DEA states that "reality lies somewhere in between."

Sources: Figures 1-6 are from National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers' Estimates and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Figure 7 is from *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, Department of State.