Europe also go both by air and by sea—although air cargo predominates. Spain, because of its historical and language ties to Ibero-America, continues to be a major staging ground and transshipment center for drugs sent throughout Europe. Another major route goes directly from Surinam, a former Dutch colony in South America, to the old "mother country," the Netherlands, which is an important drug consumption and distribution haven for all of Europe.

Increasingly, cocaine is also being shipped into Russia and the other countries of the former Soviet Union, as Dope, Inc. rapidly develops these new markets (see p. 46).

Map 4 presents a "close-up" of the Colombia-Mexico cocaine corridor, through which most of the drug passes on its way to the United States. A tightly knit infrastructure of narcotics trafficking now links the two countries, which is also expressed in the form of close working relations between the Colombian and Mexican drug cartels.

Historically, the Colombian mafia used twin-engine general aviation aircraft to transport cocaine from Colombia, up through Central America (often with a stop in Guatemala), and on into Mexico. In recent years, however, they have increasingly turned to jet cargo, passenger aircraft, and even *full-size commercial jets loaded with cocaine,* which are landed on remote clandestine airfields in Mexico, and then simply discarded.

Another relatively recent innovation of Dope, Inc. is the extensive use of air-drops of large, sealed packages of cocaine into the waters surrounding Mexico. Here again, waiting "go fast boats" pick up the cargo and take it ashore, where it is transported by land up to the border with the United States.

Note the two areas of greatest density of such air drops:

- the Gulf of Mexico coast off the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where most of Mexico's offshore oil platforms are located, and where there is consequently a significant amount of related onshore ground transportation, construction, and so forth; and
- the Caribbean coast off the Yucatán Peninsula and the nation of Belize, a member of the British Commonwealth which plays a crucial role in coordinating both drugs and terrorism in southern Mexico. This cocaine is then transported overland through southern Mexico, in particular through the state of Chiapas where the British-sponsored Zapatista narco-terrorists are active, and northwards to the United States.

Marijuana

A $150 billion chunk of Dope, Inc. production

by Valerie Rush and Joyce Fredman

The number-one drug of preference in the United States is still marijuana, and official government surveys indicate that the major decline in consumption over the previous decade and a half has now been reversed, and that consumption is again on the rise, especially among school-age children. Law enforcement officials are particularly concerned over what they call a "gateway effect," by which this age group is introduced to other, still more deadly drugs. That is, by crossing over into illegality through use of a banned substance, these children become increasingly vulnerable to the physical, psychological, *and* financial addiction of the narcotics netherworld.

What is this so-called "recreational drug," which its pushers would have us legalize, putting it in the same category as alcohol and tobacco? Marijuana is the flowering tops and leaves of the *Cannabis sativa L.* plant, which are gathered, dried, and smoked in a pipe or cigarette, or in combination with tobacco or other drugs. Both the plant, and the psychoactive chemical delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) found most densely in its flowering tops, are considered "controlled substances," that is, their consumption is illegal. Two other substances are derived from the cannabis plant, hashish and hashish oil, which contain a higher THC content than marijuana, but which do not have a significant U.S. market.

World production

Although cannabis is grown around the globe, from South America to Asia, from the Middle East to Africa, the United States has become in the past decade the single largest grower of marijuana in the world, contributing an estimated 34% to total world production in 1995 (see below).

The bulk of marijuana consumed in the United States is also produced domestically. As of 1995, *EIR* estimates that at least 50% of all marijuana consumed in the United States was domestically grown, with the rest coming from Mexico, or through Mexico from points further south, primarily Colombia (see **Map 5**). Because marijuana is a relatively bulky product to ship (unlike cocaine and heroin, for example), it is more cost-effective and less risky to either grow it domestically or to transport the drug to the U.S. market from nearby sources.

After the United States, Colombia and Mexico together account for another 45% of total world production. Colombian cultivation, which, by 1990, had been nearly eliminated altogether through eradication by glysophate, began to climb again in 1991-92, when eradication was abandoned, had a dramatic resurgence in 1993, and has been steadily climbing ever since, surpassing even Mexican production in the last year or two.

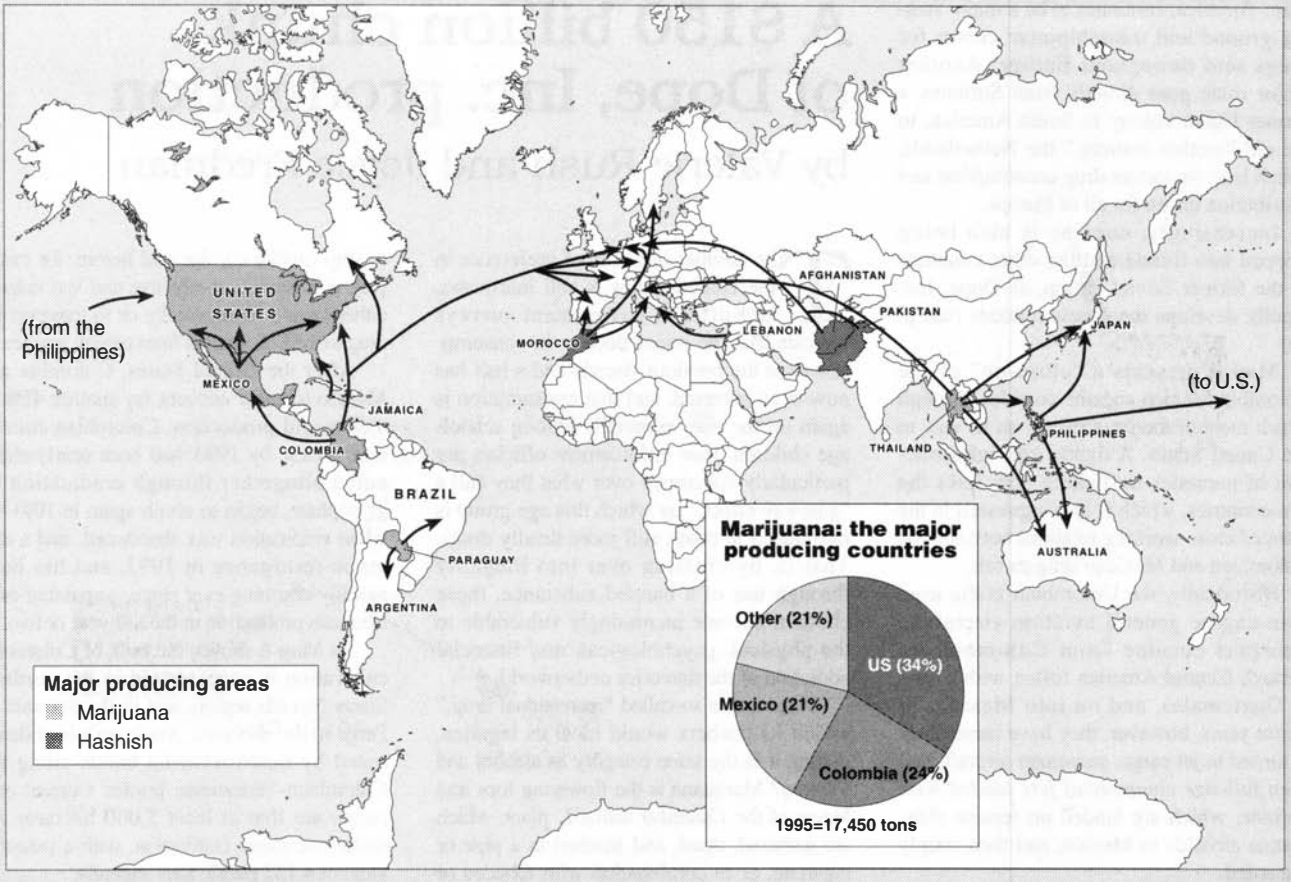
As **Map 6** shows, the bulk of Colombian cultivation is concentrated in the northern Sierra Nevada region, and in the Serranía de Perija in the northeast, a no-man's-land dominated by narco-terrorist bands along the Colombian-Venezuelan border. Current estimates are that at least 5,000 hectares are under marijuana cultivation, with a potential yield of 4,133 metric tons annually.

Because of the consolidation of financial and political power by the cocaine cartels in Colombia during the past decade, marijuana trafficking is no longer an independent affair. Combined shipments of Colombian marijuana and cocaine are now making their way northward to Mexico, by boat and air, through both Pacific and Caribbean routes, and thence across the border into the United States. Although most of Colombia's marijuana heads north to Mexico, the United States, and Canada, multi-ton shipments have also been seized in western Europe in recent years, entering largely through Germany and the Netherlands.

In Mexico, marijuana cultivation is largely concentrated in the western states of Sinaloa, Nayarit, Michoacán, Sonora, Jalisco, Oaxaca, and Durango. Mexico's so-called "golden triangle" of marijuana (and poppy) cultivation extends from Badiraguato in Sinaloa, to Tomazula in Durango, to Guadalupe y Calvo, in Chihuahua (see map). Although the bulk of Mexican marijuana is of commercial grade, the more potent *sinsemilla* has been on the increase here, too, since 1992. It is estimated that Mexico currently has nearly 7,000

MAP 5

Marijuana- and hashish-trafficking routes



Sources: NNICC; INCSR; DEA; NORML; PGR, Mexico; *EIR*.

hectares under cultivation, with a potential annual yield of 3,650 metric tons. Apart from what is domestically consumed, most of Mexican marijuana is smuggled into the United States, largely via overland routes.

As shown in **Figure 8,** combined Ibero-American production (largely Mexico and Colombia) accounts for an estimated 9,700 metric tons, out of a world total of 17,450. The United States accounts for about 6,000 tons, and Southeast Asia another 1,750 tons.

The informed reader may recognize that the total Ibero-American production during 1980-88 is far higher than the official statistics reported by either the Mexican government or the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), both of which report a dramatic *12-fold* leap in the number of hectares of marijuana harvested in Mexico in 1989, purportedly jumping from 4,500 hectares to 53,900 hectares in that one year (see **Figure 9**). The official sources admit that this does not reflect an actual increase of that magnitude in a single year, but only that new technologies were applied to detection and that new methodologies of calculation were introduced. But they have not altered their own earlier discredited figures to reflect these changes.

EIR has done so, on the following basis. What occurred is that systematic aerial surveillance over Mexico was conducted for the first time in 1989, as a result of agreements reached between the Mexican government and the DEA. They discovered that they were sitting on a virtual mountain of marijuana, and significantly revised Mexican production estimates upward. Those overflights yielded new information on the average size of fields under cultivation, as well as a new method for calculating production. So, the dramatic peak in 1988-89 of quantity produced represents these revised production estimates. But the fact is, that Mexican production throughout the previous period was probably closer, and rising, to that level all along, and had just never been adequately detected.

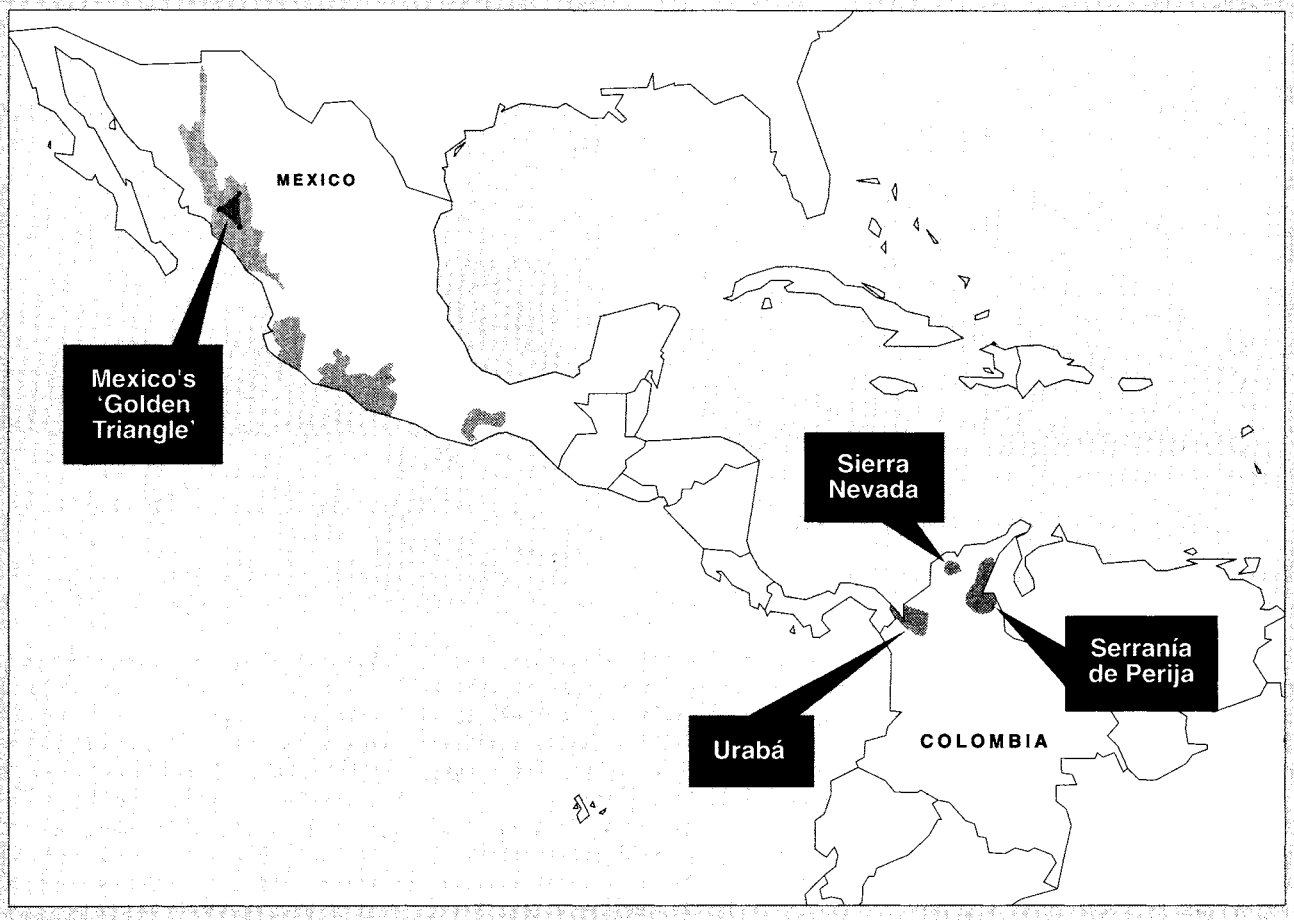
The precipitous drop in Ibero-American marijuana production after 1989 stems from a combination of adverse climate conditions and aggressive eradication, principally in Mexico, in the aftermath of the new findings.

Other producers in Ibero-America include Jamaica (206 metric tons annually), Paraguay (2-2,500 metric tons annually), and Brazil. Most of Jamaica's production goes to the United States via Florida and the East Coast. Although Brazilian production levels are substantial, no offical estimates of hectareage or tonnage currently exist. Brazilian marijuana exports are minimal; the bulk of production is consumed domestically. Paraguayan marijuana is also intended for domestic consumption, or for the market in neighboring Brazil and Argentina.

In Southeast Asia, the major marijuana producers are Thailand and Laos, and Cambodia to a lesser degree. Much of the area's trade appears to be under the control of Thailand-based traffickers, who ship to

MAP 6

Marijuana cultivation in Mexico and Colombia



Sources: NNICC; PGR, Mexico; *EIR*.

Europe via Italy, as well as to Australia, Hongkong, Singapore, and the Philippines. The Philippines is also a major producer and exporter of marijuana, as well as transshipment point. It exports mainly to Japan, Taiwan, and Australia. New reports that the Philippines has risen to become the second- or third-largest marijuana producer in the world have not yet been confirmed.

Nigeria is a grower of low-grade cannabis, often smuggling it into Europe via Dutch ports and, increasingly, into eastern Europe. Nigerian smuggling networks have constituted themselves as major traffickers not only of marijuana, but of heroin and cocaine, as well. A recent raid in Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia, led to the arrests of more than a score of Nigerians and other West Africans, all part of a Nigerian-run smuggling network which was preparing to transport cocaine out of the country in their stomachs. Substantial amounts of marijuana grown in South Africa are largely consumed domestically, while Kenya is both a marijuana grower and exporter, and a transshipment route for hashish from Pakistan.

Figure 10 shows the reductions from total marijuana cultivated worldwide, due to eradication and seizures, leaving a net available amount for sale of nearly 13,000 tons. This is almost a 50% drop from the 25,800 tons available a decade earlier in 1985. The value of the potential sales, however, did not decline similarly, because of the rising price of the drug. Thus, we see in **Figure 11** that the value of potential sales has zoomed from $21 billion in 1980, to $141 billion in 1995 (even after losing $39 billion to seizures), a seven-fold increase.

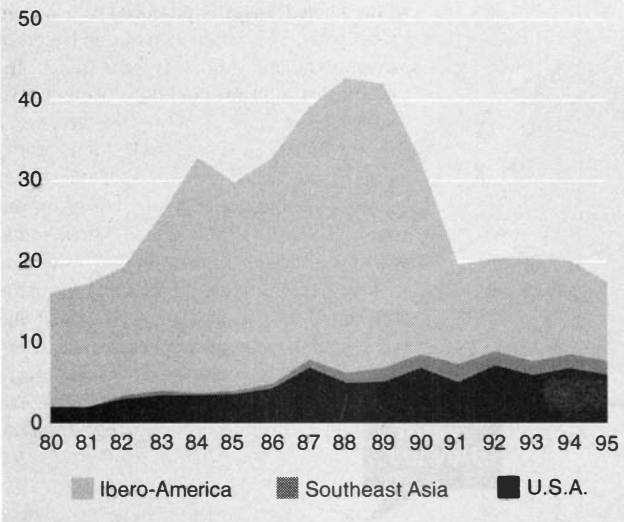
Hashish

Although the Philippines converts a certain percentage of its cannabis crop to hashish and hashish oil, destined for Australia, Canada, and Europe, the majority of the world's hashish supply comes from North Africa and the Middle East.

According to the National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee (NNICC), world hashish production in 1993 (the last year reported) was 1,150 metric tons, and *EIR* estimates that the figure for 1995 is equivalent. This amount has a potential sales value of about $22 billion. The main producing countries, in order of importance, are Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Morocco, which service the Mideastern, European, and Canadian markets (hashish has never been popular in the United States). Egypt is one of the countries in the producing regions which is most afflicted with the drug.

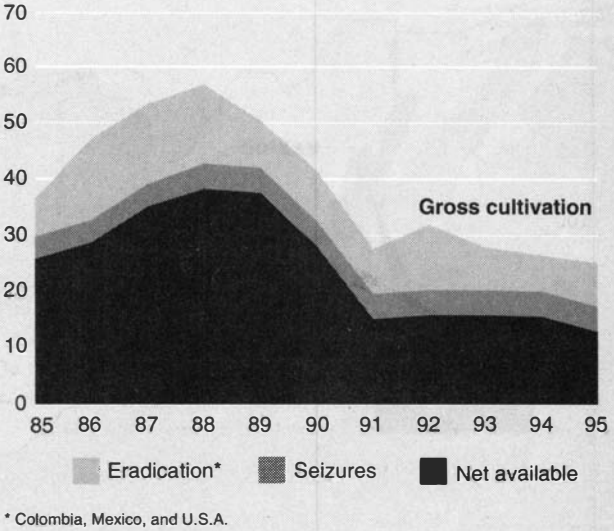
Lebanon is the world's primary grower and processor, with cultivation centered in the northern Bekaa Valley, where the Syrian Army has introduced large-scale and sophisticated farming techniques. The area also has been a major producer of opium. Almost

FIGURE 8
Marijuana: quantity produced
thousands of tons



Sources: NNICC; INCSR; DEA; NORML; PGR, Mexico; *EIR*.

FIGURE 10
Marijuana: eradication and seizures
thousands of tons



* Colombia, Mexico, and U.S.A.
Sources: NNICC; INCSR; DEA; NORML; PGR, Mexico; *EIR*.

all of the cannabis grown in Lebanon is converted to hashish. According to a 1994 report of the NNICC, "Most of the cannabis-growing region in Lebanon remained under Syrian Army control."

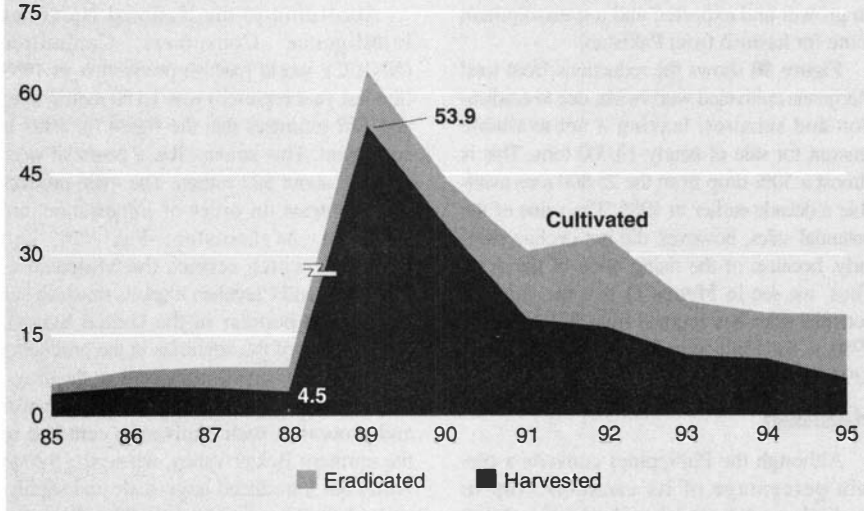
Although Lebanese hashish production is an ancient practice, it underwent massive expansion following Syria's 1977 invasion and occupation of Lebanon, in the midst of the Lebanese civil war. Since that time, Lebanese hashish and heroin proceeds (in part based on refining Central Asian opium) have accounted for a significant amount of Syria's income. Most Lebanese-produced hashish is shipped through Syria, on its way to Europe, Canada, and the Arabian peninsula.

Morocco is another cannabis grower, and while an estimated 15-40% is used domestically, the rest is converted to hashish for export through the Iberian Peninsula to other North African and European countries. Over the last year, Moroccan producing and trafficking organizations have been hit with a series of huge seizures and arrests, indicating that its role as a supplier of Europe may soon decline.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are significant producers of hashish. While a substantial amount of their hashish goes to Canada and western Europe, a growing percentage is making its way into Russia and eastern Europe. Reports of significant marijuana cultivation and export from the states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan cannot be confirmed, due to a lack of data from or on these areas.

The Dope, Inc. trafficking network used to transport heroin from the Golden Crescent, also is used to traffic in hashish. As with heroin, the land route proceeds through Iran and Turkey, reaching western Europe via the Balkans.

FIGURE 9
Marijuana in Mexico: the official version
thousands of hectares

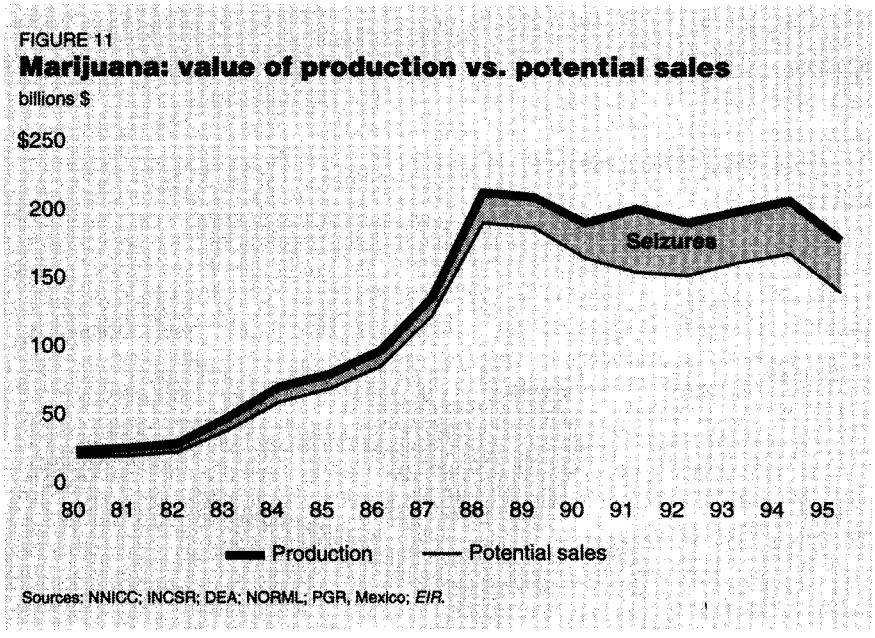


Sources: NNICC; INCSR; PGR, Mexico.

Made in the U.S.A.

The fact that the United States is both the largest consumer and largest producer of a drug that has been proven to be of the utmost danger to its population, is a shocking reality that needs to be understood by the American citizenry. Besides the social and economic consequences, it immediately shatters the myth that all U.S. drugs are imported from drug-producing nations in the Third World, which are "the cause of the whole problem." It shows, instead, that Dope, Inc. is an integrated world cartel

FIGURE 11



which simultaneously controls the production, distribution, consumption, and money-laundering phases of the total drug cycle.

Marijuana is today the largest cash crop of the United States, whose potential street sale value in 1995 was an estimated $77 billion.

Less than one year ago, the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse released their 1994 results, and announced that drug use has increased markedly among the nation's youth, particularly the consumption of marijuana. For example, according to the report (which probably significantly underestimates consumption), in an average month in 1994, some 13 million Americans used illicit drugs. Of these, 10 million used marijuana, making it by far the most commonly used illicit drug. Even worse, between 1992 and 1994, the reported rate of marijuana use among youths 12-17 years old nearly doubled, from about 14% to 22% of the total age-group population.

Other studies report similar findings. In its most recent annual survey (November 1995), the National Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education reported significant increases in marijuana use by students in grades 6 through 12, and jumps in cocaine and hallucinogen use by students in grades 9 through 12. "As in recent years, marijuana use increased more dramatically than any drug in the study. One-third of high school seniors (33%) smoked marijuana in the past year, and one-fifth (21%) smoked monthly. Since the 1990-91 school year, annual reported use of marijuana in junior high school (grades 6 through 8) has risen 111% (from 4.5% to 9.5%) and has risen 67% in high school (16.9% versus 28.2%)."

And the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy's latest "Marijuana Situation Assessment" study reports "alarming indicators that marijuana is increasing in popularity, particularly among teenagers." Even worse, "the marijuana is at least 10 times more potent than it was 10 years ago."

The potency of marijuana is determined by its percentage content of THC, the main psychoactive chemical it contains. There are two kinds of marijuana grown in the United States, commercial grade and *sinsemilla* (seedless), of which the latter has substantially higher THC content, and today supplies over one-third of the domestic market, up from about 20-25% in the early 1980s.

The THC content of both kinds has been rising significantly over the years, thanks to genetic manipulation. This partially accounts for the significant increase in the street price of marijuana (**Figure 12**). Although commercial grade marijuana prices have been relatively steady since 1991, the cost of *sinsemilla* has continued to rise from 1980 onwards, and is currently selling in the United States for an average of $550 per ounce.

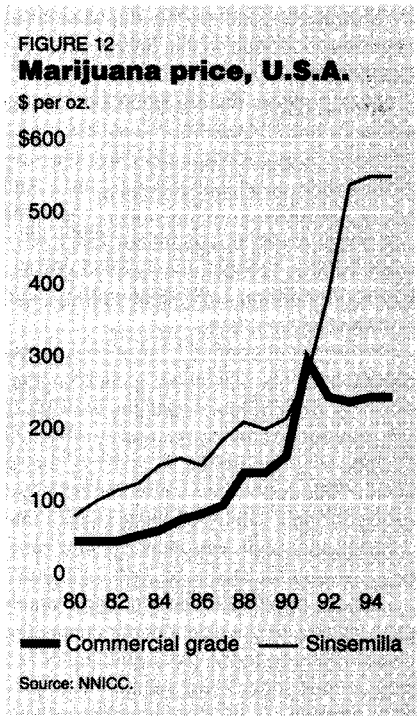
Pot is not only more potent today; average doses are also rising. One study by Monika Guttman pointed out, "Kids today smoke larger amounts than their elders did, thanks to innovations such as 'blunts': short cigars hollowed out and restuffed with pot or a pot and tobacco mix. Marijuana is now often laced with other drugs, as in 'primos' (with cocaine) and 'illies' (with formaldehyde)." The result of such concoctions is that in 1994, some 50% more 12-17-year-olds went to the emergency room for smoking pot than in 1993.

As noted, most of the marijuana consumed in the United States is produced at home. In recent years, U.S. production has undergone a virtual revolution. Although there are no official numbers on production, different estimates can be made based on the figures for marijuana eradication, which are available from the DEA. Not surprisingly, there is a disparity in the approach, depending on the source. The DEA, for example, estimates that what is eradicated accounts for 50% of what is planted. The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) and the Drug Policy Foundation on the other hand, representing the pro-pot lobby, say it is much more likely to be only 15% of the total. *EIR* believes the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes, perhaps at about one-third of the total crop.

Everyone concedes, however, that it is America's number-one cash crop. Even conservative estimates put it undisputedly in first place. For example, take the value of the top six legal crops for 1992, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

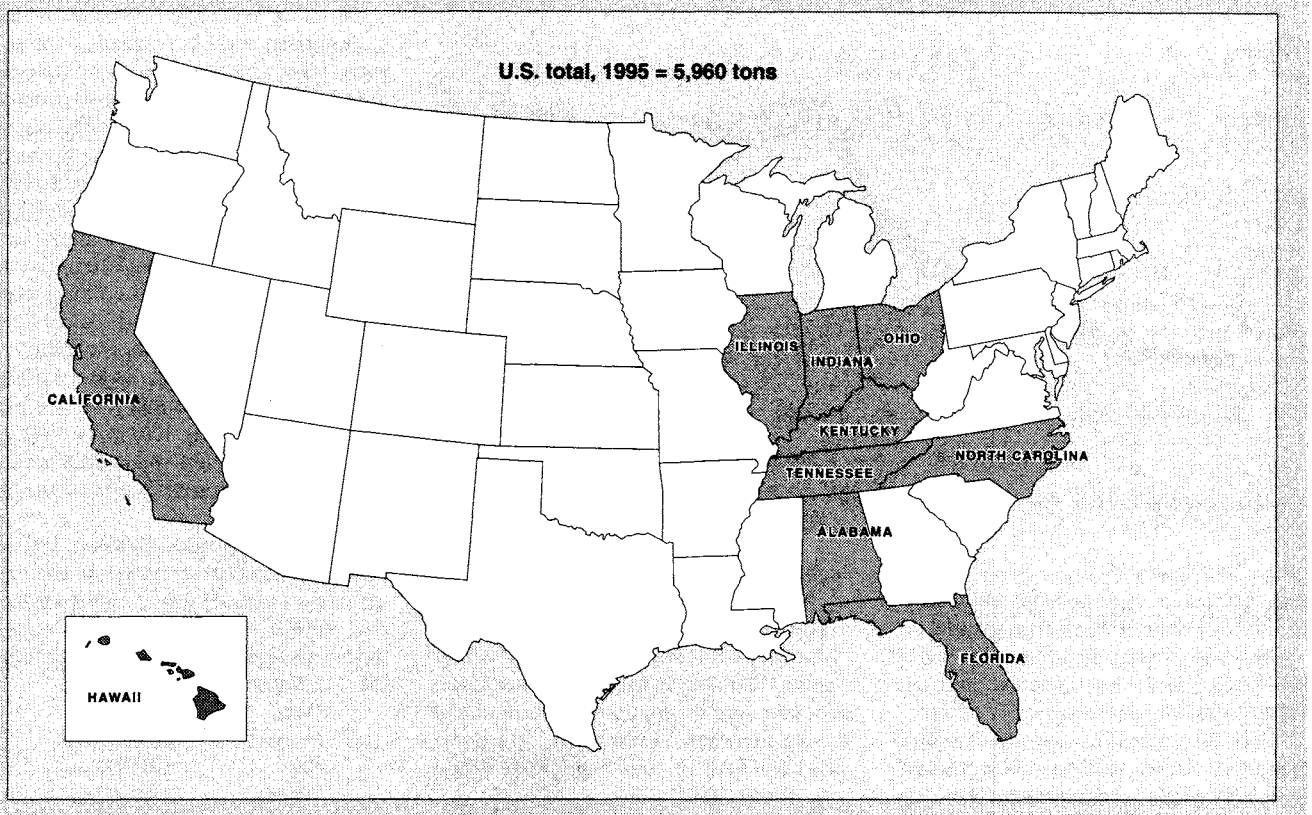
Corn	$17.8 billion
Soybeans	$10.8 billion
Hay	$10.5 billion
Wheat	$ 8.1 billion
Cotton	$ 4.0 billion
Tobacco	$ 3.1 billion

FIGURE 12



MAP 7

The top ten states in U.S. marijuana cultivation



Sources: DEA, NORML, *EIR*

Marijuana estimates for the same year, range from $20.9 billion (NORML), to $28 billion (DEA), to $76 billion (*EIR*).

Map 7 shows the top ten pot-producing states in the United States, according to NORML. Many of these are states one normally thinks of as agricultural giants. And yet, in Kentucky, in 1992 the marijuana crop was worth about $2.280 billion (NORML), while tobacco brought in only $955 million, hay $375 million, corn $312 million, and soybeans $209 million.

When the Cannabis Cup, a convention and festival for marijuana growers sponsored by *High Times* magazine, took place last November in Amsterdam, Michael Pollan, writing for the *New York Times,* noted: "Marijuana growing in America had evolved from a hobby of aging hippies into a burgeoning high-tech industry with earnings that are estimated at $32 billion a year."

How is it possible that a criminal enterprise of this magnitude thrives across the United States today? A cross-gridding of law enforcement reports and sources from pro-drug interests shows the following picture. The growing business has made a significant shift indoors, not simply to escape detection, but to allow more sophisticated growing techniques. This allows growers to adjust the amount, intensity, and wavelength of the light the plant receives; use computer-controlled irrigation; and adjust the nutrients the roots receive. Ceramic heaters are used to warm the roots, and sodium lamps give them light for extended hours.

Moving indoors has encouraged not only these advanced cultivation strategies, and permitted year-round growing, but has also permitted an overall shift to the cultivation of *sinsemilla* marijuana, the unpollinated female plant. Journalist Pollan explains:

"At the beginning, American growers were familiar with only one kind of marijuana: *Cannabis sativa,* an equatorial strain that can't withstand frost and won't reliably flower north of the 30th parallel. Eager to expand the range of domestic production, growers began searching for a variety that might flourish and flower farther north, and by the second half of the decade, it had been found: *Cannabis indica,* a stout, frost-tolerant species that had been cultivated for centuries in Afghanistan by hashish producers.

"*Cannabis indica* looks quite unlike the familiar marijuana plant: It rarely grows taller than 4 or 5 feet (as compared to 15 feet for some sativas) and its deep bluish-green leaves are rounded, rather than pointed. But the great advantage of *Cannabis indica* was that it allowed growers in all 50 states to cultivate *sinsemilla* for the first time."

Pollan wrote that, at first, the new plants were grown as purebreds. "But enterprising growers soon discovered that by crossing the new variety with *Cannabis sativa,* it was possible to produce hybrids that combined the most desirable traits of both plants while playing down their worst. The smoother taste and what I often heard described as the 'clear, bell-like high' of a *sativa,* for example, could be combined with the hardiness, small stature and higher potency of an *indica.* In a flurry of breeding work performed around 1980, most of it by amateurs working on the West Coast, the modern American marijuana plant—*Cannabis sativa x indica*—was born."