

Devastating blow to drug traffic points to PAN, international banks

by Hector Apolinar in Chihuahua

The world's biggest marijuana bust, carried out in Mexico on Nov. 9, has uncovered a conspiracy to destroy the minds of American youth with a colossal influx of Mexican marijuana and create concentration camps in that country—all in the service of paying Mexico's foreign debt to the big international banks.

Through investigations carried out in the states of Baja California Norte, Sonora, Sinaloa, Jalisco, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Chihuahua and Tamaulipas, *EIR* has obtained decisive information to expose the vast narcotics trafficking network which was formed by extensive marijuana fields in the state of Chihuahua, bordering Texas. There, on Nov. 10, Mexican authorities swept in and raided 10,000 tons of marijuana, planted in an area covering 100,000 hectares, comprising half of the fertile Valley of Culiacán and one-fourth of the Yaqui Valley in the State of Sonora—the backbone of Mexico's agricultural production.

The sale of the drugs in the U.S. market would have brought \$10 billion, which is far more than all the credit conceded by the Bank of Mexico this year, and is also far beyond the turnover of the banking system in the first 11 months of 1984. Another way of putting it is that the \$10 billion is one-sixth of the Mexican debt.

Ten thousand Mexican peasants from the states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Zacatecas, San Luís Potosí, and Durango were working in the marijuana plantations under conditions described as identical to Nazi concentration camps. Most had been recruited in their states, transported in mafia-chartered buses, and "hooked up"—as they say in this region—under contract to the mafia. They used modern equipment for planting, harvesting, and processing the illegal weed. According to estimates by the Mexican Attorney General's office, officially charged with combatting narcotics, to consume these drugs two marijuana cigarettes would have been allotted to every inhabitant of the earth.

The police authorities and army used more than 500 troops to conduct the crackdown, 15 helicopter gunships, 6 planes, and more than 30 vehicles. But, off the record, it is estimated that twice as many logistical units were actually used.

The raid on the marijuana plantations is part of Operation Pacifico, set into motion last August by the Mexican Attorney General and the Mexican Army with the purpose of breaking

the cycle of marijuana cultivation. The operation started in Oaxaca, in the deep southeast of the country, the site of the fields of the "families" of drug traffickers who were hit in the states of Sinaloa, Durango, Chihuahua, and Sonora during the Mexican government's Operation Condor, which drastically wiped out the drug mafias that had declared war on the government in 1975.

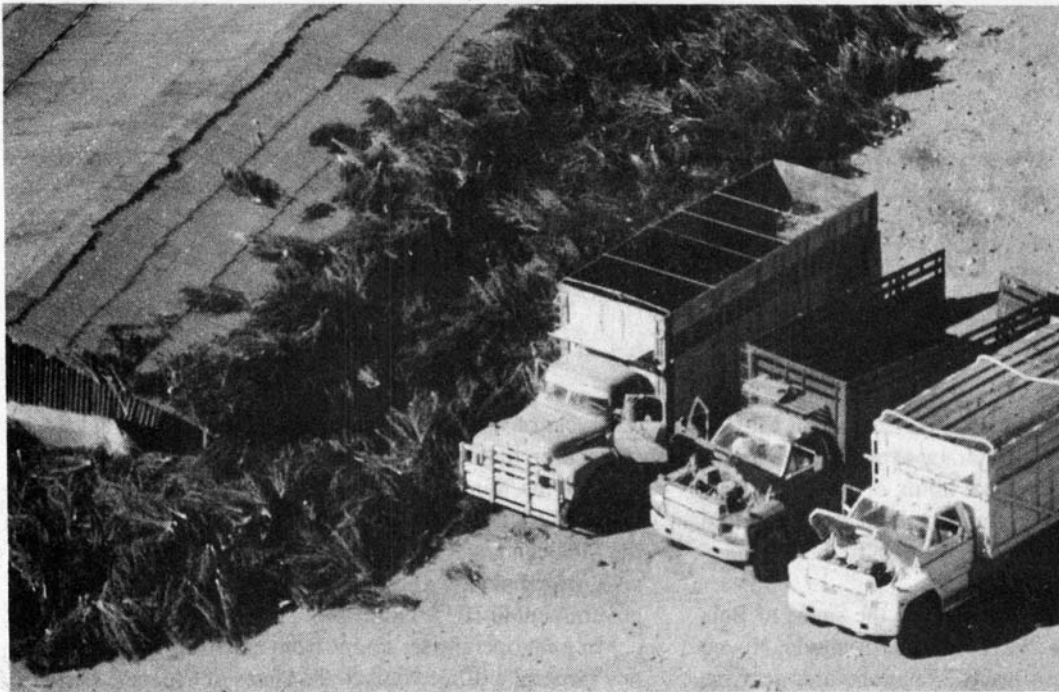
In joint operations, troops from the Army and the Attorney General's office combed the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla, Veracruz, Zacatecas, and Jalisco, some of which had never before been used for drug crops.

Nevertheless, information from various sources signaled that the state of Sonora was one of the main centers of cultivation, even though this state, which borders Arizona, had never been used for growing drugs, but rather as the place where business deals were carried out by the traffickers. Caborca Valley, some 200 kilometers away from the Arizona border, was constantly singled out as a center of large scale production and trafficking in drugs. There was also talk that the mafia had gotten back into the states of Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua, from where they were expelled in 1975.

The mafia families

In Caborca, the Caro, Rico, and Figueroa families were publicly singled out as principal leaders of drug production. These families were linked at higher levels with the Meraz and Monge families, headquartered in the border city of San Luís Río Colorado, Sonora, who were linked in turn with higher levels of the mafia in Arizona and California. All these families were associates for along time of Francisco Sahagún Baca, the mafia chief, a partner of Arturo Durazo Moreno, the ex-Mexico City chief of police currently in a Los Angeles, California, jail cell.

In turn, these families were linked to their respective counterparts in Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and Durango. These were the gangsters who opened thousands of hectares in the southeast of the country to drug cultivation in the present decade. Even more important is that the Mexican families signed a deal with the drug mafia of Colombia to produce marijuana and opium poppy in Mexico to market in the United States. In this accord, an important role was played by the family of Agustín "El Chato" Antuñez, who for several years



Mexican Attorney General's Office

More than 4,000 tons of marijuana were destroyed in Rancho Búfalo. The camp had the capacity to "export" two 16-ton truckfuls per day.

has been cultivating a close relationship with the Colombian mafia.

The Chihuahua fields: dope for debt

But never in Mexican history had such a demolition blow against the drug trade been delivered as on last Nov. 9. The fact has an enormous political importance and will have repercussions in national life which, so far, no one could calculate—in particular because it has been determined that the various marijuana fields were developed jointly by 140 of the most important families of drug traffickers.

Starting in the middle of the year, the heads of the drug trafficking families were called to tell them about the new project to be carried out in Chihuahua. According to the plans, the project supposedly counted on the "protection of the authorities," as various drug entrepreneurs put it.

As a central part of their operation, the dope traffickers mongered the rumor that the crops were authorized not only by the Chihuahua state government but the federal government. The dopers fabricated the version that the federal government would get 40% of the take and the "families" the other 60%. This would serve, the rumor said, to make "a big payment on the [foreign] debt." The mafia even tried to involve the President Miguel de la Madrid, in an incredible rumor that the President had accepted to meet with the heads of the "families" to discuss the deal.

Through this rumor, the dope families sought to facilitate the recruitment of the thousands of impoverished peasants to be used as peons in the work of cultivating and harvesting the marijuana weed. "This is all approved by the authorities," was the slogan used by the mafia for its actions. In Sonora,

the dope mob and members of the National Action Party (PAN) said that the Sonora governor, Sam and the national army stationed in the state of Sonora, were in collusion with the drug trade. Top leaders of the PAN and the mafia also put out the rumor that the federal government was hoping for drug crops to pay off the debt.

Recently, Mexican travelers in Arizona were shocked to find this version being peddled by high-level functionaries of private U.S. banks, in particular the Valley National Bank of Arizona, one of whose functionaries said: "Where do you think Mexico will get the money to guarantee payment of its debt?" This bank is one of the ones that helped capital flight, principally from the states of Sonora and Sinaloa, and now holds hefty deposits from businessmen in northwest Mexico.

Since the detention of the "mandos medios" (middle-level bosses, or capos) who oversaw the fields, the name of Ismael Paez Quintero has come out. He is a member of the Paez Quintero family, one of the leading dope-trafficking families in the entire northwest of the country, centered in the city of Caborca, Sonora, alongside the Caro, Figueroa, and Antuñez families, which are all tied to Arturo Durazo Moreno. On Nov. 16, Paez Quintero was indicted with some of his capos. It is thought that he may be able to reveal some of the secrets of the Mexican drug mafia which are still unknown.

Although it is true that the heads of the families escaped, they have been located for some time. These families have been claiming that they are "protected" and the federal government won't touch them. The reality is that with this bust, the federal government has been reinforced. Important heads can be expected to roll—soon.