

Drug cartel leader arrested

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — A leader of the once-powerful Medellin cartel was among 30 people arrested Wednesday and slated for extradition to the United States in what authorities described as the biggest blow to Colombian drug trafficking since 1995.

In a separate, unrelated operation, U.S. drug officials in Puerto Rico announced the arrests of 1,290 lower-level trafficking suspects in 15 countries and the seizure of more than two dozen drug-running boats in a two-week operation, mostly in the Caribbean.

Former Medellin cartel leader Fabio Ochoa, 42, was the best-known suspect seized in Colombia in pre-dawn raids that officials said crippled the heir-apparent to the Medellin and Cali cartels, Colombia's main drug mafias throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

The successor ring smuggled up to 30 tons of cocaine a month into Mexico for distribution throughout the United States using transit countries, including Ecuador and Chile, and also shipped the drugs to Europe, according to Colombian and U.S. officials.

“*This operation is as if we removed the chief executive officers of three major corporations who joined together in an illegal conspiracy.*”

JANET RENO
attorney general

Past law enforcement crackdowns have failed to stem the flow of drugs from Colombia, where leftist rebels are increasingly involved in protecting cocaine and heroin production. This poor Andean nation has a rich tradition of criminal enterprise, and it was unclear how much of a dent the arrests would make in the international drug trade.

New smuggling organizations have traditionally emerged to take over the business of jailed drug bosses.

Nevertheless, Attorney General Janet Reno on Wednesday said she was encouraged by the arrests.

“This operation is as if we removed

the chief executive officers of three major corporations who joined together in an illegal conspiracy,” she said in Washington.

The ring allegedly was organized by 40-year-old Alejandro Bernal Madrigal of Bogota, who officials said pulled together remnants of the Medellin and other drug gangs and personally established smuggling routes through Mexican organizations.

Bernal's chief link in Mexico, Armando Valencia, was among 43 co-conspirators named in an indictment unsealed Wednesday in Miami that specified drug trafficking, racketeering and money laundering charges.

Complete Plath works to be released to stores

NEW YORK (AP) — Finally, one of the great underground documents in literature is coming to bookstores: the complete journals of Sylvia Plath.

For decades, readers have obsessed like conspiracy theorists about Plath, the poet and novelist who killed herself in 1963. Biographers continue to analyze everything from her work to her famously difficult marriage to fellow poet Ted Hughes. Their relationship lived on in Plath's posthumously issued poems and letters and in Hughes' “Birthday Poems,” published just months before he died in 1998.

The journals should add greatly to what Hughes eventually derided as “Plathiana.” An edition published in the 1980s is believed to comprise only one-third of the collection. The new book is expected to contain hundreds of previously unpublished pages.

“The decision has been made to publish them in their entirety, unedited, so the world can judge for themselves,” said Joanna Mackle, publishing director for London-based Faber and Faber, which in April will issue the book in Britain. A U.S. publisher is expected to be announced shortly.

Few have seen all the journals, which have been stored for years at Plath's alma mater, Smith College, but the Faber and Faber catalog promises an “intimate portrait” of “vigorous immediacy.” The manuscript handed in by the editors at Smith runs at least 1,000 pages, more than double the original publication.

Mackle, who handles questions on behalf of the Plath estate, would not give a specific reason for the decision but did confirm that it was made before the death of Hughes, who was appointed Britain's poet laureate in 1984.

The estate is now run by their children, Frieda and Nicholas.

The upcoming journals are not technically “complete”; at least one notebook is apparently gone forever. In an announcement that enraged many, Hughes confessed in the first edition's

introduction that he had destroyed pages which covered the months immediately preceding her suicide.

“I think by suppressing or trying to suppress for the children's sake all accounts, etc., of Sylvia's more difficult side, I have done everybody an ill-service. Myself especially, perhaps,” he later wrote to a friend.

In the original introduction, Hughes also claimed another notebook “disappeared,” but he later wrote that it “may, presumably, still turn up.” Those entries are not believed to be included in the new edition, which will cover the years 1950-1962.

What ended up as one of the great cottage industries both in publishing and academia began as a romance. Hughes and Plath were in their 20s when they met at Cambridge University in England, in the winter of 1956. She was an American student and writer living abroad, he a young British poet trying to establish a literary magazine.

They were married within months, but by the end of 1962, they were living apart.

Hughes was seeing another woman and an increasingly unhappy Plath had moved with the children from their country house to a London flat. Plath, who had a history of mental problems, killed herself in February 1963.

At the time of her death, Plath had just one book published under her name. But a decade later, she was a feminist martyr, the mourned and beloved author of the “Ariel” poems and the novel “The Bell Jar.”

Meanwhile, Hughes was cast as the cold, oppressive villain, the man who stifled Plath in life and censored her in death. Plath fans harassed Hughes at readings and hacked his name off Plath's tombstone, which had been inscribed: “Sylvia Plath Hughes.”

While friends of Hughes defended him as a caring husband driven away by his unstable wife, the poet himself said little in public for decades.

Officials say Pat Buchanan close to making Reform bid

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Pat Buchanan is preparing to bolt his party and begin a quest for the Reform Party nomination Oct. 25, officials close to the conservative commentator said Wednesday.

Two officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Buchanan was planning to announce his departure from the GOP in suburban Washington, New Hampshire and perhaps other key states.

The officials cautioned that Buchanan could still reverse course and stay out of the increasingly fractious third-party bid. But they said he intends to bolt, and the departure was virtually certain.

In the clearest signal yet of his intentions, Buchanan's campaign mailed hundreds of invitations to supporters Tuesday night inviting them to a “major announcement” Oct. 25 at a Falls Church, Va., hotel, the officials said.

As many as 3,000 invitations also were being sent for a New Hampshire stop, they said.

“He's almost too far down the pike to get out now,” said one of the officials.

However, spokeswoman Joanne Hansen said no final decision has been made.

Lagging in GOP polls, Buchanan says he believes the party's nomination battle is rigged in favor of Texas Gov. George W. Bush, who he says is too moderate.

The Reform Party nominee would lay claim to almost \$13 million in federal matching money. Party founder Ross Perot earned 19 percent

of the vote in 1992 and 8 percent in 1996.

Republicans fear that a third-party run by Buchanan would siphon conservative votes from their nominee.

Buchanan, however, would not be assured the nomination. A parade of celebrities and politicians are mentioned as potential candidates.

Donald Trump formed an exploratory committee last week, and says he would spend \$30 million if he jumps in the race. Buchanan, who has had trouble raising money in the GOP race, could not match that total but has more political experience than Trump.

The contest is already heated. Trump consultant Roger Stone said Buchanan wants attention, not the White House.

“Pat's avocation at this point is running for president. It's all he does,” Stone said in a telephone interview. “Trump will spend \$30 million to get on the ballots in every state. I don't think Pat can do it.”

Jesse Ventura, the party's highest ranking elected official, has ruled out a 2000 presidential campaign, though the speculation continues. He is urging Trump to seek the nomination, saying Buchanan is too conservative on social issues for the party.

Buchanan is drawing support from the Perot wing of the party.

“I say to Roger Stone, ‘Bring your candidate on.’ It'll be another head on the wall,” said Pat Choate, Perot's 1996 running mate. “I believe Pat is going to get in the race, win the nomination and, with any luck, the White House.”



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