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After Hours: 361-5174

Prosecutors to stop trying federal cases

LAREDO (AP) — They are done begging, through threatening, sick of talking.

Broke and bogged down, some county prosecutors along the U.S.-Mexico border vowed to ban federal drug cases from their courts starting today. Their decision promises to drop even more cases into the swamped federal courts on the nation's southern edge.

But prosecutors say they have no choice: Struggling counties lose millions of dollars and weeks' worth of court time prosecuting federal drug cases. From now on, they say, the U.S. government is on its own.

"As of Monday we won't take any more federal cases," said Hidalgo County District Attorney Rene Guerra. "The cases are a financial drain, and we can't do it anymore. We shouldn't have to."

"The cases are a financial drain, and we can't do it anymore. We shouldn't have to."

— Rene Guerra
Hidalgo County District Attorney

It is a time-honored deal at international bridges and roadblocks: Agents send large drug busts to federal court. Small drug seizures — less than 50 pounds of pot, or minor cocaine caches — are kicked down to county courts.

For years, nobody really minded. But an explosion of agents along the border has sent drug seizures soaring — and what was once a rare hassle is now a steady stream

of costly cases.

"It's changed a lot," said Chris Roll, Cochise County, Ariz. "As the (federal courts) get overloaded, they start turning loose more and more cases. It all ends up coming to us."

For the time being, Roll will continue to stretch his \$3 million budget to include the federal cases, he said. The hand-me-down busts make up about a quarter of his total docket.

"There's a load on our jail, a load on our courts, and we can't get reimbursed," he said. "There's certainly some people in the county who'd love to see us stop taking the cases."

Most Texas prosecutors were expected to stick to the Oct. 1 deadline. That was the date agreed on earlier this year, when the Lone Star counties led a vociferous demand for emergency money.

In July, they appeared to have triumphed: Congress set aside \$12 million to be divided evenly among the four border states. But the cash got mired in a bureaucratic quarrel, and still hasn't made its way into county coffers.

Gypsy dance



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

Alla Shariy, a dancer in the Gypsy Dance Theater, performs at the opening day of the Texas Renaissance Festival in Plantersville. The Gypsy Dance Theater is a group comprised of dancers from around the world. Shariy, the newest member, recently came to the United States from the Ukraine, where she was trained as a dancer.

Reports: mentally ill lack assistance

AUSTIN (AP) — Texas does not provide adequate care for children with mental illness, parents and mental health advocates say, leaving many families desperate and bankrupt as they try to find help for their children.

Texas ranks 43rd nationally in funding for its mental health system and many children must do without treatment, the *Austin American-Statesman* reported in Sunday's editions.

Parents, running out of options, sometimes file minor charges against their children so they will go to juvenile jail, making them eligible for more mental health services. Others give up care of their children to the state.

More than 655,000 Texas children suffer mental health problems, ranging from depression to schizophrenia, the newspaper said.

Many need intensive help, services like hospitalization or residential treatment. In Texas, only the bare necessities of medicine, therapy and some training are offered, and can take weeks to receive.

"I call it 'Solomon's choice,'" said Deborah Bradley Berndt, children's services direc-

tor for the state Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. "Do you see \$50,000 to give one kid six to nine months residential care? Or do you use that money to serve 30 kids in the community?"

Many mentally ill children end up in state juvenile prison system. Of the 5,524 children in the Texas Youth Commission system August 1999, 42 percent were diagnosed with high mental health needs, the newspaper said.

After years of trying to control her son's tantrums, Austin resident Mattie Dixon police take 11-year-old David to juvenile jail last year.

"There is no help," Dixon said. "I don't know what else to do."

Hospitalization is not always an option since 25 percent of the state's mental hospital beds, about 900, have been cut since 1992. In addition, many private psychiatric hospitals are closing because of financial problems, said Amanda Engler, spokeswoman for Texas Hospital Association. In 1998, Texas had 47 private psychiatric hospitals. Today, there are

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4-6 PM	BICH 410	Chem 228 Ch. 17		Chem 228 Exams	BICH 410 Ch. 37
6-8 PM	Chem 227 Exams (GG)	Chem 227	Chem 227 Exams (Tiner)	Chem 101 Ch. 7	Chem 101 Ch. 8
8-10 PM	Phys 201 Ch. 5	Phys 201 Ch. 6	Phys 201 Ch. 7	Phys 218 Ch. 4	Phys 218 Ch. 5
10-MID	BICH 410 Exams	Chem 107 Ch. 5	Chem 107 Ch. 6		

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