

Agency announces arrests in Ecstasy ring

DENVER (AP) — More than 50 people were arrested in Colorado and California on Wednesday in what federal drug agents said were some of the nation's biggest Ecstasy rings. Drug Enforcement Agency Administrator (DEA) Asa Hutchinson said the defendants flooded communities in Colorado with Ecstasy and other so-called club drugs, as well as LSD, methamphetamine and marijuana. Three of those indicted are blamed in the death of a 16-year-old girl and could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted, authorities said. Brittney Chambers died in January after taking Ecstasy her friends bought for her 16th birthday party in suburban Denver. She went into a coma after taking the pill and died a few days later. "As Brittney's friends and family can tell us, Ecstasy is an agony," Hutchinson said.

The investigation was named Operation Green Clover, for an Ecstasy pill in the shape of a clover. Fifty-five people were arrested in Colorado and California on Wednesday on state and federal charges. Eleven others were being sought. The charges include distribution of Ecstasy, conspiracy and distribution resulting in death. Officers in California and Colorado seized 85,000 Ecstasy tablets, 2.5 kilograms of cocaine, 320 pounds of marijuana, five pounds of methamphetamine, 40,000 doses of LSD, \$1.36 million in cash, 13 vehicles and 36 weapons, said Bob Castillo, head of the DEA office in Denver. The investigation began after a Colorado state trooper made an arrest last August outside Colorado Springs and found Ecstasy pills. That resulted in the arrests of cadets at the Air Force Academy and airmen at various Colorado bases.

NEWS IN BRIEF

\$114 million cut from Missouri budget

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Gov. Bob Holden announced an additional \$114 million in state budget cuts Thursday affecting everything from prisons to his own office budget. As a result of the cuts, hundreds of positions will remain unfilled and some workers will not receive new computers, job training or be allowed to travel to conferences. No employees will be laid off. Altogether, Holden has withheld \$358 million from the \$19 billion budget that went into effect two months ago. He has blamed the budget woes on the slowing economy and \$753 million in tax cuts enacted since 1995. The Corrections and Mental Health Departments were among those hardest hit by the latest round of cuts.

Employee charged in bomb explosion

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — A Sprint employee has been charged in connection with a small bomb explosion at his office. Christopher S. McMillan, 37, was arrested Wednesday as he was discharged from a hospital where he was treated for shrapnel wounds sustained during the blast. He was charged with one count of possessing an unregistered explosive device, which has a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. A criminal complaint said materials found at McMillan's home linked him to three explosive devices, two found at a Sprint administrative office

Tuesday and one detonated by bomb experts Monday at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Some 400 Sprint employees were evacuated Tuesday after a bomb being carried by McMillan exploded in his hand, authorities said. A bomb squad found a second device, described as a pipe bomb, under his desk and detonated it outside, authorities said. A similar, cylindrical device was detonated by authorities after being found on the university campus Monday. There were no injuries. McMillan graduated from the university in 1986 and worked as a computer support technician for Sprint.

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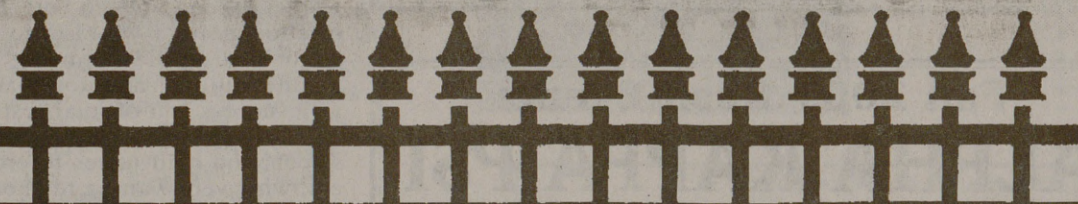
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