

# Star-Telegram

Sign in | Join

Web Search powered by **YAHOO!** search

Search

NEWS OBITUARIES SPORTS BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE & ARTS OPINIONS CARS HOMES CLASSIFIEDS JOBS SHOPPING

Place a Classified ad Traffic Weather e-Edition e-Newsletters Weddings Yellow Pages Click Subscribe Pets Site map



Home > News > International

## INTERNATIONAL

RSS Mobile Newsletters MY YAHOO!

### Mexico turns part of drug war's focus toward treating addicts

Posted Monday, Oct. 05, 2009 Comments (0) Recommend (0) Print Share Buzz up! Reprints

Topics: Felipe Calderón, Heroins, Cocaines, Mexico, Obama administration

ARTICLE PHOTOS (1) COMMENTS

BY DUDLEY ALTHAUS  
Houston Chronicle

CIUDAD NEZAHUALCOYOTL, Mexico — Tangled in the front-line trenches of Mexican President Felipe Calderon's anti-narcotics campaign are the country's growing legions of addicts, who find themselves sought by gangsters as customers and sometime targets of their violence.

Cheap and plentiful narcotics have flooded the country as producers and traffickers have sought to open new markets for cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and other drugs.

And the gangland violence, which has killed thousands, has also targeted addicts and rehab workers. At least 43 in the past 13 months have been killed in attacks on drug rehab centers in Ciudad Juarez, across the border from El Paso.

After years of cracking down on gangsters, Calderon has turned at least some attention to prevention and treatment.

Using money seized from drug traffickers, his administration has in the past year opened more than 300 drug rehab centers, some in small farm towns.

That growing focus on treatment dovetails with that of the Obama administration, which has shifted more resources to prevention and treatment as well.

U.S. officials are providing Mexico with treatment techniques and helping set up so-called drug courts in which offenders are offered supervised rehabilitation instead of jail time.

"Things that the Mexican government wants and asks for we are very happy to provide," Thomas McLellan, the new deputy U.S. drug czar, said during a visit to Mexico City last week. "It's in our interest to do so."

Physician Francisco Ramirez is director of a municipal rehab center in Nezahualcoyotl, a one-time slum turned working-class city of about 1.5 million people at the eastern edge of Mexico's capital.

His center is one of more than 1,700 that have sprung up nationwide as narcotics abuse and addiction exploded in the past decade.

"Mexico used to be a transit place, the trampoline. Now it's a consumer country," he said. "The drug of choice here is cocaine. It's easier to buy crack here than it is marijuana."

Officials estimate that 600,000 Mexicans have become dependent.

While still a fraction of those in the U.S., where experts estimate that 22 million people are narcotic-dependent, Mexico's addicts have nearly doubled in number in just five years, officials say.

"Friends consume, parents consume, brothers consume," German Hernandez, one of four staff psychologists at the Nezahualcoyotl center said. "It's become a cultural issue."



View photos

Have more to add?  
News tip? Tell us

**It's all about you. And your doctor.**

**UnitedHealthcare**  
Healing health care. Together.™

MOST POPULAR NEW MEMBERS

- The most basic throw is suddenly beyond Romo's range
- Doctors stand with Obama at White House healthcare event
- Habitual burglar sentenced to 40 years in two stabbings
- Grand Prairie police investigate fatal shooting of man
- Teen made video for bin Laden, agent says

**Obama Gives \$31 Billion for Student Aid**  
Get Your Degree Now. Financial Aid & Scholarships are available.  
www.ClassesUSA.com

**Refinance Now at 4.25% Fixed**  
\$160,000 Mortgage for \$633/mo. Free. No obligation. Get 4 quotes.  
MortgageRefinance

**Obama Backs Insurance Regulation**  
Drivers Pay \$44/mo on Avg for Car Insurance. Are you paying too much?  
Auto-Insurance

Ads by Yahoo!

**Barn Express**  
Wood Barns built on site  
www.barnexpress.com Click Here! 817-790-6133

**Specializing in Smile Perfection**  
Imagine Yourself with a New Smile! Click Here to Visit our Website!

**Kitchen & Bath Experts**  
General Remodeling. Dependable. References. Call Matt 817-675-8663

**DFW Preferred Landscape**  
Draining Systems & Design, Install, & Repair of Sprinkler Systems.

**Get Away To Granbury!**  
Where Texas History AND Texas Hospitality Live! Click here for details.