

U.S. tells drug makers not to use incentives

Robert Pear
New York Times (U-WIRE)

WASHINGTON — The government warned pharmaceutical companies on Monday that they must not offer any financial incentives to doctors, pharmacists or other health care professionals to prescribe or recommend particular drugs, or for switching patients from one medicine to another.

The warnings came as the government informed the industry that many practices commonly used in the marketing and sale of prescription drugs could run afoul of federal fraud and abuse laws.

Specifically, the government said that drug makers could not offer incentive payments or other "tangible benefits" to encourage or reward the prescribing or purchasing of particular drugs by doctors, health plans or companies that manage drug benefits for employers and insurers.

Aggressive marketing is the norm in the pharmaceutical industry. For years, drug makers have treated doctors to free Broadway plays, weekend trips, expensive meals and

other lavish perks. Many companies have rewarded middlemen, known as pharmacy benefit managers, for putting their products on lists of recommended drugs, known as formularies. Some companies have also rewarded doctors and drug stores for switching patients from one medication to another.

Similarly, doctors in a position to influence the prescribing of drugs for large numbers of patients have been retained as advisers and consultants to drug manufacturers.

The government said it was concerned about such arrangements because they could improperly drive up costs for Medicare and Medicaid, the federal health programs for 75 million people who are elderly, disabled or poor. The federal government spends \$400 billion a year on the two programs combined, and the cost is expected to double in 10 years.

The new standards, the first of their kind, were issued by Janet Rehnquist, inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services, as guidance to the pharmaceutical industry. While the stan-

dards do not have the force of law, drug makers that flout them are more likely to be investigated and prosecuted for violations of federal fraud and kickback statutes.

"In today's environment of increased scrutiny of corporate conduct and increasingly large expenditures for prescription drugs," Rehnquist said, "it is imperative for pharmaceutical manufacturers to establish and maintain effective compliance programs."

The public will have 60 days to comment on the standards. The government may revise them in the light of those comments.

Rehnquist said that every drug company should appoint a compliance officer, establish a hotline to receive complaints of fraud and abuse and consider paying rewards to employees who report misconduct.

Under the new standards, companies are responsible not only for their own employees, but also for sales agents and contractors who "engage in improper marketing and promotional activities" on their behalf.

Pentagon video shows Iraq firing on U.S. warplanes

Eric Schmitt
New York Times (U-WIRE)

WASHINGTON — Senior Pentagon officials on Monday showed previously classified video footage of Iraq's efforts to shoot down American and British warplanes patrolling Iraqi no-flight zones, in an apparent effort to build support for a tough new U.N. Security Council resolution on Iraqi weapons.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Gen. Richard B. Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, gave reporters an unusually detailed briefing, using a slide show of footage from warplane gun cameras and unmanned Predator drones, to underscore that there has been a growing number of Iraqi firings on allied planes.

In the two weeks since Iraq said it would allow the unconditional return of U.N. inspectors, it fired on coalition aircraft 67 times — 28 times in northern Iraq and 39 times in the south — including 14 times this past weekend, Rumsfeld said.

"Here you have U.S. and British planes flying daily to enforce the U.N. resolutions, putting their lives

at risk, these pilots and air crew, day after day after day for years, and the U.N. not enforcing its own resolutions," Rumsfeld said. "With each missile launched at our air crews, Iraq expresses its contempt for the U.N. resolutions — a fact that must be kept in mind as their latest inspection offers are evaluated."

But in Moscow, the Russian Foreign Ministry suggested that the most recent allied raids on Iraqi air defense sites had been timed to influence talks opening in Vienna, Austria, on procedures for allowing U.N. weapons inspectors back into Iraq.

"Anglo-American bombing raids in 'no-fly zones' not only deepen the complicated atmosphere around Iraq but create obstacles in the search for a political-diplomatic settlement of the Iraq question," the statement said.

Rumsfeld rejected the Russian criticism, saying it was "nonsensical" to blame the United States and Britain for responding to increasing attempts by Iraq to shoot down allied warplanes patrolling no-flight zones in northern and southern Iraq.

Drug gangs seize parts of Rio

Patrice M. Jones
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

RIO DE JANEIRO — Drug gangs ordered schools and businesses shut down across large swaths of Rio de Janeiro on Monday in what officials said was an unprecedented show of force by criminals in an increasingly public war with Brazil's police.

From the ritzy shops in the city's famous Ipanema neighborhood to Rio's ghettos, business was brought to a virtual standstill in at least 10 neighborhoods. Schoolchildren were released from classes early or told not to come. Tourists at some hotels were warned to stay inside. Thousands of police officers spilled into the streets.

No major injuries were reported, but an atmosphere of fear pervaded much of the city.

"This is all to make it very clear who has the power in the city. Everyone is very afraid," said Luis Neto, a 59-year-old retiree who was discussing the city's problems with neighbors in Rio's posh south zone.

Residents said young people and bandits armed with machine guns passed out letters ordering

stores and schools shut in several neighborhoods.

Local media reported that Brazil's most powerful criminal, convicted drug trafficker Luiz Fernando da Costa, known as Seaside Freddy, was behind the shutdown.

Da Costa, who was hunted down in Colombia's jungles last year, has been placed in isolation in a Rio prison and has been demanding better conditions since early September, when he allegedly led an uprising in Rio's maximum security Bangu I prison. The uprising ended with four drug traffickers dead, including a main da Costa rival.

On Monday, police arrested at least nine people circulating the warnings. News of the threats spread anyway, from downtown diners to tourist shops.

Police said bandits set off at least two homemade explosives in front of a private Rio university, forcing the cancellation of exams.

Many hospitals were barely functioning.

"A few workers did arrive at the hospital but as they began hearing the news, everyone started calling

home to check on their children and many left," said Vilma Soares, 53, a psychologist at a public hospital in downtown Rio. "People are very nervous."

Rio's state governor dispatched police across the city to encourage shop owners to defy the gangs. But most were too afraid to open.

"I want the population to know that we are in control," Gov. Benedita da Silva said at a news conference. "We are providing cover everywhere and our commanders are on the streets."

But many residents, such as Zeferino de Oliveira, 72, disagree.

"I have lived here for 67 years and I have never seen stores forced to close like this," said de Oliveira, the owner of a hair salon and a store in Leme.

"We need a (Rudolph) Giuliani in Rio. That is what we need," de Oliveira said, referring to the former New York mayor. "The police have lost the authority because of the bandits. The bandits are saying, 'We will show you who is in charge whenever we want.'"

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Hurricane Lili nears Cuba, U.S. Gulf Coast

Martin Merzer
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

Now a hurricane, Lili closed in Monday on Cuba's western tip and Isle of Youth, the same region slammed 10 days ago by Hurricane Isidore. Cuban officials prepared to order mass evacuations.

The government of Cuba issued a hurricane warning for the provinces of Matanzas, Pinar del Rio, the Isle of Youth and the city and province of Havana. A tropical storm warning remained in effect for the rest of Cuba.

Forecasters also began raising alarms about the danger to the U.S. Gulf Coast, which is likely to sustain a direct strike Thursday night, possibly in Texas or Louisiana. They said Lili has the potential to become an intense hurricane capable of inflicting massive damage.

"Lili appears poised for some fairly significant strengthening," said forecaster James Franklin of the National Hurricane Center in West Miami-Dade County. "The waters in the northwestern gulf are high octane,

with a good inner core structure. "Bottom line is that we should have a major hurricane nearing the Gulf coastline in three days' time."

Lili's center was expected to graze the Isle of Youth early Tuesday and slice across the western end of the main island a few hours later. At that point, its sustained winds could reach 100 mph.

Monday morning, strong wind reached the Cayman Islands, where all schools and most offices were closed. About half of the 1,200 residents of the eastern island of Cayman Brac lost electricity when a power plant malfunctioned. Hundreds of people moved to shelters.


One man was feared dead in Jamaica, where dozens of homes were damaged by raging floods. Fire brigades rescued dozens of flood victims, who were taken to emergency shelters.

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