AIDS epidemic due to negligence, official says

By DON LEWIS
Advocate state writer

NEW ORLEANS — This nation’s public health officials are guilty of a lack of action in containing the spread of AIDS, an official of a lobbying organization said here Thursday.

Robert Bartleson, executive director of United Families of America, said that from the time acquired immune deficiency syndrome began receiving national attention it has been identified by homosexuals and their political allies as a homosexual civil-rights issue.

“This is incorrect on both counts. AIDS is not a homosexually biased disease or a case of civil rights,” said Bartleson, of Washington, D.C.

“This past Tuesday the Washington Post ran an article ‘revealing’ that AIDS is now prevalent in the heterosexual community,” he said.

“The spread of AIDS should never have reached epidemic proportions,” he said. “While there is still much to learn about the transmission of AIDS, it is primarily through negligent disregard for standard procedures of containment for a communicable disease, such as AIDS, that the disease has reached the epidemic level.

“This negligence has been due in part to the power and efforts of the homosexual community,” Bartleson said. “They have been successful in pressuring most public health officials not already in agreement with them into treating AIDS as a civil-rights issue.

“If the spread of AIDS is to be effectively contained it must be taken out of the homosexual arena and treated as a public health threat,” he said.

Bartleson said the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Ga., reported earlier this week that more than one million people are infected with the AIDS virus, and the number is doubling every 13 months.

“The breakdown of these figures shows the astonishing rate of growth to be between 2,531 and 10,994 new people infected every day,” Bartleson said.

Bartleson spoke at the Clarion Hotel during a press conference also attended by Gene Antonio, author of “The AIDS Cover-Up?” published last month.

Antonio and Bartleson said more
money needs to be spent on how to stop the spread of AIDS.

"There is no cure," Antonio said. "There is no vaccine. And something needs to be done."

Bartleson was asked if he favors quarantining AIDS victims.

He replied, "We have not found enough overwhelming evidence to support a quarantine."

In his remarks at the press conference, Antonio said: "Our nation's leading health officials are not revealing crucial facts regarding the nature of AIDS and its prognosis.

"This cover-up has created a wall of highly politicized inertia blocking the development of practical strategies to stop the spread of the epidemic," he said.

Antonio said the public has been misinformed repeatedly that people don't die of AIDS, they only die of other diseases they can't fight off because of immune-system breakdown.

"However," he said, "it has been established for over two years that the AIDS virus itself does kill by causing degenerative brain disease — dementia — apart from immune suppression or opportunistic infection.

"People dying of dementia induced by direct attack of the AIDS virus on the brain are not included in the narrow criteria used by the Centers for Disease Control," Antonio said. "AIDS also fosters tuberculosis, which is not included in the criteria.

"The AIDS epidemic is continuing to spread at an alarming rate," he said. "With the AIDS virus being exuded from almost every bodily orifice, pore and secretion — probably including sweat — so-called 'safe sex' techniques are of highly dubious efficacy."

Asked why there is a question mark at the end of his book's title, Antonio said: "I'm leaving people the option of drawing their own conclusion" on whether there is cover-up on AIDS by the nation's public health officials.

"I wouldn't say it's a conspiracy as such . . . but just an unwillingness to face up to the problem," said Antonio, of San Francisco.

He said there is a non-release of information.

"I mean, clearly people are dying of AIDS dementia, and that's not included as part of the definition of AIDS by the Centers for Disease Control," he said. "That's a cover-up."

Antonio said that while gathering information for "The AIDS Cover-Up?" he did not interview any officials with the Centers for Disease Control.

"My background in health reporting is practically nil," he said in response to another question.

Antonio said he is a counselor with a master of divinity degree from Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Mo.