



U.S. Policy Towards Narcoterrorism in Afghanistan

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As prepared

Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to [talk](#) to you today about the narcotics situation in Afghanistan and what we are doing about it.

Success in rebuilding Afghanistan, an epicenter in the war on terrorism, is one of the Administration's two highest priorities. More than two decades of war have destroyed Afghanistan's physical infrastructure and much of its human and social capital as well. Operation Enduring Freedom's ousting of the Taliban regime, the subsequent Bonn process establishing peace between rival factions, and the presence of the moderate Hamid Karzai as head of an interim government, have solidified Afghanistan's strong and supportive relationship with the U.S. and Coalition partners. However, as the international community and the fledgling central government begin the task of building for Afghanistan an infrastructure, economy, and public institutions, the country faces major threats from different directions, including the resurgence of illegal drug cultivation and an unstable security environment. The challenge is enormous.

I have just returned from the International Counternarcotics Conference on Afghanistan held in Kabul on February 8 and 9. The Conference brought together practitioners and policy makers from a host of countries, and underscored the concern of the international community about the narcotics situation in Afghanistan and our common commitment to assist the nascent institutions of the government of Afghanistan in dealing with it.

For as you know, there is much to be concerned about. For the past decade, opium poppy has been Afghanistan's largest and most valuable cash crop. After a one-year "poppy ban" in 2000-2001, under the oppressive rule of the Taliban and during which drugs were stockpiled, Afghanistan has reemerged as the world's leading supplier of illicit opium, morphine and heroin. The CIA's Counternarcotics Center estimated the 2002-2003 crop at 61,000 hectares – a 98% increase over the 2001-2002 crop. Opium was cultivated in 28 of Afghanistan's 32 provinces indicating the nationwide scope of the problem. The International Monetary Fund estimates that the opium trade makes up between 40-60% of Afghanistan's GDP, with approximately \$1 billion/year going to cultivators and \$1.3 billion to downstream processors and traffickers. Early indications are that the 2003-2004 crop – and its negative consequences – would be even larger absent immediate action. These poppy crops present both immediate and longer-range threats.

Profits from the Afghan drug trade enabled the Taliban regime to stay in power. Today there are strong indications that these heroin drug profits provide funds, to varying degrees, to Taliban remnants, al Qaeda, destabilizing regional warlords, and other terrorist and extremist elements in the region. Unfortunately, the world financial community has only limited ability to track money moving through the hawala system, and it is difficult for the DEA and other USG agencies to estimate how much is earned from the narcotics trade and other illicit activities. However, given the street prices of these drugs in Europe and points east, estimates of "millions of dollars" are now likely – and this amount is more than enough to finance terrorist activities in and out of Afghanistan.

The consequences of failing to aggressively confront this reality could be devastating, even on top of the low intensity conflict now occurring in Afghanistan. And, as we become increasingly effective in cutting off other sources of terrorist financing, drug revenues – which already generate billions of dollars of profit for ordinary criminals - will become increasingly important to terrorist networks. For this reason, stability in Afghanistan cannot be achieved without addressing the drug issue, and counternarcotics programs cannot be deferred to a later date. Afghanistan is already at risk of its narco-economy leading unintentionally but inexorably to the evolution of a narco-state, with deeply entrenched of public corruption and complicity in the drug trade undermining stability, containment of other threats, and all our assistance programs (army, police, governmental, etc.).

We may even say that, to some degree, what loom are consequences affecting both the stability of the region and the world. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) programs to fight narcotics and build police and judicial institutions are an essential, leading piece of our endgame in Afghanistan, and are a vital element of our total assistance and wider and longer-range security strategy.

The immediate impact of unimpeded drug trafficking outside Afghanistan is apparent in the adjoining states and along the Afghan drug routes. A group of powerful tribal families, many based in Pakistan, together with other, less organized drug trafficking rings, act as primary brokers. The routes and financial and communications methods used by Afghan-based drug traffickers cannot be distinguished from those used by terrorist organizations, arms smugglers and other criminal elements to move and conduct activities in and around the region. This drug trafficking and related criminal activity emanating from Afghanistan are corrupting public officials and undermining fragile states throughout the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, while the twin plagues of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS are destroying lives across Europe and Asia.

Afghanistan's new national drug control strategy, ratified in May 2003, aims to eliminate opium poppy cultivation and trade in 10 years. We can assist in both supporting and accelerating the realization of that goal. To that end, President Karzai has issued decrees outlawing the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs, but the central government's ability to enforce these decrees is minimal. There is presently no reliable Afghan capability to accurately estimate illegal drug cultivation or to destroy illegal drug crops, and no integrated drug intelligence, investigation, and interdiction capability within the Afghan National Police. Drug arrests, seizures, testing, and destruction are haphazard and drugs confiscated by the authorities are sometimes stolen and/or resold. Trials and incarceration of offenders are beyond current government capabilities.

This mix of lawlessness and poverty has created a haven for drug traffickers and opium brokers. It is an environment in which criminals and terrorists can and do thrive and flourish. There is urgent need to help the Afghans pursue legal crop cultivation and enforce their current ban on poppy cultivation and the opiate trade. We must therefore simultaneously be preparing the foundation for institutional capacity and the implementation of laws, while also seeking to help Afghanistan eradicate crops and find and prosecute traffickers.

The INL program in Afghanistan and for the surrounding region, in partnership with the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and others, seeks to address these weaknesses across the board. The programs currently planned include activities focusing on the following areas: support for an Afghan-led

eradication campaign; continued support for alternative livelihoods programs linked to cessation/prevention of poppy cultivation; and support for major Afghan public affairs anti-drug campaign, in coordination with DOD. Programs will also address the evolving containment theory of stopping heroin from transiting across the borders of Afghanistan and in support of heroin lab targeting. In this way, we will promote greater coordination between counternarcotics and counterterrorism activities.

It is important to recognize that the process of reconstruction in and of itself will not "solve" the drug problem. The drug trade is insidious and traffickers are savvy. Simply having alternatives is not enough; licit crops cannot compete with poppy. INL "alternative livelihood" projects have had some success, but effective sanctions on illicit activity are critical. The lesson to be drawn is that economic development and drug law enforcement must be implemented in parallel.

To improve the security environment as quickly as possible, in coordination with Germany, the lead country on policing, and other international partners, we plan to train 50,000 combined Afghanistan National Police (ANP), Border Police (ANBP) and Highway Police by December 2005. More than 2,000 have been trained to date, and we aim to train a total of 25,000 by this June. We are using reprogrammed Emergency Response Funds and FY 2004 supplemental money that INL received to establish seven Regional Training Centers (RTC) near Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Gardez, Mazar-i-Sharif, Konduz, Kandahar, Bamiyan, Jalalabad and Herat. Supplemental funds will also provide equipment, communications and management systems, police physical plant and infrastructure, and salary support. We believe that this program will give the Afghan government, for the first time, the capacity to enforce the law throughout the country – a necessary condition for legitimate, sustainable economic development to take place.

Second, in coordination with Italy, the lead country on justice reform, we are working to rebuild the justice sector, which was almost completely destroyed in 20 years of war. Our criminal justice program, in coordination with the Afghanistan government, will continue the repair and construction of courthouses, aid in the development of justice sector institutions, and invest in human capital by training judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, and court administrators. Legal training and professionalization programs will reestablish professional standards and integrate women jurists and attorneys into the Afghan legal system. This program, over time, will create an Afghan government capacity to try criminal defendants fairly and to mete out appropriate punishments.

Finally, in coordination with the UK, the lead country on counternarcotics, INL programs are going after the drug industry directly. This is a multi-level strategy that involves going after drug labs, "containing" the drug trafficking threat, and becoming more aggressive about poppy eradication nationwide.

Specifically, we have contributed, with the UK, to a project through the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime to establish a Drug Interdiction Unit, which will direct its specialized expertise against drug traffickers. This Unit has been formed and specialized training is being arranged. The UK has already established a similar unit – after a yearlong effort – and it has begun to undertake operations in the south, where opium poppy cultivation is concentrated. And we are in discussions with the Germans about possible partnership in establishing another interdiction unit, which would also have specialized capacity in the area of clandestine laboratories. Building drug law enforcement capacity like this is essential but also – as UK and UNODC experience shows – difficult and time-consuming. Afghan recruits come to us with very low levels of education and experience, and vetting for suitability and training take time. There will clearly be a need for embedded foreign experts in these units for some time to come to continue professional and organizational development.

For the next several years at least, Afghan law enforcement institutions simply will not have the capacity to attack processors and traffickers effectively and systematically. Recognizing this, and at the request of the Afghan government, we are now working on a program to begin to eradicate the crop in the ground, when it is most vulnerable. We hope to destroy a portion of the current year's crop – perhaps 10-15% - and to prepare for a large-scale eradication campaign against the 2004-2005 crop. This program will, we believe, also deter farmers from planting. The profits to be made in the business are so large that only the credible threat of complete financial loss can be an effective deterrent – and we aim to create a centrally-directed, standing poppy eradication force that will be this deterrent. This program will disrupt the narcotics industry at its most vulnerable point and cut off the flow of raw material to the criminals, warlords and terrorists who profit from downstream processing and trafficking.

In support of law enforcement and eradication efforts, we will also implement alternative development and public affairs projects. To destroy Afghanistan's opium economy, alternatives to the pernicious cycle of opium credit, cultivation and harvest must be available to rural communities. Unlike traditional development assistance, INL's alternative livelihood programs directly support the opium ban by linking assistance to the cessation of poppy cultivation. INL is also working closely with the UK, USAID and the Afghans to coordinate the delivery of all development programs to poppy areas to ensure sustained success.

INL is also assisting the Afghan Counternarcotics Directorate within the National Security Council in implementing a major anti-drug public affairs campaign designed to deter cultivation, trade, use and abuse of narcotics. This campaign will include publicizing anti-drug messages through print media, radio, television and sponsorship of public/community events aimed at discouraging drug cultivation and use. We will develop and implement this program in close coordination with DOD, which also has expertise and experience in this area.

We recognize, too, that there is a need to deal with the drugs that flow over Afghanistan's borders to world markets, including the U.S. Since September 11, 2001, and the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, INL has dramatically expanded its efforts to "contain" this flow through programs to improve border controls in adjoining states in Central Asia and Pakistan, and to enhance the capacity of states on the Afghan drug routes to fight the narcotics scourge. We are continuing to work with the international community through the UNODC Paris Pact to identify drug routes, improve information exchange and coordinate the delivery of assistance programs all along the Afghan drug route. We were particularly pleased to be able to support establishment of a DEA vetted unit in Uzbekistan, and we think consideration should be given to expanding this program to other countries along the drug routes.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of assistance programs and their relevance to national security. My DEA colleague can address the specific crime threats in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and will highlight the role that assistance programs play in developing competent and reliable foreign counterparts. It is thanks in part to the assistance from INL-managed programs that U.S. law enforcement can operate successfully against transnational crime threats to the U.S. The stark reality must be faced: If we do not implement programs to help develop effective institutions abroad, U.S. law enforcement agencies will have no one with whom to cooperate.

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