



Afghanistan: The Narcotics Situation and Strategy

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Mr. Chairman, Committee members, I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you on the subject of "Afghanistan: The Narcotics Situation and Strategy."

The U.S. Government strategy for dealing with narcotics both within Afghanistan and trafficked from it is proactive and coordinated within the interagency. It is intended to reduce measurably heroin poppy cultivation, encourage alternative income streams, destroy drug labs, promote drug interdiction, and develop the justice sector to facilitate the proper prosecution and sentencing of traffickers. This State Department Bureau, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), is intent on working closely and effectively with both Congress and DEA to implement this strategy. In fact, the DEA Administrator and I have recently returned from a fact-finding trip to Afghanistan, where we represented the U.S. Government at the counter-drug conference in Kabul earlier this month.

Pieces of this counternarcotics strategy are proportionate to the urgency and needs presented on the ground. The various pieces of this emerging strategy are both complementary and independently important; the key words are proactive, comprehensive, and accountable.

A few first impressions. My recent meeting with President Karzai reaffirmed my conviction that he means business – he is serious about tackling the heroin threat to his country. This is a leader who is dedicated to breaking the cycle of opium poppy cultivation and narcotics trafficking in his country before local trafficking rings become cartels and put down taproots, transforming Afghanistan into a narco-state. President Karzai is determined to proceed with every major aspect of breaking the heroin trade, even as he reinforces the productivity of alternative legitimate income streams, such as through the production of wheat, maize, barley and other needed crops.

As you know well, there are three essential components to our accelerating counter-narcotics strategy. The first component is targeted eradication of heroin poppies. The second is targeted, ever-widening availability and reinforcement of alternative streams of income. Democracies are consolidated not by reliance on drug money, but by pairing well-supported democratic institutions and the rule of law with a sound, growing, and free market in legitimate goods. Afghanistan has great needs, for example, in the area of legitimate agriculture. We intend to support the growth of a legitimate economy in that and other sectors.

Third, and finally, law enforcement, interdiction and justice sector reform are also key to success. We must raise the costs and risks of heroin trafficking, while raising the incentives for joining, or remaining part of, the legitimate economy. Only eight percent of Afghanistan's cultivated land is presently used to grow poppies, and we must make the incremental risk of its associated profits higher than the extra income it might produce.

There are other dangers from which we cannot avert our gaze. Afghanistan's heroin, which sells on the retail market for one hundred times the farm gate price, is the source of a growing reservoir of illegal money that funds international crime across the region, sustains the destabilizing activities of warlords, and fosters local coercion and terrorism. While available information about this pattern continues to grow, we cannot afford to stand by and wait as these destructive relationships and behaviors become clearer and institutionalized. Our comprehensive approach takes stock of these linkages, and is accelerating the effort to break each of them.

A few final thoughts. On eradication, some would argue – wait. Other priorities should trump this activity. I would argue swift action is essential. Distinguishing the urgent from the otherwise important requires that we tackle the poppy crop now.

Second, I can say without qualification that we have a committed ally in the Afghan government. President Karzai believes in democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and in a robust counter-narcotics effort. I see no signs of half-measures, and we are similarly committed.

Third, I am convinced that drug money and terrorist organizations in Afghanistan and throughout the region are locked together like chain links. While there may be other links in that chain, it is my conviction, based on the information available, that the two threats overlap palpably and incontrovertibly.

Fourth, we are cooperating closely with our European allies to support the Afghan government, particularly those with lead nation responsibilities. In that regard, we are pressing for increasing coordination with the British on counter-narcotics; with the Germans on policing; and with the Italians on justice sector reform.

Fifth, and finally, INL is determined to support and encourage cooperation between the efforts of the State Department, DEA, DoD, and USAID. Congress empowers us to achieve results for the American people, for the Afghan people and for greater local, regional and national security. Congress has funded the INL-coordinated portion of that effort with \$50 million in supplemental appropriations in FY04, of which a significant portion will be dedicated to eradication.

Separately, Congress has funded INL police training and criminal justice sector development with an additional \$120 million in 2004 supplemental funds, to which the Administration added \$50 million in reprogrammed funds for accelerating success in Afghanistan, after appropriately notifying the Congress. Of this \$170 million, \$160 million is being used to build 7 police training centers to train at least 20,000 police by June, and \$10 million is to develop the justice sector, including the training of judges and prosecutors, the building of courthouses, and the reinforcement of the rule of law through guidance on developing new laws, and the provision of technical assistance.

In short, we are seeking to prevent the institutionalization of heroin cartels, to support democracy's early days in post-Taliban Afghanistan, to reinforce the best instincts of a people now freeing themselves from the terrorists' yolk, and to confront those that still threaten to destabilize that society, through both the narcotics trade and terrorism.

This effort means being active in containing the narcotics trafficking threats in places like Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan, as well as points South and West. It means working with the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), strengthening our cooperation with DEA, focusing work with the G-8's June 2003 endorsement of the "Paris Pact" to zero-in on "drug routes" from Afghanistan to heroin markets, and demonstrating global leadership through our own efforts.

Mr. Chairman, INL is involved in a full-court press on both counter-narcotics and law enforcement in and around Afghanistan. These issues will not vanish overnight, but with congressional support and bipartisan cooperation in the knowledge that success in Afghanistan matters, we will, incrementally and collectively, succeed. Thank you.

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