



United States Counternarcotics Efforts in Afghanistan

Nancy J. Powell, Acting Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

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Mr. Chairman, Congressman Lantos, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you and discuss our efforts to assist Afghanistan in curbing the production and trafficking of illegal narcotics.

The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) plays a key role in carrying out the President's National Drug Control Strategy by leading the development and implementation of U.S. international drug control efforts. We manage a diverse range of counternarcotics programs in 150 countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Europe. These bilateral, regional, and global initiatives aim to fight the cultivation of drug crops at their source, disrupt the trafficking of drugs and precursor chemicals, and help build host-nation law enforcement capacity.

My statement provides an overview of the contribution of our counternarcotics programs to the promotion of stability and security in Afghanistan. I will begin by discussing the problem of narcotics in Afghanistan and our role in supporting the U.S. Government's five-pillar counternarcotics strategy. My remarks will highlight the changes to the five-pillar program that were made as a result of our reevaluation of last year's program. While broadly addressing the current status of the five-pillar program, I will specifically highlight the recent progress in our public information campaign, provide details on our eradication and anti-cultivation programs, and address efforts in assisting the Government of Afghanistan to improve justice and the rule of law.

Overview of Counternarcotics Efforts

The production and trafficking of narcotics in Afghanistan is a devastating threat to the stability of both Afghanistan and the surrounding region. Recent estimates from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime assert that 87 percent of the world's opiates are produced in Afghanistan. In addition to all the other nefarious and debilitating consequences of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, robust drug production contributes to an environment of corruption and of political and economic instability, and thereby threatens the democratically elected Afghan Government. Afghanistan cannot hope to develop into a properly functioning democracy, with a stable government operating under the rule of law, if the drug trade dominates its economy. Unchecked trafficking and production of narcotics threatens to undermine all of the other achievements that the United States and our allies are making in the region. The continued support of counternarcotics efforts must remain an important part of overall U.S. policy in Afghanistan.

To combat this disturbing threat, the U.S. Government and our United Kingdom counterparts have developed a five-pillar program designed to meet the challenge of narcotics production and trafficking on several fronts. Our Public Information pillar is focused on galvanizing the Afghan populace to reject opium poppy cultivation and trade. The Alternative Livelihoods pillar, spearheaded by USAID, seeks to establish economic alternatives to poppy cultivation. The Elimination/Eradication pillar centers on preventing poppy-planting and eradicating those fields when prevention is unsuccessful. Our Interdiction pillar seeks to build Afghan capacity to destroy drug labs, seize precursor chemicals and opiates, and arrest major traffickers. The Law Enforcement and Justice Reform pillar assists the Afghan Government in building its capacity to arrest, prosecute, and punish traffickers and corrupt officials.

Success of the five-pillar program in combating illicit drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan is critically important to ensure that democracy flourishes in that troubled country. The just-completed parliamentary elections demonstrate that democracy is taking root, but a democratic Afghanistan can not be fully realized unless we are successful in controlling the narcotics trade.

The United States and the Government of Afghanistan, together with our international allies, are committed to addressing the drug threat in Afghanistan. In accordance with the Bonn agreement, responsibility for different realms of Afghan stabilization was divided between the United States and our allies. The United Kingdom is the lead-nation for counternarcotics, the Federal Republic of Germany is the lead-nation for police programs, and Italy is the lead-nation for justice programs. I have recently returned from a meeting in London with representatives of these nations to discuss our close cooperation, our progress in each of these areas, and ways to streamline our future efforts in countering narcotics production and trafficking in Afghanistan.

Public Information

The goal of our public information efforts is to change attitudes in an Afghan culture where too many people have come to depend upon the cultivation of poppy despite its illegality, the major public health hazard that it presents, and its threat to Afghanistan's democracy. In this effort, President Karzai has played an especially prominent and essential role, repeatedly addressing the Afghan people to reiterate his commitment to eliminate drugs and to emphasize the danger and immorality of the drug trade. Using foreign assistance funding, we have helped the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Counternarcotics to develop and conduct an anti-drug public affairs program aimed at reducing poppy cultivation, the illicit drug trade, and drug use across the country.

It is important, based on our experience this year, that the Government of Afghanistan increase its efforts to spread an anti-poppy-planting message to farmers as early as possible in the growing cycle, before planting decisions are made. Our public information efforts reflect the timing of the planting cycle. Between early July and mid-October, nearly 4,000 broadcasts of counternarcotics messages are being aired on more than thirty radio stations, with an estimated audience of about 20 million people in the primary poppy-growing provinces and beyond. This program has also led to the distribution of 2000 posters, 170,000 stickers, and 200,000 matchbook covers with counternarcotics messages in these same provinces. We are also broadening our use of electronic media, preparing to advertise on transit vehicles such as buses and taxis, and developing radio dramas and mobile cinemas to disseminate a counternarcotics message. Later this year, we will also implement a long-term Public Information program focusing on marketing, verification, and capacity building.

Also, as part of the newly established Poppy Elimination Program (PEP), we expect to place public information specialists in the governors' offices of major poppy-producing provinces. These public information specialists will implement, at the beginning of the growing season, marketing techniques

aimed at preventing farmers from planting poppy.

Alternative Livelihoods

Providing farmers with economic opportunities and alternatives to poppy cultivation is an essential part of our counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan. State and USAID have been working through non-governmental organizations to help provide alternative livelihoods assistance to Afghan farmers, with USAID now having the primary interagency lead. While the Alternative Livelihoods pillar concentrates on creating rural economic growth in the key poppy-producing provinces, USAID assistance is also being directed to reward provinces that have taken decisive action against poppy cultivation through a Good Performers Fund. In order to provide concrete alternatives to poppy cultivation in the coming planting seasons, a major seeds and fertilizer program will soon be assisting farmers in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

Elimination/Eradiation

This pillar has been revised substantially in light of the results from this year's eradication efforts. In response to a request from the Government of Afghanistan, the United States assisted in the establishment of an Afghan Central Poppy Eradication Force (CPEF) in May 2004 to carry out eradication that was centrally directed and targeted. Eradication during the 2004 season began late with modest results. Eradication results in 2005 were also disappointing. The CPEF teams initially intended to deploy in January or February, but because of an exceptionally harsh winter, they did not begin operations this year until early April when they were sent to Kandahar province, a major poppy growing region. Once there, they ran into strong opposition from local farmers and had limited cooperation from local authorities—a pattern that was repeated elsewhere until the end of their activities in June. In the end, CPEF only destroyed approximately 216 hectares of poppy in five provinces (Kandahar, Helmand, Balkh, Takhar and Badakhshan) this year. Our deep concern with those results spurred a reexamination of our approach to crop eradication.

Based on the lessons learned, the Eradication Pillar of the U.S. five-pillar counternarcotics strategy is being restructured to focus our efforts more at the provincial level. Poppy Elimination Program (PEP) teams, composed of 8-10 Afghan and international experts and advisors, will deploy to the seven major poppy producing provinces (Kandahar, Nangarhar, Uruzgan, Farah, Badakhshan, Helmand, and Balkh) to mobilize and assist provincial officials in conducting an effective public information campaign, to discourage poppy planting, and to implement provincial eradication programs early enough for farmers to replant fields with legitimate crops. The U.S. is funding six of these teams, and the U.K. is funding the seventh. Specifically, the PEP teams will coordinate public information campaigns and alternative livelihoods programs, monitor cultivation and compliance, report significant developments to senior levels of the Afghan Government, provide airlift support for the range of counternarcotics activities, and, when necessary, request eradication by provincial or national authorities.

Our review also illuminated the need to change the approach to forced eradication. As a result, the Central Poppy Eradication Force (CPEF) will be reconfigured into the Afghan Eradication Force (AEF) consisting of more mobile units bolstered by air assets to support the PEP efforts. The AEF is designed for deployment by the central government, if agreed-upon poppy elimination objectives are not met by provincial authorities.

To support the PEP teams, we have purchased ten Huey-II helicopters, which will provide emergency medical evacuation, support and protection of ground personnel if attacked, logistical resupply, air transportation, reconnaissance, and command and control for counternarcotics operations. Current estimates put the first two helicopters ready for deployment in January 2006. We are working with the Department of Defense to provide temporary basing space until we arrange for a permanent Main Operating Base in Kabul. Although the primary function of the helicopters will be to support PEP teams, they may also be used to support the Afghan Eradication Force and the National Interdiction Unit, which will implement law enforcement operations.

Our experience with illicit crop reduction programs worldwide has shown that a credible threat of forced eradication remains critical to the success of a comprehensive counternarcotics strategy. There are some indications that the increased perception of risk in growing poppy was one of the factors contributing to reportedly lower poppy cultivation this year.

Interdiction

Interdiction efforts are focused on decreasing narcotics trafficking and processing in Afghanistan. In conjunction with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and our international allies, we are helping to build Afghan capacity to destroy clandestine labs, seize precursor chemicals and opiates, and arrest high-volume traffickers. The DEA has trained and mentored five Afghan National Interdiction Units (NIU) of 25 members each. Basic training for all five units was completed in June 2005. The DEA reports that approximately 33.9 metric tons of opium and 4.4 metric tons of heroin have been seized and destroyed in Afghanistan in the first half of 2005. Significant narcotics seizures have continued through the summer.

Law Enforcement and Justice Reform

An immediate priority of the Government of Afghanistan is to establish security and rule of law throughout the country. We are working closely with the Government of Afghanistan and the Federal Republic of Germany, the lead-nation, to enhance police training programs that include mentoring initiatives. We are also supporting reform at the Ministry of Interior and providing critically needed infrastructure and equipment to ensure that the police have the skills and tools they need to perform effectively and professionally.

The goal is to provide basic training to 50,000 national police (including 3,400 highway patrol officers) as well as to 12,000 border police. To support police training needs, we established a Central Training Center in Kabul and Regional Training Centers (RTCs) in Gardez, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Konduz, Jalalabad and Herat. As of this month, we have trained more than 45,000 police, including nearly 3,000 border police and 1,100 highway patrol officers.

FY2005 Supplemental funds enabled us to take the next step in training Afghanistan police by shifting the focus from classroom instruction in basic policing skills to field training. We also initiated a Field Training Officers (FTO) program in Kabul earlier this year, and supplemental funds provided the resources to expand that program nationwide to ensure that police receive the monitoring, evaluation, and feedback that is necessary to complete their training.

We will also continue to work with the Government of Afghanistan to implement police reform initiatives at the Ministry of the Interior to help transition its police force into a professional organization that respects democratic values. In 2004, we deployed 30 senior police advisors to the Ministry of Interior to address organizational reform and help develop revenue-generating initiatives. The advisors also helped develop community policing projects and anti-corruption initiatives. This year, they are implementing a pay and rank reform initiative that restructures the Afghan police organization, reorders and reforms the current rank system, and adjusts the pay scale to achieve pay parity with the Afghan National Army as well as ensure that the wages are commensurate with the cost of living.

The Justice Reform Program focuses on providing a framework of laws and processes that will support counternarcotics law enforcement efforts. The United States Government continues to work with the Afghan Government to effect the extradition of high-level traffickers indicted in the United States. Without legal consequences to follow Afghan interdiction efforts, we would essentially leave our well-trained police powerless to do any more than simply destroy the drugs they seize. Having an effective arrest and conviction mechanism is vital. As such, our overall counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan consists of interrelated elements, one of which must be the deterrence of illegality through regularized legal structures.

Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime suggests that the rule of law message is reaching the public. In interviews conducted with farmers in 2004, 23 percent of interviewed farmers indicated that the legal ban on poppy deterred them from planting, while 16.2 percent cited fear of imprisonment. Those numbers rose in 2005 to 31.1 percent of interviewed farmers citing the poppy ban, while 39.9 percent cited fear of imprisonment. While these numbers have not been confirmed by U.S. Government estimates, they do imply that the rule of law message is reaching the public, even at this early stage.

The Justice Reform Pillar has two primary components: criminal justice reform and corrections support. A subcomponent of both is support for counternarcotics prosecution. Programs in both criminal justice reform and corrections are designed to support the work the police and interdiction units are doing in bringing drug production and trafficking to a halt.

Supported by Department of State funding, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has sent two senior, experienced prosecutors to Kabul to provide counternarcotics law reform advice and assistance and to build and support the Vertical Prosecution Task Force (VPTF). The DOJ effort has led to the redrafting of the narcotics and money laundering laws and the authority for the narcotics court's nationwide jurisdiction in Afghanistan. The VPTF will consist of judges, prosecutors, investigators and support personnel, who will be organized, trained, and mentored by the DOJ prosecutors. Currently, plans are underway to send two more U.S. prosecutors, and several experienced investigators, to increase the size and effectiveness of the task force. An Afghan Presidential Decree allows for transfer of significant counternarcotics cases to Kabul for prosecution by the task force. It is especially important to support the VPTF with mentoring now, as the first mid-level traffickers are arrested and are being held awaiting trial.

The trial and detention of these traffickers will take place in the temporary Counter Narcotics Justice Center (CNJC), which will be built in cooperation with the Department of Defense. We are committed to fund the operations and maintenance of the CNJC for two years. The facility will hold mid- to high-level narcotics offenders who are awaiting or are on trial by the Vertical Prosecution Task Force. It will also temporarily incarcerate convicted offenders in a separate wing until the permanent counternarcotics prison is complete.

Other programs on the justice reform side focus on training and education and include the U.S.-Afghanistan Master of Laws Program and the National Legal Training Center. The U.S.-Afghanistan Master of Laws Program is a \$2 million, three-year grant offering Afghan legal educators the opportunity to participate in an intensive year-long Master of Laws program at a U.S. law school focusing on comparative law, modern legal practices, and criminal law and procedures. Prior to departure, Afghan candidates undergo English training at Kabul University.

The National Legal Training Center (NLTC) is a joint U.S./Italian initiative to provide a centralized resource for specialized training, licensing, and accreditation of Afghan lawyers and judges. It will also foster career development for those in the legal profession, and improve institutional coordination. The NLTC will be housed on the University of Kabul campus.

The Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP) focuses on helping Government of Afghanistan Ministries improve criminal justice reform across Afghanistan. Under the JSSP, we are providing training and mentoring to the Afghan Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Office on criminal justice, corrections, and police/prosecutor coordination. The JSSP advisors will also track and assist in the implementation of key criminal legislation, and promote institutional capacity-building projects. The JSSP will also provide standardized training for judges, prosecutors, and defense counsel.

In addition to the justice reform component, our overall justice program in Afghanistan includes a corrections program component, organized as the Corrections System Support Program (CSSP). The CSSP provides training mentoring and advice to the Afghan corrections system. It also provides capacity building assistance, such as tracking and office management systems. Importantly, the CSSP will aid in infrastructure development, specifically the refurbishment of prisons. Kabul-based mentors and trainers will work with regional elements to help the Prison Administration expand its capacity to manage provincial, as well as national, corrections facilities, with focus on major poppy growing and drug trafficking regions and emphasis on internationally-recognized human rights.

Conclusion

Realizing that these five pillars cannot operate independently of each other, we are focusing on improving interagency communication and cooperation. A task force, organized and led by a senior official acting under the authority of the Ambassador, has been set up to enhance coordination between U.S. agencies at Embassy Kabul. Here in Washington, we meet weekly to coordinate in the Afghanistan Interagency Operations Group, led by the National Security Council and the State Department's Bureau of South Asian Affairs. Within the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, I have established a working group that meets weekly to review progress across all pillars. I am confident that effective communication combined with the sharing of ideas among colleagues working towards the same goal will enhance our ability to effect positive change in Afghanistan.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

