



Fact Sheet
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Counter-narcotics

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Opium poppy cultivation and narcotics trafficking in Afghanistan pose serious challenges to good governance, sustainable economic development, and the rule of law. Counter-narcotics programs supported by the Government of Afghanistan, the U.K, the U.S. and the international community are engaged in activities to discourage poppy cultivation, interrupt the trade in illegal narcotics, and lay the foundations for a broad-based and sustainable licit economy to support Afghanistan's new democratic institutions.

The Afghan narcotics trade and its impact:

- **Magnitude** – The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that Afghanistan accounts for 87 per cent of global opium production. Almost 8.7 per cent of the Afghan population was involved in opium cultivation in 2005.
- **Export Value** – The export value of Afghan opiates in 2005 is estimated at \$2.7 billion, or 52 per cent of the size of the nation's legal GDP of \$5.2 billion. However, 80% of this money goes to drug trafficking networks rather than to the roughly 2 million Afghan farmers and laborers believed to be involved in cultivation.
- **Decline in 2005 Production** – Both U.S. and U.N. estimates indicate there were sharp declines in Afghanistan's total area under poppy cultivation in 2005, following a record crop in 2004. However, improved yields in cultivated fields due to better growing conditions meant that total opium production declined by a much smaller amount.
- **Regional Trafficking** – Most Afghan-origin narcotics are exported from the country through Iran and Pakistan, but an increasing amount is also going across Afghanistan's northern border into Central Asia.
- **Afghan Users** – Drug abuse within Afghanistan is also of growing concern. The UNODC estimates that 170,000 Afghans, or 1.4% of the adult population, use opium and/or heroin.
- **Impact** – The lucrative trade in illicit drugs supports a wide range of criminal activities and security threats, undermines efforts to rebuild the Afghan economy and fuels public sector corruption.

The US is supporting the Government of Afghanistan in its counternarcotics efforts through a comprehensive program based on the following five pillars:

1. **Public Information** – Posters, radio and TV spots, matchbook covers, and other media are being used to increase public awareness of the dangers of the drug trade and address public tolerance of poppy cultivation.
2. **Elimination and Eradication** – Teams of advisors are working with national and provincial government officials to discourage farmers from planting poppy and to organize eradication campaigns against poppy crops that have been planted.
3. **Interdiction** – The U.S. is developing the Afghan government's capacity to destroy drug labs, seize opiates and precursor chemicals and arrest major traffickers. U.S.-trained National Interdiction Unit teams have conducted raids against drug-associated targets around the country.
4. **Law Enforcement and Justice Reform** – U.S. advisors are training prosecutors, judges, investigators, and other justice personnel to improve the Afghan government's ability to prosecute criminal cases, support corrections programs and foster the rule of law.
5. **Alternative Livelihoods** – The U.S. is supporting programs to implement alternative livelihoods programs that provide cash for work opportunities, distribute seeds and fertilizer, train farmers in the production of high-value crops like fruits and nuts, rehabilitate rural infrastructure such as roads and irrigation canals and establish processing, storage, and financing organizations to support strong rural markets.

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