



PRESS RELEASE



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• ESTIMATED POPPY CULTIVATION IN AFGHANISTAN

(Washington, D.C.)—The annual U.S. Government estimate for opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is complete and shows that approximately 206,700 hectares of poppy were cultivated during the crop season in 2004. Current cultivation levels equate to a potential production of 4,950 metric tons of opium. This represents a 239 percent increase in the poppy crop and a 73 percent increase in potential opium production over 2003 estimates.

These estimates are based on a scientific sample survey of Afghan agricultural regions conducted with specialized U.S. Government satellite imaging systems. Adverse growing conditions are the principal reason why the percentage increase for potential production is not proportional to the increase in cultivation.

"Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is a major problem, but Afghanistan is now developing the institutional foundations necessary to drive out narcotics cultivation and trafficking," said John Walters, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). "Attacking the drug trade is a key step toward establishing the stability and freedom that are the aspiration of every Afghan man and woman. In the world's 'newest democracy,' a nation increasingly governed by laws, there is simply no place for drug traffickers."

"To date, little Afghan heroin has ended up on U.S. streets, with most Afghan heroin marketed to neighboring countries and Europe," added Walters. "Additionally, by fostering corruption and undermining the rule of law, a resurgent drug trade threatens what the Afghans have achieved."

The United States is working closely with the United Kingdom, which is the lead nation coordinating international counternarcotics assistance to the Afghan Government. The United States will do its part to help by giving Afghan farmers real economic alternatives, supporting the Afghans to eradicate poppy fields, working side-by-side with the Afghans to strengthen their drug law enforcement, and helping them to establish interdiction programs. The United States is also working with our Afghan counterparts to build civic institutions and raise public awareness about the serious harm drugs inflict.

Summary of Key Findings: Poppy cultivation for 2004 was estimated at 206,700 hectares, compared with 61,000 in 2003; 30,750 in 2002; 1,685 in 2001; 64,510 in 2000; and 51,500 in 1999. Potential opium production for 2004 was estimated at 4,950 metric tons, the equivalent of approximately 582 metric tons of potential heroin production.

302 metric tons of potential heroin production.