



Israel National Defense College

Controlling Opium Production:

The Decisive Point In Stabilizing Afghanistan

Carl C. Goodison



Reuven Chaikin Chair in Geostrategy University of Haifa

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With the partnership of the Reuven Chaikin Chair in Geostrategy
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...to my wife Arlene, who has made everything in my life better – including this paper... and, to my daughter Kyran, for her prayers, hugs and words of encouragement – they kept me focused on the light at the end of the tunnel...

Table of Contents

Introduction: The Evolving Nature of Warfare 9

Opium: Examining the Battlespace 12

 The Center of Gravity: Afghanistan 12

 A Weapon of Mass Destruction 15

Afghanistan: Defining the Challenges 17

 The Opium Enterprise in Afghanistan 17

 Organized Crime: The Perilous Currents 22

Current Operations in Afghanistan 30

 SITREP Afghanistan: A Coalition Report Card 30

 The Price of Failure 36

Conclusion 39

 Opium: The Decisive Point 39

Recommendations 43

References 61

Tables and Figures

Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Afghanistan, Regional Distribution of Opium Poppy Cultivation (ha), 2005-6 | 14 |
| Table 2: Defense Assessment of ANA Capabilities, as of April 2008 | 35 |

Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1: The Opium Poppy | 13 |
| Figure 2: Opium Production, 2005 and 2006 | 13 |
| Figure 3: Pyramid of Protection and Patronage | 19 |
| Figure 4: Hawala Transactions Combining Legitimate and Illegal Activities | 22 |
| Figure 5: Schematic Overview of the Process of Consolidation of Afghan Criminal Groups | 24 |
| Figure 6: Main Opium Cultivating Provinces, 2007 | 27 |
| Figure 7: International Stabilization Force Regional Commands and PRT Locations. | 31 |
| Figure 8: Comparison of ANA Corps Personnel Assigned to a Unit to the Number on Hand, as of February 2008 | 34 |

Preface

Goodison's experience with what is happening in Afghanistan was acquired while he served there as an officer in the U.S. Air Force. He became knowledgeable about the growing of opium and its becoming a very sought-after commodity, distributed all over the globe. Carl chose to call this drug a "weapon of mass destruction," and indeed the dimensions of its growth and production in this wretched country arouse amazement; the reader will find much about it in this booklet.

A large proportion of this work deals with the writer's recommendation as to how to cope with this "weapon" and to beat it. He is aware of the great economic weight that this drug has in Afghanistan, of the dimensions of the involvement of every governmental and security (police and military) institution in what is happening; nonetheless, he suggests ways as to how the bomb can be defused.

This is a comprehensive work, rich in illuminating data, and teaches a great deal about the drug and the scope of its distribution around the world. This work also affords a rare look into the depths of what is happening in Afghanistan, and this time by someone who was there for a long time and saw things at very close hand.

The research center of the National Defense College in Israel (INDC) found this work, which had been written as a year's project at the College, to be worthy of publication and extensive circulation.

Our thanks go to Col. Carl Goodison for this serious work, to Maury Rosovsky for his editorial improvements, Many thanks to Eynat Gepner Goldstien for her contribution to shape the monograph to its final stage, to the staff of the Chaikin Chair for Geostrategy at the University of Haifa, and the staff of the National Security College for their help in having this work published and distributed.

Prof. Arnon Soffer
Head, Research Center
IDF National Defense College

The best strategy is always *to be very strong*; first in general, and then at the decisive point.

~ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

Introduction: The Evolving Nature of Warfare

War, by definition, would appear to be a very simple and straightforward undertaking. As “a state of open, armed, often prolonged conflict carried on between nations, states, or parties”¹, for centuries war was, in fact, a very simple, albeit violent, event.

Carl von Clausewitz, in His book, *On War*, in Book Four, introduces the concept of the essential point. Clausewitz states that “the capture of an *essential* point... brings about the decision.” Decision, in Clausewitz’s mind, is directly linked to victory in battle. In the context of pre-modern wars, the essential point was key terrain held by the enemy. Clausewitz’s concept of capturing the essential point has equal relevance in today’s modern wars.

The evolution of modern warfare, punctuated by distinct revolutions in military affairs, has resulted in a manifestation of war that is quite opposite its simplistic definition. As the Berlin Wall fell to the ground so did the last vestiges of truly conventional warfare. The bipolar world shifted awkwardly and teetered toward conflict that was more asymmetric in nature. Religion, ethnicity, and tribal influences became the prevailing *casus belli*. War, and the manner in which it was waged – warfare – became extremely complex and, at times, confusing endeavors. The warrior’s lexicon expanded rapidly to include such phrases as peace-keeping operations, mission creep, radical Islam, effects-based operations, and coalition warfare. Strategic purpose was distilled to “bumper sticker” phraseology and soundbites became campaigns – the War on Drugs, Weapons of Mass Destruction and Global War on Terror portended clashes of epic proportion. There is no clearer example of the rapidly evolving nature of warfare than Afghanistan – where

1 Webster’s II, *New Riverside University Dictionary*, s.v. “War.”

the War on Drugs, the Global War on Terrorism, and the term Weapon of Mass Destruction all share common ground.

NATO is at the helm of the current UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Their mission, simply stated, is to assist the nascent Afghan government in creating a secure and stable foundation for reconstruction and development. The conventional military approach, focused on Taliban and insurgent forces, ignores the potential for an unconventional solution – one that focusing on a plant versus an opposing force.

In order to explore a non-conventional approach to the situation in Afghanistan, a clear definition of essential point must be presented. Despite the evolution of warfare since Clausewitz's time, little has changed in the meaning of "Essential Point" except to integrate the concept of command decision, or decisiveness, into the term. Therefore, the current term is known as "Decisive Point" yet it remains nearly identical to Clausewitz's original meaning. According to the US Department of Defense's Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, a decisive point is "a geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a marked advantage over an adversary or contribute materially to achieving success."²

In this analysis, **opium production within Afghanistan will be considered as a holistic function to include cultivation, processing, and distribution.**

The purpose of this paper is to discuss **how controlling opium production in Afghanistan represents an essential point in stabilizing the situation there.** This paper will display data that clearly demonstrates Afghanistan

2 US Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, As Amended Through March 4, 2008), 146.

is the center of gravity for opium production and describe the deleterious effects opium is having as it spreads in concentric circles from Afghanistan, to neighboring countries and throughout the world. Opium has had negative impact both regionally and globally from the time the coalition arrived in Afghanistan in 2001 to the present. The linkage between opium production in Afghanistan, the resurgent Taliban, and the emergence of organized crime in Afghanistan, will be discussed, and finally, how the opium production detrimental effects the coalition's efforts to institute security, development, and reconstruction programs in Afghanistan .

This work insights are based, along with a research of scholarly works, on the author personal experience in Afghanistan in 2006³, discussions he have had with senior leaders of both Afghan Government and coalition, as well as interviews he had conducted since he returned.

3 The author, served as counterterrorism and counternarcotic Advisor to the Afghan National police (ANP) in 2006, and in that frame was involved during his tour in NATO in counternarcotics planning and he led a team which his mission was to give operational support to the Afghan Government in the core of counternarcotics.

Opium: Examining the Battlespace

The Center of Gravity: Afghanistan

Afghanistan dominates the supply side of the world's opium market; 92 percent of the world's opium poppy is cultivated there – 165,000 hectares – a staggering 50 percent increase from 2006. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report for 2007,⁴ 92 percent of the heroin in the world is produced from opium poppies grown in Afghanistan. This directly contributed to the establishment of a new world record for heroin production as well – 606 metric tons in 2006. The surge in heroin follows a 43 percent increase in raw opium production of 6,610 metric tons from 2005 to 2006 (Figure 2).

With a scarcity of fertile land and a lack of profitable alternative livelihoods options, the Afghan farmer has little choice but to grow poppy. There is no true alternative crop to opium poppy for the Afghan farmer.

In fact, 62 percent of the opium in Afghanistan is produced in the southern provinces where, ironically, they are “watered by a pre- [Soviet] war irrigation project built at U.S. According to the UNODC World Drug Report in 2007, “The total potential value of Afghanistan’s 2006 opium harvest accruing to farmers, laboratory owners, and Afghan traffickers reached about US \$3.1 billion. This is almost half the size of the country’s licit GDP of US \$6.7 billion, or 32 percent of the overall economy (including the opium sector).”⁵ These figures are really just the economic “ground zero” as profits expand concentrically as the drug moves across the global market (Table 1).

“While opium has a significant impact on the Afghan economy, massive profits are made abroad through its export as its value increases with every

4 UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2007*, 197, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2007.html> (accessed January 3, 2008).

5 Ibid.



Figure 1: The Opium Poppy

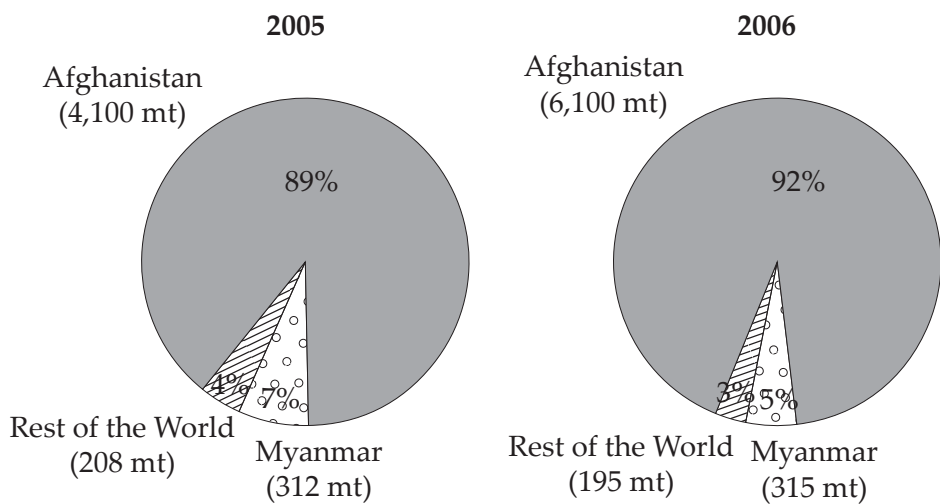


Figure 2: Opium Production, 2005 and 2006

Table 1: Afghanistan, Regional Distribution of Opium Poppy Cultivation (ha), 2005-6

| Region | 2005(ha) | 2006(ha) | Change 2005-2006 | 2005 as % of total |
|---------------|----------|----------|------------------|--------------------|
| Southern | 46,147 | 101,900 | +121% | 62% |
| Northern | 28,282 | 22,574 | -20% | 14% |
| Western | 16,543 | 16,615 | 0% | 10% |
| North-Eastern | 8,734 | 15,234 | +74% | 9% |
| Eastern | 4,095 | 8,312 | +103% | 5% |
| Central | 106 | 337 | +218% | 0% |
| Rounded Total | 104,000 | 165,000 | +59% | 100% |

border crossing. The wholesale price of a gram of heroin is, on average, \$2.50 in Afghanistan, \$3.50 in Pakistan and Iran, \$8 in Turkey, \$12 in Albania, \$18 in Slovenia or Slovakia, \$22 in Germany, \$30 in the United Kingdom, and \$33 in Russia. Retail prices can be up to ten times as high as wholesale prices, also because of "cutting" that mixes the drug with other substances."⁶ The best estimate for workers involved in opium cultivation in Afghanistan is 2.9 million or 12.6 percent of the total population of 23 million.⁷

Nearly all the opium is moved via ground transportation through neighboring countries. "In 2006, out of all the opiates that left Afghanistan, 53 per cent went via Iran, 33 per cent via Pakistan (both countries exporting primarily to Europe), and 15 per cent via Central Asia (mainly Tajikistan)."⁸

It's reasonable to assume that Pakistan plays a large role in the refinement of opium into heroin and morphine before its onward movement. It also appears that eastward movement of heroin to China – to offset declines in Burma's production – goes through Pakistan.

6 UN Information Service, *Drug Alert from the United Nations: Increased Supply of Afghan Heroin Promises Overdoses and Death*, December 16, 2004, <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2004/unisnar874.html>, (accessed January 10, 2008).

7 UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2007*, 207, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2007.html> (accessed January 3, 2008).

8 *Ibid.*, 45.

Given porous borders, weak or ineffective interdiction, and a plentiful supply of opium, traffickers nearly always succeed in satisfying the demands of the world's addicts. In the hands of a loosely aligned, global network, opium steadily moves toward its intended target and, when it is delivered there, the major damage will be done.

A Weapon of Mass Destruction

In the asymmetric environment in which we presently operate, consideration should be given to broadening the scope of WMD concerns to address the destabilizing and destructive nature of illegal narcotics – specifically opium and its derivatives.

Heroin from Afghanistan kills – at an alarming rate. “More than 10,000 drug users die annually from overdoses involving Afghan heroin. Drug-related deaths linked to the abuse of Afghan heroin are estimated at approximately 100,000 per year.”⁹ Like an atomic bomb, it destroys outward from Ground Zero in concentric circles. Survey conducted by the Afghan ministries of health and counternarcotics, in 2005, revealed there were 920,000 drug users in Afghanistan, including an estimated 150,000 users of opium and 50,000 heroin addicts¹⁰ in an estimated population of approximately 30 million people. The recent shift from smoking or eating opium to injecting heroin resulted in a dramatic increase in positive HIV tests which health officials attribute primarily to sharing needles. A 2000 UNODC National Assessment on Drug Abuse estimated 500,000 chronic heroin abusers and identified a new trend of injecting narcotics, which has raised concerns about HIV/AIDS.¹¹ It is no understatement to say that the futures of Iran

9 UN Information Service, *Drug Alert from the United Nations: Increased Supply of Afghan Heroin Promises Overdoses and Death*, December 16, 2004, <http://unis.unvienna.org/unispressrels/2004/unisnar874.html> (accessed January 10, 2008).

10 US Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, March 2006, <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2006/vol1/html/62109.htm> (accessed January 10, 2008).

11 US Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement

and Pakistan will be inextricably linked to their willingness and ability to confront the existent threat posed by Afghan opium.

Russia Federation is involved deeply in the drug trafficking. The involvement of Russian organized crime in the transshipment of heroin to other European countries will make containing the heroin problem in Russia very difficult.

“About 20 percent of this year's Afghan heroin harvest – 200 tonnes – will head to Europe via Central Asia's often porous borders with Afghanistan and then across Russia, Costa [The Executive Director of UNODC] said. The price of this amount of heroin would skyrocket from \$500 million in Afghanistan to \$10 billion when it finally reaches the streets of Moscow or London.”¹² The United Kingdom is the largest markets for Afghan opium in Western Europe. A solid 95% of the heroin for sale in the UK comes from one country – Afghanistan¹³. In total, the UK spends approximately £1.5 billion per year on heroin. The cost of drug-related crime in England and Wales is estimated at more than £13 billion¹⁴.

While the UK is the largest market in Western Europe, and the Russian Federation is by far the largest in East Europe, China is the largest heroin market in East and South-East Asia¹⁵.

Affairs, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, March 2006, <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2006/vol1/html/62109.htm> (accessed January 10, 2008).

12 Oleg Shchedrov, “Russia Must Stop Flood of Afghan Heroin – UN,” *ReutersAlertNet*, October 5, 2007, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L0534099.htm> (accessed January 10, 2008).

13 British Broadcasting Corporation, “Britain's Heroin Fix,” *BBC News Website*, July 22, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/panorama/4697411.stm> (accessed January 13, 2008).

14 Nigel Morris, “Cocaine Use Triples as Ecstasy Loses Its Appeal,” *The Independent*, April 19, 2007, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain> (accessed January 29, 2008).

15 UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2007*, 47, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2007.html> (accessed January 3, 2008).

Afghanistan: Defining the Challenges

The Opium Enterprise in Afghanistan

When you exclude the health threats presented by opium, the secondary threat from opium production is the illicit economy that it generates within Afghanistan. Approximately US \$3.1 billion is generated each year within Afghanistan from opium production. This figure represents nearly half the licit GDP of the country and contributes directly to an alarming growth in criminal enterprise, corruption, and at its worse, financial support for the Taliban. “There are unmistakable signs that opium and heroin money is energizing both al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.”¹⁶ According to Antonio Maria Costa, executive head of UNODC, “while opium brings some revenue to Afghanistan, over 90 per cent of profits are made by international criminal gangs and terrorists networks.”¹⁷

The relationship between the Taliban, a fundamental Islamic organization, and illegal narcotics would seem to be incongruous. It is, however, a strong and symbiotic one. The fact of the matter is that the Taliban had the foresight to discern two distinct advantages to allowing continued opium production. First, it staved off a popular rebellion by farmers who counted opium as their most profitable crop. This stated consideration had an added benefit as it reinforced the Taliban’s public persona as a protector of the people – particularly from corrupt government. Second, and most importantly, the opium enterprise was envisioned as a great source of revenue for the Taliban’s war on the infidels.

16 Sharon Behn, “Retired General Says Drug Money Fueling Taliban, al Qaeda,” *The Washington Times*, September 30, 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb5244/is_200510/ai_n19621832 (accessed July 8, 2008).

17 UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *Paris Pact: Stopping the Flow of Opium from Afghanistan*, October 31, 2007, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/paris-pact-afghanistan.html> (accessed June 10, 2008).

An earlier war in Afghanistan provided the impetus for the growth in opium production. While conducting operations to counter the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, US Central Intelligence Agency and Pakistani Interservices Intelligence (ISI) activities facilitated a thriving cross-border trade. With covert support in the form of weapons and other war material crossing from Pakistan into Afghanistan to support the mujahideen, the empty transport vehicles soon began to carry loads of raw opium on their return trip to Pakistan. Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, opium production came under the purview of regional warlords who imposed taxes on the production and distribution of opium. The warlords were not alone in profiting from opium. At all possible levels, from the farmer to the lowest level trader, from local government to national law enforcement, the production of opium generates illegal revenue and the proceeds are used for disparate agendas to include activities that are counter to coalition efforts (Figure 3).

The decision to permit the production of opium by the Taliban can be viewed as a both opportunistic and prescient. The rise of the Taliban was sponsored primarily by funds generated by Islamic charity organizations – some under the direction of sovereign governments. Some firmly believe that opium has always been a secondary, yet vital, source of Taliban funding. “Declassified US State Department records show that two major narco-traffickers now in US custody, Baz Mohammed and Bashir Noorzai, sat on the original five-member Taliban shura, or leadership council.”¹⁸ The Taliban has proved itself imminently capable of managing opium production. As the Taliban expanded its control on land notable increases in poppy cultivation followed as did expanded collection and distribution infrastructure.¹⁹

18 Gretchen Peters, “Taliban Drug Trade: Echoes of Columbia,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 21, 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1121/p04s01-wosc.html> (accessed June 10, 2008).

19 Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (London: Pan Macmillan Ltd, 2001), 120.

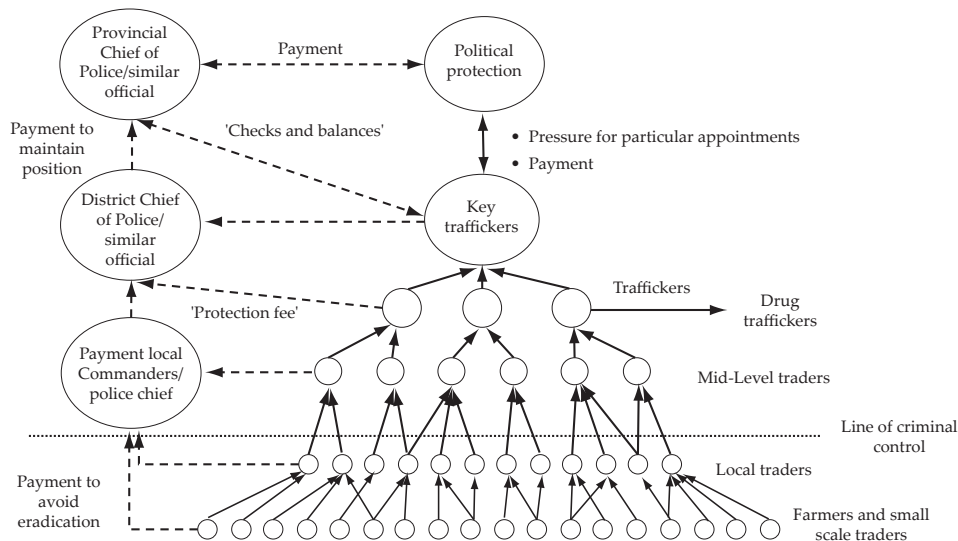


Figure 3: Pyramid of Protection and Patronage

Initially, the Taliban levied a tax on opium based on the Islamic concept of *zakat*. Described as “the systematic giving of 2.5% of one’s wealth each year to benefit the poor,”²⁰ the Taliban’s version of *zakat*, in actuality, was more of a traditional excise tax. The tax was assessed based on the value of the raw opium. As international pressure began to mount on Islamic charity organizations that had been connected to donations to known terror organizations, the tax on opium was increased to compensate for diminishing operational funds. It became apparent that “the Taliban had no religious qualms in collecting 20 per cent of the value of a truckload of opium as *zakat*.”²¹ During congressional testimony in October 2001, William Bach, with the US Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, “suggested that the drug trade brought at least

20 British Broadcast Corporation, “Religion and Ethics – Islam (Zakat: Charity),” BBC News Website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/practices/zakat.shtml> (accessed June 11, 2008).

21 Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (London: Pan Macmillan Ltd, 2001), 118.

\$40 million to the Taliban in 1999.”²² Given the fact that opium production nearly doubled from 1999 to 2006, the Taliban’s current annual revenue from opium can be estimated to be approximately \$80 million.

International efforts to “follow the money” have been rendered nearly useless by an informal fund transfer (IFT) system within Afghanistan that renders technological tracking useless. The *hawala* system exemplifies one of the asymmetric advantages indigenous forces enjoy within Afghanistan. While the US and coalition partners leverage advanced technology in an effort to capture data and map funding streams for terrorists, the insurgency in Afghanistan relies a primitive, albeit reliable, system of funds transfers that has been in use for centuries. *Hawala* means “transfer” in Arabic and refers to the practice of informal banking that, conducted domestically, maintains robust linkages with other *hawala* associates on regional and international levels. The *hawala* fills a void left by the demise of the formal financial infrastructure in Afghanistan. Years of conflict have taken their toll and formal banking processes were part of the collateral damage. “The conflict [in Afghanistan] has resulted in the complete disruption of domestic and international payments system, the virtual cessation of all lending activities within the country, significantly reduced deposit taking activities, and a stoppage of most international banking relationships.”²³

The *hawala* system’s international linkages work so well that is the primary means of transferring funds between the headquarters of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) outside Afghanistan and their field staffs operating within the country. NGOs alone are estimated to have channeled at least US \$200 million in emergency, relief, and development funding through

22 Raphael F. Perl, “Taliban and the Drug Trade,” *CRS Report for Congress*, October 5, 2001, www.fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/6210.pdf (accessed June 9, 2008).

23 The World Bank, *The Money Exchange Dealers Of Kabul: A Study of the Hawala System in Afghanistan*, World Bank Working Paper No. 13, 2003, prepared by Samuel Munzele Maimbo, 1.

the hawala system. Single transactions in excess of US \$500,000 especially between Peshawar in Pakistan and Kabul, are not uncommon.”²⁴ With no limits on the amount transferred, it is difficult to determine the volume of currency flowing within the system. Given the option to transfer funds in an informal network with no “paper trail” or a formal network with the vast amount of documentation associated with the various transactions and accounts, the advantages of the *hawala* system are abundantly clear for illicit transactions.

A key aspect inherent in the system – and a bane to law enforcement – is the separation, or transactional boundary, between the two *hawaladars* (those who run *hawalas*) that effectively masks nearly all characteristics of the funds being transferred. Additionally, per established protocol, the recipient of the funds can also remain anonymous (Figure 4).

Both the legitimate and illegitimate uses of the *hawala* system are illustrated above. In Afghanistan, vehicle importers (1) provide Afghani (the local currency) to their *hawaladar* who transfers the money to a UAE-based associate (2) who, in turn, makes payment to vehicle exporters (3). All this financial activity was conducted in the pursuit of legitimate business relations. On the other hand, opium smugglers in the United Arab Emirates (A) can use the same system, provide US \$500,000 to a local *hawaladar* to be transferred to a *hawaladar* in Kabul (B) who in turn provides the Afghani equivalent to local opium growers (C). Based on the effectiveness of, and lack of a viable alternative to, the *hawala* system, it will likely remain as both a key component to the economy of Afghanistan and a preferred conduit for narco-dollars and other ill-gotten gains. And, as the lines form in the money exchange markets that overlook the murky Kabul River in Afghanistan’s capital city, some old customers will soon be conducting larger, and more, frequent transactions.

²⁴ Ibid., 4.

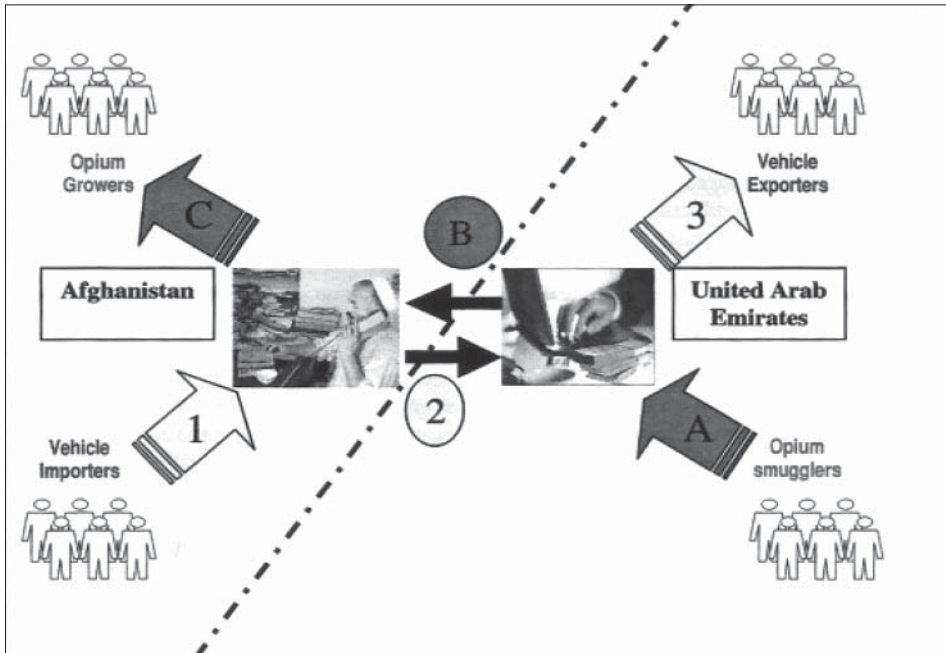


Figure 4: Hawala Transactions Combining Legitimate and Illegal Activities

Organized Crime: The Perilous Currents

The rising tide of opium production has provided an opportunity for certain figures closely involved in the enterprise to both increase their influence through protection and patronage as well as more directly regulate the business aspects of the opium trade. Within Afghanistan, the proximity of the Taliban to opium cultivation has led to an interesting metamorphosis. As a movement that was founded in order to protect the people from unfair government and to institute *Sharia* Law, the Taliban is, more and more, starting to resemble a criminal organization.

The shift from a religiously inspired *raison d'être* to a vocation of crime may seem like a long journey morally however, in practicality, it is just a small step. *Hezb-Islami Gulbuddin*, an Afghan insurgent group led by fundamentalist Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, morphed into “a full-fledged

smuggling operation"²⁵ involved in everything from heroin smuggling to human trafficking. Hikmatyar, a senior Mujahideen leader generously supported by both the CIA and the ISI during the Soviet occupation,²⁶ parlayed this robust financial support and intricate knowledge of smuggling routes into a lucrative, post-war business. This phenomenon, of commercial war economies, is a developing trend in warfare. Just as the emergence of the Afghan narcotics industry was facilitated during the anti-Soviet *jihad*, the subsequent expansion and organization of the enterprise during the latest conflict represents a logical progression in a novel, albeit familiar, economic model. It is not difficult to understand how the Taliban's familiarity with the dynamics of opium production has engendered a symbiotic relationship between themselves and the various participants in the drug trade "to the extent that some Taliban units simultaneously organize drug production and insurgent activities."²⁷ At present there are only anecdotal indicators of increasing centralized control of the opium enterprise in Afghanistan. However, emerging evidence suggests the inevitable – organized crime is about to overwhelm Afghanistan. "The drug industry is becoming increasingly consolidated. At the top level, around 25-30 key traffickers, the majority of them in southern Afghanistan, control major transactions and transfers, working closely with sponsors in top government and political positions."²⁸

25 Gretchen Peters, "Taliban Drug Trade: Echoes of Colombia," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 21, 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1121/p04s01-wosc.htm> (accessed June 10, 2008).

26 Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (London: Pan Macmillan Ltd, 2001), 184.

27 Hayder Mili and Jacob Townsend, "Afghanistan's Drug Trade and How it Funds Taliban Operations," *Terrorism Monitor*, 5, no. 9 (May 10, 2007), The Jamestown Foundation, <http://www.jamestown.org> (accessed June 9, 2008).

28 James Glanz and David Rohde, "Panel Faults U.S.-Trained Afghan Police," *The New York Times*, December 4, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/04/world/asia/04police.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss> (accessed June 28, 2008).

A fundamental principle that characterizes organized crime is the vertical integration of processes associated with a criminal endeavor with particular emphasis on those processes further up the chain of production. With regard to Afghanistan, vertical integration “can be defined as the degree to which a criminal organization... owns its upstream and downstream buyers.”²⁹ Figure 5 illustrates the consolidation of criminal groups in Afghanistan since 2001.

Post-conflict societies are susceptible to the emergence of organized crime and Afghanistan is no exception. Decreased external support by donor

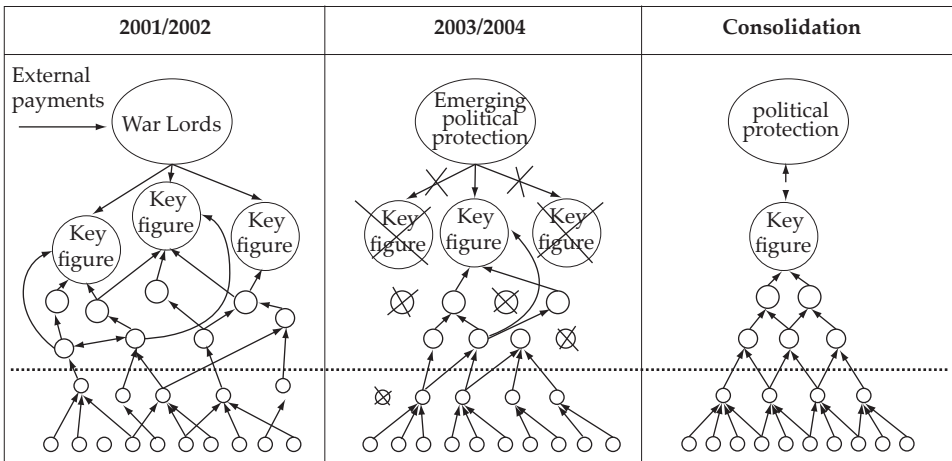


Figure 5: Schematic Overview of the Process of Consolidation of Afghan Criminal Groups

nations reduced the influence of regional warlords following the initial military entry operations in Afghanistan. This forced local and mid-level opium traders to quickly realign under key figures with established links to individuals or groups who could provide the political protection necessary to insure the continuity of their operations. The realignment leveraged

29 UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *Illicit Drug Trends in Afghanistan*, April 2008, www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Trends%20Report_Afghanistan.pdf (accessed January 3, 2008), 32.

historical relationships, exploited the abundance of corrupt government officials and also benefited from an impotent law enforcement presence in Afghanistan in order to preserve opium production capacity.

A few warlords avoided becoming marginalized after international support was withdrawn by entering the government of Afghanistan (some at the behest of President Hamid Karzai). They are now attempting to portray themselves as more legitimate, political actors with an important role in Afghanistan's future. Unfortunately, most of their backgrounds and previous affiliations are tarnished or worse – some are blood-soaked. Concerns about their present affiliations were highlighted when classified information retrieved off computer memory sticks (stolen from Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan and sold in a local bazaar) was made public in 2006. One file “names senior Afghan ministers whom US intelligence agencies believe to be drug smugglers. Described as ‘Tier One Warlords’, they include Marshal Mohammad Fahim, former defence minister and now a member of the upper house of the Afghan parliament; General Rashid Dostum, Chief of Staff of the army; and General Mohammad Daoud, presently the Interior Minister for Counter-Narcotics.”³⁰ Fahim is a Tajik and is arguably the most powerful of the former Afghan Warlords. He is both well-respected and well-connected in Northern Afghanistan where he fought against the Soviet Red Army and commanded in the Northern Alliance. General Dostum is leader of Afghanistan's Uzbek community and is renowned for his shifting allegiances. He fought with the Red Army against the Mujahideen before switching sides when it appeared the Soviet Army was going to withdraw. He was also a close ally of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar in 1994 during the siege of Kabul. General Muhammed Daoud, a former warlord and presently serving as Deputy Minister of the Interior for Counternarcotics, is routinely accused

30 Tom Coghlan and Tahir Luddin, “US Secrets For Sale Outside Bagram Airbase,” *The Independent*, April 13, 2006, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/us-secrets-for-sale-outside-bagram-airbase-473924.html?service=Print> (accessed June 27, 2008).

of either direct involvement in the drug trade or facilitating the release of smugglers who are arrested by Afghan police.³¹ The influence of these three men should not be underestimated especially with regard to controlling the smuggling routes which, of late, transit Afghanistan's Northern Provinces into Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In the south, there is no less intrigue. In 2007, two of the Southern Provinces – Helmand and Kandahar – accounted for 62% of all Afghanistan's opium poppy cultivation. Both have become a focal point for the media as British and Canadian soldiers engage in fierce battles with Taliban and insurgent forces on what has become a nearly daily basis. In fact, the coalition has suffered nearly two-thirds of its combat deaths in these provinces.³² Helmand was also targeted by the coalition for major eradication efforts. Despite the extreme investment by coalition forces, opium poppy production is expected to increase in the Southern Provinces. Morosely stated, "People are dying where poppies are thriving" (Figure 6).³³

In light of the extreme circumstances in Afghanistan's Southern Provinces, who would be entrusted with key leadership positions there? Ahmad Wali Khan Karzai, the younger brother of Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai is the representative for southern Afghanistan in Kandahar. He was chosen as a representative for the province in 2002 and was elected to the Kandahar Provincial Council in 2005. Unfortunately, he, too, is alleged to be in the pay of drug dealers. A more egregious example of corrupt governance, and senior level tolerance of it, is the former governor of Helmand, Sher Mohammad

31 Paul Watson, "The Lure of Opium Wealth is a Potent Force in Afghanistan," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 2005, <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/may/29/world/fg-drugs29> (accessed June 27, 2008).

32 Operation Enduring Freedom, "Coalition Military Fatalities," *icasualties.com*, <http://icasualties.org/oef/> (accessed June 28, 2008).

33 Hayder Mili and Jacob Townsend, "Afghanistan's Drug Trade and How it Funds Taliban Operations," *Terrorism Monitor*, 5, no. 9 (May 10, 2007), The Jamestown Foundation, <http://www.jamestown.org> (accessed June 9, 2008).

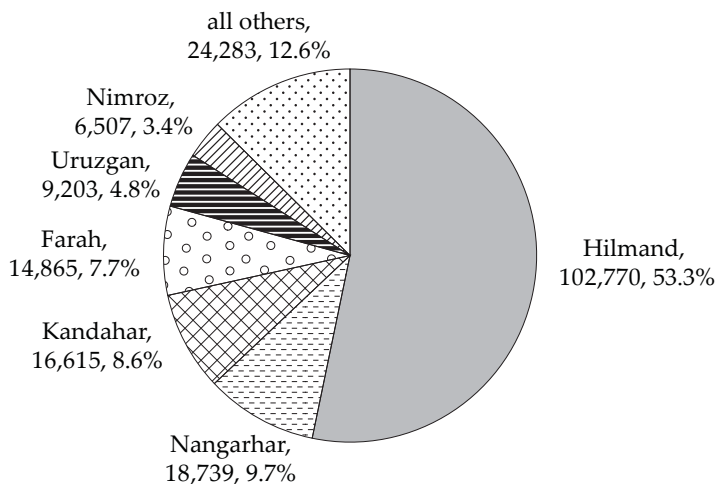


Figure 6: Main Opium Cultivating Provinces (ha and percent of total cultivation), 2007

Akhundzada. After 10 tons of opium was discovered in a stockpile in his offices, British and US officials expected him to be relieved of his duties and arraigned on criminal charges. Notably, at the time, this was the largest seizure of opium since the return of the US Drug Enforcement Agency to Afghanistan in 2002.³⁴ Instead, he “was given a seat in Afghanistan’s new upper house of parliament by President Karzai in December [2005].”³⁵ His brother Amir remained as Helmand’s Deputy Governor. Given the prominence of such patronage and protection networks in Afghan government, civil servants and law enforcement officials in Afghanistan do not “serve and protect” the people; they serve and protect the corrupt.

Given the spread of corruption through Afghanistan’s government, it is no

34 Aamir Latif, “A Stash to Beat All: In Afghanistan, Tons and Tons of Opium,” *U.S. News and World Report*, July 31, 2005, http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050808/8spotlight_print.htm (accessed June 28, 2008).

35 Tom Coghlan and Tahir Luddin, “US Secrets For Sale Outside Bagram Airbase,” *The Independent*, April 13, 2006, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/us-secrets-for-sale-outside-bagram-airbase-473924.html?service=Print> (accessed June 27, 2008).

surprise that the police force suffers from the same maladies. The Afghan National Police are aligned under the Ministry of the Interior and are divided into four regional commands that control a total of 34 provincial offices. Each is commanded by a General Officer. The appointment of these provincial police chiefs is handled by President Karzai. If the leadership of the central regional command is any example of the legitimacy of law enforcement in Afghanistan, the situation is dire. In 2004, Ranked 202 of 270 candidates by a board of US, German, and Afghan officials who were attempting to appoint 86 new senior police leaders, Guzar was moved to number 12 by President Karzai and inserted on the list along with 13 other candidates who weren't vetted by the international panel. The result was that Karzai "appointed 13 former [Mujahideen] commanders with links to drugs smuggling, organised crime and illegal militias [sic] to senior positions in the police force."³⁶ Such actions have eroded government credibility with the Afghan citizenry and will almost certainly increase the power and prevalence of organized crime.

Lack of legitimacy in key government institutions has increased Afghanistan's vulnerability to widespread corruption and expanded criminal activities. Organized criminal elements have exploited these governmental weaknesses in order to expand the nature and extent of drug trafficking and to assert their control of, or influence in, legitimate economic ventures. Even the Taliban recognized the necessity to employ external criminal networks. During the brief period they controlled Afghanistan, they utilized networks that "involved a web of commercial players with far better international contacts and market access than the Taliban themselves."³⁷ Recently, the Taliban has shown signs of fragmentation and increasing relies on foreign fighters and mercenary Afghans who fight for pay not for religion. A senior US Military Commander said, "There's a very

36 Ibid.

37 Chris Johnson and Jolyon Leslie, *Afghanistan: The Mirage of Peace* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 147.

small core of true believers still left in the Taliban... our intel is that most of the guys are just in it to make a buck.”³⁸ “In a country of intense poverty, it is not difficult to buy loyalty, and the Taliban have plenty of money raised from the drug trade. Taliban fighters are well paid in comparison to just about everyone else in Afghanistan.”³⁹ And so, what remains is a loose affiliation of Taliban leaders, insurgents, former warlords, drug traffickers, and common citizens whose habitual relationships center around opium production. As more and more evidence accumulates that the Taliban and its allies “are moving beyond taxing the [drug] trade to protecting opium shipments, running heroin labs, and even organizing farm output in areas they control,”⁴⁰ it will only be a matter of time before a more formal, organized criminal structure emerges predicated upon opium production. This will present an additional challenge for coalition members who are valiantly struggling to ford the current stream of challenges they face in Afghanistan.

38 Gretchen Peters, “Taliban Drug Trade: Echoes of Colombia,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 21, 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1121/p04s01-wosc.htm> (accessed June 10, 2008).

39 CNN, “Canadian Lawmakers Urge Talks With Taliban,” *CNN Website*, June 11, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/americas/06/11/canada.afghanistan.ap> (accessed June 12, 2008).

40 Gretchen Peters, “Taliban Drug Trade: Echoes of Colombia,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 21, 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1121/p04s01-wosc.htm> (accessed June 10, 2008).

Current Operations in Afghanistan

SITREP Afghanistan: A Coalition Report Card

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Afghanistan are faltering – some would say they are failing. Reports coming out of the area of operations, expressed in either ominous soundbites or detailed in lengthy governmental studies, generate in the minds of readers a caricature of international military forces struggling to adapt to an amorphous opposing force and failing to influence key aspects of the conflict environment. “..The astonishing thing today is that NATO and the coalition seem to have learnt nothing, neither from their own experience nor from our experience.”⁴¹

Most notably, international forces have failed to grasp the centrality of opium as the true threat to stability in Afghanistan and have overlooked emerging threats, to include growing criminal organizations, and, consequently, remain unprepared to deal with them. Additionally, despite a growing call for a review of their present strategy, an unconventional conflict continues to be dealt with in a conventional manner. Initially, a conventional, military approach was exactly what the Bush Administration had in mind in order to invade Afghanistan without a severe financial investment or excessive American casualties.⁴² There is no debate regarding the efficiency of entry operations into Afghanistan and the subsequent combat success engendered by combining elements of the Northern Alliance, American Special Forces, and coalition airpower. In retrospect, however, by empowering the Northern Alliance, basically a loose affiliation of Afghan warlords, the Bush Administration strengthened militarized local leaders who have continued

41 Helen Womack, “You Will Be Driven From Afghanistan Just As We Were, Russian General Warns,” *The Telegraph*, September 24, 2006, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1529686/You-will-be-driven-from-Afghanistan-just-as-we-were,-Russian-generals-warn.html> (accessed 3 July 2008).

42 Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War: In Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 273.

to consolidate their power by “engaging in narcotics trafficking and other predatory practices.”⁴³

The International Security Assistance Force is most visible in Afghanistan through its military presence and the deployment of its Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). PRTs are small collaborative teams of both military and civilian personnel whose goal is to establish and foster aid projects as well as reconstruction efforts throughout Afghanistan’s provinces. The NATO Regional Command structure, depicted in Figure 7, is comprised of nearly 53,000 troops from over 40 troop contributing countries. Also shown are the locations of ISAF’s 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

A comparison to the Soviet Army in Afghanistan during the 1980s, while

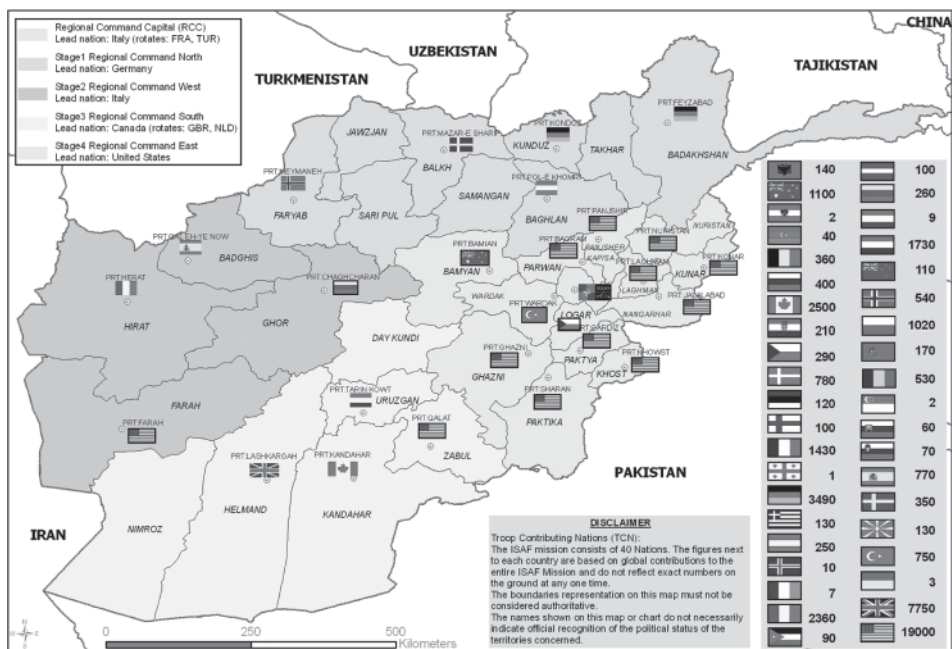


Figure 7: International Stabilization Force Regional Commands and PRT Locations.

43 Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War: In Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 273.

superficial, is valuable in the sense that it is illustrative of the relatively small NATO footprint. “The 100,000-strong Soviet army operated alongside a full-fledged Afghan army of equal strength with an officer corps trained in the elite Soviet military academies, and backed by aviation, armored vehicles and artillery, with all the advantages of a functioning, politically motivated government in Kabul. And yet it proved no match for the Afghan resistance.”⁴⁴

One of the most problematic undertakings in counter-insurgency, nation-building, or peace-keeping operations is defining success. Instead of defining success, in the case of Afghanistan, the coalition tracks trends and indicators – a sometimes overwhelming amount of data that, displayed in charts and graphs, in various combinations suggests movement in the right direction. Trends and indicators tend to focus on “big picture” pieces of the strategic puzzle and generate operational decision points for commanders and leaders. Lieutenant General (Retired) Barno is now the Director of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the US National Defense University. When asked his opinion on current operations in Afghanistan, he stated, “All the major trend lines are heading in the wrong direction.”⁴⁵

The most glaring, and public, failure is in the area of security. A pivotal aspect of security in Afghanistan is the combined response to the Taliban and insurgents. The coalition military forces – to include the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police – are doing little to deter criminal elements and provide the necessary environment for redevelopment.

Though coalition leadership is quick to herald improvements in the Afghan National Army (ANA) the improvements are as nebulous as the actual

44 M.K. Bhadrakumar, “Afghanistan: Why NATO Cannot Win,” *Asia Times*, September 30, 2006, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HI30Df01.html (accessed July 3, 2008).

45 David W. Barno, Lieutenant General (Retired), US Army, interview by author, Tel Aviv, Israel, December 12, 2007.

date the ANA will be capable of conducting operations autonomously. It took a presidential decree to garner one success; President Karzai declared absence-without-leave (AWOL) a crime. This decree, backed by a strong media campaign, was alleged by the Government of Afghanistan to have lowered desertion rates from 33 percent to 8 percent.⁴⁶ A US Government Accountability Office Report suggests that the figure is actually 20 percent – somewhat less successful, but still a reduction.⁴⁷ Figure 8 presents data regarding ANA personnel assigned versus those typically present for duty. And, while Army recruitment has benefited from rising inflation, the attendant rise in food prices and unemployment, any gains are offset by desertion, a lack of skilled non-commissioned officers, and poor retention. Retention looms as a serious detriment to attaining a mission capable posture as nearly 50 percent of all soldiers leave the service at the end of their three-year contract. However, even with the additional recruits, the ANA remains below its desired total strength of 70,000 soldiers. NATO leadership also highlights the increased capability of Afghan National Army units and their involvement in counterinsurgency operations. Another perspective indicates that “The United States has provided over \$10 billion to develop the ANA since 2002; however, less than 2 percent (2 of 105 units) of ANA units are assessed as fully capable of conducting their primary mission. Thirty-six percent (38 of 105) are assessed as capable of conducting their mission, but require routine international assistance, while the remaining ANA units (65 of 105 units) are either planned, in basic training, or assessed

46 Antonio Giustozzi, “Afghanistan’s National Army: The Ambiguous Prospects of Afghanization,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, May 1, 2008, http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=319 (accessed July 3, 2008).

47 US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Congressional Committees: GAO-08-661, Afghanistan Security Further Congressional Action May Be Needed to Ensure Completion of a Detailed Plan to Develop and Sustain Capable Afghan National Security Forces*, June 2008, Government Accountability Office Website, <http://www.gao.gov/docsearch/abstract.php?rptno=GAO-08-661> (accessed July 4, 2008), 27.

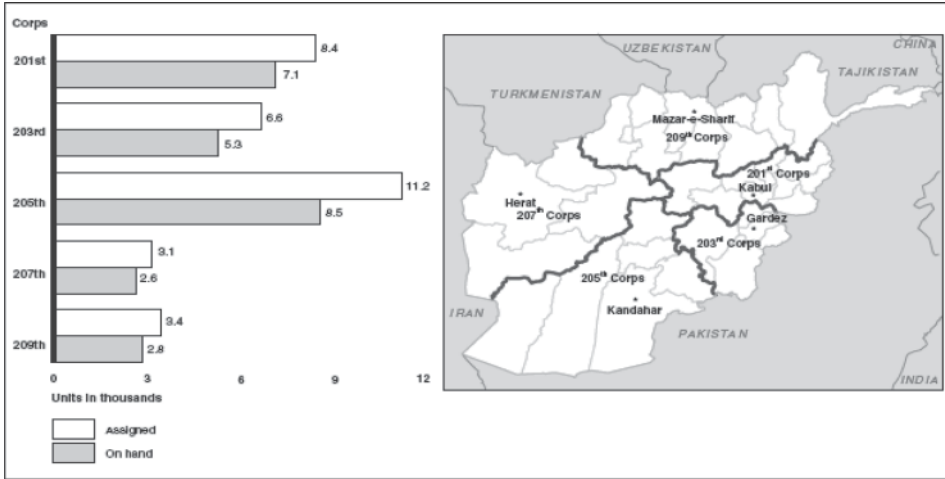


Figure 8: Comparison of ANA Corps Personnel Assigned to a Unit to the Number on Hand, as of February 2008

as partially able or unable to conduct their primary mission.”⁴⁸ Coalition optimism, however, has its limits. The original date for the ANA to assume lead responsibility for its own security was set for 2011. The new goal is unclear and US Department of Defense officials “cautioned that currently predicted dates for the achievement of a fully capable Afghan army are subject to change and may be delayed.”⁴⁹ What is very clear for outside observers is that both near-term and long-term concerns detract from any optimism the coalition projects regarding the ANA (Table 2).

The ANA’s most pressing near-term problem is its reliance on foreign trainers embedded within the ANA units and the foreign tactics they are taught. This point is demonstrated by the fact that, after five years of training, “not a single battalion has graduated from the embedded training

48 US Government Accountability Office, *Report to Congressional Committees: GAO-08-661, Afghanistan Security Further Congressional Action May Be Needed to Ensure Completion of a Detailed Plan to Develop and Sustain Capable Afghan National Security Forces*, June 2008, Government Accountability Office Website, <http://www.gao.gov/docsearch/abstract.php?rptno=GAO-08-661> (accessed July 4, 2008), 8.

49 Ibid.

Table 2: Defense Assessment of ANA Capabilities, as of April 2008

| Army units | CM1 Fully Capable | CM2 Capable with Support | CM3 Partially Capable | CM4 Not Capable | Unit Not Formed or Not Reporting* |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Corps headquarters (5) | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Brigade headquarters (14) | 0 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| Combat battalions (49) | 1 | 18 | 15 | 6 | 9 |
| Combat support and combat services support battalions (33) | 0 | 11 | 8 | 3 | 11 |
| Air Corps headquarters (1) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Air Corps squadrons (3) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Number of ANA units (105) | 2 (2%) | 38 (36%) | 32 (31%) | 11 (11%) | 22 (21%) |

program, even though the original plan was for two years.”⁵⁰ The Afghan National Air Force has never been a strong combat force and presently only possesses 19 rotary and 12 fixed wing aircraft – the serviceability of which is questionable. Given their limited capabilities, the few operations assigned to the ANA have been simple ones involving the use of overwhelming force that required little planning and were monitored by embedded trainers. Unfortunately, in the absence of airpower, the tactic of presenting a large force concentration is not the best configuration for an insurgency and will be of little value in future, autonomous operations.

The lack of security in Afghanistan also energizes the debate on the efficacy of development and reconstruction. “In the context of Southern Afghanistan, delivering development was problematic, an even greater difficulty was presented by the fact that even a successful delivery might

50 Antonio Giustozzi, “Afghanistan’s National Army: The Ambiguous Prospects of Afghanization,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, May 1, 2008, http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=319 (accessed July 3, 2008).

not have impacted on the counterinsurgency effort.”⁵¹ This debate is particularly relevant because the vast majority of high-profile projects, outside Kabul, are being administered in the Southern Provinces where the security situation has degraded significantly and where opium production is advancing in record proportions. Yet, in the more peaceful areas, especially those that are not cultivating opium poppy, little meaningful development has been accomplished. So, while a reasonable person should ask why the coalition would concern themselves with programs that will benefit a region allegedly controlled by the Taliban and drug traffickers, coalition leaders and the Government of Afghanistan continue to fixate on power production, irrigation, and roadway projects that benefit the south.

As easy as it is to find failure there,⁵² the failure we find is not from lack of effort to assist the Government of Afghanistan. It is from a lack of focus, it is from a lack of unity, and it is from a lack of vision. Some say Afghanistan is a lost cause. Lieutenant-General David Richards, former commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan has openly stated, "We need to realize we could actually fail here.”⁵³

The Price of Failure

A NATO failure *in* Afghanistan will herald the failure *of* Afghanistan. The country's descent into chaos will be as quick as that caused by a misstep on a narrow, precipitous trail in the Hindu Kush. The world needs to understand that Afghanistan's transition to a failed state remains just a step away and should be intimately aware of the implications of that misstep. in order

51 Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 198.

52 In the original work few important examples are given, like the Kajaki Dam and Kandahar Highway.

53 M.K. Bhadrakumar, "Afghanistan: Why NATO Cannot Win," *Asia Times*, September 30, 2006, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HI30Df01.html (accessed July 3, 2008).

clarify NATO's strategic vision with regard to Afghanistan; someone needs to ask the simple question, "What is Afghanistan now?" Some will answer, "an emerging democracy", others will respond, "an Islamic Republic." with the truth – "Afghanistan is a narco-state."

Despite frequent use, the term "narco-state" has no formal or legal definition. It is, however, regularly invoked to ascribe a pariah status to a nation that is controlled by narco-traffickers and where law enforcement is effectively powerless to intervene. Emerging definitions of narco-state attempt to affix financial thresholds to the definition based on the percentage of a country's GDP derived from drug trafficking. Some warn Afghanistan is on its way to achieving the notorious reputation of narco-state. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), said, "Afghanistan has already become a narco-economy in the sense that drugs are now Afghanistan's largest employer, income generator, source of capital, export and foreign investment. It has become a narco-society in the sense that many Afghans are now hooked on the drug money and now it risks becoming a narco-state."⁵⁴ A definition more suitable for this paper describes a narco-state as a region where drug traffickers exert economic, political and paramilitary influence in order to restrict government intervention in their enterprise. If the governors in many parts of the country are involved in the drug trade, if a minister is directly or indirectly getting benefits from drug trade, and if a chief of police gets money from drug traffickers, then how else do you define a narco-state?"⁵⁵ General McCaffrey's statement is particularly noteworthy given his experience as Commander, US Southern Command, whose area of operations encompassed the 30 countries located in

54 UN Information Service, "Afghanistan Risks Becoming A Narco-State, UNODC Executive Director Warns," *UN Information Service Website*, June 28, 2006, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=19027&Cr=Afghan&Cr1> (accessed July 6, 2008).

55 Scott Baldauf and Faye Bowers, "Afghanistan Riddled with Drug Ties," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 13, 2005, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0513/p01s04-wosc.html> (accessed July 7, 2008).

Central and South America; the largest cocaine trafficking area in the world. He said, "It [Afghanistan] is the biggest narco-state in history. It dominates every other reality in Afghanistan. We cannot achieve our purposes, unless we... counter this massive criminal threat.", said retired US Army General Barry McCaffrey (former Director of the US Office of National Drug Control Policy is unequivocal in his characterization of Afghanistan).⁵⁶

Openly categorizing Afghanistan as a narco state is a critical first step in accurately identifying the most inimical threat to the country – if not to the entire region. The centrality of opium to the myriad ills that plague Afghanistan cannot be disputed. Unfortunately, opium is also at the center of a widening discord between NATO and the United States regarding the prosecution of military operations in Afghanistan. While NATO countries pursue a "hearts and minds" campaign that is more focused on peace-keeping and facilitating redevelopment, the US agenda is dominated by defeating the Taliban. This disparity in strategic vision has led to an asynchronous relationship that is exemplified by a lack of standardized rules of engagement, vastly differing approaches to addressing opium production, and, most concerning, a diminishing commitment on the part of NATO countries to support the effort in Afghanistan. "Meanwhile, the insurgency remains dangerous and intractable, fueled by the opium trade and drug trafficking."⁵⁷

56 Sharon Behn, "Retired General Says Drug Money Fueling Taliban, al Qaeda," *The Washington Times*, September 30, 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb5244/is_200510/ai_n19621832 (accessed July 8, 2008).

57 Carlotta Gall, "Taliban Make Afghan Stability a Distant Goal," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/world/asia/22taliban.html?ref=world> (accessed May 22, 2008).

Conclusion

Opium: The Decisive Point

Long renown as the crossroads of ancient civilizations, Afghanistan now serves as a clear example of the rapidly evolving nature of warfare – a place where the War on Drugs, the Global War on Terror and the term Weapon of Mass Destruction all share a common ground. Their common ground also contains the decisive point for victory in the present campaign – that decisive point is the opium poppy. No other single factor influences the situation in Afghanistan more negatively than the burgeoning opium industry. Current data establishes Afghanistan as the center of gravity with regard to world opium production and illustrates the scale of this enterprise both regionally and globally. It permeates the entire fabric of Afghan society; on one hand – it is the staple of Afghan farmer and on the other – it is the primary contributor to government corruption. Most importantly, the opium enterprise in Afghanistan thrives on instability. Controlling opium production and stabilizing Afghanistan is the key to turning the coalition's failure into victory.

Despite clear indications of a non-standard threat, coalition leaders continue to pursue a conventional strategy focused on fielding a superior number of troops, employing airpower, and using sophisticated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms. At present, the combined effect of this approach has proved less than effective in both countering the Taliban-led insurgency and stabilizing the country. The coalition's conventional approach ignores the pivotal role opium plays in the current conflict. Ignoring the true nature of the threat negates the potential for an unconventional solution and displays a failure on the part of the coalition to adapt and meet the challenges of warfare in Afghanistan. What is clearly necessary in Afghanistan is a shift from a weighted military campaign transfixed on anti-Taliban operation to a more non-conventional approach that centers on opium cultivation and production.

Increased opium production in Afghanistan has far-reaching effects. The deleterious effects of opium cannot be understated and it is no exaggeration to refer to opium as a weapon of mass destruction. Afghan opium destroys from ground zero outward, leaving concentric rings of devastation in the form of addiction, terminal illness, and death. At its epicenter, opium cultivation fuels the insurgency, promotes an expanding criminal enterprise and weakens the influence of a nascent central government. At the same time, opium jeopardizes the well-being of neighboring countries and, both directly and indirectly, undermines international security operations and degrades regional stability. The “fallout” of Afghan opium is equally devastating as it settles far from Ground Zero. Iran and Pakistan are faced with burgeoning addict populations and an attendant increases in HIV / AIDS infection. Russia has emerged as Europe’s largest heroin market with the United Kingdom the leading consumer in Western Europe. Potent Afghan opium has also reached Chinese markets and threatens to reverse decades of efforts to control opium addiction. All told, drug-related deaths attributed to Afghan heroin are estimated to be 100,000 per year.

Opium does not always kill; more often it corrupts. Decades of conflict in Afghanistan have resulted in the establishment of a commercial war economy that serves as an alternative source of power and influence. Additionally, the recent, rapid expansion of the opium enterprise, started during the anti-Soviet jihad, has provided the impetus for a consolidation of criminal elements in Afghanistan. Given the Taliban’s knowledge of varied aspects of the opium trade, it is easy to understand how a seemingly unlikely affiliation between the Taliban and criminal organizations has formed. Other prominent figures – to include Afghan government officials – are also connected to these criminal organizations and, in exchange for money, influence government decisions and protect the traffickers. There are many clear examples of opium-financed corruption at all levels of the Afghan government and, unfortunately, within the security services as well. Organized criminal elements will continue to exploit these governmental

weaknesses in order to increase the nature and extent of drug trafficking all while maintaining a high level of influence in government affairs.

The US and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force have failed to acknowledge the centrality of opium as the true threat to stability in Afghanistan and have also failed to consider the acutely negative impact emerging organized crime has begun to have within Afghanistan. Consequently, the coalition is unprepared to counter the narcotics threat and the destructive influence the opium enterprise has on Afghan society. Additionally, despite a growing call for a review of their present strategy, an unconventional conflict continues to be dealt with in a conventional manner.

This lack of strategic vision has resulted in series of failures highlighted by a severely degraded security environment in which the coalition and Afghan civilian casualty rate continues to set new records. The coalition's \$10 billion investment in the Afghanistan National Security Forces over the last six years has returned little in the way of operational dividends. Less than 2 percent of the Afghan National Army is fully mission capable and the Afghan National Police, trained primarily by US personnel, are assessed as nothing less than a failure. Furthermore, coalition development and reconstruction efforts are marked by either a lack of progress due to the deteriorating security environment or by the completion of high-profile, symbolic projects that are of little utility to the average Afghan. The fact that, after 7 years of coalition efforts in Afghanistan, less than 7 percent of the population has access to electricity and only 13 percent have access to improved water sources points to the folly reconstruction and development in Afghanistan. What this lack of focus and the failure to address the basic needs of the Afghan citizenry has done, however, is provide reliable fodder for Taliban recruitment campaigns.

Any failure for the coalition is usually translated into a Taliban success and, lately, the coalition in Afghanistan has amassed a substantial number of

failures. Many of these failures result from long-standing disagreements on each country's respective roles and missions. Restrictive national caveats on European troops in particular severely reduce their effectiveness and are divisive to the coalition itself. Viewed in totality, these failures, combined with a lack of strategic coherence, drastically undermine the strength of the coalition.

Acknowledging the linkage between opium production and the insurgency is necessary in order to shift the operational mindset of the coalition. The next step is to integrate and synchronize the coalition's disparate counternarcotics efforts. This includes three significant adjustments in coalition operations. First, for both the US and ISAF, it means a commitment to interdiction missions including both illicit narcotics and precursor chemicals. Second, the primacy of interdiction should supplant eradication – especially aerial-spraying – as the preferred course of action. Finally, full funding of the United Kingdom's alternative livelihoods program should be the goal of all nations involved in counternarcotics' operations in Afghanistan. The combined effect of these actions is to reduce the cultivation of opium poppies without harming the simple Afghan farmers who rely on this crop to survive. And, this operational shift serves to reduce the strength of the Taliban, and emerging organized criminal elements, by ultimately reducing revenues they generated from opium production.

Utilizing a strategy that emphasizes interdiction and promotes alternative livelihoods, the coalition should strive to transform the fields of Afghanistan from areas that contribute to the destruction of the nation to ones that provide economic strength and stability. This transformation will require all members of the coalition to recognize that *controlling opium is the decisive point* in the stabilization of Afghanistan. As Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai most accurately remarked: "If we don't destroy poppy, it will destroy us."⁵⁸

58 Karzai, Hamid, Untitled. Speech of Hamid Karzai at the Second Conference on Counternarcotics, Kabul, Afghanistan, August 22, 2006, http://www.cfr.org/publication/11507/afghanistan_president_hamid_karzai_rush_transcript_federal_news_service.html (accessed January 3, 2008).

Recommendations

The deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, to include the friction within the coalition, has served as a catalyst for senior leaders to reexamine the present situation. The pressure is particularly intense on the leaders of those countries – Britain, Canada, and the United States – whose casualty figures have increased noticeably in the last year.

In order to prevent incurrence of the higher price and to reverse the negative trends of the present engagement in Afghanistan, coalition senior leaders have to forge a resolute agreement outlining the way ahead. Coalition senior leaders need to move beyond the “association” that currently defines their degraded relationship and develop a more integrated response to the insurgency and understand the crucial role opium plays. Further discussions should also encompass emerging threats that could jeopardize future successes. During their debates, senior leaders are likely to invest a considerable amount of time discussing the following five topics:

1. The Need to Develop Strategic Unity Within the Coalition

The strength of the coalition, is being undermined by a lack of strategic coherence and, given the declared intentions of the participating countries, the present state of confusion is easily understood.

Prior to committing forces to the agreed upon missions, most of the participating countries developed rules of engagement – self-imposed directives that “delineate the circumstances and limitations under which... forces will initiate and/or continue combat engagement with other forces encountered.”⁵⁹ Although all 27 NATO member states are deployed in Afghanistan, “only Britain, America, Canada, Denmark and Holland have

59 US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, As Amended Through March 4, 2008), 472.

not used caveats to limit the rules of engagement of their troops.”⁶⁰ According to a recent report by the European Council on Foreign Relations, “the effectiveness of European troops has been severely reduced by restrictions imposed by most national governments. Sixty such national restrictions, or ‘caveats’, exist, limiting the ability of the ISAF commander to deploy and allocate forces. Caveats include a prohibition on moving forces to a certain area, requirements for lengthy consultations with national capitals before tactical decisions can be made, and restrictions on certain types of activities, for example, riot control.”⁶¹ The corrosive effect of such national caveats is likely to intensify.

Recommendation: The first step in developing strategic unity within the coalition will be for participating countries to standardize rules of engagement and to strongly discourage the use of national caveats. Operational restrictions are divisive and reduce the ISAF Commander’s ability to employ forces in a coherent and flexible manner. Standardized rules of engagement would allow the ISAF Commander to shift NATO troops in order to replace US forces in the stabilized Regional Command East sector. The US troops could then be surged to the Regional Command South sector in order to reinforce the British and Canadians who need additional combat strength to deal with near daily skirmishes with insurgents. A subsequent step, necessary to unify the coalition, would be the definition of a strategic endstate that incorporates reasonable expectations about both the level of commitment for participating countries and the duration of the mission in Afghanistan. This is a particularly important step as it shows a long-term commitment to the Afghan people. The stated, and diverse, roles and

60 Insurgency Research Group, “German Special Forces in Afghanistan: Not Licensed to Kill,” *Insurgency Research Group Website*, May 19, 2008, <http://insurgencyresearchgroup.wordpress.com/2008/05/20/german-special-forces-in-afghanistan-not-licensed-to-kill> (accessed July 10, 2008).

61 Daniel Korski, “Afghanistan: Europe’s Forgotten War,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, January 2008, 16.

missions of the various NATO forces should be looked upon as a strength and integration of the participating countries should be undertaken based on their desired contributions. All countries, however, should have a combat capability and readily agree to contribute forces where they are needed, even if it involves a combat scenario.

2. The Necessity to Integrate and Synchronize the Counternarcotics Effort

The topic of counternarcotics has been the figurative “elephant in the room” that both NATO and the United States have chosen to either avoid or marginalize. The result is that, counternarcotics operations in Afghanistan have been epic failures as evidenced by burgeoning opium production despite enormous financial investments in programs to counter it. Additionally, because their present approaches to reduce opium poppy cultivation are diametrical, US and NATO counternarcotics operations actually undermine each others’ potential for success. NATO clearly states that “ISAF is not directly involved in poppy eradication, nor does it participate in the destruction of processing facilities, or in any military action against narcotic producers.”⁶²

The US and the British counternarcotics effort in Afghanistan is bankrupt. With a price tag of nearly “\$1 billion a year, [the US counternarcotics program] may be the single most ineffective program in the history of American foreign policy. It actually strengthens the Taliban and al Qaeda, as well as criminal elements within Afghanistan.”⁶³ Both US intelligence and US senior defense officials are reluctant to acknowledge the link between drug production revenue and the insurgency due to “fear of being

62 International Security Assistance Force, “Topics: ISAF Mission,” *NATO ISAF Website*, <http://www.nato.int/issues/isaf/index.html> (accessed July 3, 2008).

63 Richard Holbrooke, “Breaking the Narco-State,” *The Washington Post*, January 24, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/22/AR2008012202617.html> (accessed July 4, 2008).

forced to take a direct, but unwanted, role in interdiction.”⁶⁴ Instead, the US remains focused nearly exclusively on forced eradication, to which the US has expended untold personnel and financial resources with absolutely no appreciable effect on opium cultivation. However, failure has not inspired the search for an innovative or collaborative solution for the problem. Instead the present failure has set the US on a more troublesome path – that of aerial spraying as a form of eradication.

In light of the past failures, “Britain is furious at America’s obsession with spraying the Helmand poppy crop and thus destroying all hope of winning hearts and minds”⁶⁵ in that province. Many argue that aerial spraying in Afghanistan will have “remind villagers of the Soviet Union’s chemical spraying during the Soviet-Afghan conflict in the 1980s and drive impoverished farmers even more closely into the arms of the Taliban.”⁶⁶

The coalition’s lack of a focused and coherent counternarcotics strategy is exacting a heavy toll. Most significantly, the fragmented coalition effort has contributed to the deaths of many coalition soldiers. Delays in resolving the friction inherent in current counternarcotics strategies strengthens the narco-traffickers, providing opportunities for them to expand both their enterprise and their profits.

A disconcerting trend that has emerged in Afghanistan is the increasing refinement of opium into heroin and morphine within Afghanistan. One of

64 Sharon Behn, “Retired General Says Drug Money Fueling Taliban, al Qaeda,” *The Washington Times*, September 30, 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb5244/is_200510/ai_n19621832 (accessed July 8, 2008).

65 Simon Jenkins, “Fall Back, Men, Afghanistan is a Nasty War We Can Never Win,” *The Sunday Times*, February 3, 2008, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/simon_jenkins/article3295340.ece (accessed February 3, 2008).

66 Daniel Lak and Robert Sheppard, “Joint Operations: The Pros and Cons of Teaming Up With the U.S. in Afghanistan,” *Canadian Broadcasting Centre*, April 10, 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/afghanistan/joint-command.html> (accessed July 11, 2008).

the signs is a substantial increase in the trafficking of chemicals essential to the process, called “precursor chemicals;” particularly that of acetic anhydride which is vital to the production of heroin. The International Narcotics Control Board expressed serious concern based on this turn of events and reiterated that fact that Afghanistan “has no legitimate need for the substance.”⁶⁷

The shift to domestic refinement indicates Afghan criminal organizations have realized that a combination of supplying the precursor chemicals, refining the opium, and the trafficking of both, equates to a dramatic increase in their profits. This shift from exporting dry opium to processing centers outside the country has two distinct impacts within Afghanistan. First, the criminal organizations involved in the various stages of production “have access to increasing financial resources.”⁶⁸ Second, due to the increased availability of heroin in Afghanistan, the number of Afghans addicted to the drug has risen significantly. The World Health Organization noted drug abuse as a growing concern in Afghanistan, cited the rising number of addicts returning from refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan, and provided evidence that indicates the spread of HIV is likely to increase dramatically in Afghanistan due to increased abuse of intravenous drugs.⁶⁹ Local demand will, no doubt, generate more local production and this vicious cycle will present one additional problem for those seeking to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan.

Recommendation: Integrating, and synchronizing, the counternarcotics effort in a manner that recognizes its central role in the coalition’s future

67 United Nations, *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2007*, International Narcotics Control Board, www.incb.org/pdf/annual-report/2007/en/annual-report-2007.pdf (accessed July 4, 2008), 87.

68 Paul Rodgers, “The New Opium War,” *Open Democracy Website*, May 4, 2006, http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict/war_opium_3502.jsp (accessed June 20, 2008).

69 World Health Organization, *World Health Report 2006*, World Health Organization Website, <http://www.who.int/whr/previous/en/index.html> (accessed January 11, 2008).

plans is critical to the success of their efforts in Afghanistan. Moving to a counternarcotics-centric strategy shifts the operational perspective of the coalition campaign, allows for the realignment of resources, and facilitates a more logical prioritization of missions. Of critical importance is the fact that it recognizes the link between counterterrorism and counternarcotics.

Recognizing the linkage between the insurgency and opium production should engender a vital, and necessary, shift in the mindset of the coalition. Both counterterrorism and counternarcotics are criminal enterprises. The coalition should establish an overarching, multi-disciplined organizational structure to address both concerns simultaneously. The fusion of intelligence and the synchronization of field operations will increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of the coalition. This new organization should also be robustly supported by international law enforcement agencies particularly those familiar with organized crime as well as representatives of the redevelopment sector in order to insure reconstruction efforts are not compromised by counterdrug operations. Additionally, "high value target" lists should be expanded beyond terrorists to include the leaders of drug production and trafficking organizations. Most importantly, the counternarcotics operational focus should also shift from eradication to interdiction as a means of reducing the flow of opium products without compromising the coalition's relationship with Afghan farmers.

The shift to interdiction, to include precursor chemicals, will necessitate a re-evaluation of both the US and International Security Assistance Force involvement in the varied aspects of counternarcotics. While the US provides substantial combat strength to the coalition, it can no longer ignore the necessity of interdiction operations and should include interdiction targets in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance efforts. Most importantly, ISAF should not be excluded from direct operational involvement in counternarcotics – particularly interdiction operations – which is clearly a necessary component of the future fight against opium production and thereby influential to success against the insurgency. Lack of ISAF

participation greatly reduces the amount of coalition coverage, decreases necessary intelligence collections, and perpetuates a damaging rift in the international fight against illicit narcotics.

In return for ISAF's decision to more fully support counternarcotics efforts, the United Kingdom (which should continue as the G-8 lead for international counternarcotics efforts) and NATO should be allowed to decide on the core components of the new counternarcotics strategy. The UK must craft a strong, unified, and lucid campaign plan that is both measurable in its desired outcomes and recognizes the importance of involving the Afghans, at all levels, in the solution. As a matter of fact, and as a matter of compromise, the US should recognize that the new strategy should include no type of eradication that is not voluntary – and certainly no aerial spraying. The US should embrace the shift to interdiction and seek ways to fully fund alternative development and reconstruction of industry as a means to reduce Afghan reliance on opium production as a way of life.

3. A Focus on Meaningful and Enduring Development and Reconstruction Efforts

The only people that travel on the Kabul to Kandahar highway are the very daring and the insurgents. The Taliban has made travel so dangerous on “Highway 1” that coalition forces use helicopters to resupply forward operating bases instead of traveling on the road the US invested nearly \$65 million dollars to repair. This exemplifies the folly of reconstruction in Afghanistan. With “more than 2,400 national and international aide agencies and other non-governmental organizations registered in the country”⁷⁰ and a host of unilateral aid projects currently underway, to say development and reconstruction in Afghanistan lacks focus and synchronization is a gross understatement. The nearly ad hoc nature of reconstruction is exacerbated by the fact that “too many people are making decisions on how and where the

70 Toby Poston, “The Battle to Rebuild Afghanistan,” *BBC News Website*, February 26, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4714116.stm> (accessed June 7, 2008).

money should be spent: donor countries, nongovernmental organizations, even foreign nations' militaries."⁷¹ Equally disconcerting, it appears no consideration is given to the location of projects. While the Southern Provinces get new roads and power projects, Bamiyan in the north, one of Afghanistan's most peaceful provinces remains "one of the most impoverished and underdeveloped."⁷² The result is, that while billions of dollars in foreign aid have been invested, the country has not seen any marked improvements. Additionally, an aid project carried out by foreign contractors, more often than not, benefits domestic industry in their home country and, in the end, contributes little of long-term significance to Afghan development.

It has been over seven years since the invasion of Afghanistan and "despite hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid... nation-wide only 6 percent of the Afghans have electricity."⁷³ The implications of an electricity shortage are apparent and far-reaching especially in terms of enabling further development and reconstruction projects. "If focused in the commercial sector on large-scale industry like agricultural processing plants and cold storage which require a persistent power source, electricity generated by the projects could bring much-needed sustainable economic growth."⁷⁴ Without electricity, local industry is idled and the initiative for new industrial projects is stifled. The linkage between alternative development projects, to include crop substitution, which the United Kingdom suggests in order to reduce poppy cultivation and reliable energy is worth noting.

71 Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, "Afghans Frustrated by Slow Pace of Development," *National Public Radio Website*, May 19, 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90536577> (accessed May 20, 2008).

72 Ibid.

73 Jason Straziuso, "Power Cuts Still Leave Kabul in the Dark," *The New York Times*, January 13, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/world/AP-Afghan-Electricity-Woes.html?_r=1&oref=sl (accessed January 13, 2008).

74 Afghan Energy Information Center, "Power Projects in Laghman, Nangarhar Discussed," *Afghan Energy Information Center Website*, March 25, 2008, http://www.afghanenergyinformationcenter.org/News_Reviews.html (accessed July 12, 2008).

In addition to reliable energy, Afghanistan needs a constant source of clean water. Presently, “only 13 percent of [Afghan] people have access to improved water sources”⁷⁵ and “a large percentage of patients in hospitals and clinics suffer from water-related diseases.”⁷⁶ The inability of both the Afghan Government and the coalition to deliver these essentials undermines the legitimacy of the government and decreases popular support to the coalition.

More troubling than the continued lack of basic services in Afghanistan is the actual investment in Afghanistan generated by international aid. Action Aid, a respected non-governmental organization headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa has analyzed the actual impact of development aid provided by some of the larger and more consistent donor countries. What it discovered is that most of the aid is “phantom aid”, a term they coined to describe a phenomenon by which foreign investment actually benefits the donor country more than the country that receives the aid. This occurs when a large percentage of aid is paid directly to technical advisors in the donor country or caveats on the aid package include provisions for purchasing supplies or equipment exclusively from the donor country. In the case of Afghanistan, the US and France are the largest providers of “phantom aid” with 47 percent of US aid expended on technical assistance and 70 percent of all US aid earmarked for the purchase of US products.⁷⁷ “Considering all these practices, Action Aid calculates that 86 cents of every dollar of US aid is phantom aid.”⁷⁸

75 Action Aid UK, “Priority Projects: Safe Water in Afghanistan,” *Action Aid Website*, www.actionaid.org.uk/content_document.asp?doc_id=943 (accessed July 12, 2008).

76 International Committee of the Red Cross, “Afghanistan: Improved Access to Clean Water,” *International Committee of the Red Cross Website*, December 3, 2003, <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/5tv18c?opendocument> (accessed July 12, 2008).

77 Ann Jones, “Why It’s Not Working in Afghanistan,” *Asia Times*, August 30, 2006, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/south_asia/hh30df02.html (accessed July 3, 2008).

78 Ibid.

Recommendation: Meaningful and enduring development projects are essential in demonstrating the value and necessity of a central government and countering an insurgency. A strong development program is necessary to reduce reliance on opium poppy cultivation thereby decreasing the economic impact of illicit narcotics and making the Taliban nearly irrelevant to the average Afghan. To have maximum value, however, development programs must address the basic, common needs of the populace and be equally distributed. Of particular importance is the prioritized development of areas that have been peaceful and do not grow opium poppies. Extreme care has to be taken to avoid the perception of over-investment in the Southern Provinces – home to Afghanistan’s President and his fellow Pashtuns – the country’s largest ethnic group. Long-term projects, sustainable through independent Afghan efforts, and aimed at generating domestic solutions to Afghanistan’s shortage of electricity and access to clean water, should dominate the international agenda. These projects should be coordinated with the Government of Afghanistan and Afghan civil servants should be given meaningful roles in the administration of these projects in order to develop a capacity within the country to both plan and execute municipal projects.

Given the amount of international agencies involved in the effort to stabilize Afghanistan, one central organization should be empowered to prioritize, deconflict and monitor the vast number of projects being planned and in progress. All foreign aid should be administered by this agency in order to maintain an accurate accounting of actual aid contributions and the impact of that aid. All participating countries should be represented and the leadership of this agency should be predicated not upon amount contributed but based on least amount of phantom aid contained in their national aid packages. Finally, a critical function of this organization should be to insure the widespread publication of development programs and highlight the role of the central government in the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

4. A Commitment to Developing Afghanistan's National Security Forces

The Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army will require a long-term commitment on the part of Afghanistan's international partners in order to develop into reliable and self-supporting entities. The future role of the Afghanistan's National Security Forces in maintaining security and enforcing the rule of law is critical to the country's successful development. A failure of Afghan forces will certainly result in the rapid resurgence of local militias aligned under regional warlords. In the near-term, the ANA and the ANP must focus on developing the competence and reliability necessary to augment international forces in both counterinsurgency and counternarcotics operations. This is especially important given the fact that the insurgency and drug-related criminality are expanding and cooperating.⁷⁹ Of vital importance, both the ANA and the ANP must develop legitimacy with the Afghan people. In order to reach that point, care has to be given to insure a precise balance between necessary capability and potential for sustainability.

Despite the low readiness and mission capability rates of the Afghan National Army, measurable progress is being made in forging them into an effective fighting force. Two issues require immediate attention in order to insure practical and cohesive management of Afghan Army training program endures. First, is the development of a realistic training plan to address sustainable training into the future and second is the resolution of whether or not the Afghan National Army should be expanded.

European critics of US plans to expand the Afghan Army believe expansion will lead to a "massive expenditure imbalance which no Afghan government

79 Carlotta Gall, "Taliban Make Afghan Stability a Distant Goal," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/world/asia/22taliban.html?ref=world> (accessed May 22, 2008).

will be able to sustain independently in the foreseeable future.”⁸⁰ An additional pitfall of over-expansion would be the need to “right-size” the force at some future point in time which raises “the prospect of serious disgruntlement among officers.”⁸¹ Given the years it takes to develop effective leadership in the officer corps, and the loyalty their men have for them, a reduction in force looms as an additional setback.

The Afghan National Police training effort is no stranger to setbacks yet the ANP’s potential contributions to the stabilization of Afghanistan warrant continued investment. In 2005, then NATO Commander General James Jones said, “For my money, the number one problem in Afghanistan is drugs.”⁸² With opium production increasing on an annual basis and “a handful of politically connected traffickers increasingly dominat[ing] the drug trade,”⁸³ his assessment is especially true today. Counternarcotics is fundamentally a law enforcement problem and Afghan law enforcement must be part of the solution.

Establishing a credible law enforcement capability, however, is going to be a challenge for both the Government of Afghanistan and all the other countries involved. Illiterate recruits, low pay, and corruption continue to stymie international efforts. However, the Afghans are not all to blame. Recent reviews of US-sponsored police training in Afghanistan revealed

80 Daniel Korski, “Afghanistan: Europe’s Forgotten War,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, January 2008, 14.

81 Antonio Giustozzi, “Afghanistan’s National Army: The Ambiguous Prospects of Afghanization,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, May 1, 2008, http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=319 (accessed July 3, 2008).

82 Los Angeles Times, “Drugs Main Threat in Afghanistan, General Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 16, 2005, <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/dec/16/world/fg-afghan16> (accessed June 27, 2008).

83 Carlotta Gall, “Taliban Make Afghan Stability a Distant Goal,” *The New York Times*, May 22, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/world/asia/22taliban.html?ref=world> (accessed May 22, 2008).

gross negligence in management and, despite the investment of in excess of \$1 billion dollars over five years “no effective field training program had been established in Afghanistan.”⁸⁴ Equally disconcerting is the fact that the police force that has been built is nearly unsustainable by the Government of Afghanistan. An estimated “\$600 million per year will be needed indefinitely”⁸⁵ to sustain the present Afghan National Police force.

Recommendation: When viewed in totality, the challenges facing the Afghanistan National Security Forces seem insurmountable. However, progress, albeit slow, is noticeable in both forces. The importance of this endeavor is that the Afghan Army and the Afghan Police represent an Afghan solution to an inherently Afghan problem. No other response is more acceptable to the Afghan people than security and policing provided by their own countrymen. In order to deliver this capacity, the international community has to be careful not to expect a near-term replacement option based on fledgling Afghan forces. What the international community needs to deliver is a solid foundation of both structure and capabilities from which force can continue to grow and develop. What is critical in the near-term is matching capacity with prioritized requirements and developing a framework that delivers basic security capabilities as soon as possible. A manageable and effective organizational framework must be tempered with the reality of sustainability and goal of delivering tangible benefits to the Afghan citizenry.

For the Afghan National Army, rapid growth is already challenging sustainability. In order to consolidate gains and prevent a loss of commitment on the part of soldiers, expansion of the Afghan Army should be suspended until proper resources are secured. Priority should be given to reinforce the

84 James Glanz and David Rohde, “Panel Faults U.S.-Trained Afghan Police,” *The New York Times*, December 4, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/04/world/asia/04police.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss> (accessed June 28, 2008).

85 Ibid.

successful training of these forces and the international community should insure adequate equipment and field training instructors are made readily available. The increase in morale and confidence of the Afghan Army will be force multipliers and solidify commitment to their profession. Another step necessary to increase their confidence is to challenge the Afghan National Army to operate in a province without external support. There are peaceful provinces to which the Afghan Army can be assigned and, with international monitoring and evaluation, the Afghans can be used to meet basic security requirements. A more controversial step that needs to be undertaken is to drastically reduce the Afghan National Army's reliance on allied airpower. Currently, airpower operations are fraught with friction and collateral damage is more damaging to the international reputation than nearly any other aspect of the conflict. Given the status of the Afghan National Air Force, employment of airpower will not be a viable option and other, more effective, unit-level tactics should be presented to prepare the Afghan Army for future operations.

The Afghan National Police are an important resource with a vital role in addressing the current counternarcotics problem in Afghanistan and in mitigating the emerging threat of organized crime associated with drug trafficking. International efforts have failed to generate both capacity and capability within the Afghan Police. This is troublesome because the more daunting challenges faced by the Afghan Government are law enforcement issues. Renewed focus by those international organizations charged with providing training is paramount to reversing past failures.

Increased basic pay and providing proper equipment to the current members of the Afghan police are necessary first steps in enhancing recruitment and generating capacity. It is important that, despite the marginal capabilities of the current police force, they be integrated into international law enforcement operations to include efforts to interdict and disrupt opium production even if their participation is as observers. The experience and

frontline participation is vital to their growth and understanding of security operations. A past mistake, that need not be repeated, was involving the Afghan Police in eradication efforts. Given the failure of eradication, their involvement only served to alienate them from the public they are supposed to serve.

Achieving legitimacy with the Afghan public is going to be a true challenge for the Afghan National Police. Their past allegiance to regional warlords and participation in militias will not be soon forgotten; nor will their reputation for corruption. To assist the rebuilding of public goodwill toward the police, the international community needs to be resolute in their requirement to investigate and vet both recruits and those considered for leadership positions within the police hierarchy. There should be no allowances for interference in this process and no person should be approved for police duty, even by the Government of Afghanistan, if their background is suspect. The Afghan Police will only be respected by the people if they are fair and professional.

5. Relevant External Engagement and Expanded Internal Dialogue

There is a striking and undeniable interrelationship between Afghanistan's internal dilemmas and myriad external factors that either shape or exacerbate them. This external influence is understandable given the history of intervention in Afghanistan and the legacy of decline and destruction that foreign occupation has bequeathed. Hopefully, the NATO-led coalition will be the last foreign entity to occupy the country and their legacy will be one of reconstruction and progress. As Afghanistan looks forward to a more independent existence, it needs to consider the importance of a balanced regional engagement and the importance of forming an inclusive framework that includes an open dialogue with, and integration of, the varied groups that comprise Afghan society.

In the absence of the coalition, one of Afghanistan's most important tasks

will be formulating a strong foreign policy in order to resist external attempts of neighboring countries to use Afghanistan to benefit their own agendas. "Any stability achieved in Afghanistan will remain unacceptably fragile as long as neighbours such as Pakistan, India, Russia and Iran treat the country as a pawn in their own regional power play, and refuse to accept the stable governance in Afghanistan is in their own long-term interests."⁸⁶ While support from the international community will likely remain, future challenges may defy conventional solutions. There is no clearer example of the complexity of these challenges than the present relationships with Iran and Pakistan. "No nation fights harder against the Afghan drug trade than axis-of-evil enemy Iran, while the United States' 'staunch ally' Pakistan lends support to the trade and to the Taliban as well."⁸⁷ Since President Karzai has declared his commitment to "countering the narcotics trade – over fighting terrorism – [as his] central aim,"⁸⁸ this should make for an interesting regional dialogue.

The internal dialogue in Afghanistan promises to be no less interesting. Insuring ethnic balance in the security forces and at all levels of government will necessitate an honest and transparent dialogue. This exchange is essential for the central government to earn the respect of the populace and remedy "the Afghan malaise of nepotism, tribal affiliations and corruption"⁸⁹ that have been the hallmarks of previous Afghan Governments. Dialogue is also going to be instrumental in the resolution of two interrelated domestic

86 Daniel Korski, "Afghanistan: Europe's Forgotten War," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, January 2008, 3.

87 Ann Jones, "US's Afghan Policies Going Up In Smoke," *Asia Times*, November 1, 2006, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HK01Df01.html (accessed March 7, 2008).

88 Scott Baldauf and Faye Bowers, "Afghanistan Riddled with Drug Ties," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 13, 2005, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0513/p01s04-wosc.html> (accessed July 7, 2008).

89 M.K. Bhadrakumar, "Afghanistan: Why NATO Cannot Win," *Asia Times*, September 30, 2006, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HI30Df01.html (accessed July 3, 2008).

concerns – opium production and the Taliban. Britain’s Prime Minister Gordon Brown supports outreach to the Taliban. “If they are prepared to renounce violence and abide by the constitution and respect basic human rights then there is a place for them in the legitimate society and economy of Afghanistan,”⁹⁰ Brown told the House of Commons. Aimed primarily at the disenfranchised Pashtun living in the Southern Provinces, this dialogue could represent a departure point that would include “a package of financial and other incentives which could encourage them to support the government rather than the Taliban.”⁹¹ The importance of enlisting the population of the Southern Provinces in the counterinsurgency fight cannot be overstated – especially given the provinces status as the leading producer of opium poppy. President Karzai’s spokesman, Khaleeq Ahmad, said, “We want to fight (terrorism) in a way that we fight the roots of it: where they get trained, where they get equipment, where they get money, where the recruitment centers are.”⁹² The roots of terrorism are in the south – *they are the roots of the poppy* – and encouraging the people of the Southern Provinces to pull up those roots is worth the investment of the Government of Afghanistan.

Recommendation: Afghanistan’s geographic location raises the stakes in terms of international and regional dialogue. The pressure to exert sovereignty and manifest an independent national will, and still maintain close ties with the world’s military and financial powers, will necessitate pragmatic and skillful diplomacy. However, despite solid relations with the

90 David Stringer, “Britain: Ex-Taliban Have Role in Afghanistan,” *Afghanistan News Center Website*, December 12, 2007, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2007/december/dec122007.html> (accessed December 12, 2007).

91 Daniel Korski, “Afghanistan: Europe’s Forgotten War,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, January 2008, 2.

92 Tini Tran, “Karzai: War Not Getting At Terrorism Cause,” *Common Dreams.org Newscenter*, June 24, 2006, <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/0624-08.htm> (accessed June 20, 2008).

world's powers, Afghanistan's Government cannot overlook the important fact that relations with its neighbors are more critical to internal stability. Afghanistan's entrée into the regional discourse is clearly predicated upon the need to staunch the flow of opium from Afghanistan into bordering countries. Countering the flow of both illicit narcotics and precursor chemicals is a mutually beneficial undertaking and should serve as a basis for continued, productive interaction and dialogue. Regional and international cooperation in the counternarcotics arena could form a basis for enhanced law enforcement cooperation, additional training, exchanging intelligence, and enhancing border security; all of which are visible signs of a strong government.

Ultimately, Afghanistan's ability to project strength within the context of regional dialogue will be predicated upon its social cohesiveness. Overcoming ethnic and tribal allegiances, particularly along borders in Northern and Southern Afghanistan, will be difficult to accomplish in the immediate future. Engendering loyalty to a state requires both vast amounts of time and a consistent reputation for fair and equal treatment. It also presupposes a need for, and the intrinsic value of, central government – something that needs to be demonstrated in Afghanistan. When held in that light, fostering and engendering strong nationalistic attributes in its citizenry is many years away in Afghanistan. However, Afghan senior leaders should insure inclusiveness is a government priority. In developing Afghan solutions to Afghan problems, this inclusiveness means establishing a dialogue with the Taliban – it may even mean finding a role for them in the Government of Afghanistan. Given the Taliban's direct influence on opium production, engaging them in earnest discussions may be the first step in controlling opium production and stabilizing Afghanistan.

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תקציר

קרל גודיסון רכש את ניסיונו בנעשה באפגניסטן כקצין ב-United States Air Force ושם עמד על ממדי התופעה של גידול האופיום, הפיכתו למוצר מבוקש בשוק והפצתו לכל חלקי כדור הארץ. הוא בחר לקרוא לסם זה כ"נשק להשמדה המונית" ואכן ממדי הגידול והייצור של סם זה במדינה אומללה זו מעוררת תדהמה ועל כך ימצא הקורא רבות בחוברת זו.

חלק גדול מן העבודה עוסקת בהמלצותיו של הכותב כיצד להתמודד עם ה"נשק" הזה ולנצחו. הוא מודע למשקל הכלכלי הרב של הסם באפגניסטן, לממדי המעורבות של כל הממסד הממלכתי והביטחוני (משטרת וצבאי) בנעשה, ומציע דרכים כיצד בכל זאת לנטרל את "הפצצה".

זו עבודה מקיפה, עשירה בנתונים מאירי עיניים ומלמדת רבות על הסם והיקפי הפצתו בעולם. זו היא גם הצצה נדירה לתוך נבכי הנעשה באפגניסטן והפעם ממי שהיה שם זמן רב וראה דברים מקרוב מאד.

המרכז למחקר של המכללה לביטחון לאומי מצא עבודה זו, שנכתבה כעבודה שנתית במכללה לביטחון לאומי בישראל, כראויה לפרסום ולהפצה בקנה מידה נרחב.

תודה לקולונל קרל גודיסון על עבודה רצינית זו, תודה למורי רוזובסקי על השיפוצים, תודה מיוחדת לאל"מ (מיל') עינת גופנר-גולדשטיין עבור הכנת עבודה שנתית זו לפרסום כמונוגרפיה, לצוות קתדרת חייקין לגאואסטרטגיה – אוניברסיטת חיפה ולצוות מב"ל על הסיוע להביא עבודה זו לקראת פרסום ולהפצה.

בברכה,

פרופ' ארנון סופר

ראש המרכז למחקר של המכללה לביטחון לאומי-צה"ל

2010

Colonel Carl C. Goodison from the United States Air Force was an International Fellow in the Israeli National Defense College during 2007.

Colonel Goodison served as Counterterrorism and Counternarcotic Advisor to the Afghan National Police (ANP) in 2006, and as such, he was involved in counternarcotics planning during his tour in NATO and he led an operational support team to the Afghan Government in the core of counternarcotics.

This work insights are base, along with a research of scholarly works, on his personal experience in Afghanistan in 2006, discussions he have had with senior leaders of both Afghan Government and coalition, as well as he had conducted since he returned.

