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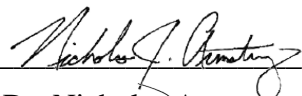
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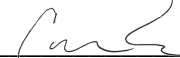
Afghan Narcoterrorism:
The Problem, its Origins, and Why International Law
Enforcement Should Fight it

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2015

Honors Capstone Project in Political Science

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides insight into the issue of opium trafficking in Afghanistan. In 2014, despite U.S., Afghan, and international efforts since 2001, poppy-opium cultivation in Afghanistan reached an all-time high. The Afghan opium trafficking industry provides funding to terrorist groups and transnational crime organizations and is responsible for the continued corruption of government officials, police officers, and intelligence agents in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and other nations. Aside from increased corruption and funding of terrorists and criminals, the opium trade creates opium and heroin addicts out of men, women, and children across the globe. The history of how the opium problem reached its current state and an account of the methods previously attempted to combat the opium trade in Afghanistan is included in the paper. By looking at the past, the reader will gain an understanding of the level of success law enforcement efforts have achieved as compared to reliance on other approaches such as crop eradication, and alternative livelihood assistance.

Acknowledging that this issue negatively affects many countries, I argue for the international community to cross current alliances and create and deploy a unified law enforcement counternarcotics force to work with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and surrounding nations to target the problem at the point of supply. This paper relies on information gathered from a variety of sources to provide a broad scope of perspectives including reports from the United Nations, the United States Government as well as books and articles from social scientists, journalists, and DEA agents.

Executive Summary

Today, Afghanistan is the world's largest opium producer, taking over 90 percent of the global market share. Said to be introduced by Alexander the Great, opium had been in the region as early as 330 B.C., but it wasn't until the Soviet invasion in 1979 the production was significant. Struggling for control, the Soviet military targeted the rural areas through economic warfare, burning entire farm fields and making it difficult for any crops to grow.¹ Rival Mujahideen groups, a name given to Muslim Afghan fighters engaged in the Soviet War in Afghanistan, dismantled their opponents' aqueducts and irrigation systems, further exacerbating the issue. As licit agricultural production fell by nearly two-thirds, the low maintenance opium production skyrocketed.

At the end of the Soviet War in Afghanistan, Mujahideen leaders who had used opium to help fund their war against the Soviet Union, were now using their connection to make money for themselves. Throughout the late 1980's United States failed in its attempts negotiate with Mujahideen leaders to ban opium production in exchange for aid packages. With international aid slashed to nothing, Afghanistan was in disarray and a new organized faction sought to take control. The Taliban, an Islamic fundamentalist group, formed by Mullah Omar, took control of the country and imposed its strict interpretation of Sharia Law on its new constituents. By 1999, Afghanistan produced 75 percent of the world's opium and the Taliban was getting a cut of the profits.

¹ Vanda Brown, *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs* (Washington, District of Columbia: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 115.

Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States invaded Afghanistan and kicked out the Taliban. Claiming that fighting the drug trade was not part of its mission, the U.S. military took a laissez-faire approach to handling the drug economy, and decided that it would be better to let the trade flourish if it meant making enemies with those who profited from it. In 2005, after realizing the level of funding that narcotics provided to the Taliban and al Qaeda, the U.S. government created a five-pronged approach to address the counternarcotics problem.

A total of \$438 million was spent by the United States to provide an alternative crop for farmers to grow and to eradicate poppy fields yet opium cultivation nearly doubled from 2005-2007 and Afghan farmers violently opposed the efforts. U.S. counternarcotics interdiction efforts were largely successful but underfunded. Following the U.S. troop surge in 2009, politicians looked for quick solutions to a chronic, systemic issue. Opium cultivation was let loose, reaching new heights every year from 2010-2014.

Why should the international community care about Afghanistan's opium problem? There are several reasons. First, the Taliban, a ruthless organization responsible for the massacre of hundreds of Afghan schoolchildren in 2014, collect up to \$500 million a year from the opium trade. Terrorist organizations such as the Haqqani network, al-Qaeda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and the Kurdistan Workers Party also bring in millions of dollars to fund their attacks. That's not to mention the organized and common criminals who earn money along the drug trade route as it reaches the consumer.

Second, corrupt public officials and government actors in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and other nations are encouraged to ignore or even participate in the

drug trade to earn extra money. Drug trafficking degrades the public faith in its government which increases the difficulty in bringing stability to the region.

Lastly, the spread of opium and heroin creates addicts of men, women, and even young children, all around the world. More than 100,000 people die from Afghan heroin each year and the use of dirty needles has caused Hepatitis C and HIV to spread at an alarming rate. In the end, terrorists, criminals, and corrupt government officials make money and the common farmer is trapped in a cycle of debt and repayment, preventing them from ever being able to choose a different crop to grow.

I propose that the solution to Afghanistan's opium problem is redoubling the efforts of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and to create a counternarcotics team from a joint coalition of international partners. The DEA, with little funding and few personnel has managed to make a significant impact in the war against Afghan drug traffickers. The DEA has arrested and prosecuted low-level opium smugglers and prominent drug lords. The DEA has trained its Afghan partners to continue the mission but they will need continued help.

As the U.S. military draws down, I argue that the international community needs to cross traditional diplomatic lines and unite the U.S. and its partners with non traditional allies such as Russia and Iran to combat Afghan opium trafficking. An increase in funding, personnel, and available helicopter transportation will allow the counternarcotics agents to be more effective. With participating nations sharing relevant intelligence, the counternarcotics effort will be able to make great strides in Afghanistan.

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to three Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agents, killed on October 26, 2009, when the U.S. military helicopter they were in crashed while returning from a joint counternarcotics mission in western Afghanistan.

Special Agent Forrest N. Leamon

Special Agent Chad L. Michael

Special Agent Michael E. Weston



"Like all those who give their lives in service to America, they were doing their duty, and they were doing this nation proud. Now, it is our duty, as a nation, to keep their memory alive in our hearts and to carry on their work, to take care of their families, to keep our country safe"² -President Barack Obama's address of the tragedy

² Carol Cratty and Brooke Baldwin. "Obama: Americans Killed in Afghan Crash 'doing This Nation Proud'" (CNN: October 26, 2009).

PREFACE

As I'm sure many students completing a lengthy capstone or thesis paper will tell you, figuring out what to focus your research on isn't an easy task. Initially, I wanted to write my paper around issues related to U.S. veterans. That's how I was introduced to my Capstone Advisor, Dr. Nicholas Armstrong, Senior Director of Research and Policy at the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) and a former research fellow with the Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (INSCT), at Syracuse University. As a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and himself a veteran Army officer with seven years of service, deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia, there was no one better to understand these issues.

I thought that was the end of my topic search. I figured there were plenty of veterans' issues out there that needed researching, and that he would simply assign me a topic and that would be that. Not the case. From the very beginning, Dr. Armstrong encouraged me to think for myself and find a topic that I was interested in and to create a paper that I could be proud of.

With the advice of my advisor, I spent many hours looking up different topics and trying to find a fit for my diverse set of interests in the political science field including constitutional law, U.S. policy during international conflicts, and federal law enforcement. Along with finding a topic that would be of interest to me, I wanted to make sure that the paper I wrote made a *contribution* and that the end result would have been worth all the work.

While researching one day, I stumbled upon a New York Times article titled, “Afghanistan Opium Cultivation Rises to Record Levels” and quite shockingly, dated November 12th, 2014. I thought to myself, how, after thirteen years of U.S. presence in Afghanistan, has opium cultivation in Afghanistan reached its record height? What, if anything, is the U.S. doing to decrease the high levels of opium cultivation? After further research I learned that Afghanistan is the world’s leading opium cultivator, growing more than 90 percent of the world’s opium. The country has been eternally entangled in a web of drugs, corruption, smuggling, and guns that is led by lesser known mafia-style drug kingpins and facilitated by big name terror organizations.

As the old adage goes, “don’t lose sight of the forest for the trees.” When you are invested particular topic and begin researching, learning, and writing about specific details, you can sometimes lose sight of the broad meaning. The opium issue is more than an Afghanistan issue, it’s an international one. We live in the age of globalization and the opium trade is no different. Whether you realize it or not, the poppy fields in Afghanistan have impacted your life. Pretending the issue is not there will do no good, as current statistics have shown, cultivation is growing every year. We must act together to solve this issue.

As I began writing this paper, I took a moment to reflect. I watched videos of the September 11th attacks and re-witnessed people jumping out of the buildings as the towers crumbled. The memory flashed me back to third grade when my principle rushed into my class and told us that a plane had hit the first World Trade Center tower. I remember being sent home shortly after, and watching that same footage, except it was

live. As you read this paper, think about where you were when you heard the news and how it has affected you to this day. That's what motivates me.

INTRODUCTION

In the fields of Afghanistan lies an underestimated force responsible for the killing of “five times as many people in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries *each year*, more than the eight-year total of NATO troops killed in combat.”³ That force is opium, a seemingly harmless substance derived from poppy fields. Afghan opium is linked to the death of over 100,000 people worldwide, *every year* and generates more than \$60 billion in illicit revenue.⁴

Afghan opium is a problem for several different reasons, the first and most obvious being the consequences on global health, resulting from the spread of the dangerous drugs of opium and heroin. Second, proceeds from the trade support many different terrorist organizations across the world. The pre-established trafficking network also allows for arms to be smuggled in return. Third, farmers who grow the poppy are exploited and put into a cycle of debt repayment that prevents from them being able to opt-out and grow a different crop.

With Afghanistan opium cultivation reaching 224,000 hectares in 2014, the most in history, and the United States planning to drawdown overtime, this paper discusses what the world community should do moving forward. By examining history, relevant data, and analysis from both U.S. and non-U.S. officials and Afghans knowledgeable on the issue, I will argue that the international community should seek to build upon U.S.

³ Lord John E. Tomlinson, "Drug Traffic from Afghanistan as a Threat to European Security" (Council of Europe: September 24, 2013).

⁴ Ibid.

law enforcement efforts and create and maintain a united counternarcotics interdiction force to help the Afghan counternarcotics efforts and bring drug lords to justice.

In Section I of the paper I explain the long and complicated history that led to Afghanistan's present opium dominance and argue that addressing the issue is more complex than just eradicating the opium poppy and convincing the farmers to grow something else. Throughout history there have been many different ways to attack Afghanistan's opium issue, and several of them including physical crop eradication, alternate livelihood funding, and widespread spraying campaigns, have largely failed.

Only two methods have made an impact on the drug trade, interdiction and bribing Taliban and local government officials to issue a fatwa against opium. The latter, while successful in decreasing opium production levels, has been administered in an unfair way that has caused economic hardships on already poor segments of society, while rich drug traffickers got richer. The latter, through law enforcement agencies with a small budget and few dedicated personnel, has made great strides in bringing drug lords to justice and seizing substantial amounts of illicit drugs.

In Section II, I explain why the heroin trade in Afghanistan matters, by covering the victims and benefactors of the multi-million dollar industry and by introducing the stake holding nations with an interest in curbing it. I cover the heroin from the opium fields in Afghanistan to the streets of Europe and will discuss the different strategies that the drug traffickers use to avoid capture. I will layout the methods by which the drug money is laundered, how the money is used, and why law enforcement is best fit to investigate these cases. I will also cover the heroin trade from the view of the Afghan

poppy farmer and how opium poppy is used to kill people in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, and Europe. Section II makes an appeal to the international community that the Afghan opium economy is a serious issue that affects everyone and must be dealt with.

Section III will cover the success of the United States' Drug Enforcement Agency post 9/11. It will show that, through the use of trained law enforcement agents, the heroin trade can be attacked at the source and save money and lives by preventing the spread of drugs and funds to terrorist groups. By using the case-studies of three convicted Afghan drug traffickers, I argue that interdiction is the best means by which the international community can stem the flow of narcotics out of Afghanistan.

As evidence, I utilize the first-hand account of Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent Edward Follis, in his book The Dark Art, which covers his life undercover and the events leading up to the arrest of drug lord Haji Juma Kahn. Included in this section is an analysis of an update to the PATRIOT act that allowed the DEA to more effectively operate overseas. Lastly, I will use the success stories of the DEA to argue that law enforcement efforts in Afghanistan should be bolstered by the United States and international community in order to take the fight to the drug traffickers and help supplement Afghan counternarcotics efforts.

As a caveat, it's impossible to discuss the Afghan opium trade without mentioning Pakistan, but I did my best to focus in on Afghanistan in order to keep my paper clear. Likewise, other drugs such as hashish and marijuana play a meaningful role in the drug trade, but to be concise I concentrated this paper on opium and heroin. Furthermore, all information used in creation of this paper was found open source,

therefore much of the information regarding the details of the history, DEA operations in Afghanistan, and government intelligence was unavailable.

SECTION I: Origins of the Afghan Opium Trade

While Afghan farmers had grown opium prior to the 1950's, production escalated in 1955 following a ban in Iran from the Shah, Mohammad-Rezā Shāh Pahlavī. Instituted as a result of international pressure and to create a more disciplined Iranian military, opium addicts were given six months to recover, after which they would be thrown in jail if caught with the narcotic.⁵ Afghanistan followed suit in 1958 by banning opium but, unlike Iran, the law was not enforced and thus, largely ignored.

The last king of Afghanistan, Mohammad Zahir Shah, dominated the country's opium trade for the first half of the twentieth century, exporting most of the product over the western border into Iran. Mohammed Zahir Shah's control lasted until 1973 when the government was seized by his cousin Mohammed Daoud Khan while Shah was in Italy being treated for eye problems and undergoing therapy for back pain.⁶ Daoud Khan had been prime minister of Iran ten years prior and he was displeased when King Shah decided to terminate him from the position. Rather than engaging in what was sure to be a long, drawn out, bloody conflict, Shah relinquished the throne and lived in exile. Using the word "exile" may be misleading, Mohammad Shah spent his time playing chess and drinking cappuccino in a beautiful villa on Via Cassia, just north of Rome.⁷

⁵ Martin Booth, *Opium: A History* (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 253.

⁶ Barry Bearak, "Former King of Afghanistan Dies at 92" (The New York Times: July 23, 2007).

⁷ Ibid.

In the latter half of the 1970's, Afghanistan became the cornerstone of the Russian sphere of influence in Central Asia. As the Soviet Union's number one trading partner and beneficiary of financial aid, Afghanistan had a strong relationship with the USSR, even partnering with its military and participating in officer training programs.⁸ Despite the excellent rapport with the communist nation, President Mohammed Daoud Khan's desire to pursue more traditionalist policy led Afghanistan away from the Eastern bloc, and eventually, to destruction. On April 28th, 1978, Daoud was overthrown by a communist political faction in Afghanistan who struggled to rule over the next year.

The potential collapse of the newly christened Democratic Republic of Afghanistan led to the Soviet Union's invasion in December of 1979. The USSR struggled to gain control and within a year, after deploying over 100,000 troops, combat had spread across the entire country. The Soviet military targeted the rural areas through economic warfare, burning entire farm fields and making it difficult for any crops to grow.⁹ Rival Mujahideen groups dismantled their opponents aqueducts and irrigation systems, further exacerbating the issue. By 1987, the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan had reduced the agricultural output significantly, which now produced only one-third of what it had in 1978.¹⁰ Millions of Afghans were displaced because of this.

Despite the dry, mountainous climate of Afghanistan, one crop -opium- thrived in these harsh conditions. Opium is a drought-resistant and durable crop that does not rot or

⁸ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 114.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

bruise on its way to the market.¹¹ Three of the most prominent Mujahideen rivals, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Ismat Muslim, and Mullah Nasim Akhunzada took advantage of the drug cultivation.¹²

Although opium consumption was prohibited by the Muslim Koran (haram), cultivation was argued as permissible, especially if it was being put to good use. Mullah Nasim Akhunzada issued a religious ruling (fatwa) declaring that, not only is opium cultivation acceptable, but actually encouraged. His brother, the Taliban appointed governor of Nimruz province, Mullah Muhammad Rasul also used religious zeal in his plea to his countrymen: “We must grow and sell opium to fight our holy war against the Russian nonbelievers.”¹³ It wasn’t long before heroin processing plants and refineries sprung up all across the south of Afghanistan. From 1984 to 1986 yearly opium production in Afghanistan quadrupled, starting at a lowly 140 metric tons, and reaching over 800 metric tons at the end of the three year stretch.

Through their careless scorched earth policy, the Soviets created a problem that would help lead to their demise. According to a study commissioned by the U.S. Army and conducted by the RAND Corporation, Soviet Union soldiers turned to drugs to handle the boredom, fear, and awful conditions every present during the conflict in Afghanistan.¹⁴ The study showed that a substantial majority of Soviet troops used drugs on a regular basis, trading extra weapons and supplies for heroin, and using the needles in their first aid kit to shoot up. According to Zamir Kabulov, former Russian ambassador to

¹¹Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Drugs, Thugs, and Crime Are Reshaping the Afghan War* (New York, New York: Picador, 2010), 6.

¹² Ibid., 62-72.

¹³ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 116.

¹⁴ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 50.

Afghanistan, this problem was caused intentionally. He argued that the United States and Pakistan “had a plan to spread drugs among Soviet troops.”¹⁵ Although proof of intentional U.S. funding of opium production is unfounded, it is plausible that at least some of the 3.2 billion dollars in U.S. aid to the Mujahideen went towards opium cultivation and heroin processing.

Fighting drugs in Afghanistan through interdiction was not a primary concern of the United States. With the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration’s Kabul office closed for the duration of the Soviet war in Afghanistan, there were no law enforcement operations to keep the drug trade in check. The U.S. had instead focused on eradicating poppy in Pakistan, for which more of the heroin ended up in U.S. cities. On the surface, eradication and alternative livelihood projects from 1979 to 1986 succeeded in uprooting 80 percent of Pakistan’s poppy, but in actuality, it did little more than shift the fields across the border.¹⁶ From 1984 to 1988, heroin production in Pakistan shot up five-fold, from six tons to thirty tons.¹⁷ Pakistan’s addict population had tripled since the onset of the Soviet war too. By the early nineties there would be more than 1.2 million heroin addicts in the country.¹⁸

The United States’ priority of supporting the Mujahideen insurgency against the Soviets had created a situation in which drugs had become a major source of income for Mujahideen commanders. According to a DEA report, less than 5 percent of the heroin produced in Pakistan or traveling through the country was seized and it is clear that the

¹⁵ Ibid., 52.

¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 58.

Pakistan government and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) reduced their enforcement.¹⁹ Prominent Pakistani drug lords held seats in the government assemblies and their presence had an undue influence on the success of the drug trade. Senior Pakistani military officials outside of the corrupt politicians' reach were bribed by drug traffickers to turn a blind eye.²⁰

U.S. sentiment was made clear by Jimmy Carter's national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski who, in a 1998 interview said, "What's more important, a few stirred up Muslims, or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?"²¹ The drug trade was in full swing. Connections had been made, trade routes had been set up, and as international aid waned through time, the opium trade would soon become the Mujahideen's financial lifeline.

In March of 1988, the Soviet Union announced a full withdrawal from Afghanistan that was set to take five months to complete but which took nearly a year. With war coming to a close, the United States and Pakistan signed an agreement with the Soviets stating that they would no longer supply the Mujahideen with weapons or training.²² As the Russians made their way out of the country, FIM-92 Stinger surface to air missiles previously supplied to the Mujahideen by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to take down their aircraft was now being used to guard heroin shipments. With millions of Afghan refugees set to return to their home country looking for a well-paying crop to grow, opium production was set to explode.

¹⁹ Ibid., 49.

²⁰ Ibid., 70.

²¹ Ibid., 72.

²² The agreement is referred to as the Geneva Accords (1988).

The United States' Missed Opportunities

With restructuring of United States' priorities in Afghanistan, the DEA was taken off the sidelines and tasked with infiltrating the war torn country and taking down the well-oiled machine that had become Afghanistan's heroin network. During the late eighties, heroin originating from Afghanistan now accounted for approximately 50 percent of the product found in the cities of the United States, giving good reason to send the premier counternarcotics law enforcement organization overseas.²³

Rather than having to dispense millions of dollars in resources going after low level drug dealers in the U.S., it was more efficient for the DEA to target the source of the heroin. Under the cover of night and using the CIA's mujahideen operation as a cloak, two DEA special agents wearing traditional mujahideen garb snuck into the country with Afghan guards and began to locate and mark infrastructure used to develop raw opium into potent heroin.²⁴ The DEA agents brought a goat along with them, which their Afghan counterparts killed and ate as the trip wore on. The agents' life depended on the Mujahideen, whether it was dealing with freezing weather conditions at night and burning temperatures in the day, or lack of communication or GPS' location to know where they were going.

Codenamed "Operation Jihad," the DEA vamped up the effort by enlisting rival mujahideen fighters and teaching them how to use cameras so that they could photograph drug labs they were going to hit. Afghan drug labs were nothing to stare at, "just a couple of rudimentary mud huts, often strewn with plastic barrels for mixing precursor

²³ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

chemicals” used to process heroin.²⁵ Labs across Helmand province produced millions of dollars worth of heroin a month and the mujahideen rebels were paid up to \$25,000 for every site they destroyed. According to DEA agent Richard Fiano who worked on Operation Jihad, some of the labs destroyed in the program were pushing out up to six hundred kilograms of crystal heroin a month.²⁶ By going directly to the source, the DEA was able to do much more damage than back at home. Taking out just one lab in Afghanistan was nearly equal to the entire *yearly* domestic seizure of heroin by the DEA.²⁷

As with anything in politics, the operation set forth by the DEA was risky, one missed step could expose their mission. Since the U.S. already had an agreement in place with the Soviets that they would not interfere in Afghanistan during the pullout, Operation Jihad was particularly dangerous. Uncovering of the clandestine operation could have had damning consequences at the diplomatic negotiation table. In an interview conducted by journalist Gretchen Peters with Jack Lawn, former DEA Administrator in the later 1980’s, “the holy warriors the DEA hired to roll over heroin labs got into the habit of tying up lab workers and executing them.”²⁸ The United States Senate Intelligence Community caught wind of the foul play and just as quickly as the DEA had deployed its agents, the mission was scrapped.

With the Soviet Union gone, the Central Intelligence agency predicted that Afghanistan was ready to crumble. Continual fighting among warlords and communist

²⁵ Ibid., 32.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Drug Enforcement Agency. "Statistics & Facts" (Drug Enforcement Administration: March 1, 2014).

²⁸ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 34.

President Mohammed Najibullah created a struggle that would not end without massive bloodshed. Sibghatul Mojaddedi was chosen by the Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahideen to lead the new government of Afghanistan and after meeting with the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Robert Oakley and President George H.W. Bush, Mojaddedi agreed to issue a fatwa banning opium production across Afghanistan.²⁹ Unfortunately, his role in government did not last very long. Rival mujahideen clans fought for several more months and opium became a financial means to fund the carnage. In the 1989-1990 growing season, Nangahar province alone produced over 355 tons of opium.³⁰

Without any singular person leading the conflicted nation, the U.S. attempted to decrease opium production by dealing with each rival group separately. Arsala clan leader Haji Abdul Qadir of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan's second-largest opium producing region, took an international aid package with promises of cutting opium production under his jurisdiction by 50 percent. On top of opium production, Qadir used the Jalalabad airport to smuggle contraband such as gems and electronics, into and out of Afghanistan. When international funding dried up, the smuggling operation alone was not enough to employ the people of Nangarhar and Qadir quickly reinstated full poppy cultivation.³¹ Qadir used drug trafficking as another revenue source.

Facilitated by the airport staff who were paid a hefty sum, up to \$8,000 a month to participate in the drug trade, mujahideen would drive to the airport in trucks loaded with

²⁹ Ibid., 60.

³⁰ Amir Zada Asad and Robert Harris, *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border: Implications for a Globalized World* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 61.

³¹ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 121

carpets that weighed a significant amount more than a normal carpet.³² According to one Afghan cargo loader whose identity is concealed for his safety, “we could always tell which carpets had heroin.”³³ Hollowed out logs suffused with heroin would prove to be another reliable method to conceal heroin as it crossed international lines.

Mullah Nasim Akhunzada, the nation’s biggest drug dealer, made a deal with the United States. First, he wanted \$2 million in funding to provide farmers an alternative to poppy cultivation. Second, Akhunzada wanted the Kajaki dam restarted. As the region’s leading source of hydroelectric power in the entire southwest region, the dam would be invaluable. In exchange for those two requests, Akhunzada agreed to halve opium production in Helmand province.³⁴ After secret aerial reconnaissance was done to ensure that Akhunzada had fulfilled his end of the bargain, the simple dam revitalization plan was ready to begin.

The United States was getting a great deal. While the CIA expended billions funding the mujahideen rebels to topple the Soviets in Afghanistan, a mere two million dollars would cut opium production in Afghanistan’s most opium rich province, a drop in the bucket. In the infinite wisdom of Washington, the United States decided to renege on the deal. Just as the U.S. does not negotiate with terrorists, backdoor compromises with drug dealers were interpreted as illegal.

With a temporary drought in opium production in Afghanistan’s Helmand province, rival drug trafficker Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was paying as much as three times for opium he purchased from Helmand province. Black market dealers like Hekmatyar

³² Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 71.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 62.

are in the business to make a profit. Given that basic understanding of drug traffickers' desires, it shouldn't be surprising that Mullah Akhuzada and five of his associates were massacred by a rival drug gang just six months after the U.S. deal. His death "pretty much threw a wet blanket on anyone's willingness to cooperate with anti-narcotics."³⁵ In the wake of Akhuzada's death, his brother, Mohammad Rasul, took over Helmand province and increased opium production back to full force.

The United States' involvement in Afghanistan in the early 1990s was limited. Beverly Eighmy, a USAID officer responsible for an Afghanistan counternarcotics pilot program that was shut down due to funding issues stated, "the Soviets left and America just lost interest."³⁶ As the communist Najibullah was being removed, U.S. funding to Afghanistan's mujahideen went from \$280 million in 1990 to \$30 million worth of Iraqi weapons in 1991, to nothing by 1992. That same year, relief and reconstruction aid for Afghanistan was slashed by more than 60 percent.³⁷ By 1993, President Bill Clinton reduced USAID to Afghanistan to nothing. With well over 100,000 Afghan fighters and their families left with no way to earn money, many of turned to weapons and drug trafficking. While this would have been a perfect opportunity to attempt to stabilize the Afghanistan economy and encourage alternative farming to opium through livelihood funding, the U.S. missed its chance.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 64.

³⁷ Ibid.

The Rise of the Taliban

Ravaged by conflict among the various different warlords, power was concentrated when local religious madrassa leader Mullah Omar heard that two young girls in his town outside of Kandahar had been abducted by the local chieftain and were being continuously raped. As legend has it, Omar rounded up his thirty talibs (students) and with little weapons and ammunition, overthrew the warlord and freed the girls.³⁸ From 1994-1995, the one-eyed, illiterate, Mullah Omar lead a swift blitzkrieg campaign across southern Afghanistan, taking over many towns without a struggle.³⁹ In many places, however, it was far from a passive takeover, hundreds of Taliban would die over the two months of intense fighting and through sacrifice; the Taliban took control of Helmand province.

The Taliban imposed a strict interpretation of Sharia law upon its new constituency. Women were required to veil themselves from head to toe (purdah), were not allowed to receive medical care, go to school, or even leave the home without a male relative accompanying them. In a truly draconian fashion, it became illegal to “play music, fly kites, dance, or read anything published outside of Afghanistan.”⁴⁰ Males young and old using electrical cords and car antennas would lash people on the spot who broke the law. Just as with empires who dominated two thousand years ago, the Taliban “packed the stadiums with crowds of tens of thousands to witness amputations, floggings,

³⁸ Ibid., 76.

³⁹ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 124.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 129.

and executions.”⁴¹ Stoning adulterers and severe punishments for criminals became the norm in Taliban controlled areas.

The Taliban was oppressive, yet consistent during its initial reign. Just like criminals, drug abusers were dealt with a heavy hand. Abdul Rashid, the Taliban’s anti-drug czar admitted that, “addicts got beaten until they confessed the name of their supplier...then [in jail] we dunked them in ice-cold water for two or three hours a day.”⁴² In keeping with the Koran, the Taliban ravaged Afghan vineyards, eradicating the fields so that the grapes being grown could not be used to make wine, a substance expressly permitted.

Similarly, the Taliban decided at first that opium cultivation and production too, should be outlawed. Due to the ban on opium and a particularly damaging drought that year, opium cultivation in Helmand province from 1994-1995 had dropped by nearly 33 percent with profits dipping from \$102 to \$54 million.⁴³ The international community commended the Taliban and many began to think that, if the Taliban was successful, opium cultivation in Afghanistan would soon be a thing of the past. With the Taliban earning roughly \$75 million smuggling legal goods alone, opium cultivation and heroin production was not a financial necessity to sustain the Taliban. They could afford to shun the dirty drug money.

Although the Taliban touts religious zeal, Sharia law, and respect for the Koran as primary motivators of the organization, more political factors came into play that would

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 73.

⁴³ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 129.

lead them to quickly change their policy.⁴⁴ Although Taliban members shared the same Pashtun heritage as many of the local populace whom they presided over, background alone was not enough to appease them. Although the Taliban itself did not need the opium money, for others, it was their entire livelihood.

Why not grow something else? As was covered in the previous chapter, the Soviets altered the ability for Afghan farmers to easily grow something else when the critical agricultural infrastructure of the country was destroyed. Irrigation systems were reduced to rubble and, without a water supply, common crops such as rice, wheat, or fruit, did not stand a chance at surviving. The inferior transportation system in Afghanistan made the production of licit crops even more problematic. Without reliable, fast shipping methods, common crops would not survive their trips to the marketplace. Opium, on the other hand, is easy to cultivate, requires little water, and lasts for a very long time. Whoever supported the opium trade, held the keys to the hearts and minds of the farmers of southern Afghanistan.

As quick as the Taliban's ban on poppy went into effect, it was just as quickly taken away. By 1996, the Taliban released a softer directive on opium. The consumption of opium remained illegal and into the 21st century the Taliban would continue to flog and beat people who they found in violation of this law. The manufacture of heroin was also officially still against the law, however, the Taliban did nothing to enforce it. The production and trading of opium was now allowed. As Rashid put it, "there would be an

⁴⁴ Ibid., 130.

uprising against the Taliban if we forced [farmers] to stop poppy cultivation.”⁴⁵ A handful of prominent Afghan tribes conceded to back the Taliban so long as they did not impede poppy cultivation. It seems very clear that the importance of following the teachings of Islam were superseded by prominence of opium cultivation in the Afghan economy in the Taliban’s efforts to maintain control.

One added benefit of the change in opium policy was that swaths of previously unemployed Afghans now had a secure and well paying job. Although opium requires low maintenance and is easy to cultivate, it is very labor intensive to produce. While wheat only requires 41 person days to cultivate one hectare, poppy necessitates 350 person days to yield the same amount. Keeping people’s pockets filled and mind occupied is half the battle when controlling the populace, and the Taliban was able to achieve both those goals with one policy switch. The Taliban had regained its political capital and was now stronger than ever. By 1999, the Taliban had firm control of the vast majority in Afghanistan, 97 percent of poppy was being grown in Taliban controlled areas, and Afghan poppy opium made up 75 percent of the world market share.⁴⁶

In 2000 the Taliban regime sought to normalize relations with the international community in order to be recognized and offered a seat at the table -or so it seemed. At the time, only three countries recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. As part of a means gain that recognition, allured by the \$250 million alternative livelihood grant promised by the United Nations, and with complete control of the country, the Taliban once again

⁴⁵ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁶ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 87.

banned the cultivation of poppy. In the largest cutback of opium cultivation in a single year to date, Afghan poppy dropped from a whopping 82,172 hectares in 2000 down to just 8,000 hectares in 2001.⁴⁷ That year, the global supply of heroin dropped 75 percent and price per kilo skyrocketed to over \$375, a more than thirteen times the 2000 price.⁴⁸ This was a result that could only be attained by an established, governing body that had reach from the cities all the way to the mountains of Afghanistan. Was this a legitimate effort by the Taliban to reverse its position on opium cultivation and put a halt to the global trafficking of heroin? Or was this a sophisticated ploy in order to earn more money?

Aside from the quarter of a billion dollars offered by the United Nations, in 2001 the United States provided an additional reward payment to Mullah Omar, the Taliban's leader, in the amount of \$43 million.⁴⁹ The George W. Bush administration and UN seemingly overlooked four important factors when doling out the payment.

First, Omar's radical means by which he eradicated poppy cultivation had crippled the Afghan economy, which was dependent on poppy cultivation and opium production and trafficking for a significant portion of its GDP. For farmers in remote Afghanistan, opium poppy wasn't a mere cash crop, it was their entire livelihood. Opium had, quite literally, become a form of currency in bazaars across Helmand, Nangahar, and Kandahar provinces, where "shopkeepers kept scales in their shops as opposed to cash

⁴⁷ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 130.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁴⁹ Edward Follis and Douglas Century, *The Dark Art: My Undercover Life in Global Narco-terrorism* (New York, New York: Penguin Group, 2014), 172.

boxes or registers.”⁵⁰ In 2000, Afghanistan saw many of its farmers default on debts, leaving unemployed workers starving both financially and physically. Entire families of poppy farmers were forced to pick up and flee to the neighboring countries of Pakistan and Iran. There are many possible ways to address the poppy issue in Afghanistan, an immediate large scale eradication campaign leaving droves of Afghan farmers in poverty, is not one of them.

Another issue with Omar’s strategy was that he purposefully only targeted the landowners, sharecroppers, and farmers responsible for *cultivating* poppy opium in the opium trade. Drug stockpiles were not confiscated from producers or distributors and the Taliban made no effort to go after the illicit end of the network. Rather than arresting drug traffickers in charge of moving the heroin across borders and to cities around the world, the Taliban turned a blind eye to them. Drug bazaars continued to operate in full force, the Taliban continued to levy taxes on the trade and the purity and street price of heroin in the west remained relatively consistent.⁵¹ If opium cultivation was cut by three-fourths in the country leading the world in that category, then how could prices and purity remain the same? Understanding the inelasticity of the heroin market, economics infers that there was no significant affect on the heroin economy. Mullah Omar, top Taliban officials, and associated terrorist organizations and drug traffickers had been stockpiling opium in anticipation of this.

In one of the biggest insider trading scams in history, the perceived illiterate, simple, cave dwelling Taliban would make a fortune. Just before the ban, Mullah Omar

⁵⁰ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 90.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

sanctioned a meeting between high level drug lords: Haji Bashir Noorzai, Haji Bagcho Sherzai, Haji Baz Mohammad, and Haji Juma Khan.⁵² The meeting became known as the Quetta Shura, and while some speculate that the ban was the work of top tier al Qaeda officials, the months following the meeting sent into motion an economic crisis that would enrich the drug lords and terrorist groups.

As officials at the UN would later find out, the Taliban, al Qaeda, and its organization of drug lords had amassed a stockpile of over 2,800 metric tons of opium with a wholesale price of upwards of \$1 billion.⁵³ According to DEA officials, after stockpiling roughly 65 percent of opium cultivated during each growing season, their cache was enough to supply Europe for at least two years.⁵⁴ The UN-affiliated Narcotics Control Board came in with a higher estimate, projecting that their supply could serve Europe for more like four years.⁵⁵

In many ways, the actions of the Taliban were no different than past stock market crashes seen in the United States. Taliban “executives” received a large “bonus” after selling “stocks” before the market tumbled. Mullah Omar himself moved himself into a mansion outside of Kandahar province, laden with “crystal chandeliers and kitschy murals,” its own servants, guest house, and a mosque. Economics, rather than religion now guided the Taliban who reaped huge rewards while its people suffered. Popular resistance movements once again developed in southern Afghanistan. Taliban’s Kandahar provincial governor Mullah Mohammed Hassan Akundh said that in order to continue to

⁵² Follis and Century, *The Dark Art*, 172.

⁵³ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 106.

⁵⁴ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 131.

⁵⁵ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 100.

enforce the ban into 2001, “many people [would] be killed and others to face starvation.”⁵⁶ The loss of political capital was too much to handle and in September of 2001, at a time when they needed all the support they could get, the Taliban rescinded the ban.

Possibly the most direct negative effect of the Taliban’s involvement in the drug trade for the United States was its connection to terrorism. According to the U.S. Department of State, the Taliban was pressured to banish Osama Bin Laden over 30 times from 1996-2001.⁵⁷ Following the 1998 bombing of U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya that killed 224 people and wounded 4,000, State Department officials talked with Mullah Omar who “expressed interest in a confidential dialogue with the U.S.”⁵⁸ Despite the facade, Omar would remain loyal to the man who donated \$3 million of his own funds to help finance Omar’s initial takeover of Afghanistan, Osama Bin Laden.

It is believed that Bin Laden wasn’t directly involved in heroin production himself, but that he used his Arab contacts to help facilitate the trafficking of narcotics. Unsurprisingly, Bin Laden used his commission profits to set up terror camps and train jihadists. Mullah Omar gave Bin Laden access to Russian-made MI-17 helicopters and was also given control of the Afghan state-run Ariana Airlines through false identification that was provided to him. Bin Laden “ferried Islamic militants, arms, cash

⁵⁶ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 132.

⁵⁷ Sajit Gandhi, “Taliban File Update: U.S. Pressed Taliban to Expel Usama Bin Laden Over 30 Times Only Three Approaches in First Year of Bush Administration” (George Washington University: January 30, 2004).

⁵⁸ Ibid

and opium through the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan.”⁵⁹ Ariana became the official airline sponsor of al Qaeda, providing a quick and efficient way for the terrorist organization to conduct its supply management and transportation operations.

Apart from their connection to the Taliban, wealthy Afghan drug-lords were also responsible for donating hundreds of millions of dollars to terrorist groups worldwide.⁶⁰ Financial assistance by drug lords to terrorist groups is more of an investment than it is a donation. Sure the drug lords regarded the Taliban and al Qaeda with more respect than the west, but I don’t believe that was their primary motivator when providing funds to those groups. While donations are given to support a cause the donor believes in, investments supply a return, and for the drug lords that’s stability through chaos.

Effective counternarcotics efforts cannot be successful if those efforts are not being tended to. Throughout history, quelling insurgencies had taken precedence over impeding the drug trade, and it was no difference in this case. The Taliban opened the trade network that allowed drugs to go in and out of the country while al Qaeda provided a distraction to allow the opium trade to flourish.

The Post 9/11 Invasion

On October 7, 2001, twenty six days after the twin towers fell in Manhattan, United Airlines flight 93 crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, and the west wing of the Pentagon was attacked in D.C. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) commenced and the

⁵⁹ Stephen Braun and Judy Paternak, "Long Before Sept. 11, Bin Laden Aircraft Flew Under the Radar" (Los Angeles Times: November 18, 2001.)

⁶⁰ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 174.

United States launched attacks on Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan. President George W. Bush addressed the nation:

“Good afternoon. On my orders, the United States military has begun strikes against al Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.”⁶¹

Fifty tomahawk cruise missiles launched from U.S. Naval ships, B2 stealth bombers, B-1 and B-52 long range bombers, and other aircraft commenced a bombing campaign that would bring the ruthless Taliban organization to its knees. The targets included terrorist training camps and Taliban air defense systems. Notably avoided in the bombing raids were drug labs and heroin storage areas, facilities that had supported the financial backbone of the Taliban.

At the onset of the war, the CIA had provided a catalogue of possible targets that included “twenty five different drug labs, storage warehouses, and other opium-related facilities,” and that would slow down opium production in Afghanistan for over twelve months.⁶² Congressional Republican Dana Rohrabacher put pressure on the Bush Administration to destroy four Taliban controlled storage facilities that were believed to house over \$1 billion worth of narcotics.

The United Kingdom had a particular interest in seeing the Afghan drug trade ended and shared intelligence with the U.S. of over twenty-five different drug workshops

⁶¹ Mark Memmott, "Ten Years Ago Today, President Bush Announced Strikes On Afghanistan" (NPR: October 7, 2011).

⁶² Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 107.

that should be taken out. “The arms the Taleban are buying today are paid for with the lives of young British people buying their drugs on British streets,” Tony Blair claimed, just a few days before OEF began.⁶³ Despite the drug-related targets alone the size of small towns, the U.S. decided to avoid bombing them for fear of collateral damage, instead electing for a light footprint in the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban.⁶⁴

In December of 2001, twenty five well-known Afghan leaders met in Bonn, Germany to discuss the future of the Afghanistan. The result of the meeting was the creation of a constitution, supreme court, and interim government, led by Hamid Karzai. Under the new agreement, foreign military members consolidated into The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a NATO-led contingency created to help “provide security around Kabul and support reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.”⁶⁵ For the first two years of OEF, NATO and US combined forces maintained a troop level of under 10,000 service members.⁶⁶

Southern Pashtun farmers were far from satisfied with their Taliban rulers just prior to the U.S. invasion. Still sour over the harm that had been done following the 2000 opium ban, Pashtuns rose up and fought against the Taliban in the wake of the 2001. The new government, the Afghan Interim Authority, disregarded history. One of the first policies imposed by the government was to outlaw the cultivation, processing, trafficking, and consumption of opium. With farmers across Afghanistan in poverty, the

⁶³ Richard Davenport-Hines, "War Views: Afghan Heroin Trade Will Live on" (BBC News. October 10, 2001).

⁶⁴ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 107.

⁶⁵ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 133.

⁶⁶ Hannah Fairfield, Kevin Quealy, and Archie Tse, "Troop Levels in Afghanistan Since 2001" (The New York Times: September 30, 2009).

rule was largely ignored and opium cultivation would grow from 8,000 to 74,000 hectares (See Appendix A). With potential to earn up to twenty times more money for growing opium as opposed to wheat, it was clear that Afghan's would continue to grow the cash crop.

With the United States rolling into Afghanistan, it seemed as though the opium trade might finally be brought under control, that the U.S. would put an end to the drug trade and cut off the Taliban's financial lifeline. They did not. Military spokesman Sergeant Major Harrison Sarles put it bluntly, "We're not a drug task force. That's not part of our mission."⁶⁷ The U.S. military took a laissez-faire approach to handling the drug economy, deciding that it would be better to let the trade flourish if it meant making enemies with those who profited from it. The U.S. also declined to share intelligence gathered about notorious drug traffickers in the region with its international partners such as Great Britain.

The U.S. not only turned a blind eye to the drug trade, but actually funded warlords involved in the drug trade to help gather intelligence and fight against the Taliban, and it almost worked. Hazrat Ali and his 18,000 member militia were contracted by the U.S. to locate Osama Bin Laden, which they did until he slipped away at the battle of Tora Bora.⁶⁸ Aside from their manhunt, Ali's men were involved in the procurement of raw opium, its processing into heroin, and transportation outside of the country. This strategy was seen as justifiable as the United States anticipated that the war would be expeditious. Kill or capture the al Qaeda leaders, kick out the Taliban, and let local

⁶⁷ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 136.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Chieftains stabilize the country. U.S. service members walked right on past the poppy fields and drug labs. Had the United States anticipated a long, drawn out war and its additional role in state building, the U.S. might not have done things that way.

On the other hand, the United Kingdom would not stand idly by as Afghan heroin destroyed their society. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan assigned the UK the lead role in the counternarcotics mission, intending to reduce opium cultivation 70 percent by 2007.⁶⁹ In order to achieve that goal, the UK created a strategy that encompassed both eradication repayment and interdiction. United Kingdom counternarcotics officials agreed to “pay \$350 in compensation for each jerib of poppy that was eradicated.”⁷⁰ The program was expected to take five years and cost just over \$70 million in both UK and international funds but the plan did nothing more than add in the destabilization of mission critical regions.

The very premise of the eradication plan was faulty. Afghanistan was a war zone, and as such it was hard for UK officials to check to see if their plan was actually working as they intended. It was not feasible for officials to go farm to farm and compensate farmers for their part in eradication; instead they depended on local commanders to do that for them.⁷¹ The Afghan Chieftains knew this and decided to work the system so that they could capitalize off both international assistance and drug money. Farms operated by the officials themselves were left alone while poor, weak farmers who couldn't pay a bribe saw their crops destroyed. Instead of passing on the international funding to the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 138.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

poor farmers who eradicated their poppy, local officials pocketed the money for themselves.

The prominent landlords became thankful to local authorities who spared their farms and threw their support behind them, further strengthening the corrupt officials' grip on the community. Local commanders overstated the amount of land that had been eradicated and then began growing even more poppy the season after. Opium, being a labor intensive product to extract, required the work of many people to get done. In the past, the amount of poppy opium farmers would cultivate depended on how many family members they had and workers they could pay to be in the fields. Since farmers were now paid to destroy their opium, they no longer needed laborers to process it, and farmers began to grow as much as their fields would allow. This resulted in the expansion, rather than reduction of poppy cultivation during 2002 and 2003. With no way to audit the leaders, a check was simply cut in their name and they walked away without fulfilling any of the programs intended goals.

Due to manipulation, international funds for the cultivation reduction effort dwindled. Now paying nine times less per jerib for eradication, it was no longer financially sensible to accept the aid. Farmers would make five times the amount to cultivate poppy then they would to let the government eradicate it. With families to feed and debts to pay off, the financial benefit of growing opium was influential to farmers. Eradication efforts came to a violent head in Helmand province when one anti-eradication protest left eight farmers and dozens wounded at the hands of the Afghan

National Police.⁷² In the eastern province of Nangarhar, 10,000 farmers assaulted eradication units and police with stones. As the interim government and the international community began to see the difficulty with eradication, it became clear why the United States didn't want to touch the issue.

The United Kingdom refused to give up. In 2004, Britain established a first class counternarcotics force tasked with drug interdiction, the Afghan Narcotics Special Force.⁷³ This unit was accountable to the Ministry of Interior of Karzai's government but was run by the Special Air Services (SAS) and Special Boat Service (SBS) of the British special forces. In its inaugural year, the Afghan Narcotics Special Force confiscated over "seventy-five tons of opiates, destroyed eighty labs, and dismantled two opium bazaars."⁷⁴ The Taliban spent countless men and resources trying to protect the drug labs, but to no avail. The ANSF interdiction efforts concentrated on attacking the drug trade at its most valuable point, as opium was processed into heroin. By focusing on the criminal drug traffickers instead of the poor farmers, the United Kingdom was able to make significant strides through a relatively small and cost-efficient means.

The United States began to change paths themselves after they concluded that "the narcotics problem has become a major impediment for ridding Afghanistan of warlords, the Taliban, and al Qaeda."⁷⁵ In March of 2005, the United States Department of Defense, USAID, State Department, and Drug Enforcement Agency created a five-pronged approach to addressing the counternarcotics problem. (See Appendix B)

⁷² Ibid., 140.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 141.

Alternative livelihoods, elimination and eradication, interdiction, law enforcement and justice reforms, and public information became the pillars of the United States' anti-drug policy. The U.S. military would also begin to share intelligence and assist the DEA and Afghan counter-narcotics forces with transportation and targeting. According to a report published in October of 2007, \$180 million was spent on alternative livelihoods, \$258 million on elimination and eradication of opium; \$65 million on interdiction; \$24 million on law enforcement and justice reform; and \$5 million on public information.⁷⁶

Amidst pressure in the media and political tension, the Bush administration agreed to a \$50 million contract with the private corporation Dyncorp to create and train the 150-man Central Poppy Eradication Force (CPEF) comprised of Afghan soldiers.⁷⁷ President Hamid Karzai threw his support behind eradication, arguing that poppy was a worse problem than terrorism. U.S. Military officials worried that the eradication efforts would hurt the public relations campaign that sought to win the hearts and minds of Afghan citizens and would fail to address the long-term drug problem. Their concerns were well-founded.

In the years following its inception, CPEF has been met with armed resistance to its eradication efforts. Revolts, blocked roads, and armed fighting kept the CPEF from returning to the conflicted areas. Eradication worked to temporarily limit the cultivation of poppy, which dropped 27,000 hectares in a year. However, the next year, cultivation shot back up 61,000 hectares, eliminating any gains the eradication efforts had achieved (See Appendix A).

⁷⁶ John Glaze, "Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy" (Strategic Studies Institute: October 1, 2007).

⁷⁷ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 143.

In another counterproductive result, \$108 million in funds earmarked by the United States for infrastructure projects to help decrease Afghan dependence on poppy was actually used to construct irrigation system to help grow even more poppy, one audit report found.⁷⁸ An additional \$18.7 million dedicated to alternative livelihood funding for farmers was also used to develop irrigation systems.⁷⁹ USAID cash-for-work programs were ineffective as well. Farmers who enrolled in the program suffered shocking financial losses as much as 90 percent of their previous year's income.⁸⁰ In a repeat of British history just two years before, U.S. efforts to eradicate and assist in alternative livelihood funding ultimately failed. By focusing too much on eradication and alternative livelihood funding, the United States had relied too much on these two methods in order to achieve results.

While hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars were used to line the pockets of corrupt local officials, the \$65 million in interdiction funding did a lot of good. Combined Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNP-A) and DEA teams were successful in “seizing 47.9 metric tons of opium and 5.5 metric tons of heroin in 2005.”⁸¹ Just as the British run ANSF had triumphed, the CNPA and DEA too saw considerable success. Had the U.S. and UK put more funds in interdiction as opposed to eradication, the results would have been more even more eye-catching.

In 2006, with troop levels hovering just over 20,000, the Taliban began a resurgence campaign aimed at retaking provinces in the south and east. Mimicking

⁷⁸ Brianna Ehley, "The U.S.'s \$7 Billion War on Drugs Helped Grow Afghanistan's Heroin Biz" (The Fiscal Times: October 13, 2014).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 151.

⁸¹ Ehley, "The U.S.'s \$7 Billion War on Drugs".

jihadist tactics frequently used in the Iraq conflict, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) more than doubled from 2005-2006.⁸² Suicide bombers also became over six times more frequent in 2006 as they were in 2005. Allied control of Afghanistan would take a turn for the worst, as would its fight against drugs. Unlike in conflict areas, well-secured areas where the government was able to safely insert its teams, eradication was largely successful.

An unintended consequence of the limited progress was that opium cultivation pushed further and further into Taliban controlled areas.⁸³ The Taliban profits from taxing opium produced in their jurisdiction, and since that's almost all production, the Taliban receives an inflated return. If cultivation and production returned in government controlled regions, the Taliban would earn less. Today, almost all of the opium production takes place outside of the Afghan and international governments' sight and reach (See Appendix C).

When President Obama took office in 2009, the unsuccessful and disadvantageous poppy eradication strategy was put to an end. Instead, the Obama administration began to focus on developing Afghanistan's licit economy and addressing the systemic reasons as to why farmers cultivate opium poppy. The fact of the matter is, Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan is the longest war in the United States' history, and the government and its people have been eager to withdraw from Afghanistan.

⁸² British Broadcasting Corporation, "The Taliban Fights Back" (BBC News).

⁸³ Stan Veuger, "When The U.S. Cracks Down On Afghan Heroin, It Aids The Taliban." (Forbes: April 19, 2013).

Due to this impatience, “policymakers were showering Afghan provinces with money hoping to deliver results within six to twelve months.”⁸⁴ A sixty year old problem will not be solved in less than a year, no matter how much the United States wills it. As U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns has acknowledged, “were the drug trade easy to dislodge from Afghanistan, we would have done it already.”⁸⁵ With the Afghan economy overwhelming dependent on the opium trade, experts estimate that it will take at least 10-15 years to put Afghanistan in a position to be able to drop its old habit.

Now that the historical background behind the rise of the opium trade in Afghanistan has been covered, the next section of the paper lays out how the opium trade works, the methods that are employed to smuggle the drugs, and the terrorist and criminal groups who benefit. Further, Section Two examines several key nations who are affected by opium and heroin trafficking and explains why they have an interest in fighting the opium problem in Afghanistan.

⁸⁴Christopher Ingrahm, "It's Official: The U.S. Drug War in Afghanistan Is a \$7.6 Billion Failure" (Washington Post: October 22, 2014).

⁸⁵Jennifer Quigley-Jones, "The High Costs of Afghanistan's Opium Economy" (Center for American Progress: June 8, 2012).

SECTION II: THE WINNERS AND LOSERS

The Drug Trade Benefactors

While opium is a relatively low-maintenance crop to cultivate, it does require a warm, dry climate like Afghanistan's to grow in. Despite opium requiring little care, it is labor intensive and requires hard work and dedication to cultivate and produce. The growing cycle helps to offset the high labor intensity is. Opium poppy can be planted in the September fall and no later than early December. Three months after putting the black seeds in the ground, beautiful flowers fill the landscape. By late spring, the petals drop off and "green pod containing a thick, milky sap-opium in its purest form" is exposed.⁸⁶ The farmers must manually extract the opium resin by going poppy to poppy and using a curved knife.⁸⁷ In countries such as Australia and France, opium is refined for legitimate use in prescription painkillers such as Oxycontin, Oxycodone, and Vicodin. Almost no Afghan opium is used for legitimate purposes.

After cultivation, raw Afghan opium is brought to "laboratories," but that's just the fancy name for them. Afghan laboratories are usually nothing beyond mud huts with very basic kitchen supplies. By applying lime, ammonium chloride, and boiling the opium in water, a dark brown morphine base is created. To make the drug easier to transport, the morphine base is poured into pre-made molds and dried in the sun to

⁸⁶ Glaze, "Opium and Afghanistan", 3.

⁸⁷ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 36.

harden. The harden morphine base blocks are ten times lighter than the liquid morphine base, making them significantly easier to move.⁸⁸

After the drying process, the morphine blocks are taken to more sophisticated refineries where they are combined “with acetic anhydride to create heroin base, a coarse granular substance.”⁸⁹ At this point, the low grade heroin is still thick and brown. In Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, where the substance is sold, people refer to the crude heroin as “brown sugar.” In order for the heroin to be developed into the high quality white colored heroin used on the streets of Russia and Europe, hydrochloric acid, chloroform, and sodium carbonate is added in a series of more intricate steps.

In order to reach the markets outside of southwest and eastern Afghanistan, where the drugs are grown, traffickers utilize three main routes. Drugs originating in southern Afghanistan’s Kandahar and Helmand provinces pass through Baluchistan Province in Pakistan before making their way to Iran while some of the drugs head directly through Iran’s Nimroz and Farah provinces. Lastly, the Persian Gulf is taken advantage of as naval vessels are deployed off of the coast of Pakistan’s coast where they travel across the gulf to the African continent⁹⁰ (See Appendix D for Global Flow of Heroin).

The following tradecraft is deployed by traffickers in order to clandestinely conceal, transport, and deliver opium and heroin around the world⁹¹:

- Maintaining underground storage facilities used to hold opium and heroin caches
- Concealment of heroin inside hollowed out logs and rolled up carpets

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 163.

⁹¹ Ibid., 57-172.

- The placement of bags of heroin inside cabbage buds so that as it sprouts, the mature cabbage head conceal the drugs
- Use of Nigerian “visitors” to Pakistan made to ingest rubber pellets that contained heroin inside them
- Adopting of camels to cross the Baluchistan Desert and carry heavy amounts of heroin and morphine base across long distances
- Operating speed boats for the purpose of traveling drug supplies quickly to larger boats deeper in the ocean
- Forcing sheep and goats to ingest bags of heroin
- Painting of smuggling vehicles to pose as a government agency responsible for removing land mines
- Sewing heroin bags into the cuffs and seams of women’s dresses and even badges commemorating Queen Elizabeth
- Stuffing heroin into hollowed-out high heels
- Gluing drugs into walnuts that were split and resealed
- Use of code words trucking firms to alert guards at checkpoints that they had paid their protection payment
- Operation of government vehicles by Afghan police and Iranian intelligence officers to smuggle drugs past border checkpoints
- Bribing of Afghan National Army, Afghan Police, and Pakistan security to ensure unmolested travel

The corruption that pervades the drug trade provides a significant advantage to the drug traffickers. According to the U.N. Office of Drug and Crime, \$2.5 billion in bribes were paid to Afghan public officials.⁹² With the borders essentially wide open and access to government intelligence, smugglers have no issue bringing large volumes of drugs out of

⁹² "U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan: A Report to the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control." (Federation of American Scientists. July 1, 2010), 8.

Afghanistan. Military personnel in Pakistan and Iran tasked with preventing smuggling are already susceptible to bribes and do not have the skills or expertise to investigate corruption even if they are legit. The slick tradecraft used by smugglers could evade even the smartest and best trained of law abiding military officials.

A 2010 report to the United States Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control suggests that “proactive drug investigations are a significant weapon against corruption,” and that “U.S. law enforcement personnel should expand cases to include targeting corrupt Afghan officials.”⁹³ Law enforcement officials specifically trained in uncovering these methods are needed in order to catch the criminals in the act. Anti-corruption counternarcotics efforts will make great strides in legitimizing the established democracy in Afghanistan.

After the drugs leave Afghanistan, non-Afghan drug traffickers take over the fencing and the drugs become incomparably harder to track. Law enforcement officials in Europe believe that the members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) are in charge of roughly 80 percent of heroin trafficking that passes through Turkey.⁹⁴ Also, “Arab, Chechen, and central Asian militants linked to al Qaeda help smuggle drugs beyond Afghanistan’s borders.”⁹⁵ The international drug trade fuels insurgencies and conflicts across the globe, and the profiteers couldn’t care less that the product they pass on is deadly.

The price of heroin multiples as it reaches the market, retailing on European streets for more than 40 times its value in Afghanistan. It is estimated that roughly 25

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 8.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 10.

percent of criminal enterprises and 50 percent of transnational criminal groups' income is derived from drug trafficking.⁹⁶ To this end, the heroin trade seeks to do even more damage to society by providing gang members and drug dealers an incentive to continue the drug trade. In addition, the profits from drug contribute to the funding of other criminal activity.

Back in Afghanistan, the once-humble Taliban earns a substantial profit. There is a vast array of gang activities that the Taliban partakes in. Highway robberies, kidnappings, extortion, human trafficking, and illicit trading in wildlife are just a few of the ways the Taliban makes money.⁹⁷ In order to avoid government tax for commercial activity and collect tax of their own, they also are involved in the smuggling of licit goods such as gems between Afghanistan and Pakistan. More still, telecom companies are forced to pay the Taliban protection fees, less have their towers destroyed. Taliban leaders also acquire a good portion of their income from donations in Pakistan and the Middle East.⁹⁸

On top of funding from all these moneymakers, the biggest Taliban cash cow is its drug trade. The Taliban skims money off the top at all phases of the opium trade which, in total, accounts for about 70 percent of its income.⁹⁹ The average opium poppy farmer is taken by the Taliban for 10 percent of his revenue, which is referred to as *ushr*. A 20 percent tax (*zakat*) is charged per truckload of opium moving from the farm by the

⁹⁶ Tomlinson, "Drug Traffic from Afghanistan", 7.

⁹⁷ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 150.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Glaze, "Opium and Afghanistan", 7.

distributor.¹⁰⁰ Morphine base and heroin refineries are also charged 10-25 percent for being allowed to play their part in the drug trade.¹⁰¹

In addition from its tax revenue, the Taliban earns money from contracting out its protective services as escorts for drug convoys to provide safe passage to its borders. The largest source of the Taliban's drug money comes from fees paid by major drug trafficking cartels to ensure that they are allowed to operate without defiance - a worthwhile investment. The Drug Enforcement Agency estimates the Taliban's revenue from drug tax and protection to be several hundred million dollars a year but estimates from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other sources suggest that number may be even higher, approaching the \$500 million mark.^{102,103} The money earned by the Taliban is used to buy weapons and supplies to make IEDs and kill both ISAF and Afghan troops.

The Taliban isn't the only terrorist group to reap in the benefits from Afghanistan's illicit opium market. The negative impacts of the Afghan drug trade in its funding of terrorism spreads far past the borders of the country. The Haqqani network, an insurgency group based in Pakistan's Warzardistan province and Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin, an extremist group in Afghanistan and Azerbaijan, both raise money through taxing of opium poppy cultivation.¹⁰⁴ The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a terrorist group born

¹⁰⁰ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 88.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰² "U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan", 2.

¹⁰³ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

in the 1990s and influenced by Osama Bin Laden, is said to control almost three quarters of the heroin trade in Central Asia.¹⁰⁵

The more well-known terror group, al Qaeda, benefited as well. Forty-one percent of Afghan farmers surveyed by journalist Gretchen Peters reported that, “low level al Qaeda fighters regularly helped to protect heroin shipments once they reached the Pakistan border.”¹⁰⁶ In one instance, the U.S. Navy detained al Qaeda operatives sitting on \$3 million worth of heroin on a boat in the Persian Gulf.¹⁰⁷ No one knows exactly how much al Qaeda earns from the heroin trade, but it’s definitely not an insignificant amount. Terrorist groups like al Qaeda and the Taliban don’t just profit financially from the drug trade, but by utilizing the drug trade routes, they are also given a means by which they can smuggle jihadists and weapons around the world.

Transnational criminal organizations and terrorist groups involved in the drug trade need a way to launder their drug money once it is earned. Several different strategies are employed to facilitate this process and the most common is the use of hawalas. Although hawalas are certainly used for legitimate purposes by law abiding people, illegitimate actors have taken advantage of the system to a large degree. In countries without structured banking systems, hawalas provide a cheap, quick, and simple way to transfer money from one party to another. Money goes through the hands of a trustworthy facilitator and confirmation numbers are used by the receiving party in order to “withdraw” the money.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 145.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 4.

Hawalas account for roughly \$100 billion dollars in global transactions and it is unknown exactly how much of money transferred by hawalas is legitimate. Tasked with following Osama Bin Laden's 9/11 funding money trail, the FBI and the DEA's Financial Investigations Unit determined that a total of \$300,000 came from hawalas. Hawalas in the Middle East had funneled the money through Thailand to support the attack.¹⁰⁸

It is estimated that more than \$1 billion in drug money is moved from Helmand and Kandahar province alone.¹⁰⁹ An estimated 33 percent or \$3 billion of hawala activity in Pakistan is connected to the drug trade. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan have taken steps to address the misuse of the hawala system by setting up a free register in which hawaladars, the "banking official," registers with the state to allow the government to track their transactions to ensure their legitimacy.

Despite the register's success, the large scale of the hawala system means that Afghanistan and Pakistan cannot investigate all the suspicious transactions themselves. Through assistance from U.S. and international law enforcement, the hawala system can be subject to much greater scrutiny, thus helping to block the laundering of drug money into and out of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In addition to hawala money laundering, criminal and terrorist factions use trade-based money laundering techniques to assure that their dirty money goes unnoticed. Trade-based money laundering consists of two parties who exchange licit good with one another and over inflate the price of the product by a margin of roughly 10 to 20

¹⁰⁸ Follis and Century, *The Dark Art*, 236.

¹⁰⁹ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 181.

percent.¹¹⁰ For example, one party has a supply of lumber worth \$100,000 and wants to launder \$20,000 worth of drug money. The supplier simply sells the lumber for \$120,000 to the buyer in another country and receives only \$100,000 from the buyer but now has \$120,000 in clean, accounted for money. According to U.S. Treasury Department official John Cassara, Trade Transparency Units (TTU's) need to be set up in Afghanistan and Pakistan to monitor trade-based money laundering of supplies used in Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts.¹¹¹

Another form of money laundering utilized is the establishment of business fronts, shell companies, and real estate ventures worldwide. This form of laundering relies on an actual physical presence of a business in which the executives who run the business and the salaries paid to those executives are made up. The Karachi Stock Exchange, Pakistan's unregulated stock market is another means by which the Taliban and its affiliates can launder money. With an increased law enforcement presence of white-collar trained officers and agents from around the world with experience investigating money laundering, the amount of illicit funds gained from opium and spread across the world to fund terrorism and crime will be cut. Of course, some money will slip through the cracks but any effort made by the international community to address this issue will be beneficial.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 183.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

The Drug Trade Victims

Heroin is a drug that pervades all segments of society, all around the world. “My little girl Laila used to cry a lot. So my sister-in-law gave the child opium to calm her down. She’s ten and she’s hooked on heroin,” says Zahra, an Afghan villager.¹¹²

A 2007 video survey of forty-two Taliban militants (many of which were poppy farmers), by the Canadian newspaper Globe and Mail showed that 38 percent of respondents hoped that they would make an addict of non-Muslims.¹¹³ Opium and heroin has been utilized by the Taliban as a weapon against the west, just as they did to the Soviets during their Afghan occupation. Taliban clerics and other extremist leaders praise opium growing as an agricultural jihad and a way to ruin the lives of the western infidels, and, to an extent, they are right. However, what the extremist leaders fail to note when they are making their pitch to ignore the Koran’s message that drugs are “the filth of Satan's handiwork” is the effect opium production has had on Muslims.¹¹⁴

According to the UNODC, Muslims consume *over 50 percent* of the opiates grown and refined in Afghanistan.¹¹⁵ Current Afghan law enforcement efforts to help prevent the flow of opium and heroin are insufficient, less than two percent of drugs are seized by police.¹¹⁶ On the streets of Afghanistan, one gram of heroin costs about \$6 and for citizens of a country that has been involved in violent conflict for over thirty years, heroin provides a cheap way to help handle the problems that they have had to deal

¹¹² Renee Montagne, "An Afghan Village Of Drug Addicts, From Ages 10 To 60" (NPR: April 30, 2014).

¹¹³ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 123.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Tomlinson, "Drug Traffic from Afghanistan", 9

with.¹¹⁷ Afghanistan has more than 1 million addicts of opium and heroin, 40 percent of which are women and children.¹¹⁸ The country's current budget allows for \$2 per addict and enough bed space at treatment centers for only 2,305 people.¹¹⁹ With the added concerns of the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C, opium in Afghanistan is an epidemic for the country and has created a serious global health concern.

It's easy to blame the Afghan farmers who grow the opium that causes all this suffering as scapegoats; however, they are not the ones at fault. In a country where the unemployment rate flutters around 40 percent and 38 percent of Afghans live under the poverty line, poppy is the most valuable crop to grow. With lack of agricultural subsidies common in western nations, poor farmers require small loans to buy food and clothing in order to get their families through the growing season. Under the "salaam system," the opium buyers provide cash up front to farmers and sharecroppers and requests that they be paid back after the opium is cultivated and sold. Often times, farmers do not have a choice in whether or not they accept the offer. Through threats and coercion, the farmer has two options, grow opium or be killed.

The salaam system loan repayment term is not subject to weather conditions or political change. When cultivating season comes around, the farmers are expected to pay up. During the Taliban's control in 2000, the poppy ban sent hundreds of thousands of farmers into default on their loans. The people connected with those responsible for eradicating the poppy fields were forcing farmers to pay money they originally planned on earning after selling the opium! Many of the opium farmers were compelled to flee to

¹¹⁷Tahir Qadir, "Afghanistan, the Drug Addiction Capital" (BBC News: April 11, 2013).

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

neighboring countries or sell of their land or livestock to make up the payment. One farmer in from Khogiani, Afghanistan in Nangahar province had to trade his daughter to cover \$3,200 of the \$7,200 he owed to his creditors.¹²⁰ Predatory loans persisted even after the Taliban regime fell. In 2004, a farmer had to trade his three year old daughter to repay his debt and escape execution.¹²¹ It is for this reason that, according to local researchers, “virtually every farmer interviewed expressed a desire to grow something else.”¹²²

Understanding this complexity, drug interdiction centering efforts on criminal and terrorist enterprises responsible for opium trafficking makes more sense. No suggestion that overlooks the need for a long-term agricultural overhaul in Afghanistan is realistic and I am not arguing that interdiction alone will solve the issue. Nevertheless, I do argue that a reinforced counternarcotics push in Afghanistan will make a positive impact for not just Afghanistan, but for everyone.

Once the nation is more stable, efforts to reinstate alternative livelihood and eradication programs will need to occur. What is often forgotten about opium is that it is not just used in heroin, but also licit painkillers such as morphine, oxycodone, fentanyl, hydrocodone, and methadone. While the present market for prescription painkillers certainly cannot handle the entirety of Afghan opium production, it may be able to provide partial and temporary relief while Afghanistan’s agricultural production is adjusted. Helping the farmers make that transition, rather than destroying their crops and offering no alternative, will create a sustainable future for them.

¹²⁰ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 101.

¹²¹ Brown, *Shooting Up*, 152.

¹²² Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 236.

Just over the border in the most heroin addicted country in the world, Pakistan, 6.7 million people used drugs in the year 2013, taking part in the \$2 billion industry.¹²³ In a country where drug rehabilitation programs can treat approximately 30,000 people, 4.25 million Pakistanis are categorized as dependent on drugs. From 2005 to 2011 the amount of drug users that were positive for HIV rose 40 percent. Pakistan is just another example of a nation shook by the opium production in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has a stake in the fight against Afghan drug criminals, the international community will need its unwavering support if the proposed joint-law enforcement mission is to succeed. Tightening the Afghan-Pakistan border region and stamping out corruption in the Pakistani ISI, police, and military will help block the trafficking of Afghan opium and heroin.

Beyond the western border of Afghanistan lies the Islamic Republic of Iran with a population of 77 million, over 4 million of which are addicts.¹²⁴ Five percent of Iranians are victims of the extended border shared with Afghanistan and primary drug trade routes that runs through the country. As many as 318 Iranians were executed by their government for drug use, yet addicts continue to demand opium and heroin.¹²⁵ Hundred of Iranian troops monitoring the border have been killed by drug traffickers trying to get their product to the addicts.

¹²³ J.T. Quigley, "Pakistan: The Most Heroin-Addicted Country in the World." (The Diplomat: March 24, 2014).

¹²⁴ Stephen Kinzer, "US, Iran Share a Common Enemy: Heroin -The Boston Globe." (Boston Globe: April 7, 2014).

¹²⁵ "U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan: A Report to the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control." (Federation of American Scientists: July 1, 2010).

Iranian police are responsible for seizing more heroin than any law enforcement agency in the world and half of Iran's prison population is made up of non-violent drug offenders. Although Iran is an unlikely ally to the United States and its partners, the country's geographic location and interest and contribution in opium counternarcotics makes the country a necessary partner in the fight against Afghan drug trafficking. Intelligence sharing and border cooperation by Iran will be instrumental in helping to combat the issue and make sure that Iran cannot be used as a staging area to ship drugs out of the region. As of April 2015, the United States has achieved success in negotiating a deal with Iran regarding the development of their nuclear capacity. With the U.S. set to phase out its sanctions against Iran in exchange for changes to their nuclear program, future partnership in a mutually beneficial area such as counternarcotics efforts is now a realistic possibility.

Two thousand ninety-nine and a half miles away from Afghanistan, heroin is "as easy to buy as a snickers," according to Russian anti-drug czar Viktor Ivanov.¹²⁶ Ninety percent of Russia's 2.5 million addicts consume over 70 tons, greater than one-fifth of the heroin that derives from Afghanistan.¹²⁷ According to a poll conducted by the Associated Press-GfK, 87 percent of Russians recognize drug abuse as a "very serious problem."¹²⁸ Approximately 80 percent of Russian street crime is attributed to drug-users.¹²⁹ Russia has continually released statements critical of NATO's failure to address the drug problem in Afghanistan, despite the opium issue predating the NATO-led invasion.

¹²⁶ Sasha Oldershausen, "Russia Drug Abuse Top Problem, According To Poll." (The Huffington Post: July 12, 2012).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Tomlinson, "Drug Traffic from Afghanistan as a Threat to European Security", 7.

Looking back at the Soviet Union's destruction of Afghanistan's agriculture infrastructure and fields during the Soviet-Afghan war, part of the blame for the development of Afghanistan's opium problem lies with Russia.

While 80 Russians die every single day from heroin, overdose is not the only opium related issue that plagues the country. Russian citizen Nikolai Leonov recounts walking through a suburb of Moscow with his daughter of two years when she picked up a bloodied syringe off the ground before he could grab it away.¹³⁰ Incidents like these are not uncommon. According to a report published by the United Nations, in the past ten years the HIV infection rate in Russia has more than tripled. Excluding African nations, Russia has one of the highest percentages of people affected with HIV in the world, a total of 980,000 people.¹³¹ Many of the woes related to the spread of HIV can be attributed to the lack of governmental support for prevention programs such as clean-needle initiatives but the fact still remains, the heroin inside those dirty needles came from Afghanistan.

Like Iran, Russia is an out of the ordinary U.S. partner to cooperate in a counternarcotics effort. Despite this truth, I argue that Russia has a prevailing interest in seeing the Afghan drug trade come to an end. In March of 2010, Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's Ambassador to NATO said, "[Russia] is losing 30,000 lives a year to the Afghan drug trade and a million people are addicts. This is an undeclared war against our country."¹³² With support of Russian law enforcement personnel, the international

¹³⁰ Oldershausen, "Russia Drug Abuse Top Problem".

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan", 11.

community can forget about previous disagreements and come together to help support a common cause that will benefit all of the concerned nations.

Current ISAF partners in Europe are also negatively affected by Afghanistan's opium drug trade which has made addicts of 1.4 million citizens of the European Union (EU).¹³³ According to a 2013 report released by the Council of Europe's Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, due to the inability of the international community to block the outflow of heroin from Afghanistan, Europe has been severely damaged. In addition to financing transnational and criminal syndicates, as previously noted, opium is responsible for 75 percent of drug deaths in the EU.¹³⁴ In the United Kingdom, where roughly 90 percent of heroin sold comes from Afghanistan and Turkey, where a significant amount of opiate drugs are smuggled on their way to the European market, those numbers elevate to 83 percent and 88 percent, respectively.¹³⁵ The additional contribution of any law enforcement agents and intelligence analyst that a country can provide will be helpful in making strides against Afghan drug trafficking.

Current law enforcement cooperatives set up to help fight the drug trade have proven successful, but have not been enough. For example, cooperation from Turkey and 19 participating European nations has led to the arrest of 876 individuals as a result of 180 joint investigations.¹³⁶ Despite these achievements, drug trafficking still heavily persists in Turkey. Interpol, Europol, UNODC, and similar global and regional

¹³³ Tomlinson, "Drug Traffic from Afghanistan", 8.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 12.

organizations that target the Afghan drug trade have not done enough to stop opium trafficking efforts.

As stated by the former UNODC Executive Director, Antonio Maria Costa, “it is incomparably cheaper and easier to detect and interdict an illicit activity at the source, rather than at destination.”¹³⁷ With ISAF troops already withdrawn from the country and U.S. troops set to drawdown, the Council of Europe suggests that, “there is little hope, if any, that the effectiveness of the Afghan authorities...dismantling of clandestine production and trade in opiates can be improved.”¹³⁸

If the international community continues on the current track, opium levels will continue to rise and the effects of opium and heroin will worsen. The countries discussed above, as well as many nations not discussed, have an interest in dismantling the production and trade of opiates. It is for this reason that I propose a combined international counternarcotics interdiction force operate in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future as foreign troop levels drop. In the next section I will describe the success of the United States Drug Enforcement Agency from 2003-2014 and use their efforts as a model by which the international community can follow to combat the drug trade “at the source, rather than at destination.”

¹³⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 10.

SECTION III: THE DEA: A MODEL OF SUCCESS

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration was founded in 1973 as a law enforcement agency branched under the Department of Justice and entrusted with enforcing and regulating the Controlled Substance Act, 21 United States Code (21 U.S.C.). In 2003, with poppy opium cultivation growing by 10 times the amount of its 2001 figure, the DEA reopened its Kabul office in Afghanistan. As an agency with more than 10,000 employees, 5,000 of which are agents, the DEA initially assigned only 13 of its members to Kabul.¹³⁹ By 2013, the DEA had bumped up its personnel level in Afghanistan to 97, and is currently set to reduce its staff at a rate comparable to the U.S. military drawdown.¹⁴⁰

At its peak involvement in 2013, the DEA committed \$17 million of its own annual appropriations for payroll and related expenses incurred in its mission in Afghanistan. The “DEA also received \$30.5 million from the DoS Bureau of South and Central Asia Affairs (DoS-SCA) primarily for personnel-related costs; and \$6.6 million from DOD for the operation and maintenance of aircraft, \$8.7 million for the startup costs associated with Global Discovery Aircraft, and \$350,000 for staffing reimbursements”...along with \$5.4 million “for program costs from the DoS Bureau of

¹³⁹ Thomas Schrettner and W. Norvell Travis, "DEA in Afghanistan" (Marine Corps Gazette: 94.3, 2010), 2.

¹⁴⁰ James Capra, "'Future U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts in Afghanistan'" (DEA: February 5, 2014), 2.

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (DoS-INL).”¹⁴¹ The grand total for FY 2013 DEA funding in Afghanistan was approximately \$68.6 million. The DEA’s budget was miniscule compared to the \$86 billion spent by the DOD in Afghanistan in the same year,

The DEA’s mission in Afghanistan is threefold: “conduct investigations of high level narcotics trafficking organizations...implement its intelligence-driven drug flow attack strategy (DFAS)...and participate with the interagency community to develop Afghan capacity.”¹⁴² With few dedicated personnel and a small budget, DEA Special Agent Gary O’Hara, who served in Afghanistan, called it, "one of the most difficult missions a civilian law enforcement agency has ever undertaken.”¹⁴³

Agents normally accustomed to wearing only bullet proof vests and jeans and investigating drug sales of gangs and criminals on the U.S. streets had to adapt to wearing full combat uniforms and Kevlar helmets in pursuit of insurgents engaged in international drug trafficking. Although many DEA personnel had previously served in Afghanistan in an active or reserve military capacity, it was an adjustment for everyone operating under different restrictions and with an entirely new role to investigate, build evidence, and convict drug traffickers.

To achieve its goals in Afghanistan, one of the DEA’s five, 10-member Foreign deployed Advisory Support Teams (FAST) was always stationed in Afghanistan and the

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Schrettner and Travis, "DEA in Afghanistan", 2.

¹⁴³ James Gordon-Meek "DEA Team Suits up to Fight Opium Trade in Afghanistan", (New York Daily News: 14. April 3, 2005), 1.

five teams were rotated every four months.¹⁴⁴ DEA FAST agents are highly trained operatives educated in investigations, tactical assaults, and personnel recovery, tasked to “identify, target, and dismantle drug trafficking organizations with ties to terrorist organizations in the region.”¹⁴⁵ In May of 2009, a single raid conducted in Helmand province, in conjunction with the U.S. Special Forces and the Afghanistan National Police and Army, the FAST team seized:

“18,164 kilograms of opium; 200 kilograms of heroin; 1,000 kilograms of hashish; 72,727 kilograms of poppy seed; chemicals used to make drugs; and a significant cache of weapons including 44 blocks of Iranian C4, Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), mortar rounds, and other weapons used to attack Coalition Forces.”¹⁴⁶

The heroin confiscated in this sole mission would have accounted for nearly a third of the organization’s entire domestic total for 2009.¹⁴⁷ In FY 2009, the DEA claims to have captured another 25 Afghan heroin labs, the majority of which were connected to the Taliban.¹⁴⁸

Supplementary to its primary assignment, the DEA team also trains members of the National Interdiction Unit (NIU), Sensitive Investigations Unit (SIU), and Technical Investigations Unit (TIU) of the CNP-A. Officers of the Afghan counternarcotics police are chosen for these units based on the result of physical fitness, psychological, and

¹⁴⁴ Capra, “Future U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts”, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Drug Enforcement Administration “FY 2014 Performance Budget”, 31.

¹⁴⁶ “U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy”, 21.

¹⁴⁷ “Drug Enforcement Administration “Statistics & Facts”.

¹⁴⁸ “U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy”, 24.

urinalysis testing, as well as background checks.¹⁴⁹ Members of the SIU are vetted even further and required to undergo initial, and later randomly selected, polygraphs. The NIU, SIU, and TIU are provided guidance and mentorship with the hope of being able to bring the Afghan drug trade under their control one day. From May 2013 to February 2014, the CNP-A made 2,258 arrests, destroyed 55 drug labs, and captured over 60,619 liters and 32,214 kg of chemicals and over 121 metric tons of drugs.¹⁵⁰ Those arrested by the CNP-A were prosecuted by the Afghan judicial system.

With ambitions to trace the drug money that is financing terrorism, the DEA was appointed to lead the Afghanistan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC), a multi-agency U.S. intelligence organization. In cooperation with the DOD and U.S. Department of Treasury, and in conjunction with its Afghan counterparts, the ATFC has gathered intelligence of the financial networks that exists between foreign terrorist groups, local insurgents, drug smugglers, businesses, financial establishments, and unscrupulous politicians. Once collected, the intelligence is disseminated to the intelligence community, law enforcement agencies, military units and diplomats.¹⁵¹

Although work done by the ATFC has damaged many terrorist networks, their case against the Herat Insurgency Network was the pinnacle of its success. On September 1, 2013, Abdullah Akbari, the Herat Insurgency Network's leader, was killed during an arrest attempt. Akbari was alleged to have "smuggled weapons, drugs, and money for Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other Islamic extremist groups." and to have, "intimidated villages through kidnappings and executions, murdering more than 100 Afghan

¹⁴⁹ Capra, "Future U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts", 3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

civilians”¹⁵² A villager of Afghanistan’s Herat province admitted, “His name always scared the people of Guzarah. He is finally dead, and we will never have to deal with him again.”¹⁵³ Through the work of the ATFC, the opium trading conducted by the Herat Insurgency Network was dismantled, the Network’s funding to terrorist groups ceased, and thousands of Afghans can now live without fear of being kidnapped or murdered.

A special unit underneath the SIU has been established to take over the ATFC mission once its foreign advisors have left, however, without continued support the unit will face additional operational difficulties. For example, leaders of drug trafficking organizations worry of extradition to the United States as it causes major problems for their ability to manage their organizations from abroad. Furthermore, the U.S. justice system is more efficient and far less prone to corruption. The ATFC’s mission will be curtailed if the U.S. pulls its support.

The ATFC is a good example of the DEA dealing with other U.S. agencies and Afghanistan, but the DEA also collaborates with its international partners. One case of this type of cooperation is the Interagency Operations Coordination Center (IOCC). Working with the United Kingdom’s National Crime Agency, the Center assists the CNP-A in arresting and prosecuting “significant traffickers and key associates to the Afghan judicial system.”¹⁵⁴ The Center’s additional support of counternarcotics analysis and creation of targeting packages has been integral to the arrest of drug traffickers. The successful cooperation demonstrated by the IOCC is a model to follow for future

¹⁵² Richard Lower, "Herat Province's Most Wanted Criminal Killed in Guzarah District." (DVIDS: September 1, 2013).

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Capra, “Future U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts”, 6.

counternarcotics efforts in which the responsibilities are shared with participating nations of the international community.

Despite its long list of accomplishments, the DEA has faced many obstacles during its presence in Afghanistan. When the DEA first arrived, the U.S. military was hesitant to help out the law enforcement agency in carrying out a mission the military saw as hurtful to the “hearts and minds” campaign. As history proved, Afghans would fight hard to protect their opium cultivation livelihoods, and the DOD feared that entire farming villages would turn against the U.S. and ISAF if the opium trade was targeted. As a result of this concern, 23 of 26 airlift requests from the DEA to the DOD were denied, as one congressional study showed.¹⁵⁵ Military leaders steered clear of involving their troops in counternarcotics missions, referring to it as “mission creep.” Unlike past attempts at taking control of the opium trade, the DEA was not involved in crop eradication. Because of this the criminal, rather than the farmers and sharecroppers, were affected and the populace’s reaction was tame.

By 2009, the DOD had changed its posture towards the DEA; U.S. service members were now given authorization to assist the DEA and the Afghan counternarcotics units in reaching their goals.¹⁵⁶ Even with DOD support, the DEA still lacked the helicopter transportation necessary to effectively carry out its duties. In March 2010, Attorney General Eric Holder admitted that, “The most significant factor we face in Afghanistan is helicopter lift. DEA must have adequate helicopter lift capacity that is

¹⁵⁵ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 192.

¹⁵⁶ “U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan”, 21.

night capable and flown by veteran pilots.”¹⁵⁷ A 2010 report to the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control put it bluntly, “the shortage of helicopters in Afghanistan for counternarcotics missions is similar to a big city in the U.S. without patrol cars.”¹⁵⁸ Future counternarcotics efforts will need to be supported by adequate helicopters and personnel if their mission is to succeed.

In addition to the lack of helicopter transportation, the DEA was also hamstrung by legislation that curtailed its ability to investigate drug traffickers and smugglers. Up until 2006, DEA agents could only build cases against drug traffickers who they could prove product ended up in the United States. Since the vast majority of heroin sold in the U.S. comes from Central and South America, Afghan smugglers were not often subject to U.S. laws on the books designed to address domestic drug trafficking. In response to the situation in Afghanistan and related issues facing law enforcement targeting the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Congress passed 21 U.S.C. § 960a, included in the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005.¹⁵⁹

In brief, the new code allows U.S. law enforcement to arrest traffickers who used drug earnings to sponsor terrorist activity, without having to prove its nexus to the United States (See Appendix E for full text of 21 U.S.C. § 960a).¹⁶⁰ According to the performance budget submitted by the DEA to Congress in 2014, 21 USC § 960a “significantly expands DEA’s authority into narcoterrorism investigations and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵⁹ Brian Lichter, "The Offences Clause, Due Process, and the Extraterritorial Reach of Federal Criminal Law in Narco-Terrorism Prosecutions." (Northwestern University Law Review: 103, no. 4, 2009), 1930.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

prosecutions” and “expands the reach of DEA to acts of manufacture or distribution outside of the U.S.”¹⁶¹ This provision has proved especially valuable in Afghanistan, which suffers from an inconsistent and frequently corrupt justice system. Similar laws need to be passed by other contributing nations to allow them to prosecute Afghans involved in narcoterrorism.

Successful Prosecutions

With the expanded authority provided by 21 USC § 960a, the DEA and Afghan CNP-A arrested and convicted several prominent drug traffickers, but the conviction of Haji Bashir Noorzai would have been successful without the new law. Noorzai was a member of the Mujahideen and fought against the Soviets in the early 1980’s before forming and becoming the leader of the 500 member Haji Bashir Front. After the war Noorzai was paid an estimated \$50,000 by the CIA to recover stinger missiles that had been lent to the Mujahideen during the war.¹⁶²

Although Noorzai had financed the Taliban and had made millions off of the Taliban’s poppy ban in 2000, when the U.S. invaded in October of 2001 he flipped sides hoping to continue making money off of opium. Noorzai turned his back on the Taliban by providing the U.S. government over 400 anti-aircraft missiles and other weapons he said were taken from the Taliban.¹⁶³ Noorzai was greedy, and he would soon regret his decision as the United States turned up the pressure on the most prominent drug lord in southern Afghanistan.

¹⁶¹ Drug Enforcement Administration, "FY 2014 Performance Budget", 9.

¹⁶² Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 201.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 202.

After leaving the mansion he operated out of Kandahar, the DEA believes that Noorzai used contacts inside the Pakistani ISI to obtain a passport to flee to the neighboring country. From Pakistan, Noorzai directed the processing of heroin out of 18 facilities he owned in Kandahar province, and employed Iranian smugglers to move a metric ton of heroin every month.¹⁶⁴ By working in cooperation with Romanian officials, the DEA was able to obtain information seized from a wire trap between Iranian smuggler Huessein Karimi and Noorzai.¹⁶⁵ After obtaining sufficient evidence that a portion of the drugs were being brought to the United States, Haji Bashir Noorzai was arrested and convicted of two life sentences in Federal court.

Another successful DEA investigation became international after starting out on the shaken streets of New York City following the September 11 attacks. DEA agents with New York's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force used their skills to develop an Afghan informant. Information extracted from the informant led the Strike Force to low-level street dealers who gave up information on their New York heroin wholesalers. The investigation revealed that the New York wholesalers were being distributed heroin from an Afghan named Mohammed Essa who worked with Pakistani supplier Haji Baz Mohammed.¹⁶⁶ Essa and Baz Mohammed were taken into custody and prosecuted in the United States.

In March 2009, Haji Baghcho was arrested for leading one of the most prolific heroin trafficking groups around the globe.¹⁶⁷ Classified as, "Operation Redwine," the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 204.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 207.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Drug Enforcement Administration, "FY 2014 Performance Budget", 8.

DEA and Afghan CNP-A discovered hidden heroin processing facilities in Afghanistan along the border of Pakistan. In trial, prosecutors presented evidence that since the 1990's Baghcho had shipped the drugs to over 20 different countries and used the profit to support the Taliban's insurgency efforts in Afghanistan.¹⁶⁸ In 2006, Bagcho had trafficked more than \$250 million worth of heroin, roughly 20 percent of the world's total production!¹⁶⁹ Three years after his arrest, Baghcho was sentenced to life in prison and "ordered to forfeit \$254,203,032 in drug proceeds along with his extensive property in Afghanistan."¹⁷⁰

Prominent Afghan drug trafficker Khan Mohammed was the first individual to be convicted under 21 U.S.C. § 960a.¹⁷¹ As an associate of the Taliban, Mohammed was responsible for organizing terrorist attacks and earning money from drug trafficking for the Taliban. DEA agents "flipped" several informants and utilized a cooperating Afghan farmer and a hidden camera to record a conversation between the farmer and Mohammed.¹⁷² The footage of the conversation proved that Mohammed had admitted to carrying out attacks against the Afghan government and NATO troops. Mohammed was more than happy to work with the farmer to export heroin to the United States, exclaiming, "God turn all the infidels into corpses...whether it is by opium or by

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Follis and Century *The Dark Art*, 187.

¹⁷⁰ Drug Enforcement Administration, "FY 2014 Performance Budget", 8.

¹⁷¹ John Thomas, "Narco-Terrorism: Could the Legislative and Prosecutorial Responses Threaten Our Civil Liberties?" (Washington and Lee University School of Law Review: 2009), 1891.

¹⁷² Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 211.

shooting, this is our common goal.”¹⁷³ Khan Mohammed is serving life in prison for violating 21 U.S.C. § 960a.

In the preceding cases, federal agents with the training and experience of building evidence for cases, operating with confidential human sources, and making arrests, were best suited for the mission. Apprehensions made by the DEA and its Afghan partners have showed that justice in the unstable nation is not only possible but actually preferable. Critical information was gathered by the DEA along the way to prosecuting those individuals. Furthermore, drugs and drug money were seized in connection with the arrests and dangerous weapons were taken away from insurgents. The investigation and subsequent arrest of Haji Juma Khan, is the best example of this.

The Investigation of Haji Juma Khan

Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar are more notorious than Haji Juma Khan yet, according to a Senior Afghan police official, Bin laden and Omar both, “worked for him.”¹⁷⁴ With terrorists receiving payment to protect Juma Khan’s drugs, the distinction between terrorism and drug trafficking was blurred. In 2007, Notorious drug kingpin Haji Juma Khan was considered by Afghanistan’s National Directorate of Security to be the country’s leading drug smuggler, moving over \$1 billion worth of opium and heroin a

¹⁷³ Michael Jacobson and Matthew Levitt. "Tracking Narco-Terrorist Networks: The Money Trail." (*Washington Institute*: 34, no. 1, 2010), 119.

¹⁷⁴ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 153.

year.¹⁷⁵ Juma Khan was solely responsible for providing terrorists groups with over \$100 million a year.¹⁷⁶

Khan grew up in humble beginnings as a sheep herder, but like so many other drug traffickers covered in this paper, he lived a life of luxury after cashing out his drug profits. With palaces in six different countries and over two hundred houses, he was known to have parties with foreign prostitutes and alcohol.¹⁷⁷ HJK had a personal outfit of over 1500 men who were involved in kidnapping, human smuggling, and extortion. Unsurprisingly, he also paid off “provincial governors, security agents, regional military commanders, and senior officials of the Highway Police.”¹⁷⁸ Khan even used then President Hamid Karzai’s half brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, as “a conduit to bribe governors to allow narcotics to be processed and transported through their provinces without impediment.”¹⁷⁹

Profit was the motivation behind HJK’s support of the Taliban and al Qaeda and the reason why he assisted in smuggling weapons into Afghanistan to kill NATO troops. He ran the province of Nimruz as his “own personal fiefdom,” and installed opium and heroin processing labs all across the area.¹⁸⁰ With the Taliban running the country, Juma Khan had the ability to earn much more money but the United States prevented that from happening. People like Haji Juma Khan who engage in similar nefarious activity often reach two ends, a life in hiding or a bomb dropped on them. Through the work of DEA

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Follis and Century *The Dark Art*, 174.

¹⁷⁷ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 154

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 162.

¹⁷⁹ Follis and Century *The Dark Art*, 173.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 194.

Special Agent Edward Follis, Haji Juma Khan managed neither and is instead sitting in solitary confinement in New York City's Metropolitan Correctional Center.

According to Agent Follis, trying to take down HJK's drug empire "was impossible using a paramilitary mind-set."¹⁸¹ Instead Follis opted for him and his men to use undercover policing techniques, ditching their combat fatigues for street clothes and occasionally requiring them to wear traditional ethnic Afghan garb. Although Agent Follis was the leader of the DEA undercover mission against HJK, as the most experienced he played the role of Khan's point of contact. Follis first met HJK for dinner at the Afghan equivalent of a five-star restaurant named Shiraz and after two months of establishing a relationship with him, HJK contacted him with a concern of his.

In the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, HJK showed Follis that he had growths on his chest that he was worried about them. Follis, who had a similar medical problem in the past, was able to convince Khan to travel to the United States to receive proper medical care in return for information on "whatever he knew about Islamic terrorist activity and its symbiotic relationship with the opium and heroin trade."¹⁸² After Agent Follis obtained a false passport and visa for him, HJK traveled clandestinely on a commercial airliner to Washington D.C. After arriving and being seen by a doctor, several DEA special agents posing as high level DOD figures extracted information regarding "other major narco-terrorists, Taliban leaders, and command-and-control figures in Al

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 177.

¹⁸² Ibid., 207.

Qaeda.”¹⁸³ Thereafter HJK “proved to be one of the United States’ most valuable counterterrorism assets.”¹⁸⁴

After building a case against and obtaining information from Juma Khan, Agent Follis was promoted and sent back to the United States. In July of 2008, he found out that Khan had been placed on the DOD’s “kinetic list.”¹⁸⁵ That meant that, without due process, HJK would be targeted with a stealth drone strike. The previous ambassador of Afghanistan, Ambassador Neumann prioritized the need to “show the [Afghans] that we abided by the rule of law—not just in principle but also in practice.”¹⁸⁶ Follis used this message to secure more time for HJK in hopes that he would be arrested rather than killed. Promising a “lucrative business opportunity,” Agent Follis was able to lure Khan to Jakarta, Indonesia where he was taken into U.S. custody. Haji Juma Khan’s “current judicial status is officially categorized as “sealed” for reasons of national security.”¹⁸⁷

Juma Khan’s arrest is just another example of the DEA’s ability to obtain information critical in the fight against terrorism while also taking down a dangerous drug kingpin. With few dedicated personnel or resources, DEA Agent Edward Follis relied on his experience and training to bring Haji Juma Khan to justice. Future international law enforcement counternarcotics efforts should seek to build off of that success.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 210.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 213.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 241.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 247.

CONCLUSION

In a speech given by President Obama in December of 2014, he noted that “America’s war in Afghanistan will come to a responsible end” but acknowledged that “that doesn’t mean that everything is great in Afghanistan, Afghanistan is still a very dangerous place.”¹⁸⁸ With the poppy-opium cultivation reaching an all time high in 2014, narcoterror organizations have continued to capitalize on the regions instability and millions of Afghans live in fear.

History has shown us that attempting to broker deals with local leaders such as Haji Abdul Qadir or Mullah Nasim Akhuzada to decrease opium production have been fruitless. First, the United States’ apprehension and distrust towards working with drug lords has made it impossible for the U.S. to overtly receive approval from congress in order to make eradication plans effective. Past efforts that initially seemed to work were ignored by the drug lords and their illicit business continued. A perfect example was the Taliban’s 2000 opium ban. The world believed that pressure they had put on the Taliban was achieving results when in actuality, it was a mere economic scam conjured up by prominent drug kingpins and terrorists. The international community must never again put its trust or its money in believing that those so heavily invested in the drug trade will simply throw away their illicit livelihoods to do the right thing.

Alternative livelihood plans encouraging farmers to grow other crops have proven fruitless for the simple reason that the United States and Afghan government's reach does

¹⁸⁸ Jim Kuhnenn, "Obama Declares 'turning Point' for US Military", (AOL: December 15, 2014).

not extend into much of the Afghanistan's rural conflict areas. Consequently, Taliban-controlled areas in the southern Afghanistan provinces of Kandahar and Helmand dominate the opium trade. Attempts by the British in the early 2000's to work with local chieftains to achieve poppy-opium eradication succeeded only in lining the pockets of corrupt politicians and further impoverishing farmers and sharecroppers.

When the United States tried eradication in 2005, eradication teams were meant with violent resistance and run off the farms. Hundreds of Millions of dollars spent in attempts to refocus Afghanistan's opium agricultural production have been for nothing. The durability and high profit margin of opium has allowed it to remain the main cash crop of a country with poor infrastructure and transportation systems. That's not to mention the fact that the crop's high labor intensity employs many Afghans. A long term plan to change the types of crops that Afghanistan grows is a must in order to shift the country away from opium cultivation, but it can't happen if corrupt politicians and drug traffickers are allowed to have a say.

Law enforcement efforts by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration have proven to be well worth its investment. Afghan police are being trained, an interagency center that follows terrorist and criminal financing through the drug trade is running smoothly, and overwhelming quantities of drugs have been seized at the source before they spread havoc around the world. In setting a good example to the Afghans of how a justice system should work, the DEA has used well-trained and experienced law enforcement agents to apprehend and convict major Afghan drug kingpins that were previously considered untouchable.

As Afghan President Ashraf Ghani expressed regarding the United States' involvement in Afghanistan, "tragedy brought us together, interests now unite us."¹⁸⁹ Through statistical evidence of the worldwide heroin epidemic and its ancillary negative effects of spreading HIV and Hepatitis, I have shown that the international community and several key nations have a vested interest in seeing the Afghan opium trade come to an end. Drug use of women and children as well as the financing of transnational criminal and terrorist organizations is truly a tragedy. The international community must do all it can in order to unite the world against it.

In order to achieve this end, I am proposing that a joint counternarcotics force of willing nations be deployed to Afghanistan to continue the mission of the Drug Enforcement Administration. The partnerships developed by ISAF and NATO forces should be reinforced and built on. Other nations, such as Turkey and Russia, who benefit by a decrease in opium production, should be added to those partnerships. Personnel dedicated to the fight against opium and heroin should be added. The DEA was able to achieve successes with just under 100 agents and support staff in Afghanistan, but more staff will be needed in order to make long-term progress against Afghanistan's drug trafficking economy. Essential personnel levels will be easier reached with key members of the international community committing members.

Next, the United States and cooperating nations must increase funding for interdiction efforts. \$68 million is not enough support to take on the most notorious

¹⁸⁹ David Jackson, "U.S. to Keep 9,800 Troops in Afghanistan through 2015." (USA Today: March 24, 2015).

heroin kingpins in the world. Money is already being spent by many nations trying to fight opium and heroin trafficking on their own. By synergizing contributing members' finances, money will be better spent fighting opium and heroin at their source. Like personnel levels, by having many nations contribute financially, the necessary funds will be raised without any one nation having to bear the entire burden.

Providing the counternarcotics team with proper helicopter transportation and military assistance is a fundamental need of the mission. Helicopters designed to transport troops, such as the UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters, are required to navigate the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. Due to the historical development of the opium problem, much of Afghanistan's opium production takes place in areas contested by the Taliban. Law enforcement agents themselves are not skilled or trained enough to take on the Taliban in a major firefight. Military personnel will need to accompany law enforcement to conflicted areas in order to ensure their safety.

Key to success will be cooperating and sharing intelligence of drug trafficking and border crossings with Pakistan and Iran. It is imperative that drugs be prevented from leaving the region. With primary drug trade routes running through Pakistan and Iran, the two nations will need to be a part of the counternarcotics effort if the world hopes to prevent the spread of opium. By implementing these requirements, the international community will achieve success in the fight against opium in Afghanistan.

Of course, success will come with a price. On October 26, 2009, three DEA Agents, to whom this paper is dedicated, died while fighting the good fight against opium

in Afghanistan. If a counternarcotics force continues to fight against the opium trade, many more may die, but what if the world does nothing? What if the world stands idly by as the U.S. draws down and pulls the DEA out of Afghanistan? At the very best nothing will change, drug related public corruption will continue, millions will remain addicted to opium and heroin, over 100,000 people will die every year from Afghan heroin, and the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and transnational criminals will continue to reap the benefits. Worst-case scenario, the Taliban retakes Afghanistan, imposes its heavy handed laws including public executions by flogging and stoning, and the opium trade spirals out of control. When the options are considered it no longer becomes a question of *if*; the international community **must** act.

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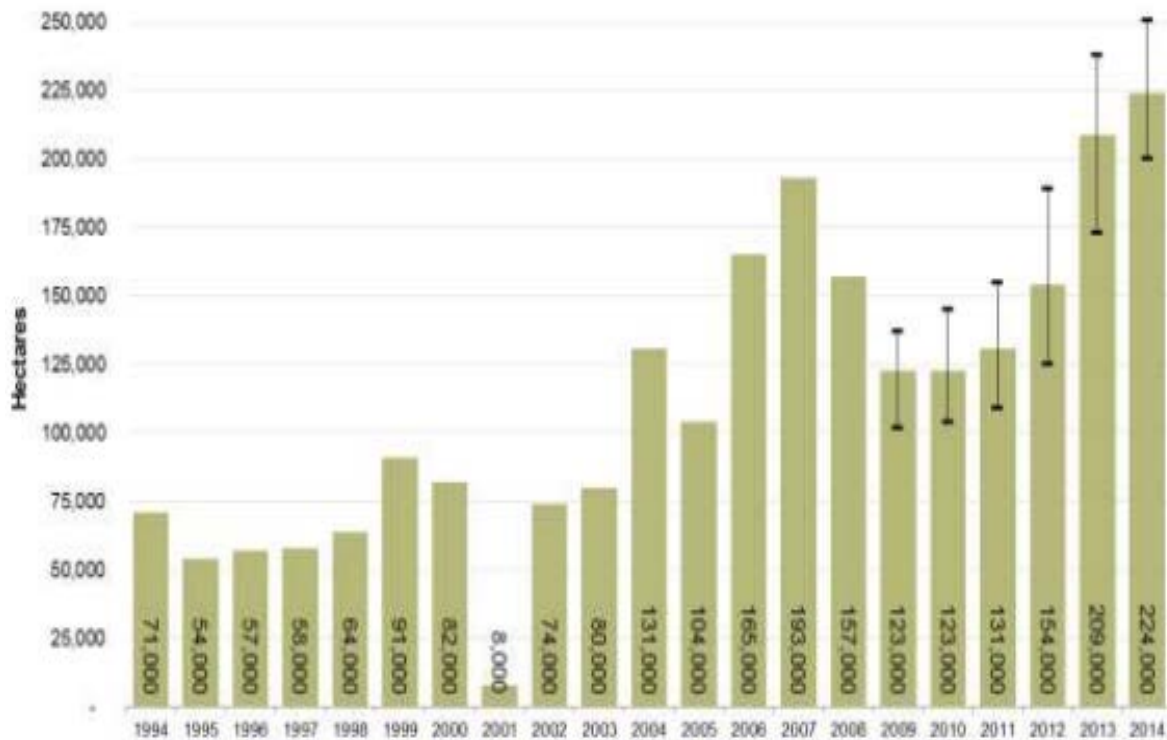
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Figure 1: Opium cultivation in Afghanistan, 1994-2014 (Hectares)



Sources: UNODC and UNODC/MCN opium surveys 1994-2014. The high-low lines represent the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

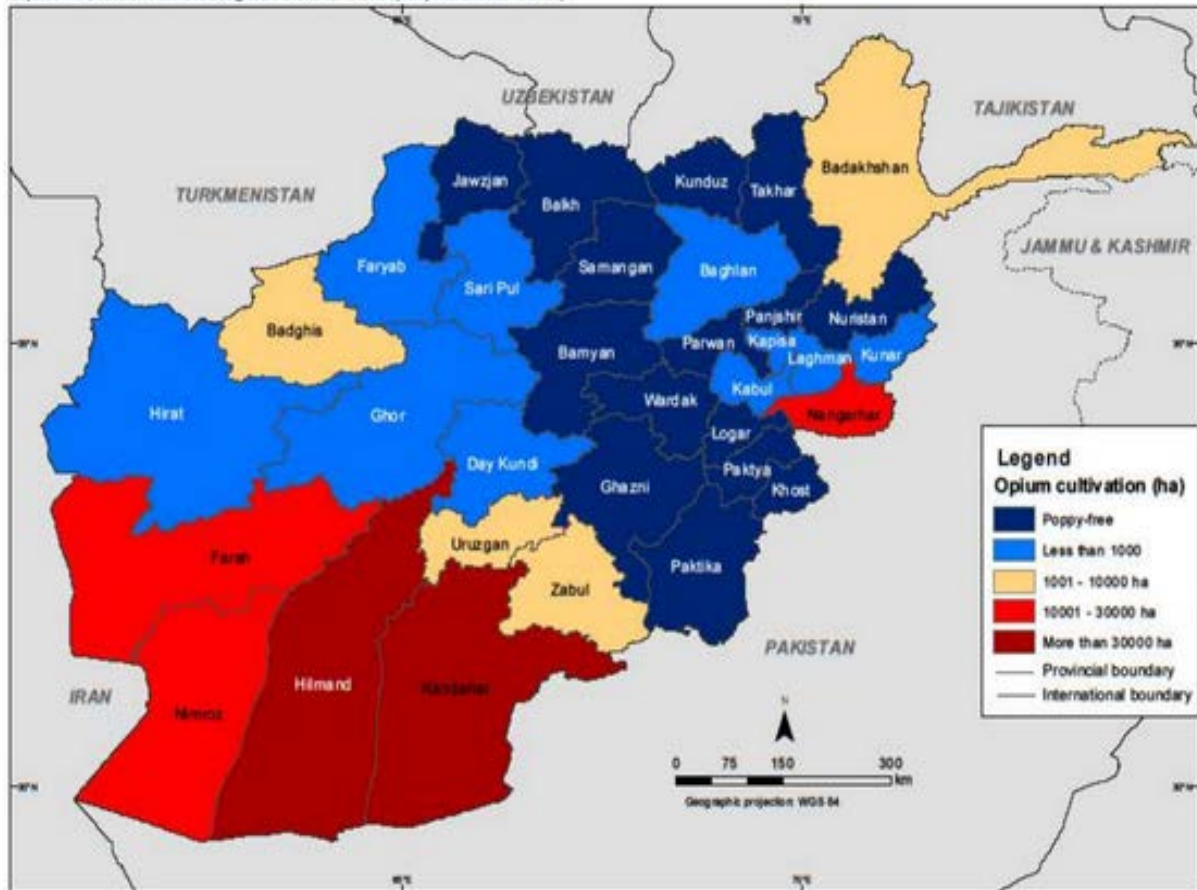
Appendix B



Source: Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) *Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy*, 2007

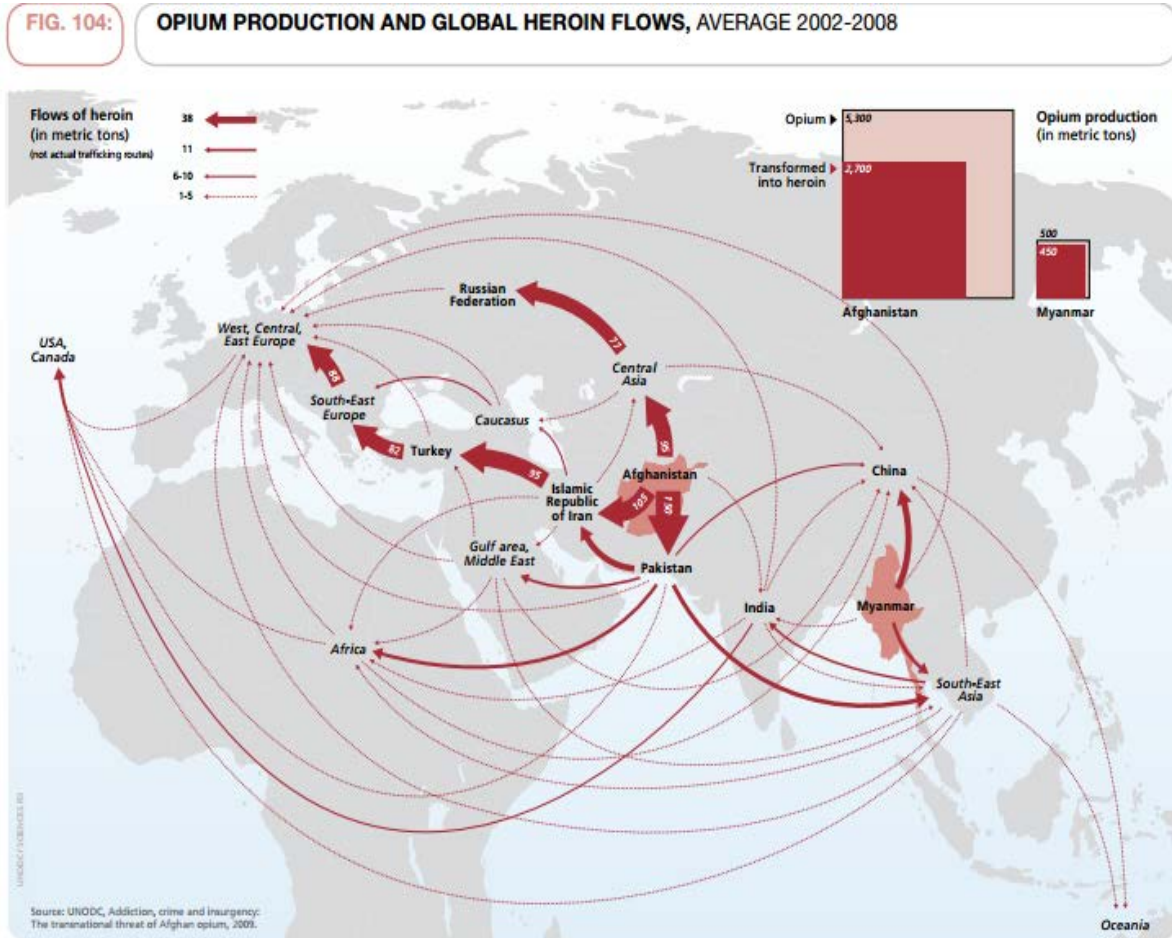
Appendix C

Opium cultivation in Afghanistan, 2014 (at province level)



Source: United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) Opium Survey, 2014

Appendix D



Source: UNODC, *Addiction, crime and insurgency: The transnational threat of Afghan Opium, 2009*

Appendix E

Title 21 USC §960a. Foreign terrorist organizations, terrorist persons and groups

(a) Prohibited acts

Whoever engages in conduct that would be punishable under section 841(a) \1\ of this title if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States, or attempts or conspires to do so, knowing or intending to provide, directly or indirectly, anything of pecuniary value to any person or organization that has engaged or engages in terrorist activity (as defined in section 1182(a)(3)(B) of title 8) or terrorism (as defined in section 2656f(d)(2) of title 22), shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not less than twice the minimum punishment under section 841(b)(1),\1\ and not more than life, a fine in accordance with the provisions of title 18, or both. Notwithstanding section 3583 of title 18, any sentence imposed under this subsection shall include a term of supervised release of at least 5 years in addition to such term of imprisonment.

(b) Jurisdiction

There is jurisdiction over an offense under this section if—

- (1) the prohibited drug activity or the terrorist offense is in violation of the criminal laws of the United States;
- (2) the offense, the prohibited drug activity, or the terrorist offense occurs in or affects interstate or foreign commerce;
- (3) an offender provides anything of pecuniary value for a terrorist offense that causes or is designed to cause death or serious bodily injury to a national of the United States while that national is outside the United States, or substantial damage to the property of a legal entity organized under the laws of the United States (including any of its States, districts, commonwealths, territories, or possessions) while that property is outside of the United States;
- (4) the offense or the prohibited drug activity occurs in whole or in part outside of the United States (including on the high seas), and a perpetrator of the offense or the prohibited drug activity is a national of the United States or a legal entity organized under the laws of the United States (including any of its States, districts, commonwealths, territories, or possessions); or
- (5) after the conduct required for the offense occurs an offender is brought into or found in the United States, even if the conduct required for the offense occurs outside the United States.

(c) Proof requirements

To violate subsection (a), a person must have knowledge that the person or organization has engaged or engages in terrorist activity (as defined in section 1182(a)(3)(B) of title 8) or terrorism (as defined in section 2656f(d)(2) of title 22).

(d) Definition

As used in this section, the term "anything of pecuniary value" has the meaning given the term in section 1958(b)(1) of title 18.

Source: U.S. Department of Justice Website