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**Afghanistan,
Drugs and Terrorism
Merging Wars**



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T*"The arms the Taliban are buying today are paid for with the lives of young British people buying their drugs on British streets. That is another part of their regime that we should seek to destroy,"* British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, in one of his attempts to sell the war in Afghanistan. His statement is an example of the distorting declarations made nowadays, inspired by media spin doctors to rally public opinion to support a controversial war. Everything nasty is combined to paint a black image of the 'evil' enemy, never mind reality.

Actually, it is Mr. Blair's ally in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance, who may have profited more from the illicit drugs economy than the Taliban. While opium poppy cultivation went down in Taliban controlled territories last year, it flourished in areas that were under control of the Northern Alliance at spring harvest time. The rapid advance of opposition forces due to the massive bombing campaign and their takeover of Kabul, by no means will end the opium economy. On the contrary, our expectation is rather a re-surgence of poppy cultivation across the country. However, Mr. Blair's statement is indicative of the new context of the war on drugs, after the terrorist attacks of September 11.

In this issue of TNIs *Drugs & Conflict* we try to put this new context into perspective. The aim of these debate papers is to highlight issues involving the global drugs phenomenon, foster public debate on anti-drugs strategies and search for alternative policies. An intention more needed now than ever, given that the new found link between drugs and terrorism may be used to justify an escalation of the war on drugs as a proxy in the one against terrorism.

Drugs, terrorism and covert warfare have been close allies ever since World War II. Not only do 'evil' rebels use drug money to finance their operations. Cocaine profits have also been exploited by State officials to support the Contra's against the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua and heroin

money to finance the Mujahedeen that fought Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Today, the two major producers of opium poppy and coca, Afghanistan and Colombia, are in the midst of shifting counterdrug strategies. In this issue we will look at the case of Afghanistan, analysing the UN International Drug Control Programme's (UNDCP) ill fated interventions. And while international attention is focused on Afghanistan, the linkage of drugs and terrorism is endangering the troubled peace talks between the government and the FARC guerrilla in Colombia.

The US State Department has identified the FARC as a terrorist organisation and as a 'narco-guerrilla', because they control a large part of the coca growing areas and tax coca production. Consequently, Colombians will have less opportunities to define their armed conflict in political terms and be pressured into redefining it in criminal terms, and face military escalation.

Both countries have been subject to attempts to start a biological front against drug cultivation. Sponsored by the UNDCP, the US and the United Kingdom, scientists have developed killer fungi to destroy opium poppy and coca bush. In Colombia the attempt was stalled due to wide spread resistance, because of risks for the environment, legal crops and human health.

In Central Asia the fungus is ready for use. The war against the Taliban might improve conditions for fungus protagonists to pursue their agenda. Spraying the spores from high altitudes might be presented as an effective weapon to prevent a resurgence of opium poppy cultivation in Taliban territories, deriving them of a source of income by harvest time next spring.

In brief, the linkage of drugs and terrorism can lead to scary scenarios. And, as a European Commission official once speculated, maybe the present illegal nature of the drugs trade is making the situation worse.



THE TWO WARS

In a press conference held a day after the September 11 attacks, Secretary of State Colin Powell urged the need to counteract terrorism by attacking “its branches and roots”; that is, by attacking those who support terrorist activities as well as their financial sources.

While, until some years ago, the general assumption was that some states financed terrorism, with the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Bloc, terrorism has sought its funding from other sources, among them the trade in illicit drugs. Today, within the new international context of the ‘war on terrorism’,

pared for a ‘new invasion’ of Al Qaeda’s opium.

Smoke still billowed from the ruins of the Twin Towers as Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, announced the creation of a task force to combat drug traffic, the main financial source for many terrorist organisations. After releasing a new list of international terrorist organisations, the U.S. State Department formally denounced the link between terrorism and illicit drugs. Testifying on October 10 before the House Committee on International Relations’ subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, James Mack, Deputy Secretary of State for International Narcotics



the ‘war on drugs’ moves to centre stage. The recent drugs-terrorism connection began with the opium of the Taliban. Referring to the responsibility of Bin Laden’s network for the terrorist attacks in Washington and New York, Prime Minister Tony Blair pointed out that Bin Laden and the Taliban “jointly exploited the drugs trade”. In an effort to rally support for the war in Afghanistan, Blair warned to be pre-

pared for a ‘new invasion’ of Al Qaeda’s opium. and Law Enforcement Affairs, noted that “... the same criminal gangs involved in narcotics smuggling have links to other criminal activities and to terrorist groups”.

Although in several cases direct links between drug money and groups classified as terrorist have been substantiated (in Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Chechnya, Uzbekistan and Colombia),

Al Qaeda's alleged funding with Taleban opium is less evident, or at least it was until September 11. Figures on Afghanistan's illicit economy reveal that the proceeds from opium sales netted by the Taleban plummeted between 1999 and 2001 (see Box 1), while the Northern Alliance's proceeds from opium tripled during the same period. "We will bomb their poppy fields", proclaimed Blair, oblivious of the fact that hardly a single hectare of poppy was left in Taleban-controlled regions, due to the ban issued by the regime the previous year.

Unconcilable Wars

The anti-terrorist strategy with respect to drugs is: less drugs, less resources for terrorists. As a result, the anti-terrorist war would require escalating the war on drugs. In practice, though, the two wars are not very compatible. Addressing a legislative panel in mid October, DEA-Chief, Asa Hutchinson, complained that the U.S. government's emphasis on terrorism was allowing South American drug dealers to introduce more drugs into the U.S. through the Caribbean. Both the DEA and the US Coast Guard have had to displace staff from anti-narcotics duty to the strike against terrorism. Other state officials and independent analysts alike have also noted that the Pentagon's military actions in Afghanistan and the war against terrorism on U.S. soil may hamper anti-drugs efforts.

*"So if you are a drug trafficker, you might see this as a moment of opportunity."
(Michael Shifter, Inter-American Dialogue)*

The anti-terrorist strategy may even be antagonistic with respect to the anti-drug strategy. Within the framework of the anti-drug programme for Afghanistan, the U.S. and the UNDCP threatened the Taleban with measures and sanctions against them if they did not put an end to the production of opium, heroin's raw material. The ban on growing poppy imposed by the Taleban in July 2000 – which received such high praise from UNDCP Executive Director Pino Arlacchi – is likely to have come about chiefly as a result of this pressure. Now that their territory is under repeated

bombing, rumour has it that the Taleban have lifted their ban. This would mean an enormous step backwards in what has been regarded as a success in the anti-drug effort. According to recent United Nations reports, peasants in Afghanistan are planting or preparing to plant poppy in two main agricultural regions. Consequently, a resurgence of the Afghan drug trade is to be expected.

On October 23, The Washington Post stated that the main casualty of the war on terrorism against Afghanistan is the war on drugs. This newspaper and other media have alleged that the price of heroin has dropped drastically, and that the flow of opium and heroin into the West through the various existing drug trafficking routes has increased. Meanwhile, the U.S. seeks out tribal leaders willing to oppose the Taleban regime, ignoring the links these leaders have forged with the drug trade over

decades. Bernard Frahi, UNDCP Representative in Pakistan and Afghanistan, stated in an interview that the resurgence of heroin traffic might become an obstacle in the war against terrorism: "Before this war, Osama had enough money. Now that his

bank accounts have been frozen, what will he do? Turn rapidly to drug trafficking through networks that exist already". For Richard Davenport-Hines, an expert on the history of narcotics, the drug trade will survive no matter how the war against terrorism turns out.

As a matter of fact, the U.S. Congress is reducing the budget it had previously allocated to the war on drugs in the Andean countries. Of the USD 731 million requested for the Andean Regional Initiative (an extension of the controversial Plan Colombia), the Congress approved only USD 625 million on November 15. It is worth noting that this cut in the budget basically affects what relates to the drug trade directly, at least in the short term – this is what the Head of the DEA criticises – but it does not modify one iota in what pertains to production itself.

Aerial spraying, forced eradication and the criminalisation of those growing illicit crops are still being carried out as if nothing had changed in the rest of the world. This is bound to continue unless the position taken by some members of the U.S. Congress is honoured. They insist that U.S. aid to Colombia be conditioned on that country's performance on human rights and demand that the impact of aerial spraying be assessed before deciding whether to continue or suspend fumigation. They also insist that funding of fumigation be suspended until an alternative development programme for the areas sprayed is drafted. However, only a minority in the Senate is advancing this position and it is yet to be seen whether these recommendations will be taken into account.

Drug consumers, on their part, are being stigmatised for "contributing to terrorism" by using drugs. The U.S. administration's capacity to view reality from different angles has never been very sophisticated. It divides the world into good and bad. Among the latter, drugs, terrorism and criminality are one and the same thing. Not surprisingly, domestic policies have also changed since September 11. The penalties for heroin consumption have increased, with the argument that each dollar paid for heroin is a dollar that goes into Al Qaeda's pockets: a contribution to terrorism that well deserves more severe penalties.

Colombia, the Hemisphere's threat

In the Western Hemisphere, Colombia is the best example of this new interrelation of wars. After President Bush's speech announcing the launch of a new crusade against terrorism, there were no doubts that the crusade would have repercussions for Colombia. Three Colombian armed groups appear on the new list of foreign terrorist organisations. This country is also the largest producer of cocaine and its heroin production supplies a substantial part of the US market. Most importantly, Colombia resembles Afghanistan in one key aspect, the fact that drugs are exchanged for weapons.

Towards mid October, Ambassador Francis X. Taylor, U.S. State Department Co-ordinator for

Counter-terrorism, confirmed U.S. intentions to dismantle the Colombian terrorist networks, announcing that Colombian guerrillas would get the same treatment as any other terrorist group. The FARC were singled out as the most dangerous terrorist group in the Western Hemisphere, together with the extremist Islamic organisations present at the 'Triple Border' area where Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay meet. On October 10, in his testimony before the subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, James Mack specifically referred to the FARC, the ELN and the paramilitary AUC as groups that "... all benefit substantially from their deep involvement in drug trafficking". Washington is therefore proposing a new anti-terrorist plan for Colombia. The idea of the military defeat of Colombia's terrorist groups, with U.S. support in the form of counter-insurgency actions, had already been gaining ground in Washington before September 11.

Other high-ranking U.S. government officials are following the same lead. The strategy for the hemisphere is very similar to the global strategy, implying the use of all U.S. forces, including the military. Recently, conjectures have been made about the Pentagon's plans to create a 'military Commando for the Americas' in charge of defending the Western Hemisphere. This task is currently in the hands of the Southern Command, but its role and resources have been limited until now. The U.S. has also announced its renewal of military assistance to the Nicaraguan Army, which is no longer controlled by the Sandinista Party.

After the events of September 11, the FARC have more relevance for the U.S. as a terrorist group than as a drug-dealing one. From either perspective, what is sought is its elimination. But if the emphasis is laid on the FARC's terrorism, with funding clearly channelled in this direction, the war on drugs, particularly in what pertains to drug trafficking, could suffer the consequences. Annihilating the FARC would not mean annihilating Colombia's drug traffic; not by a long shot. It is not the FARC but the various drug cartels operating in the country that are the true motor behind the drug business. No definite proof linking this guerrilla group with the international drug

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trade exists, although some evidence does point in that direction.

At the end of October, in a public address entitled "The New Relations between U.S. and Colombia", the U.S. Ambassador in Colombia, Anne Patterson, stated directly and unequivocally that her country's new global strategy would have serious repercussions on its relations with Colombia. The Ambassador highlighted Plan Colombia as "... the most effective anti-terrorist strategy we could possibly design". Patterson expressed concern about the existence of the demilitarised zone under FARC control and the presence within it of foreigners linked with terrorist organisations. She also warned that heroin providers might move to Colombia because of the crisis in Asia, in order to keep supplying their international clients. With her speech, the North American Ambassador bluntly erased the distinction between the counter-narcotics effort and counter-insurgency, which had been official policy up until then.

"One of the biggest bastions of terrorism is not a world away, but right under our nose. A two-hour flight south from Miami will land you in Colombia, the most dangerous and terroristic country in the world."
(Zell Miller, US Senator)

In addition to this change in US policy there is the sudden shift of the European Union with regard to the peace process in Colombia. Two events caused serious irritation with EU countries, jeopardising their previous constructive attitude to Colombia's peace process. First, there was the kidnapping of three German GTZ technicians (now released), which was considered as a slap in the face. Then, the capture of three IRA members who allegedly had taken part in training activities in the demilitarised zone, erased doubts about links of the FARC with international organisations considered as terrorist groups. It is worth pointing out that the IRA has been excluded from the State Department list of terrorist organisations, because it has agreed to a cease-fire and is in the process of a peace negotiation.

The announcement by the U.S. that it would request the extradition of Colombian guerrilla leaders currently involved in the peace negotiations with the Colombian government was another cold shower for the already frail and problem-ridden peace process. The key argument is that a peace process cannot be viable if one of its spokespersons is in danger of being extradited to the U.S. The guerrilla rejects extradition. Simply reducing the guerrilla to a criminal organisation and expose them as drug traffickers, will not encourage basic conditions of trust in the peace process. As a result, the threat to extradite the guerrilla leadership as drug traffickers reduces the possibility of

involving the guerrilla in finding a solution to the drug problem.

Now, more than ever, war and peace in Colombia are in the crossfire of the U.S. anti-terrorist war. If there were any doubts, the measures taken by the U.S. government and the many statements issued by high-ranking government officials during the past weeks abruptly dispelled them. The 11th of

September has encouraged hard-line sectors in both Washington and Bogota in their effort to shift the general perception of the FARC as an insurgent movement to that of a terrorist organisation financed by the international drugs market.

The role of Colombia in the international war against terrorism, as well as the advances, obstacles and implications of the peace process, will be important topics of discussion between the Colombian and the U.S. governments. The pressure on Colombia to abandon its peace talks in favour of a military solution is mounting. Colombia has turned into the main threat to hemispheric security. Colombians will have less and less time to define their armed conflict in political terms and be pressured, instead, into redefining their conflict in criminal terms in the midst of a military escalation.



Taleban & Opium Economy

The extent to which the Taleban regime relied on the opium economy has often been overestimated. 'Best guesstimates' about Taleban earnings are based on UNDCP figures on number of hectares planted, yield per hectare, price per kg opium, and the imposed tax rules. None of these are hard facts. Yield figures vary widely per region and huge differences exist between irrigated and rain-fed poppy fields. Price per kilo in the North is never the same as in the South and easily doubles or halves within each district according to quality.

1999 holds the record in Afghan opium production of 4600 tons, harvested from 91,000 planted hectares with a national average yield estimated at 50.4 kg/ha and sold at an average of US\$ 58 per kilo. Total farmgate value of opium production came at US\$ 251 million. The Taleban has levelled the 'usher' 10% tax on all agricultural production including opium, and sometimes manages to collect additional taxes from traders. This would bring Taleban earnings for the top year at somewhere between US\$ 30-45 million. The following year, in 2000, production was down to 3300 tons from 82,000 hectares with yields dropped to an average 35.7 kg/ha (rain-fed fields only reached 18.5 kg/ha) and prices had fallen to US\$ 30 per kilo. Total farmgate value in 2000 amounted thus to only US\$ 91 million. With production down to only 185 tons in 2001, but very high prices, UNDCP still estimates potential gross income from the sale of fresh opium by farmers around US\$56 million, but most of that was earned and taxed in Northern Alliance controlled territory. Since the ban, Taleban earnings from opium were practically down to zero.

The figures are very low compared to the many billions that are earned higher up in the commodity chain with trafficking and street sale of processed heroin. There are no examples documented that connect the Taleban directly with international heroin

trafficking. Such allegations do exist against Juma Namangani of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and against Hajji Bashar, both operating in Afghanistan in alliance with the Taleban. On Northern Alliance side, similar allegations have been reported against ethnic Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, who joined the alliance earlier this year. To what extent other heroin trafficking rings might support any of the factions in a substantial way, like what happened during the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s with clearance from the CIA and Pakistan intelligence, is today a largely unknown factor. Including the DEA has to rely on very vague language to argue an alleged connection between drugs and terrorism in the case of Taleban, Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network: *"Although DEA has no direct evidence to confirm that Bin Laden is involved in the drug trade, the relationship between the Taliban and Bin Laden is believed to have flourished in large part due to the Taliban's substantial reliance on the opium trade as a source of organizational revenue. While the activities of the two entities do not always follow the same trajectory, we know that drugs and terror frequently share the common ground of geography, money, and violence. In this respect, the very sanctuary enjoyed by Bin Laden is based on the existence of the Taliban's support for the drug trade. This connection defines the deadly, symbiotic relationship between the illicit drug trade and international terrorism."*

Taleban opium earnings are also low when compared to their other main illicit source of income: large scale regional contraband of regular goods, either flown in directly from duty-free Dubai and then smuggled to neighbouring countries, or diverted from tax-exempted transit shipments through Pakistan under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA). A World Bank study estimated this contraband trade to be worth US\$ 2.5 billion in 1997 and that the Taleban derived at least US\$ 75 million from it.

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WAR & OPIUM IN AFGHANISTAN

UNDCP'S ILL FATED INTERVENTIONS

Afghanistan has been the centre of attention for the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) since it became clear that the country had gained the status of the world's largest source of opium. Since 1994, the *Annual Opium Poppy Survey* of UNDCP's Crop Monitoring Programme is the most reliable source for figures on poppy hectares and opium production potential. To understand the complexities of the Afghan opium economy, UNDCP's *Strategic Study Series* is indispensable. It has documented the expansion of poppy fields in Afghanistan and the reasons behind it; the role of opium as a source of credit and in livelihood strategies of small farmers and war refugees; the role of women in the opium economy and the rural dynamics behind the illicit trade.

Unfortunately, this accumulated wisdom seems absent in the planning and implementation of UNDCP projects that aimed to stem the flow of illicit drugs from Afghanistan. The policy interventions have been highly politicised and every one of them has been plagued by controversy. The following reconstruction of UNDCP's troubled efforts casts serious doubt about the ability of this agency to play a constructive role in the crucial political moment today, where the drugs-and-war nexus in Afghanistan has come to the attention of the entire international community.

Alternative Development

By 1989, once Soviet troops had left Afghanistan on February 15, UN agencies were conscious of the potential increase of illicit opium production. It had grown steadily over the past few years already reaching an output of 1200 metric tons, roughly one-third of global production. The countryside was devastated and millions of refugees were starting to return to their home villages. Integration into the established opium economy was their best option to survive. To counter this threat UNDCP launched its first Alternative Development project in June 1989. This *Afghanistan Drug Control and Rural Rehabilitation* project (AD/AFG/89/580), with a total budget of

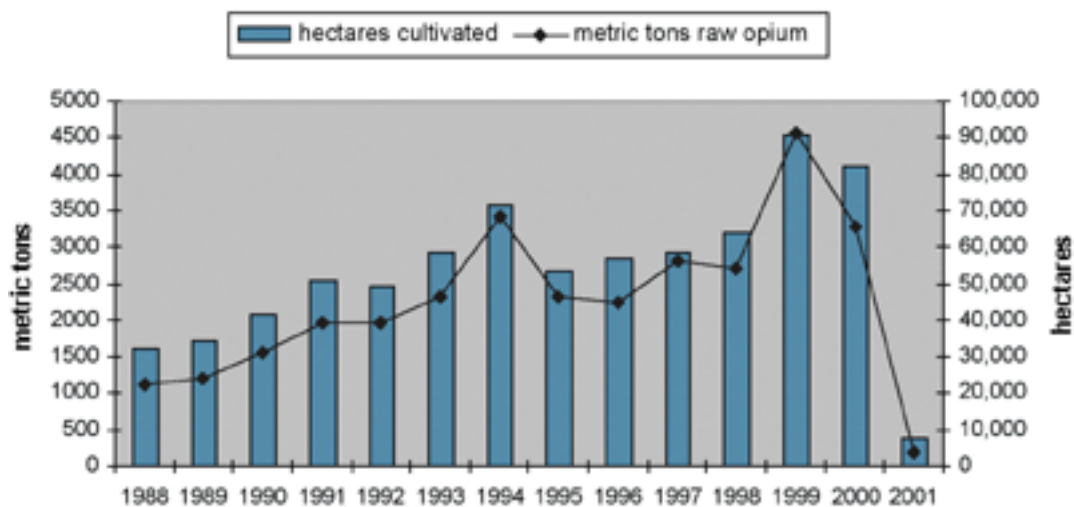
US\$9.2 million, would last until March 1996. Across the major poppy growing provinces, over 200 small drug control development projects were initiated as part of the overall international rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. The only common element in the package of scattered projects and the only difference with the many other rural reconstruction efforts implemented by other agencies, was the '*poppy clause*.' Prior to the start of a project communities had to sign an agreement to end opium cultivation. Enforcing this clause, however, proved to be impossible. Between 1989 and 1994 opium production nearly tripled to 3400 tons. Evaluations of the programme did recognize its contribution to overall rehabilitation of the countryside, but acknowledged its failure in terms of reducing poppy crops.

In March 1997 a second initiative was launched in the form of a pilot project: the *Poppy Crop Reduction Project* (AD/AFG/97/C28), with a total budget aim of US\$ 12.5 million for the 1997-2001 project period. It was financed by Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and the USA, but never reached the target amount. A more focussed intervention was planned in four specific districts (three in Qandahar and one in Nangarhar province), aiming to improve conditions for alternative incomes for farmers through a range of activities: "*Activities will include introduction of alternatives to poppy based cropping systems, rehabilitation of karez and canal irrigation systems (including the Nangarhar canal), road improvement, flood protection, introduction of a rural credit system, improvement of veterinary and animal husbandry services, rehabilitation of the Qandahar wool factory and electricity substation, promotion of opportunities for self-employment and small-scale commercial enterprises, skill enhancement through an apprentice scheme, establishment of schools and health, drinking water supply and improved sanitation facilities and training programmes for women in basic family health and livestock production.*"

The '*poppy clause*' in this programme was implemented through Drug Control Action Plans (DCAPs). Local authorities and community representatives had to commit themselves to full elimination of illicit crops in the project



Afghanistan - Opium Production & Poppy Hectares - UNDCP Figures



period. "Under its conditionality policy, UNDCP will provide development assistance only if a ban on opium poppy cultivation has been declared at district level and that the concerned authorities at provincial, district and village levels have committed themselves to enforce such ban." The DCAPs recognized the necessity of a four year gradual reduction scheme, but failed to specify any relationship between achieving development targets and diminishing illicit crops. In spite of the pilot status of the programme, the DCAP reduction timetables did not allow any flexibility to build confidence with the involved communities. Instead they pressured them -in vain- to comply with schedules that did not take into account survival necessities or lessons learned elsewhere. In Pakistan, similar efforts had taken 8-12 years to reach sustainable results. While the UNDCP *Strategic Study Series* collected data and new insights about household decision making on poppy planting, the role of women in the opium economy and the importance of opium as a credit facility, this did not lead to any adaptations in the programme.

Towards the end of 2000 the project was abruptly ended. Only about US\$ 3 million had actually been spent in the four districts. Donor enthusiasm had ran out because of critical reviews about its impact, political inconvenience about dealing with Taliban authorities, and an internal management crisis in UNDCP involving Executive Director Pino Arlacchi. At

the time evaluations concluded that opium poppy was indeed significantly reduced by 2000, particularly in the Qandahar districts. However, no causal relationship with the project activities could be confirmed. A severe drought was the main cause of the fall in planted area and yield, a pattern shown as well in districts outside of the project coverage.

The pilot project failed to meet its original key targets, one of which was stated as: "The project will demonstrate to the Afghan authorities that a poppy ban can be sustained without due hardship when supported with a programme to help poppy growing areas along an alternative path of socio-economic development." Rising production patterns, disappointment over drug control impact of Alternative Development programmes, donor reluctance and a change in leadership shifted UNDCP closer to a dependency on law enforcement. Emphasis was laid on developing an efficient method of forced eradication, negotiate a complete opium ban with Taliban authorities and close off Afghanistan's borders. Alternative Development became a negotiating tool to achieve a reduction through repressive means.

Negotiating the Ban

In the one-year lapse between ending the first Alternative Development programme in 1996

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and starting the second, the Taliban gained control over Nangarhar province and the capital Kabul. The southern opium producing provinces were already under their control since 1995. Given the 'conditionality principle' in the pilot project, this meant entering into negotiations with the Taliban as the de-facto authorities. In November 1996 the new government in Kabul issued its first statement on the issue. The Taliban declared their opposition to the production, processing, trafficking and abuse of opium and pledged their determination to take all necessary measures, in the context of regional cooperation and international assistance. The delicate mission to negotiate the terms of this pledge was assigned to Giovanni Quaglia who represented UNDCP in talks with Taliban authorities in 1997. UNDCP made clear that it was willing to channel aid and investment into Afghanistan but that it would get the green light only if the Taliban leadership would issue a public edict declaring that opium cultivation is a violation of Islamic law, and would co-operate actively in eliminating poppy crops in areas under their control. Mr Quaglia explained to the press: *"We have told them, 'We give you one, and you give us one back'. This is the language of business. Taliban are Afghans and all Afghans are traders. This is the language they understand. Taliban has been told that silence is complicity. It already has a serious international image problem, and the time has now come for the leadership to make clear to the world its policy on drugs."*

On September 10, 1997, the Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the required declaration: *"The Islamic State of Afghanistan informs all compatriots that as the use of heroin and hashish is not permitted in Islam, they are reminded once again that they should strictly refrain from growing, using and trading in hashish and heroin. Anyone who violates this order shall be meted out a punishment in line with the lofty Mohammad and Sharia law and thus shall not be entitled to launch a complaint."* It was amended by a clarification issued on October 20 which specifically banned cultivation and trafficking of opium.

When Pino Arlacchi was appointed Executive Director of UNDCP in September 1997, he took the issue as his first priority and immediately travelled to Afghanistan to personally

pursue the negotiations. *"In Afghanistan it is a matter of helping the Taliban do something they want to do anyway as strict Moslems,"* Arlacchi told reporters during his visit to Helmand in November. He offered the Taliban authorities a potential amount of US\$ 250 million over a decade for Alternative Development if they would fully cooperate in eliminating opium poppy cultivation. Leaving Afghanistan, Arlacchi announced that he had solved the Afghan drug problem. It was to become the new Executive Director's trademark to spread around promises without having secured any donor commitment, leaving a trail of failed promises and frustrated (non-)recipients.

The 1998/99 winter season production reached the enormous record of an estimated 4565 tons of opium, while negotiations to enforce the pledge continued. In March 1999, UNDCP organised a high-level meeting in Pakistan with nine Taliban drug control officials, fifteen Islamabad-based Drug Liaison Officers from around the world and representatives of Pakistan Anti-Narcotics Forces. Experts in Islamic Law were brought in to discuss legal issues of poppy cultivation under Taliban jurisdiction and to argue for practical steps towards enforcement of an opium ban. In September 1999, just prior to the new planting season and a month before a Security Council meeting about actions against the Taliban regime, Mullah Omar issued a decree to decrease poppy cultivation by one-third and the UNDCP was invited to witness an eradication-show of some poppy fields in Nangarhar. In fact, UN monitoring confirmed after harvest season in spring 2000 a significant 28% production decline to 3276 tons of opium. In terms of the number of hectares dedicated to opium, however, the decline was only 9%, the lower average yield per hectare was caused by the drought. The Taliban had hoped that by showing willingness to co-operate with the international community on the drugs issue, the Security Council might take a softer stand in its accusation that the Taliban were supporting terrorism. But it did not prevent the Security Council from imposing the first sanctions in October 1999.

Then, on July 27, 2000, Mullah Omar issued his total ban on opium planting for the next season. Conditions at that moment were much

Box 2: Drugs Trafficking in the Region

Roughly between one-third and half of the opium from Afghanistan is consumed in the region itself. Apart from widespread traditional opium smoking, the region is experiencing a major crisis of heroin abuse. UNDCP estimates the number of heroin users in Pakistan at 1-1.5 million and in Iran at 1.5-1.8 million, figures that roughly equal the total heroin user population in Western Europe. Most of Afghanistan's production leaves the country in the form of opium or morphine base, the first step towards heroin processing which takes place largely in Turkey and Pakistan and more recently in the Central Asian republics. Heroin laboratories inside Afghanistan are on the rise as well. This is demonstrated by the interception of processed heroin at the Iranian and Tajik borders and the seizure of acetic anhydride shipments destined for Afghanistan, a crucial chemical precursor in the refining process from morphine base to heroin.

The Balkan route has been the most significant trafficking route towards Europe. Huge quantities of opium and morphine base, passing through Pakistan and Iran, are refined in Turkish laboratories, transported via the Balkan, and sold on the Western European market in the form of crude heroin, 'brown sugar.' On a small scale further refinement takes place into high grade 'number 4' heroin, similar to the quality of South-East Asian heroin. The Silk route through Central Asia is gaining importance, primarily to supply the expanding heroin markets in Russia and Eastern Europe. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have turned into substantial processing, storage and transit countries. Transshipment also takes place through Turkmenistan, into Iran or across the Caspian Sea, into the Caucasus to Turkey or up north into Russia.

The border regions have become virtual war zones, where heavily armed trafficking groups are confronted by militarized police forces. Especially in Iran, where over the year 2000, Iran drug control agencies reported 1500 armed clashes and more than 900 smugglers killed. In total over the past two decades, more than 3000 Iranian police and military have lost their lives in such confrontations. Insecurity has reached dramatic levels also because of many kidnappings by traders to settle disputes or for ransom in order to repay debts after traders have lost cargo to police seizure. According to the drug control chief of Khorasan province: *"If we built the Great Wall of China, the traffickers would still find a way to get in. We shoot one today, and tomorrow there are two."*

more favourable to effectuate such a ban. Prices were still low after the over-production in the previous seasons and the continuing drought made poppy planting a risky enterprise anyhow. Initially, few international observers were convinced the ban would be for real this time. However, it was clear to most farmers that this time planting might be punished and although widespread repression did not occur, several examples of arrests and destruction of fields were reported. Given the reputation of rigidity the Taliban had gained, the ban definitively contributed to the spectacular crash of the Afghan opium economy in the 2000/2001 winter season. The almost complete disappearance of opium poppy from Taliban controlled areas could only be confirmed by May 2001.

The gesture came too late for the Taliban to cash in on the basis of Quaglia's 'We give you one, and you give us one back' or Arlacchi's hollow carrot of US\$ 250 million. Instead of a reward or compensation, Arlacchi announced in September 2000 to close down all operational activities in Afghanistan. The decision even took UNDCP staff in the country by surprise, who learned about it when listening to the BBC. The Taliban expressed anger: "We are wondering how the [UN] can step out of its programme on the pretence of not having the funding," said Abdel Hamid Akhundzada, director of the Taliban's High Commission for Drug Control. "We have fulfilled our obligations. We demand that the agreement we made should be fulfilled up to the end." But political developments internationally had turned into another direction, towards confrontation with the Taliban regime. In that climate, Arlacchi had not been able to enthruse donors for major development investments and he already was moving along other paths, for which he no longer needed the Taliban.

Security Belt

While the Taliban renewed their threat to punish all Afghan farmers who grow opium poppy or cannabis, UNDCP was proposing to set up a 'Security Belt' around Afghanistan to contain the flow of drugs by strengthening border and drug control capacities of neighbouring coun-

tries. Arlacchi announced the plan at the *International Conference on Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: An Integrated Approach to Counter Drugs, Organized Crime and Terrorism*, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in October 2000.

The next day he travelled to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to inaugurate the new Drug Control Agency which had been set up with UNDCP assistance. *"The Tajikistan projects were from the very beginning shrouded in secrecy,"* according to Michael von der Schulenberg, who accompanied Arlacchi in his first mission to Tajikistan in April 1999 as Director for Operations and Analysis. *"Mr. Arlacchi promised the President to finance a Drug Control Agency and to pay national salaries for three years of all law enforcement officers. Later he added a commitment of US\$ 2 million for Russian border guards stationed along the Afghan-Tajik border. (...) The crucial recruitment of four international inspectors has been halted leaving the Drug Control Agency with virtually no international supervision."*

The money largely came from UNDCP's very limited General Purpose Funds. The Dutch government was not pleased when they discovered that about US\$ 300,000 of a Dutch donation to UNDCP earmarked for demand reduction projects, was actually used to buy arms and equipment for this paramilitary elite police unit of a repressive state in the highly unstable Central Asian region. Arlacchi had a letter drafted to convince the Dutch donor that this project would contribute to demand reduction, but was convinced by his advisors that it was wiser to re-allocate the money to a Caribbean drug abuse prevention project.

The Security Belt programme was intended to gather funds totalling US\$ 87 million. Due to lack of donor support only the Tajikistan projects and -since May 2001- a UK supported effort to strengthen drug control efforts in Iran have been approved so far. Again Arlacchi had been quick in promising money, but poor in collecting it. Arlacchi gathered a team of intimate -largely Italian- friends around him for his efforts in Central Asia, who only reported to him. Responsibility for or even information about anything to do with activities in Afghanistan or Central Asia was taken away from Michael von der Schulenberg (Director

Operations) and Anthony White (Head Supply Reduction), who both left the agency in utter frustration at the end of 2000.

An important forum at the background of the Security Belt programme is the so-called "Six Plus Two" Group, a regular meeting to coordinate policies towards Afghanistan of representatives from six neighbouring countries (Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and China) plus the United States and the Russian Federation. In February 2000, this Six-Plus-Two group took up the question of illicit drugs coming out of Afghanistan and its destabilizing impact on the region. UNDCP was asked to assist in identifying a joint response. One month later, Arlacchi briefed the UN Security Council and a statement was issued encouraging the Six-Plus-Two Group to address drug-related issues in a coordinated manner, with the support of UNDCP. The Security Council statement also urged other Member States to increase their support for efforts aimed at strengthening the drug control capacities of countries bordering Afghanistan. In May 2000 UNDCP convened a meeting between experts from the Six-Plus-Two Group and major donor countries to discuss the drug threat from Afghanistan and regional insecurity. A Regional Action Plan was approved on September 13, 2000, largely a wish list to increase international security and border control assistance to the Central Asian republics.

Biological War on Drugs

In February 1998, UNDCP signed a \$650.000 contract with the Institute of Genetics in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, for a 3.5 year research programme to develop *"an effective, reliable and environmentally safe agent for the eradication of opium poppy."* A pathogenic plant fungus was identified capable to infect and kill opium poppy. The project (AD/RER/98/C37), funded by the US and UK governments, was referred to for the first time in the Strategy for Coca and Opium Poppy Elimination (SCOPE). SCOPE was meant to become the Grand Master Plan to free the world of cocaine and heroin within a decade by combining Alternative Development and eradication interventions. Pino Arlacchi promoted SCOPE heavily but



failed to have it endorsed at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs in 1998. The fungus project, however, proceeded as planned.

UNDCP called upon the 1996 Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control Cooperation, signed by all Central Asian governments, providing the legal basis for cooperation in eradication of illicit opium poppy in the region. However, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan refused to collaborate in the fungus experiments. The government of Uzbekistan was willing to host the programme and after laboratory testing, field experiments started in 2000 in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan with the fungus *Pleospora papaveracea*. The research phase of the programme has recently been concluded. The next step is to install a scientific panel to review its results, evaluating potential risks for environment, legal crops and human health. Taking into account the conclusions of the review panel, UNDCP and the project donors will decide whether or not to proceed to the next stage: the deployment of the fungus in Central Asia to destroy poppy fields by triggering an epidemic of the fungal disease and making the soil unfit for poppy planting for many years. The real target for the project, however, lies next-door in Afghanistan. Arlacchi allegedly considered to get the UN recognized Afghan Government in exile, to agree to massive application of the *Pleospora* fungus in Afghanistan.

A similar project that was intended to develop the *Fusarium* fungus to destroy coca crops in Colombia, triggered so much resistance from scientists, environmental groups, indigenous peoples and governments from the region, that the Colombian government decided not to allow field testing on its territory. UNDCP had to withdraw the project plans. The controversy sparked unrest worldwide about the idea that a UN agency might start a biological front in the War on Drugs, prompting also several European countries and the European Parliament to denounce such plans strongly. This now forces UNDCP, the US and the UK to consider very carefully the future of the Uzbek project, which has become politically a highly sensitive issue. On the other hand, the current war against the

Taleban regime might improve conditions for the protagonists of the now ready-to-use fungus to pursue their agenda. Spraying *Pleospora* spores from high altitudes might be presented as an effective weapon to prevent or to counter a resurgence of opium poppy cultivation in Taleban controlled territories, deriving them of a potential source of income for their war treasure by harvest time next spring.

Drugs, Terrorism and War

By May 2001 the absence of opium poppy in Taleban controlled territory was confirmed by UNDCP. *"We have done what needed to be done, putting our people and our farmers through immense difficulties. We expected to be rewarded for our actions, but instead were punished with additional sanctions,"* the Taleban's High Commission for Drug Control complained. UN Security Council sanctions against the Taleban were re-inforced in January, because of US pressure to get Osama Bin Laden extradited from Afghanistan. The international community began to focus on the *"increasingly interweaving threats of drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism."* The Tashkent Conference in October 2000 had been the first initiative in the region explicitly making the connection between drugs, crime and terrorism. According to Schulenberg *"the outcome of this meeting has been questioned repeatedly ever since, due the lack of definition of what constitutes 'terrorism' in the regional context."*

The UN panel installed to recommend ways of monitoring an arms embargo on the Taleban questioned the motives of the opium ban. *"If Taleban officials were sincere in stopping the production of opium and heroin, then one would expect them to order the destruction of all stocks existing in areas under their control,"* the panel said in its report to the UN Security Council. The panel also stated that the proceeds of the sale of stockpiled opium were being used to buy arms and *"finance the training of terrorists and support the operations of extremists in neighbouring countries and beyond."* The team of experts toured the six neighbouring states to assess how border controls might be further tightened. The Afghanistan Support Group, a regular donor conference under the UN to coordinate

aid to the country, recognizes the humanitarian drama caused by the opium ban and noted at its meeting in Islamabad in June 2001 that its “members were unanimous in their recognition that it was imperative the international community responds as soon as possible to alleviate the suffering of those farmers and labourers most affected by the ban.” In response, UNDCP prepared an assistance plan and in August a pilot project for the Nangarhar province was launched. A meeting was prepared for early October to seek the support of the donor community. However, as Arlacchi explained in October: “The tragic events of September 11 changed the situation. UNDCP decided to put all its activities in Afghanistan on hold for the time being. This included the closure of the recently launched project in Nangarhar.”

On October 16, UNDCP convened a meeting with representatives of seventeen donor countries, of nine countries in the region around Afghanistan and of the European Commission to assess the situation following the terrorist attacks of September 11. “Participants recognized that the importance of the fight against drugs in Afghanistan had gained increased urgency because of connections between drug trafficking and the financing of terrorism. Despite the Taliban’s effective ban on poppy cultivation last year, trafficking in Afghan heroin, drawing on important stockpiles, continued unabated. Participants in the meeting expressed their joint commitment to strengthening cooperation in order to reinforce border control capacity in the region, both of the countries in the first and second ‘lines of defence’ and to fight against drug trafficking.”

Looking to the future, Arlacchi has pleaded before the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE Permanent Council, 1 November 2001) to apply the UNDCP’s ‘conditionality principle’ to all reconstruction efforts: “The millions that will be spent on the reconstruction of Afghanistan will diminish greatly in value if they do not include a guarantee that opium poppy cultivation and heroin production will no longer be allowed. [...] I call on you to join us in an action to prevent the return of opium poppy. This will contribute to security in all OSCE countries. A reduction in the availability of illicit drugs will address an important threat to human security in the region and in Europe. In addition, the removal of the profits from illicit drugs will make it more difficult for terrorists

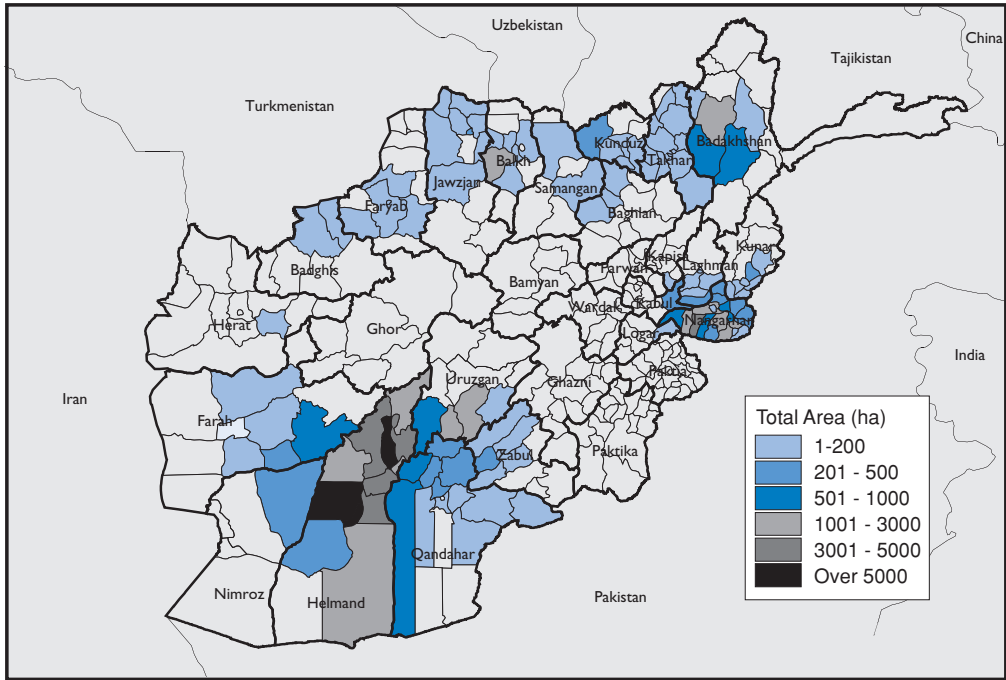
and organized criminal groups to threaten both human security and national security.”

Conclusion

Afghanistan today is at the centre of the world’s attention now that the ‘alliance against terrorism’ is engaged in a full-blown war against the Taliban regime. The importance of understanding the illicit drugs economy as a cross-cutting issue touching on security and development issues is more and more recognized. Policy making to address the endemic conflict inside Afghanistan, the severe developmental crisis and the refugee drama, has to incorporate the drugs factor. Reconstruction of the country and prevention of recurring armed conflict will have to be accompanied by considerate policy approaches towards the reality of the opium economy as a component of survival strategies. Implementing unsound Alternative Development strategies, a repressive ban, risky and ineffective biological eradication methods, or strengthening the repressive apparatus of neighbouring authoritarian regimes, may well deteriorate the crisis even further. The international community has to look beyond applying the blunt instrument of a ‘conditionality principle.’ Given the history of UNDCP’s ill fated interventions in the region and the current malfunctioning of the agency in terms of management and evaluation mechanisms, it seems wise to consider an institutional UN framework for the reconstruction of Afghanistan without a leading role of UNDCP in the process. A wider development and conflict resolution and prevention context will have to prevail, accompanied by drugs policy approaches based on learning from past failures, in which many of UNDCP’s dogma’s need to be re-thought.

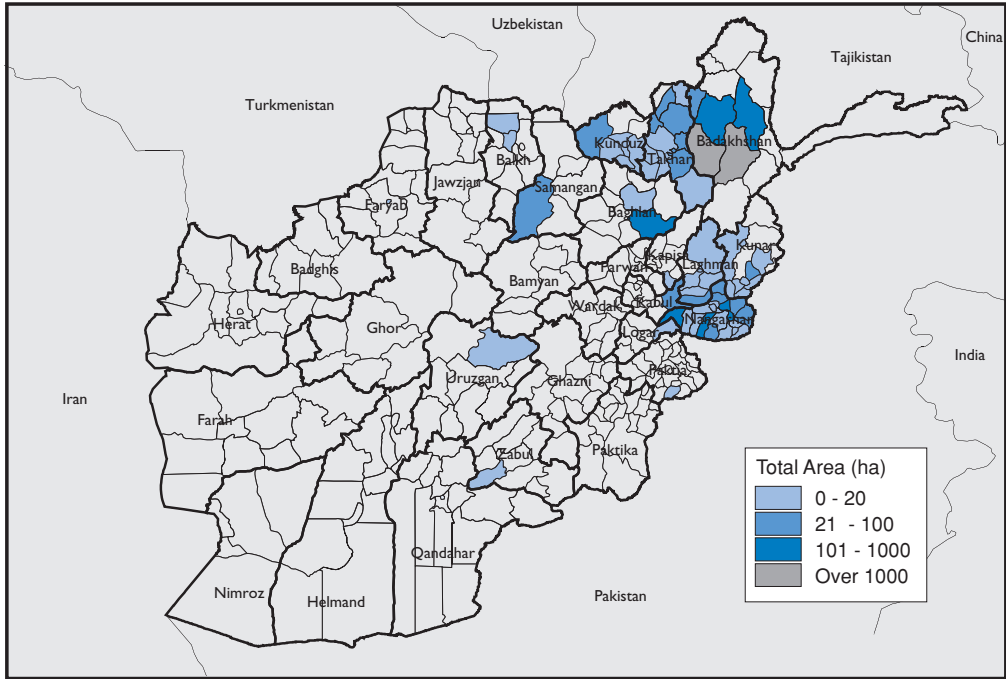


Afghanistan: Opium Poppy Cultivation, 2000



Based on UNDCP data

Afghanistan: Opium Poppy Cultivation, 2001



Based on UNDCP data

The Opium Ban

On July 27, 2000, the Taleban authorities banned opium poppy. The UNDCP Annual Opium Poppy Survey for 2001, released in October, confirms in detail the near total success of the ban in eliminating poppy cultivation in Taleban controlled areas. *"An estimated 7,606 hectares (Ha) of opium poppy was cultivated in Afghanistan during the 2001 season. This represents a reduction in total poppy area of 91% compared to last year's estimate of 82,172 Ha. Helmand Province, the highest cultivating province last year with 42,853 Ha, recorded no poppy cultivation in the 2001 season. Nangarhar, the second highest cultivating province last year with 19,747 Ha is reported to have 218 Ha this year. (...) In Badakhshan, there has been an increase from 2,458 Ha to 6,342 Ha compared to last year."* The survey revealed the politically inconvenient reality that this year 80% of the total 185 tons of opium from Afghanistan came from territories controlled by the Northern Alliance. In absolute terms, however, this only represented a small amount compared to previous years' production.

Much has been speculated about the existence of huge stockpiles of opium remaining from the record harvests of previous years. Many commentators alleged that the ban also was intended to restore market prices. There is no doubt that the 1999 and 2000 figures represented an over-production for the opium and heroin markets. Indeed, by harvest time 2000, fresh opium prices had bottomed to US\$ 30 per kilo, indicating a saturation of demand. The dynamics of the opium market, however, make it unlikely that substantial stocks were under control of the Taleban and that they would benefit much from restoring prices.

One of the reasons behind the over-production of 1999 can be found in the role opium has as a grassroots banking system, providing credit to farmers through the salaam system of pre-harvest sale to traders. As explained in "The Role of Opium as a Source of Informal Credit" (UNDCP Strategic Study #3): *"The dramatic fall in the yield of opium in 1998, has led to many households, particularly the most vulnerable, facing considerable problems repaying their seasonal debts and servicing their long-term debts. Given the substantial increase in the*

post harvest price of opium in the south in 1998, those who purchased opium on the open market to repay their salaam debt, were found to be paying as much as four times the value of the original advance given." Many farmers managed to reschedule their repayments to the next season. The study illustrates with an example of a sharecropper: *"In order to repay his marriage expenses(...) he had obtained salaam from a trader for 14 kg of opium. Unfortunately, poor yields in 1998 meant that he only received 7 kg as his fifth share of the final opium crop. The trader agreed to accept the 7 kg of opium (...) on the understanding that the current 7 kg deficit would be supplemented with a further 7 kg in 1999."* *"Increasing opium poppy cultivation was cited by all socio-economic groups as a means of repaying their loans."* Especially in the south, much more was planted at the end of 1998. Combined with the good yield in 1999 this led to the record production. Much of the over-production thus went directly to traders. The next harvest season showed a downfall of prices caused by market saturation, leading many farmers to keep part of their opium stashed on their farm awaiting better prices. The likely owners of the stocks are opium traders and heroin producers –largely outside of Afghanistan- and farmers themselves.

One of the dramatic consequences of the ban, is the breakdown of this informal credit system based on opium. At the end of 2000 and early 2001, some 200,000 refugees moved towards Pakistan and Iran, amongst them many indebted former poppy farmers unable to obtain salaam to live through the winter and defaulting on their longer term loans. The sudden ending of poppy cultivation has wreaked havoc on local economies. Bernard Frahi, head of the UNDCP office in Pakistan, applauded the success of the opium ban. *"This is the first time that a country has decided to eliminate in one go - not gradually - these crops on its territory," and called it "one of the most remarkable successes ever"* in the UN drug fight. Sandeep Chawla, head of UNDCP research, however acknowledges that "in drug control terms it was an unprecedented success, but in humanitarian terms a major disaster," casting doubt on the sustainability of the implosion.



The Market Responds

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The illicit drugs market in and around Afghanistan, has been highly unstable this year. This is due firstly to the impact of the opium ban and more recently because of the military intervention. When it became clear that little opium would be produced, prices for fresh opium increased 10-fold compared to last year to some US\$ 300 per kg around spring harvest time, and grew even higher to US\$ 700 by early September before the attacks in the US. These unprecedented high prices indicate that no huge stockpiles of opium remained in the country. After September 11, traders and farmers who still had stocks began to sell and move opium and morphine base out of the country, anticipating the counterattack against Afghanistan and forecasting a re-bound of poppy cultivation. Prices dropped rapidly. Several sources mention a price fall inside Afghanistan to about US\$ 100 by October. This is still above the level of the past decade, when prices per kg averaged between US\$ 35-70 per kg. Opium prices in Pakistan showed a similar pattern of strong growth between March and September and a decline after September 11. In comparison, heroin wholesale prices in the region seem to have remained more stable, indicating that trafficking groups are still able to provide the market with a steady supply from stocks held outside of Afghanistan. Street prices in Europe and the US have not been affected at all so far.

Apart from the chaotic fluctuations in the region caused by the panic of the war, the big question is how the global market will respond in the mid and longer term to the crash of opium production in Afghanistan.

The global supply, combining the figures from South-West Asia with South-East Asia and the smaller amounts from Mexico and Colombia, is compared to last year down from 4700 tons to 1700 tons. Such a downfall is impossible to sustain. Either heroin prices will rise steeply and many consumers and addicts will run into serious difficulties maintaining their habit and be forced to find chemical substitutes, or supply will restore itself.

It is likely that opium production in Afghanistan will resume to a certain extent. Taliban authorities maintain that all the rumours stating that they would reverse the ban are fabrications. *"When the authority of a Muslim land asks the community to obey a religious decree, even if they are starving or facing a difficult situation, they have to obey and they have to be patient."* In case the opium ban would be lifted, the return of poppy in territories until recently under Taliban control will be massive, as a farmer was quoted: *"When Mullah Omar told us not to plant poppies, we did not plant them. And when he tells us it's permissible, we will plant it again. He is our Commander of the Faithful."* But even if the ban will be formally upheld, conditions for enforcing it have definitively changed. In spite of the drop after September 11, prices are still good and are likely to rise again, providing a strong incentive to farmers for planting. The Taliban regime clearly has other priorities at the moment and needs its security forces for defence tasks instead of preventing poppy planting or eradication operations. The planting season is in October/November and observers in Afghanistan have indeed spotted

farmers preparing fields in several provinces.

There will be also market pressure to increase opium production in other places. On a small scale, poppy cultivation exists already in Central Asia. Border areas in Pakistan were significant producing regions especially until the 1979 Hadd Ordinance prohibiting production and consumption of all drugs, which shifted cultivation into Afghanistan. The same holds true for Iran, but both countries seem to be aware of the threat and are determined to repress any re-bound. Global deficit may also increase prices far away in Burma, Laos, Mexico and Colombia, providing incentives for growth. So far, however, there are no indications of rising prices there and the farmgate raw opium price levels have over the past years already been much higher in comparison with Afghanistan: in Burma around US\$ 200 per kg, in Colombia between US\$ 300-400.

Supply reduction efforts over the past decades have failed on a global scale. One way or another, the market arranges the displacement of crops. As also Arlacchi has come to understand after four years of UNDCP directorship and in spite of his policy preference for law enforcement and a 'going to the source' approach: *"If demand does not decrease, then any success against illicit supply will not be sustainable."*

REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.tni.org>

Site of the Transnational Institute, with a special issues section dedicated to the War in Afghanistan (www.tni.org/wtc). It includes articles on the war on drugs in the context of the war in Afghanistan. The website of the TNI Drugs & Democracy programme (www.tni.org/drugs) contains special sections on Drugs & Peace in Colombia, chemical fumigations, the biological War on Drugs, UNDCP drug control and an extensive list of links and documentation.

www.tni.org/drugs/research/threats.htm

Ricardo Vargas; *A New World Era: Threats and Incidents Concerning the Colombian Case*, TNI/AA Briefing, November 2001.

www.undcp.org

The United Nations International Drug Control Programme is the UN agency responsible for coordinating activities relating to the international control of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The UNDCP collects data and produces analysis on all dimensions of the drugs issue. On Afghanistan, excellent data can be found in *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2001* (www.undcp.org/global_illicit_drug_trends.html), *Annual Opium Poppy Survey* and the *Strategic Study Series* (both at www.undcp.org/pakistan/publications.html).

www.mapinc.org/drugnews

Site of the Media Awareness Project (MAP). MAP is a feature of DrugSense. Extensive information and links. The Drugnews Index provides on-line news from major English language press and press agencies about drug policy, mostly on consumption issues and domestic U.S. law enforcement, but also international news. Daily update, free access and interactive.

www.mycoherbicide.net

A site dedicated to the open investigation of mycoherbicides, by Sharon Stevenson and Jeremy Bigwood. This site attempts to consider many aspects of the proposed and actual use of mycoherbicides against drug crops: i.e. marijuana, coca, and opium, including issues of mutability and toxicity.

www.sunshine-project.org

The Sunshine Project is a nonprofit bringing information to light on potential abuses of biotechnology. The Project is concerned misuse of some science may undermine agreements on peace, disarmament, and the environment. Through research, awareness building, and advocacy, the Sunshine Project stands for international consensus that advances in health, agriculture, and microbiology should not be used to harm people or their environment.



The connection between terrorism and the illicit drug trade has made the headlines after the terrorist attacks of September 11. In their public statements, leaders of the international alliance against Osama Bin Laden and the Taleban repeatedly stressed that not only were innocent civilians terrorised, but poisoned with heroin as well. What is more, drug profits were also used to finance terrorist attacks.

With the new international context of the war against terrorism, the war on drugs moves centre stage as well. While drugs and terrorism are now shoved together to demonise the 'evil' enemy, reality is the victim. Blending the two wars to one seriously endangers the advances made to find a solution to the drug problem. In this issue of Drugs & Conflict an attempt is made to restore the facts and separate these merged wars again.

Today, the two major producers of opium poppy and coca, Afghanistan and Colombia, are in the midst of shifting counterdrug strategies. We will look at the case of Afghanistan, analysing the UN International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) ill fated interventions. And while international attention is focused on Afghanistan, the linkage of drugs and terrorism is endangering the troubled peace talks between the government and the FARC guerrilla in Colombia.

The Transnational Institute (TNI) is a decentralized fellowship of scholars, researchers and writers from the Third World, Europe and the U.S. committed to create and promote international co-operation in analysing and finding possible solutions to such global problems as militarism and conflict, poverty and marginalisation, social injustice and environmental degradation.

Since 1996, the TNI Drugs & Democracy programme has been analysing trends in the illegal drugs economy and in drug policies globally, their causes and their effects on economy, peace and democracy.

The Drugs & Democracy programme conducts field investigations, engages policy debates, briefs journalists and officials, coordinates international campaigns and conferences, produces articles, publications and briefing documents, and maintains a daily electronic news service on drugs related issues.

The aim of the project and of the Drugs and Conflict series is to stimulate a re-assessment of conventional prohibitive and repressive policy approaches and to argue for policies based on principles consistent with a commitment to harm reduction, fair trade, development, democracy, human rights, environmental and health protection, and conflict prevention.

