

# **FUTURE U.S. COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN**

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A REPORT

BY THE

UNITED STATES SENATE CAUCUS  
ON  
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

**U.S. SENATE CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL**

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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

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### UNITED STATES SENATE CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL


Washington, D.C.  
December 2014

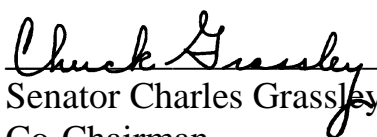
DEAR COLLEAGUE:

As the United States continues its drawdown in Afghanistan, it is critical that an effective counternarcotics strategy be put in place. The attached report presents findings gathered by Caucus members and staff through hearings, briefings, interviews, and the review of documents from government and non-government subject matter experts. This report builds on the draft recommendations presented to witnesses by Senator Feinstein prior to the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control Hearing on January 15, 2014, entitled “*Future of U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts in Afghanistan.*” It examines the existing strategy and provides recommendations regarding counternarcotics efforts to consider moving forward.

We look forward to working with you to implement these recommendations.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Charles Grassley  
Co-Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Charles Schumer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator James E. Risch

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Tom Udall

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator John Cornyn

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*The illegal drug trade contributes to nearly every major challenge Afghanistan faces. It funds the insurgency, fuels corruption, and poses a serious public health challenge in Afghanistan and beyond.*

*Unfortunately, there is little good news coming out of Afghanistan when it comes to counternarcotics. According to the United Nations, poppy cultivation in Afghanistan reached 224,000 hectares in 2014, the second consecutive year of record high cultivation.<sup>1</sup> A United Nations Security Council report also estimates that the Taliban received \$100 million in funding in 2012 from the Afghan drug trade.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, an estimated 1.6 million Afghans, representing 5.3 percent of the population, use drugs regularly, and each year 100,000 deaths can be attributed to Afghan opium globally.<sup>3</sup>*

*Given these statistics, the United States must maintain a focus on effective counternarcotics efforts and programs, even as it reduces its military footprint in Afghanistan. In this vein, the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control (the Caucus) offers the following recommendations to maintain counternarcotics support in specific areas and further engage international partners.*

### **COMPREHENSIVE COUNTERNARCOTICS STRATEGY**

1. ***Finding:*** There is currently no comprehensive, interagency U.S. strategy for post-drawdown counternarcotics efforts. The Afghan drug trade is a crosscutting problem that impacts all U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. It plays a key role in the economic, security, and political challenges the country faces. Therefore, a comprehensive counterdrug strategy is needed.

***Recommendation:*** Under the leadership of the White House and the National Security Council, all U.S. agencies carrying out counternarcotics work in Afghanistan should produce a long-term, coordinated counternarcotics strategy that recognizes the limitations of a smaller U.S. footprint in Afghanistan, clearly outlines future counternarcotics goals, and includes metrics to measure progress.

In addition, because of the drug trade's significant impact on so many facets of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, all U.S. assistance should incorporate a counternarcotics assessment. This assessment should consider how assistance will impact or can contribute to counterdrug efforts, thereby

incorporating counternarcotics efforts into the overall U.S. strategy for Afghanistan.

## **GREATER FOCUS ON CENTRAL ASIAN TRANSIT COUNTRIES**

2. **Finding:** According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 90 metric tons of heroin transit from Afghanistan through the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan en route to Russia each year.<sup>4</sup> The Department of Defense's *Post-2014 Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan and the Region* states that there are "dedicated counternarcotics services in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan," but the majority of national counternarcotics forces are challenged by "resource shortfalls, lack of training, and corruption, which have contributed to an overall decline in reported opiate seizures since 2005."<sup>5</sup>

**Recommendation:** Given the limits that will exist on operating within Afghanistan post-2014, the United States and other partners should focus efforts on enhancing the capacity of Central Asian counternarcotics forces to better interdict heroin leaving Afghanistan.

## **COMPREHENSIVE ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY**

3. **Finding:** Afghanistan is the fourth most corrupt country in the world, according to Transparency International.<sup>6</sup> Proceeds from the drug economy are one factor in the corruption that emboldens the insurgency, undermines security, and threatens the sustainability of the country. Despite this, the United States has not implemented a comprehensive interagency plan to counter corruption in Afghanistan.

The lack of such a strategy all but guarantees that the financial, criminal justice, economic, and other licit systems that the United States and our international partners have worked with Afghanistan to establish will fail when the drawdown is complete.

**Recommendation:** All U.S. agencies carrying out counternarcotics work in Afghanistan should produce a comprehensive, interagency strategy to ensure that anti-corruption efforts are woven into the overall post-2014 strategy for Afghanistan, rather than executed in piecemeal fashion. This effort should be coordinated by the White House and National Security Council.



To ensure success in reducing corruption and strengthening accountability in Afghanistan, an assessment – which includes goals and metrics to measure progress – should be conducted to determine the extent to which U.S. programs and initiatives contribute to reducing corruption.

## **SUPPORT FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

4. ***Finding:*** Comprehensive alternative development programs that are well-informed, planned, and coordinated can be successful. However, simple crop substitution may be susceptible to crop failure, not have any domestic or international market, or not help landless individuals. Therefore, experts recommend focusing on increasing non-farm income, such as promoting manufacturing and retail development, providing micro-loans so that individuals can start small businesses, or greater investment in livestock.

***Recommendation:*** The Caucus supports efforts to maintain and expand alternative development programs to additional Afghan provinces, within current budgetary constraints, only if long-term sustainability is accounted for and development programs beyond agriculture are pursued. Future alternative development programs funded by the United States should focus more intensely on non-farm income to broaden the base of sustainable, licit sources of income in Afghanistan.

## **CONTINUE SUPPORT FOR DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION VETTED UNITS AND EXPAND VETTING TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

5. ***Finding:*** Drug Enforcement Administration vetted units in Afghanistan are indispensable in combatting narcotics trafficking and systemic corruption. Despite the fact that vetted units conduct investigations with the endgame of prosecuting, convicting, and sentencing targets, this goal often is not achieved because members of the judicial sector are not subject to vetting, and therefore are susceptible to corruption. The last high-level trafficker-kingpin to be extradited from Afghanistan was in 2009 and was subsequently sentenced to 20 years in prison.

***Recommendation:*** Within current budgetary constraints, U.S. funding should continue to support Afghan vetted units. To protect U.S. investments in counternarcotics investigations and ensure they result in convictions and sentencing, funding provided for rule of law programs should be contingent

upon a comprehensive vetting process that is applied to prosecutors and judges involved in cases that are investigated by the Afghan vetted units.

## **PRIORITIZE INTERDICTION**

6. ***Finding:*** Current counternarcotics enforcement efforts in Afghanistan include a range of eradication and interdiction initiatives. As U.S. and coalition forces and funding decrease, current counternarcotics programs will need to be prioritized based on their effectiveness. Eradication efforts, although successful at times, have not made a sustained impact on reducing poppy cultivation for a variety of reasons, including lack of security and absence of political will.

***Recommendation:*** As the U.S. military footprint decreases and security forces are further stretched in Afghanistan, U.S. counternarcotics efforts should increasingly focus on interdiction efforts, including investigating and targeting organizations that operate heroin-processing laboratories. These laboratories represent a natural chokepoint in the drug trade and, though potentially difficult to target because of their remote, insecure locations, offer the best opportunity to seize narcotics and target drug kingpins. Interdicting finished drugs ready for sale and the organizations that refine them has the additional benefit of removing the drugs from the market and denying these organizations an important source of revenue.

The Caucus continues to support both effective crop eradication and interdiction programs. However, as security concerns increase and resources for counternarcotics become more limited, the United States will be forced to make difficult budgetary decisions. Given these unique circumstances, the Caucus believes that it may be more effective to prioritize the identification, pursuit, and prosecution of drug traffickers that fund the insurgency.

## **CONTINUE THE AFGHAN THREAT FINANCE CELL MISSION**

7. ***Finding:*** In the past, U.S. anti-money laundering operations in Afghanistan were conducted by the Afghan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC), a partnership including the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Department of Defense, as well as other agencies and international partners. The information provided by the ATFC has proven useful in building cases against drug kingpins. The ATFC uncovered corruption and criminality in

the Afghan government and banking sector and provided critical support in operations that led to the disruption of insurgent funding and the capture of key insurgent financiers. The number of U.S. personnel supporting the ATFC's mission has decreased, and it will likely merge into a broader existing interagency and international partnership operation post-2014.

***Recommendation:*** The Afghan Threat Finance Cell's mission is vital in targeting drug kingpins and disrupting terrorist financing. Recognizing that resources are not currently available for the ATFC to stand on its own, and may continue to be unavailable as the drawdown progresses, the United States must take appropriate steps to ensure the mission of the ATFC continues to be fulfilled, even if it becomes part of a broader interagency intelligence operation.

## **ENCOURAGE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT IN DEMAND REDUCTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS**

8. ***Finding:*** Drug addiction and high drug use rates lead to increased health costs and crime rates, high levels of unemployment, and decreased societal morale and economic productivity. With Afghanistan cultivating more than 90 percent of the world's opium poppy, the number of Afghan drug addicts and associated negative consequences will likely increase unless effective drug demand reduction and treatment programs are in place.

***Recommendation:*** Understanding that the U.S. and international drawdown will lead to reduced resources in Afghanistan, the Caucus supports increased emphasis on, and support for, demand reduction programs executed in conjunction with supply reduction programs that target both higher user populations and children and teens who are not yet regular users. Science-based treatment and rehabilitation services that reach rural and urban populations and data collection on drug use in Afghanistan should also be expanded, within existing budgetary constraints.

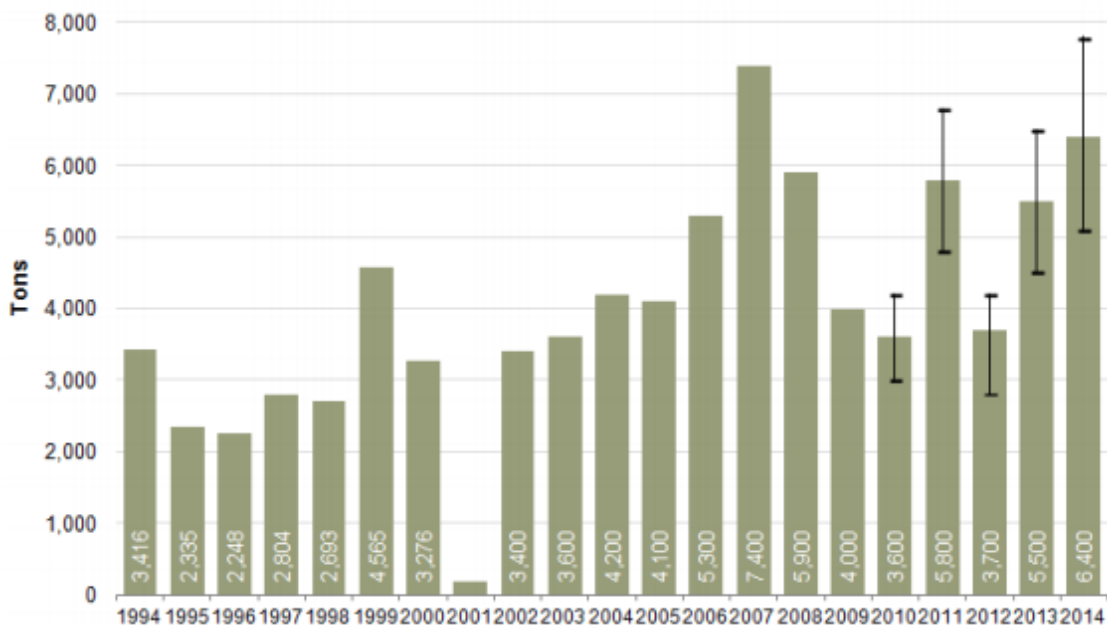
## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

In 2010, the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control (the Caucus) issued a report entitled *U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan*, which concluded, “If we ignore the drug problem in Afghanistan, we will fail in Afghanistan.” This remains true today.

### *Scope of the Narcotics Problem*

Though the political landscape has changed significantly since the last Caucus report on Afghanistan was issued – a new president has been elected, and a new chief executive officer has been appointed – issues surrounding the drug trade have remained constant. Cultivation, production, and trafficking all are thriving. Afghanistan is the largest producer of illicit opium in the world, responsible for over 90 percent of the global total. In 2014, the United Nation’s Afghanistan Opium Survey showed poppy cultivation at a record high of 224,000 hectares, up 15,000 hectares from the previous record high of 209,000 hectares, just one year prior.<sup>7</sup> Opium production potential is up 17 percent from the previous year, totaling 6,400 tons.<sup>8</sup> The value of opium and its heroin and morphine derivatives was equivalent to 15 percent of Afghanistan’s gross domestic product in 2013.<sup>9</sup>

### Potential opium production in Afghanistan, 1994-2014



Sources: UNODC and UNODC/MCN opium surveys, 1994-2014. The high-low lines represent the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval of the estimates. Figures refer to oven-dry opium.

This increase in poppy cultivation and opium production was accompanied by a decline in supply reduction efforts. Poppy eradication was down 63 percent from 2013 to 2014, to 2,692 hectares, though the number of provinces that the United Nations certified as “poppy free” held constant at 15.<sup>10</sup> Reduced eradication levels can partially be explained by the reduction in International Security Assistance Force personnel and the security focus on the 2014 Afghan Presidential Elections. The fact that this increase occurred while attention and resources were focused elsewhere is indicative of what will continue to happen if counternarcotics efforts are not prioritized as the United States and our international partners drawdown in Afghanistan.

The drug trade serves as a significant funding source for the insurgency that kills Americans, Afghans, and our international partners. Estimates as to the exact amount of money the Taliban receives from the drug trade vary, but a recent United Nations Security Council report cited \$100 million,<sup>11</sup> which is a significant portion of their estimated annual budget.<sup>12</sup>

Narcotics production and trafficking not only fund the insurgency, but help fuel Afghanistan’s staggering levels of corruption. Afghanistan has the unfortunate distinction of being the fourth most corrupt country in the world.<sup>13</sup> This is due in no small part to the effects of drug money on Afghan officials.

Afghan drugs have also created a public health crisis. Afghanistan has a treatment capacity of just over 32,000 people per year,<sup>14</sup> yet the United Nations estimates that more than five percent of Afghanistan’s population are regular drug users.<sup>15</sup> Globally, 100,000 people die from Afghan opium every year.<sup>16</sup> These high levels of drug use contribute to dire social, criminal justice, and economic consequences that undermine efforts to build strong Afghan communities.

Unfortunately, the devastating effects of Afghan drugs extend beyond the country’s borders – wreaking havoc abroad and causing thousands of deaths every year outside of their country of origin. Russia is the ultimate destination for approximately one quarter of all Afghan heroin and reportedly suffers up to 30,000 heroin overdose deaths per year.<sup>17</sup> Russia, however, is not alone. Nations around the world suffer serious public health and organized crime problems because of Afghanistan’s flourishing narcotics industry. Approximately four percent of heroin seized in the United States originates from Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup>

The Afghan drug trade and its associated dangers threaten the hard-won progress that the United States and our international partners have achieved.

Therefore, the United States, along with our international partners, must design and implement effective, sustainable strategies and programs to achieve our counternarcotics goals in Afghanistan.

### *Intent of this Report*

While the Caucus believes it is important to combat the Afghan drug trade for the above reasons, the United States must seriously evaluate its counternarcotics goals in Afghanistan rather than spend taxpayer dollars on ineffective programs that have not or cannot achieve their intended results. This point was underscored in a recent editorial in *The New York Times*, which stated, “Over the last dozen years, the United States has poured \$7.6 billion into combating Afghanistan’s opium production, and the results are now clear: the program failed.”<sup>19</sup>

Although the newly elected President Ashraf Ghani has called for a unified government and has already begun taking steps to address the corruption that is rampant in the country, the Afghan drug trade poses a number of immediate and significant threats that could derail these efforts, ultimately causing the country to become a narco-state.

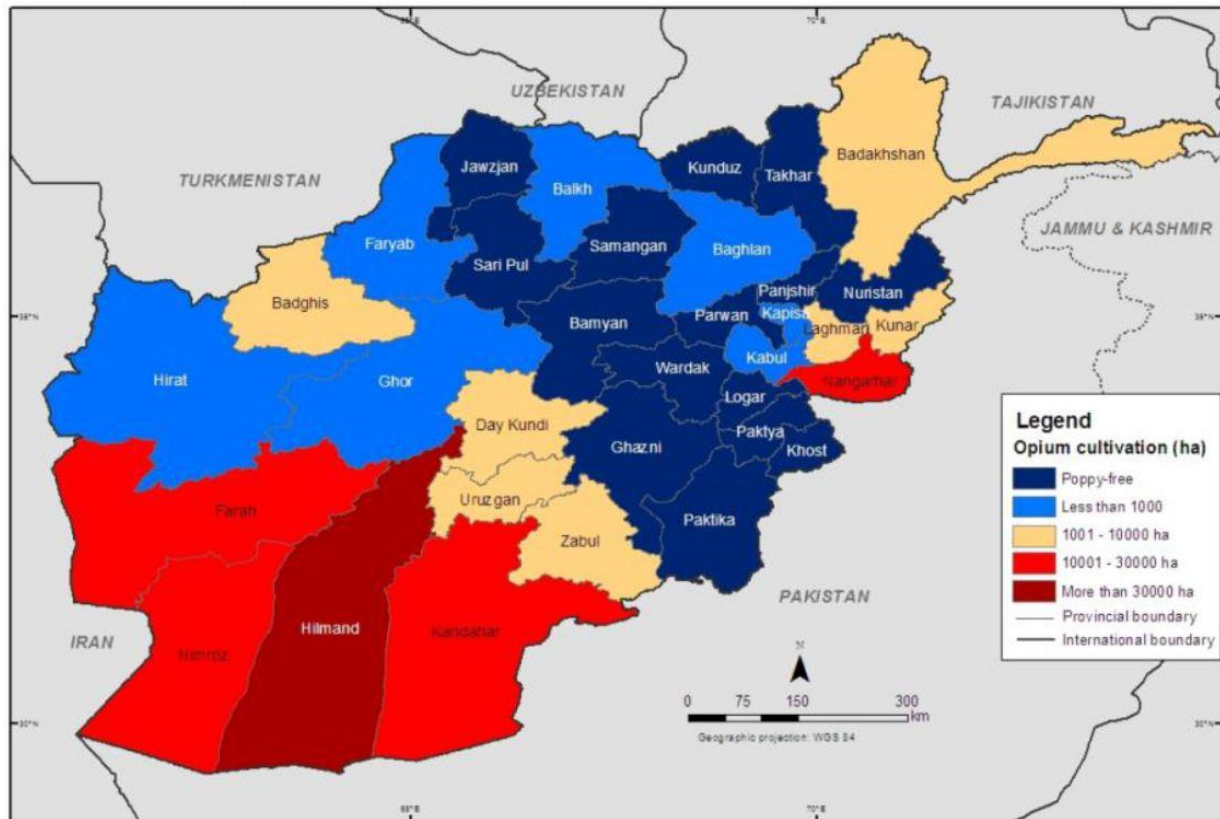
With these serious challenges in mind, and drawing on lessons learned over the past 12 years, this report attempts to outline effective, sustainable strategies to address the United States’ counternarcotics priorities in Afghanistan going forward.

## THE INSURGENCY AND THE AFGHAN DRUG TRADE

### Overview

As the United States and our international partners drawdown in Afghanistan, we must reassess the goals of our counternarcotics efforts in the country. Although Afghan drugs do not enter the United States in significant numbers, Afghanistan's narcotics trade poses a significant threat to the United States because it funds the deadly insurgency. This is evidenced by the fact that opium poppy cultivation is flourishing in the southern and southwestern provinces – areas hit hardest by the insurgency.

### Opium Cultivation in Afghanistan, 2014 (by Province)



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

As the 2014 Afghanistan Opium Survey makes clear, cultivation is concentrated in “the most insecure provinces, with a security risk classified as “high” or “extreme” by the United Nations.”<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, Taliban control and attendant insecurity are spreading in Afghanistan. Recent reports have noted the Taliban’s presence in Wardak Province’s Tangi Valley, only 60 miles from Kabul.”<sup>21</sup> Insurgents have also made inroads into provinces outside their typical

areas of influence, including advances into Kunduz Province in Northern Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup>

### *Insurgency and Drug Trade Funding*

Cutting off insurgency funding from the narcotics trade must be the major focus of U.S. counternarcotics efforts going forward. While estimates as to the exact amount of money the insurgent groups receive from the drug trade vary, all sources agree on its significance.

Haji Bagcho, a heroin trafficker and Taliban sympathizer from Nangarhar Province, conducted heroin transactions worth over \$250 million in just one year.<sup>23</sup> He then used a portion of these proceeds to fund Taliban groups in eastern Afghanistan before he was extradited and convicted in the United States on narco-terrorism charges.<sup>24</sup> This extraordinary example of the link between drug traffickers and insurgents illustrates one method of collaboration between the two groups, but it is far from the only one.

The United Nations Al-Qaeda and Taliban Monitoring Team cites the criminal syndicate headed by Hajji Fatah Ishaqzay as another example of the nexus between the narcotics trade and the Taliban. This syndicate:

“pays both in cash and in kind, and its members have close relatives serving within the Taliban. In addition, a hospital run by this syndicate offers free treatment to Taliban fighters. The syndicate provides most of its support through Akhtar Mohammad Mansour Shah Mohammed (according to the UNSCR 1988 Sanctions List, the Taliban ‘Governor’ of Kandahar was temporarily in charge of the Taliban Supreme Council) and Agha Jan Alizai (according to the UNSCR 1988 Sanctions List, he managed a drug trafficking network in Helmand Province).”<sup>25</sup>

According to the Financial Action Task Force, “the Taliban runs a sophisticated protection racket for poppy farmers and drug traffickers.”<sup>26</sup> The system includes a 10 percent *ushr* tax on farmers, taxes on small traders, transit taxes on truckers, protection for heroin labs, and larger payments made by major drug trafficking organizations to Taliban leadership.<sup>27</sup> The Taliban also taxes opium farmers, laboratories, and bazaars in a number of other localized ways to net profits.



When observing the drug trade first-hand in Nangarhar, David Mansfield, of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, noted that “such was the diversity in payments that in one village in upper Achin, farmers reported paying cash at the end of each agricultural season to local insurgents via the mosque . . . yet only a short distance away in another, village farmers paid a fixed amount of opium.”<sup>28</sup>

Insurgent forces also secure local support and financial rewards, particularly in the southwestern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand, by providing armed protection to ward off eradication. In recent years, the Taliban’s annual “spring offensive” has targeted “not only the officials trying to eradicate the plants, but also the tractors they use.”<sup>29</sup> These attacks have intensified recently, as demonstrated by the August 2014 fighting in Sangin, which “is critical to both sides because of its prime spot in Helmand, a poppy-growing region that has long provided the Taliban with drug-and weapons-smuggling routes.”<sup>30</sup>

The insurgency in Afghanistan is inextricably linked to funding from the country’s profitable drug trade. Some groups have become so heavily involved in narcotics that, according to the Department of Defense’s *Post-2014 Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan and the Region*, “in some parts of Afghanistan, the insurgency has become criminally driven.”<sup>31</sup> Cutting off the profit link between the two is critical to the country’s long-term stability and prosperity.

### *Conclusion*

The insurgency in Afghanistan is directly strengthened by funding derived from the country’s drug trade. As the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction stated, the “narcotics trade is poisoning the Afghan financial sector and fueling a growing illicit economy. This, in turn, is undermining the Afghan state’s legitimacy by stoking corruption.”<sup>32</sup> Only by confronting Afghanistan’s illicit drug trade to choke off the financial and popular support it provides for the insurgency can the country’s long-term stability be ensured.

## U.S. COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN

### *Overview*

The drug trade represents an immediate threat to the already fragile democracy of Afghanistan. And while the election of a new Afghan President may bring new opportunities for lasting change in the country, such changes will likely be short-lived and even reversed absent an effective counternarcotics strategy. Thus far, the United States, its international partners, and Afghanistan all have struggled to put such a strategy in place.

To date, the United States has appropriated approximately \$7.62 billion to support counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup> Since 2002, there have been several iterations of the U.S. counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan. The initial strategy heavily emphasized poppy eradication and was later revised to focus on the nexus between counternarcotics and counterinsurgency, with four primary areas of emphasis: security, governance and development, humanitarian, and civilian operations. In 2012, the U.S. counternarcotics strategy was revised again, this time to account for the impending drawdown and transfer of security responsibilities to Afghan forces.

### *Current Counternarcotics Strategy*

The current counternarcotics strategy focuses on strengthening Afghanistan's ability and capacity to combat drugs on its own and to disrupt the narcotics-corruption nexus.<sup>34</sup> The ultimate goals are to contain and reduce the flow of drugs; disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal and drug trafficking organizations; and reduce the flow of illicit proceeds that fund the insurgency.<sup>35</sup>

In some ways, this strategy has been successful. For example, due to the mentoring and training provided by the United States and the United Kingdom, the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan seized more than 20 tons of illicit narcotics in Kabul alone in 2014;<sup>36</sup> the Counter Narcotics Justice Center (CNJC) Investigation and Laboratory Department increased the amount of illicit drugs processed by 26 percent;<sup>37</sup> and the Herat, Kunduz and Kandahar Regional Law Enforcement Centers have been successfully transitioned to the Afghan Ministry of Interior.<sup>38</sup> Also, as a result of support from the United States, an additional 76 drug treatment facilities have been established throughout the country and are currently being transitioned to the control of the government of Afghanistan.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these gains, however, testimony provided to the Caucus in January 2014 and Caucus staff interviews with experts paint a bleak picture for counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan that will likely worsen as the drawdown continues. While the various agencies responsible for carrying out the U.S. counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan are confident that some level of effort will remain in place when the drawdown is complete, they also expressed trepidation that hard won gains could be quickly reversed due to reduced funding, lower staffing levels, and the fact that Afghanistan may not have the political will to keep counternarcotics efforts at the forefront.

As the drawdown continues, it is anticipated that the United States will continue to focus on the following counternarcotics areas in at least some capacity.

*Security:* The United States has provided training and equipment to the Afghan Special Missions Wing (SMW) air interdiction unit, which is supposed to provide support to Afghan counternarcotics missions. There is concern that the SMW lacks the personnel needed to reach full operational capacity due to the facts that: (1) only a small fraction of the pilots are qualified to fly with night vision goggles, and (2) Department of Defense contractors are performing the majority of critical maintenance and logistics management, as well purchasing spare parts.<sup>40</sup> As the drawdown continues, U.S. staffing will be reduced and its role will shift to an advisory capacity. The sustainability of the SMW is therefore currently unclear.

*Eradication:* Although the United States does not conduct eradication missions itself, along with other international partners, it provides financial support to the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics through the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Affairs for the Governor-Led Eradication Program to do so. The United States currently plans to continue funding this program post-2014.<sup>41</sup>

*Interdiction:* The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has trained and mentored a variety of specialized units that provide critical interdiction, enforcement, and surveillance capabilities to the Afghan government. These units include the National Interdiction Unit, the Sensitive Investigative Unit, and the Technical Investigative Unit, which along with the DEA Foreign-Deployed Advisory and Support (FAST) Teams, utilize the airlift capacity provided by the Department of Defense.

As the drawdown continues, DEA is transitioning from an “operational boots on the ground” role to a traditional in-country role, and staffing levels will be greatly

diminished – from 97 to 33 – post-2014.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, the extent to which the Department of Defense will be able to continue supporting the FAST Team as troops withdraw is likely to be greatly reduced, resulting in fewer counternarcotics missions in Afghanistan.

Experts have expressed concern that the vetted units may be marginalized and/or that their duties will be shifted to focus on priorities other than counternarcotics as the United States reduces its presence in Afghanistan.<sup>43</sup>

*Intelligence Gathering:* The Department of Defense has traditionally coordinated with a number of other agencies and international partners to provide intelligence on the drug trade within Afghanistan, as well as on a broad regional basis.

The Joint Narcotics Analysis Center and the Interagency Operations and Coordination Center have helped develop an “understanding of how the Afghan and regional narcotics trade supports the insurgency and drives corruption.”<sup>44</sup> The Department of Defense also operates the Regional Narcotics Interagency Fusion Center, which uses intelligence and law enforcement efforts to disrupt the flow of Afghan heroin and other illicit drugs from the Pakistan Makran Coast to East Africa. Additionally, the Afghan Threat Finance Cell has been critical to identifying and disrupting insurgent and terrorist funding sources.

The precise staffing levels for the various U.S.-supported intelligence gathering agencies after the drawdown is complete is currently unclear, as many of these agencies may merge to streamline their operations.

*Alternative Development:* The United States has consistently supported alternative development programs as part of its counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan and intends to continue doing so. As the drawdown continues, the Caucus understands that these programs will be redesigned to take a more comprehensive approach that focuses on more than just agriculture, with the hope of yielding better results.

*Demand Reduction and Treatment:* The State Department, through the Bureau of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Affairs, has worked with the Afghan Ministries of Public Health and Counter Narcotics to provide school-based prevention programs to Afghan youth and execute public awareness campaigns to educate the broader population about the dangers associated with drug use. The State Department also worked with the Afghan Ministries of Public Health and Counter Narcotics to establish 76 drug treatment centers.

The State Department is currently in the process of transitioning these treatment centers to Afghan control. Over the next four years, the Ministry of Public Health is expected to assume financial responsibility for 100 percent of staff salaries at all of the country's treatment centers.

*Judicial Reform:* Afghanistan, in partnership with the United States, established the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) – which was initially a vetted, self-contained unit comprised of investigators, prosecutors, and first instance and appellate court judges.<sup>45</sup> The CJTF pursues investigations and prosecutes public officials involved in drug trafficking.<sup>46</sup>

The Caucus understands that the United States now serves only in an advisory capacity to the CJTF and was concerned to learn that officers of the CJTF are no longer vetted.<sup>47</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Recognizing the reduction in resources that will accompany the post-2014 counternarcotics strategy for Afghanistan, the Caucus believes it is critical that the United States maintain, and prioritize to the greatest extent possible, an effective, comprehensive, interagency counternarcotics strategy. Under the leadership of the White House and the National Security Council, all U.S. agencies carrying out counternarcotics work in Afghanistan should produce a unified, long-term strategy that clearly outlines future counternarcotics goals while recognizing the limitations of a smaller U.S. footprint in Afghanistan. It should also include metrics by which to measure progress and adapt as necessary.

# INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS ON COUNTERNARCOTICS IN AFGHANISTAN

## Overview

The vast majority of heroin produced in Afghanistan stays close to home, where it often transits through, or is consumed in, other countries in the region.<sup>48</sup> The United States should therefore increase its counternarcotics cooperation with these countries, specifically those in Central Asia, which are equally concerned about the impacts of the Afghan drug trade, and encourage them to take greater responsibility in addressing this issue.

As recognized in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, the Afghan drug trade is a shared problem that requires a shared response.<sup>49</sup> Very little Afghan heroin – only four percent – enters the United States. Given these patterns, the Afghan drug trade presents a unique area of overlapping interest for the United States and other countries impacted by the problem.

## Heroin Processing Activity and Trafficking Routes in Afghanistan



Sources: Graphic by CRS. Map generated by Hannah Fischer using data from U.S. Department of State (DOS), Esri, 2013; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Afghan Opium Trade Threat Assessment, 2011; UNODC, Opiate Flows Through Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia Threat Assessment, 2012.

## *Central Asia*<sup>50</sup>

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 90 metric tons of heroin and 35-40 metric tons of opium transit from Afghanistan through the Central Asian countries en route to market each year. In Afghanistan, this heroin alone was worth approximately \$475 million in 2012. However, once it moved through Central Asia into Russia, its worth increased to a staggering \$1.9 billion.<sup>51</sup>

In 2011, then-Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and current Secretary of State John Kerry issued a report, *Central Asia and the Transition in Afghanistan*, which discussed U.S. assistance to the region in light of an eventual U.S. drawdown. This report included an assessment of the Central Asia Counternarcotics Initiative that advised supporting vetted units in countries where they stand the greatest chance of success, scaling up cross-border operations, and investing in informal working groups.<sup>52</sup>

These recommendations remain equally, if not more, true today, as the Department of Defense's *Post-2014 Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan* makes clear. A cornerstone of this strategy is identifying and dismantling Central Asian financial infrastructures used by criminal organizations and insurgent groups. It also calls for improving the capacity of Central Asian states to deny border transit points to drug traffickers.<sup>53</sup> Doing so would help address the narcotics issue from the "outside in," as there will no longer be large numbers of International Security Assistance Force troops present in Afghanistan.

Any successful effort to contain the Afghan drug flow and cut off the illicit profits it provides must involve the countries of Central Asia. The U.S. drawdown inside Afghanistan can and should free up resources to address the flow of Afghan narcotics leaving the country. Focusing on the Central Asian countries through which Afghan drugs transit could very well result in a more effective approach to countering the Afghan narcotics trade than efforts inside the country itself.

Significant challenges exist in Central Asia, including weak or corrupt institutions. Nonetheless, the United States must pursue improved counternarcotics efforts with willing, capable Central Asian partners to effectively contain the flow of Afghan opiates.

## *Conclusion*

While the end of the International Security Assistance Force mission and U.S. drawdown in Afghanistan presents challenges to the U.S. counternarcotics mission in the region, it also presents opportunities. The drawdown inside Afghanistan will enable the United States to refocus resources on countries where Afghan drugs transit and are sold. Collaboration with the aforementioned countries could also potentially improve what can be difficult international relationships through our nations' shared interest in combatting the Afghan drug trade.



## CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN

### *Overview*

As previously stated, Afghanistan is the fourth most corrupt country in the world. This endemic corruption emboldens the insurgency, undermines security, and threatens the sustainability of the country. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko stated that:

“the expanding cultivation and trafficking of drugs is one of the most significant factors putting the entire U.S. and international donor investment in the reconstruction of Afghanistan at risk. All of the fragile gains we have made over the last twelve years on women’s issues, health, education, rule of law, and governance are now, more than ever, in jeopardy of being wiped out by the narcotics trade, which not only supports the insurgency, but also feeds organized crime and corruption.”<sup>54</sup>

Afghanistan has made some perfunctory attempts to address corruption, but the issue remains pervasive, and little progress has been made. Although the Afghan government created a National Anti-Corruption Strategy and committed to enacting 37 laws to curb corruption, very few of these laws have actually been enacted.<sup>55</sup> Senior U.S. officials agree that many of the anti-corruption benchmarks contained in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework have not been met.<sup>56</sup> Yet, the United States continues to provide extensive financial support to the country.

A comprehensive, interagency anti-corruption strategy is therefore imperative. The fact that neither Afghanistan nor the United States has established and implemented such a strategy from the beginning of the reconstruction effort is a missed opportunity. However, the recent Afghan election presents a new opportunity to start fresh and implement systemic changes to reduce corruption.

Prior to his election, President Ghani was outspoken about the threat that corruption poses to Afghanistan and the perils of the drug trade.<sup>57</sup> The fact that he recently ordered the Afghan Attorney General to reopen the case that led to the collapse of the Kabul Bank, and that an Afghan judge tripled the jail sentences of the two former heads of the bank and froze the assets of former President Karzai’s brother due to his involvement in the case, is cause for cautious optimism that such systemic changes may actually be implemented.<sup>58</sup>

## *Corruption is Prevalent at All Levels of Government*

Given that the value of opium and its heroin and morphine derivatives equated to \$3 billion, or 15 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product in 2013, it is no surprise that drug-related corruption takes many forms in Afghanistan and permeates all levels of government.<sup>59</sup> Prior to his death, it was widely reported that Ahmad Wali, former President Karzai's brother and once the most powerful political figure in Kandahar Province, was involved in, or at the very least, tolerated narcotics trafficking.<sup>60</sup> This type of high-level, drug-related corruption contributes to the widespread dissatisfaction with the central government and is, unfortunately, also the case locally.

At the district level, experts have observed that officials overstate eradication efforts and negotiate with poppy farmers due to their limited enforcement capabilities and weak state presence.<sup>61</sup> Also troubling are cases of direct Afghan National Security Force involvement in the drug trade. In Helmand, Afghan National Police have, at times, supported poppy cultivation and replaced the Taliban in collecting taxes on the opium crop in parts of the province.<sup>62</sup>

Corruption also is prevalent within the judicial system.<sup>63</sup> Although the caseload of the Counter Narcotics Justice Center has increased, targets must meet a specified threshold in order to be pursued, and the conviction rate is above 90 percent,<sup>64</sup> very few cases are being brought against Afghan officials, indicating that the Afghan government may not have the political will to address corruption. Officials from the Justice Department who have worked in Afghanistan likened the issue of rooting out corruption to trying to reach the top floor of a 12-story building: if each floor of the building represents one level of corrupt Afghan officials, only the bottom four levels can be actually pursued and prosecuted for corruption.<sup>65</sup>

As demonstrated by the lack of high-level prosecutions, drug traffickers enjoy significant political protection. Because an extradition treaty between the United States and Afghanistan does not exist, traffickers are typically tried in Afghan courts and many wield their political influence to avoid prosecution. The recent conviction of Haji Lal Jan marked the first time a U.S. designated drug kingpin was convicted at the Counter Narcotics Justice Center.<sup>66</sup> Officials with knowledge of the case said the verdict came in spite of significant political pressure to release Haji Lal Jan, and they were concerned that he may not serve the full sentence.<sup>67</sup> Their concerns were well-founded, as the Afghan Supreme Court

reduced his sentence from 20 to 15 years, and on June 4, 2014, a Kandahar court ordered his release. He has since disappeared.<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, although Afghanistan's High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption sent 190 cases of high-level corruption to the Attorney General's office in a two-year time span, the Attorney General's office only investigated 20 senior officials, and these investigations rarely led to a conviction.<sup>69</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice has said that "the primary challenge to the Afghan government's anticorruption efforts is the unwillingness of the Afghan Attorney General's office to pursue complex corruption cases."<sup>70</sup>

### *The Role of the United States in Anti-Corruption Efforts in Afghanistan*

Corruption in Afghanistan – and the role of the United States to help mitigate it – is complex. The case of Muhammad Fahim illustrates this point. Fahim was a military chief of the Northern Alliance; instrumental in the fight against the Taliban; and at one time worked closely with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Despite the fact that he had a history of drug trafficking, Fahim eventually became the defense minister, where he was responsible for training the Afghan Army, and then served two terms as vice president. It is alleged that Fahim remained engaged in drug trafficking even after becoming defense minister. According to *The New York Times*, as defense minister, Fahim "had a Soviet-made cargo plane at his disposal that was making flights north to transport heroin through Russia, returning laden with cash . . . ."<sup>71</sup>

At times, the United States has made the difficult decision to partner with corrupt officials and narcotics traffickers within the Afghan government – such as Fahim – in its efforts to defeat the Taliban and retain some semblance of unity in the country. However, U.S. officials have also acknowledged that:

"the decision to turn a blind eye to the warlords and drug traffickers who took advantage of the power vacuum in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks was one of the fundamental strategic mistakes of the Afghan war. It sent a signal to the Afghan people that the most corrupt warlords had the backing of the United States, that the Karzai government had no real power or credibility and that the drug economy was the path to power in the country."<sup>72</sup>

This stark example illustrates the nexus between drug trafficking and corruption and its far-reaching impact. While tolerating corrupt officials may have

had short-term benefits, it ultimately undermined efforts to build an effective government and did little to foster long-term stability. The United States has recently made a more concerted effort to address corruption within Afghanistan, however, these efforts have not always achieved their desired impact.

### *Post-2014 U.S. Anti-Corruption Efforts in Afghanistan*

The Caucus has learned that, although attempts have been made to reduce corruption, a comprehensive, interagency plan to counter corruption or measure the impact of these efforts does not currently exist. Rather, the United States relies on working groups established by senior leadership at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, which coordinates agencies' activities with the following overarching goals: building Afghan government institutional capacity, improving financial regulations and public financial management, and enhancing revenue generation.<sup>73</sup> These working groups, however, "remain unable to assess the overall progress the U.S. government has made to improve the Afghan government's capacity to combat corruption."<sup>74</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Afghanistan suffers from a tremendously weak economy and relies on its international partners to augment its budgetary shortfalls, which, in 2013, amounted to \$3.4 billion. According to Jean-Luc Lemahieu, Director of the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Afghanistan:

"political will for anti-drug initiatives is weak among members of the Afghan elite, many of whom have become increasingly dependent on the proceeds of drugs as foreign funding dries up . . . . Money is less and less available within the licit economy. The real danger is the weakened resistance to corruption and to involvement in a distorted political economy, which weakens your resistance to collusion with the enemy."<sup>75</sup>

Given the threat corruption poses to counterdrug and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, it is troubling that the United States has not implemented a robust strategy to help strengthen Afghanistan's ability to reduce corruption and increase accountability. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction shares this concern and, in July 2014, sent a letter to the Commander of the U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, requesting a detailed account of his "plans for maintaining the

U.S. military's support for programs and task forces to combat corruption in Afghanistan after U.S. combat operations conclude . . . ."<sup>76</sup>

The response to this letter acknowledged that in order to reduce corruption, it is critical to have a "unity of effort."<sup>77</sup> It also noted that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan does not have a comprehensive plan to address corruption within the Afghan government. Instead, ISAF has focused on transparency and "predatory corruption," or the solicitation of bribes, and defers to the international community to address other areas of corruption.<sup>78</sup> As of January 2015, the Resolute Support mission, rather than ISAF, will be responsible for any post-transition activities and will continue to focus on transparency and predatory corruption.

The lack of a comprehensive, interagency anti-corruption strategy all but guarantees that the financial, criminal justice, economic, and other licit systems that the United States and our international partners have worked with Afghanistan to establish will fail when the drawdown is complete. As General John Allen, former Commander of ISAF, put it, corruption is "the existential threat to the long-term viability of modern Afghanistan."<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, in much the same way that U.S. assistance programs and initiatives should be assessed to determine the extent to which they contribute to counternarcotics efforts, an assessment should also be conducted to determine the extent to which these programs and initiatives contribute to anti-corruption measures. This effort should be coordinated by the White House and National Security Council and ensure that anti-corruption efforts are woven into the overall U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, rather than executed in piecemeal fashion.

## ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD ZONE PROGRAMS

### *Overview*

Alternative development or alternative livelihood programs – terms used interchangeably in this report – have played an important role in the U.S. counternarcotics strategy. They aim to “[increase] household income and employment opportunities while decreasing household expenditures and risk.”<sup>80</sup> This can include: agricultural assistance for packaging and marketing goods, technical assistance for better crop yields and productivity, improved irrigation and transportation infrastructure, and expansion of other legal employment options.<sup>81</sup>

While alternative development efforts in Afghanistan have achieved short-term successes, they have not produced sustainable outcomes because they have primarily focused on agriculture-only options. This approach is too limited in scope and does not provide a stable enough alternative income to convince farmers to stop cultivating opium poppy on a permanent basis. Without adequate security, funding, and more non-agriculture options, implementation of alternative development programs will likely be even less successful than in the past 12 years.

Within current budgetary constraints, the counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan should continue to include alternative livelihood options for Afghan farmers to dissuade them from relying on poppy cultivation as their source of income, but their scope should be broadened.

### *Alternative Development Programs in Afghanistan*

Alternative development programs have been well-funded, but largely uncoordinated – both within the Afghan government and between the Afghan government and international donors. This has resulted in duplicative, short-sighted, and isolated projects that do not provide sufficient opportunities for farmers to completely abandon growing poppy. It has also proven difficult to track the return on investment in and effectiveness of the projects because there are so many actors involved.<sup>82</sup>

In the Afghan government, the Ministry of Counter Narcotics works with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development to execute the country’s 2012 National Alternative Livelihood Policy. Prior to the implementation of this policy, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development provided roughly \$1.14 million

in funding to complete almost 61,000 alternative development projects between 2002 and 2012.<sup>83</sup>

For the United States, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is responsible for implementing alternative development programs. Its goal is to “improve productivity, regenerate agribusiness, rehabilitate watersheds and irrigation infrastructure, and increase the capacity of [Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock] to deliver services effectively.”<sup>84</sup> From 2002 to 2012, Afghanistan received approximately \$2.46 billion from USAID in alternative development funding.<sup>85</sup> Other international donors also contribute to alternative development projects in the country.

### *Food Zone Programs*

Food zone programs aim to reduce poppy cultivation through a combination of alternative development, eradication, security, demand reduction, education, and public information campaigns. The Caucus has previously been supportive of food zone programs, including the Helmand Food Zone, which was the first multi-faceted approach to reducing poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. A portion of the Helmand Province was selected for the Food Zone program, in part, because it has historically been the leading cultivator of poppy in Afghanistan.<sup>86</sup> Between 2008 and 2012, under the leadership of Helmand Province Governor Gulab Mangal, and with support from USAID and the United Kingdom, the Helmand Food Zone increased security, implemented public awareness campaigns, provided agricultural inputs and assistance to farmers who pledged not to grow poppy, and eradicated poppy if farmers were found to be in violation of their pledge.

While this program was initially successful, the gains were short-lived. For the duration of its existence, poppy cultivation within the zone decreased by 81 percent, farmers had higher incomes, and they were less dependent on poppy for income.<sup>87</sup> However, when the program ended, security declined and the total area under poppy cultivation increased by approximately 50 percent, almost reaching pre-food zone cultivation levels, and in 2014, Helmand Province accounted for 47% of the country’s total opium cultivation.<sup>88</sup>

Based on lessons learned from the Helmand Food Zone, a second food zone project is currently being implemented in Kandahar Province and will end in 2015.<sup>89</sup> The Afghan government has considered implementing additional food zones in other provinces (e.g. Badakhshan, Farah, and Uruzgan); however, it does not have sufficient funding at present.<sup>90</sup>

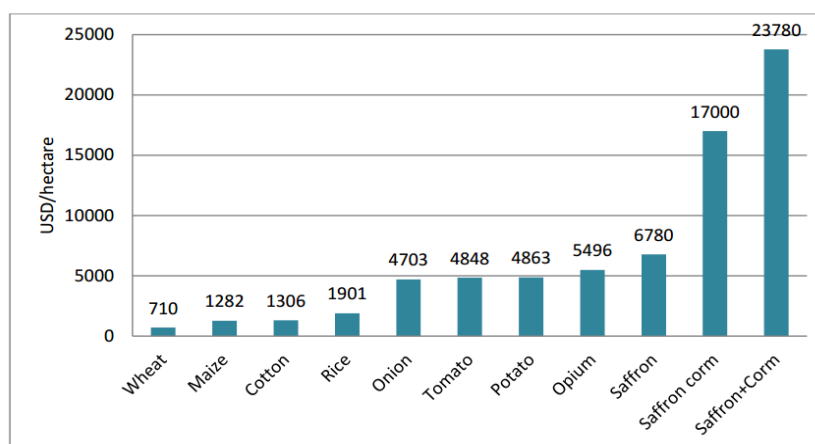
## Challenges to Alternative Development

Alternative development projects in Afghanistan generally face four major challenges: (1) security and access, (2) sustainability, (3) unintended consequences, and (4) coordination.

Security and Access: Alternative development projects often are limited to areas that are urban, easy to access, and already secure. In 2011, an estimated 191,500 rural households' income were dependent on illicit drug crops, but of those, just 30 percent received agricultural assistance in the prior year.<sup>91</sup> As the drawdown continues and security decreases, it is likely that alternative development projects will be confined to areas in which they already exist or be forced to reduce their presence to safer regions. It is estimated that only 21 percent of the country will be accessible to American personnel when the drawdown is complete, making it increasingly difficult for these programs to expand and achieve greater success.<sup>92</sup>

Sustainability: Alternative development programs have finite funding and implementation lifespans, which limit their long-term effectiveness. To persuade a poppy farmer to change his crop, an alternative development project must result in a viable long-term source of income that is equal to, if not greater than, the income a farmer would make from cultivating poppy. Given the comparative prices of licit crops and poppy, it is easy to see why farmers may not believe that agricultural alternative development projects are in their best financial interests.<sup>93</sup>

### Farmers gross income (USD) per hectare by crop – 2009-2012 prices



Source: United States Department of Agriculture, WFP, CSO, MAIL, Roots of Peace

Although it is important to encourage licit crops as a source of income and sustenance, the Caucus believes that there should be a greater focus on “non-farm



income,” such as investment in manufacturing or providing access to microloans for small businesses outside of the agriculture sector. This approach has been reflected in more recent USAID projects, as well as in the Afghan government’s alternative livelihood work. Lack of sustainable alternative development options will result in farmers reverting to poppy cultivation.

*Unintended Consequences:* The Helmand Food Zone resulted in the “balloon effect,” where the elimination of poppy cultivation in some areas led to increased cultivation in other areas with greater insecurity and less access for enforcement.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, agriculture-based alternative development typically only helps landowning farmers because agriculture assistance often is tied to land ownership. Project parameters and inputs must be studied as part of the country’s broader situation, in order to anticipate and mitigate any negative outcomes or spill over into other regions.

*Coordination:* Alternative development programs suffer from a lack of coordination and communication at all levels, which leads to unsustainable project investment, duplication, and limited effectiveness. For example, the July 2014 quarterly Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction report highlighted a U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded soybean processing facility that lacked appropriate coordination and research. Only after the project had been completed was it discovered that there was no market in Afghanistan for soybeans.<sup>95</sup> The Afghan National Alternative Livelihood Policy acknowledges this lack of coordination and has requested that international non-governmental organizations better coordinate with the Afghan government to ensure effective use of funds for alternative development.<sup>96</sup>

## *Conclusion*

It is clear that alternative development projects face a number of challenges. It is also highly likely that international troop withdrawal will lead to greater insecurity post-2014, thus making program delivery more difficult. All of this is compounded by the continued reduction in international donor assistance.

The Caucus continues to believe that alternative development projects hold significant potential and, within current budgetary constraints, supports expanded projects that include sectors beyond agriculture, such as infrastructure, manufacturing, healthcare, legal, and education. However, the above challenges must be addressed or further investment in Afghanistan alternative development projects will continue to be met with diminishing returns.

## SUPPORTING VETTED UNITS AND THE EXPANSION OF VETTING IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

### *Overview*

Through its vetted units, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) pursues, and trains Afghan law enforcement officers to pursue, major drug traffickers throughout the country. These units have become indispensable tools for executing U.S. counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan and mitigating corruption.

While vetted units have been successful, with the impending drawdown and DEA's role shifting to one that is advisory rather than operational, there is concern that they will be marginalized or that outside corruptive forces will hamper the rule of law benefits that they provide.

### *Vetted Units*

The DEA helps strengthen the rule of law by training, equipping, mentoring, and supporting three types of vetted units in Afghanistan, including:<sup>97</sup>

- 1. Special Investigative Units:** These units target drug kingpins and are trained in Quantico, Virginia. They are considered the “gold standard” of police vetted units. Each Special Investigative Unit member is subjected to a full background check, routine polygraph examinations, and drug testing. Members must pass Leahy Law vetting to ensure that they have not committed past human rights violations.
- 2. National Interdiction Units:** These units are considered the enforcement component of the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan and conduct drug enforcement operations throughout the country. There are over 500



**Vetted unit member field tests opium**  
*Source: Drug Enforcement Administration*

members. It is important to note that these individuals are not polygraphed because of the prohibitive cost and impracticality of testing all members.

- 3. Technical Investigative Units:** These units are responsible for all of the judicially-approved drug wire intercepts in the country. The work this unit does is key to prosecuting traffickers and corrupt individuals.

Each of these specialized, elite units has increased Afghanistan's capacity to identify, investigate, disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute major drug traffickers.

Investigations conducted by the vetted units in conjunction with the DEA, led to the arrest and conviction in a U.S. court of Khan Mohammed, who participated in a Taliban plan to obtain rockets to attack U.S. military and Afghan civilian personnel. He also intended to ship heroin to the United States and use profits from that trade to assist the Taliban.<sup>98</sup> Vetted unit investigations also led to the arrest of Haji Juma Khan, who arranged to sell morphine base, an opium derivative that can be processed into heroin, in quantities as large as 40 tons – enough to supply the entire U.S. heroin market for two years. Haji Juma Khan was closely aligned with the Taliban, and the proceeds from his global drug trafficking organization funded the terrorist activities of the Taliban.<sup>99</sup>

### *Investigative Endgame*

DEA vetted units conduct investigations on high-level targets and organizations that result in arrests, seizures of drugs and assets, and the collection of evidence that can be used to prosecute drug traffickers in a court of law. Having vetted members in these units give investigations



**420 kilogram seizure of opium**

*Source: Drug Enforcement Administration*

the best chance to achieve the investigative endgame of prosecuting, convicting, and sentencing these traffickers, free from outside influences such as criminal organizations and corrupt government officials. Vetted units are critical to maintaining the integrity of cases during the investigative phase and need equally capable and trustworthy partners in the judicial system.

## *Expanding the Vetting Process to Help Strengthen Rule of Law and Reduce Corruption*

Unfortunately, unlike the Special Investigative Units, National Interdiction Units, and Technical Investigative Units, prosecutors and judges in Afghanistan are not thoroughly vetted. Consequently, they are more susceptible to corruption, and it is therefore easier for criminal organizations, insurgents, political figures, and high-level government officials to operate with impunity. This jeopardizes the investigations conducted by the vetted units.

In order to be optimally effective, the integrity of investigations must be consistent throughout the investigative and judicial process, including the prosecutorial and sentencing phases.

While fully vetting the entire criminal justice system in Afghanistan is cost prohibitive, impractical, and politically unacceptable, vetting select prosecutors and judges involved in high-level cases would provide a better assurance that the U.S. investment in these specific investigations would lead to just convictions.

### *Conclusion*

The ability to conduct effective investigations against high-level targets is paramount to the effective rule of law. Vetted units allow the U.S. government to protect its investment and ensure that the investigations conducted have the best chance to succeed in an environment challenged by corruption. Though resources will clearly be limited moving forward, the Caucus believes these specialized units play a unique and essential role in disrupting the drug trade and should continue to be funded at the highest possible levels.

The Caucus also believes that judges and prosecutors play critically important roles in ensuring high-level targets are brought to justice, and therefore recommends that future U.S. funding to support rule of law programs in Afghanistan be contingent upon a comprehensive vetting process that extends beyond the vetted unit programs, to prosecutors and judges handling cases investigated by the vetted units. This is essential to maintaining the integrity of counternarcotics missions and will ensure a greater return on the investment of U.S. dollars.

## PRIORITIZE INTERDICTION

### *Overview*

Counternarcotics enforcement efforts in Afghanistan have historically included both eradication and interdiction strategies. As the United States reduces its footprint in Afghanistan and funds become more limited, it is necessary to ensure that the most effective strategies are prioritized. With this in mind, it is important to consider the impact of both eradication and interdiction efforts.

Eradication efforts, although successful at times, have not made a significant or lasting impact on reducing poppy cultivation. This is due in part to the fact that eradication requires a significant security presence. As the drawdown continues, military and security resources will be further stretched, making it more difficult to continue eradication efforts.

Given that Afghan opium fuels a global trade that generates over \$60 billion in profits for corrupt officials, drug traffickers, organized criminal groups, and insurgents, the remaining, limited resources should be focused on locating, investigating, prosecuting, and sentencing corrupt officials, drug traffickers, and insurgents.<sup>100</sup> Identifying heroin processing laboratories and those responsible for the manufacturing and subsequent trafficking is an important part of this process.

### *Eradication Efforts: Mixed results*

Though the United States does not perform eradication in Afghanistan itself, it does provide funding to support the Afghan government to do so. This funding has supported programs such as the Governor-Led Eradication Program, which has had varied results. For example, although eradication efforts supported by this program in Nangarhar were initially successful, Nangarhar is now a principal opium-cultivating province and cultivation continues to increase. Officials cite the newly-elected governor of the province as the cause for this increase, which demonstrates that Afghanistan may lack the political will to continue eradication efforts.

Eradication efforts are also hampered by security issues. The sharp decrease in international security forces has been accompanied by an increase in attacks by insurgents in areas where the Afghan government performs eradication. Given these concerns and when faced with difficult budgetary constraints, the Caucus

believes that it may be more effective to prioritize the identification, pursuit, and prosecution of drug traffickers that fund the insurgency.

### *Effectiveness of Interdiction*

Interdiction efforts, including operations aimed at detecting and destroying heroin processing laboratories, as well as intercepting drug shipments and precursor chemical deliveries, offer a number of benefits over eradication efforts. First and foremost, targeted interdiction hits drug traffickers and insurgent finances without alienating local populations or encouraging corruption in the way that eradicating poppy fields does.

Additionally, capturing and destroying processed narcotics removes drugs from the market when they have highest value for traffickers. For example, the farm-gate value for fresh opium in 2013 was \$172 per kilogram compared to \$5,900 per kilogram of processed heroin ready for export.<sup>101</sup> These price differences illustrate that interdicting finished heroin inflicts far greater financial damages on criminal and insurgent groups than eradication.

The emphasis on interdiction over eradication is not new. In 2009, then-U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the Administration's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, announced, "The United States has wasted hundreds of millions of dollars doing this [poppy eradication]. . . the amount of hectareage we were destroying was inconsequential and the amount of money we were denying the Taliban was zero."<sup>102</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Afghanistan's complex security environment poses unique challenges for counternarcotics efforts. As resources become more limited and security concerns grow, the United States will be forced to make difficult decisions in terms of prioritizing counterdrug efforts, focusing on interdiction and seizures of finished drugs and processing labs may provide a more effective return on the United States' investment.

## CONTINUE THE AFGHAN THREAT FINANCE CELL MISSION

### *Overview*

Terror organizations and insurgents use profits from the drug trade to finance operations, including “training, infrastructure needs, equipping their members, bribing local officials, recruiting, and logistics.”<sup>103</sup> To combat this financing, the United States and our international partners formed the Afghan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC), which targeted and eliminated the sources of financial income for terror organizations through “intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination.”<sup>104</sup>

### *Afghanistan’s Financial System*

The Afghan financial system cannot support its country’s banking needs – it lacks oversight and is susceptible to exploitation and corruption, as seen in the recent collapse of the Kabul Bank.<sup>105</sup> The lack of faith in the banking system has led to 90 percent of Afghans using “hawala,” a network of informal banks that allows funds to be transferred without the physical movement of money through formal banking institutions. This form of banking represents a significant potential threat, both in terms of money laundering and terrorist funding.<sup>106</sup>

### *Afghan Threat Finance Cell*

The ATFC was created in 2008 with the vision that the Afghans would develop the capacity to independently carry out its mission. It used authorities provided by Executive Order 13224 and the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act to “[unravel] key financial networks controlled or used by the Taliban, corrupt public officials, narcotics traffickers, and other criminal elements.”<sup>107</sup> At various points, the ATFC included staff from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Departments of Defense, Treasury, Justice, and Homeland Security, as well as other international partners. It also worked with the Afghan Sensitive Investigative Unit-Financial Investigation Team and Da Afghanistan Bank’s Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Center for Afghanistan.

The ATFC is said to be responsible for exposing the link between the Taliban and Afghan government through the Kabul Bank, which led to the 2010 collapse of the bank.<sup>108</sup> It also helped dismantle the Herat Insurgent Network,

which murdered Afghans and smuggled drugs, weapons, and money for other terrorist networks.<sup>109</sup>

### *Future Plans*

The ATFC faced a number of challenges in fulfilling its mission, including limited staffing and funding. Additionally, the financial systems (such as hawala) that the ATFC targeted were inherently difficult and time-consuming to investigate due to the lack of a traditional paper or digital trail. Lastly, some officials expressed concern that the Afghan government may lack the necessary “political will or capacity” to fulfill the ATFC mission, and thus, successful transfer of responsibility to the Afghans may be impossible.<sup>110</sup>

Despite these challenges, both the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Department of Defense acknowledge the significant role the ATFC has played. While the ATFC has ceased its stand-alone operations, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Department of Defense anticipate that its mission will be merged with other existing intelligence operations.<sup>111</sup> With the U.S. military drawdown, the strategy going forward must maximize existing resources, while expanding intelligence and information sharing that will result in the prosecution and sentencing of drug traffickers, criminal organizations, and insurgents.

### *Conclusion*

Though the ATFC’s work remains largely unpublicized, it served an essential function in fighting criminal and narcotic trafficking networks in Afghanistan and neighboring countries. Given this, the Caucus supports an ongoing commitment to continuing efforts to combat and dismantle criminal and terrorist financial networks and pursue those involved in money laundering.



## DEMAND REDUCTION AND TREATMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

### *Overview*

With an estimated 1.6 million regular drug users in Afghanistan, it is clear that the drugs produced in Afghanistan are also abused inside the country.<sup>112</sup> Drug abuse results in a host of negative consequences, including: the spread of HIV infection through shared needles, increased crime and community degradation, low employment rates and an unproductive workforce, and deterioration of family and personal relationships.<sup>113</sup> Since 2003, focus on demand reduction and treatment efforts has increased, as it has become apparent that drug use and addiction are economically and socially draining on the country.

The Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health established the country's first drug treatment center in 1987 in Kabul; however, public awareness in Afghanistan regarding the dangers of drug use and addiction did not widely take hold until 2002.<sup>114</sup> As part of the Afghan government's efforts to address drug use in the country, the Ministry of Counter Narcotics released a National Drug Demand Reduction Policy in 2012, which included plans to create regional drug treatment centers, increase harm reduction services, and increase the country's drug prevention and treatment capacity by up to 40% in five years.<sup>115</sup>

### *Patterns of Afghan Drug Use*

Drug use in Afghanistan is largely driven by custom and circumstance. The central region has the highest number of drug users, but there are also high drug use rates in the northern and southern regions, which are major poppy cultivation areas.<sup>116</sup> The *2009 Drug Use in Afghanistan Survey* concluded that increased drug use is a reflection of the toll that war has taken on the country combined with access to inexpensive drugs and poor and limited treatment options.<sup>117</sup>

An estimated 5.3 percent of the country's urban population uses drugs.<sup>118</sup> Opioids and cannabinoids are the most commonly used drugs in these areas, with prevalence rates of 2.6 and 1.7 percent, respectively.<sup>119</sup> Of those under the age of 15 in urban areas, 2.3 percent tested positive for drugs and an estimated 300,000 children are affected by drug use.<sup>120</sup> Most children are not active users; rather, they are "innocent victims probably being provided opioids by adults or exposed to second-hand opium/heroin smoke and third-hand [drug] residues in the home."<sup>121</sup> It is common practice in northeastern and southern Afghanistan to give children

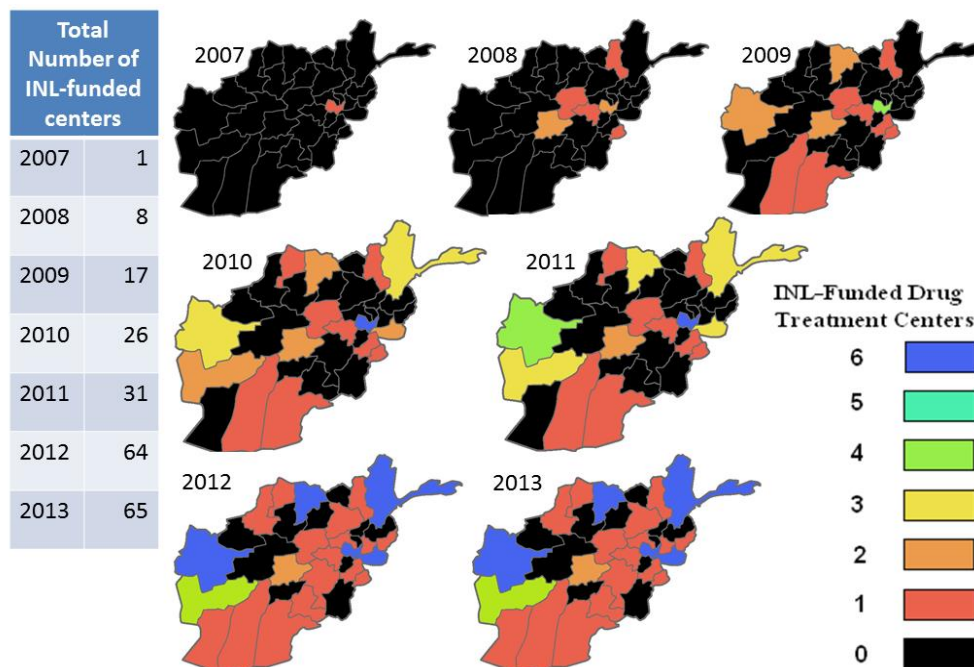
opium as a calming agent and to dull their hunger.<sup>122</sup> Youth exposure to drugs and youth drug use are concerning problems that cannot be ignored.

*Preempting Drug Use through Demand Reduction and Addressing Drug Use through Treatment*

Though drug demand reduction is a main component of the Afghan government’s drug control policy, much remains to be done. The majority of the work the Afghan government has done on demand reduction to date has been in partnership with the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Through the Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Program, the State Department’s drug demand reduction and treatment services began as public awareness and aftercare programs at schools and mosques in 14 provinces.<sup>123</sup>

Now, Afghanistan has more than 100 treatment centers (with a treatment capacity of just over 32,000), 76 of which are State Department-funded and 21 of which are Ministry of Public Health-funded.

**Expansion of Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Support for Drug Treatment Centers**



Source: Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

The State Department-funded treatment centers are comprised of a mix of in- and out-patient centers. These treatment centers also perform outreach to raise awareness about treatment availability and dangers of drug use, as well as provide harm reduction services. Drug prevention education is conducted in schools and religious institutions and via mobile exhibit and street theatre.<sup>124</sup> Other youth-based programs include youth congress programs and job training.<sup>125</sup> As evidenced in the figure on the previous page, the country's access to treatment, both in terms of capacity and geography, has drastically increased over the past several years, particularly with State Department support.<sup>126</sup>

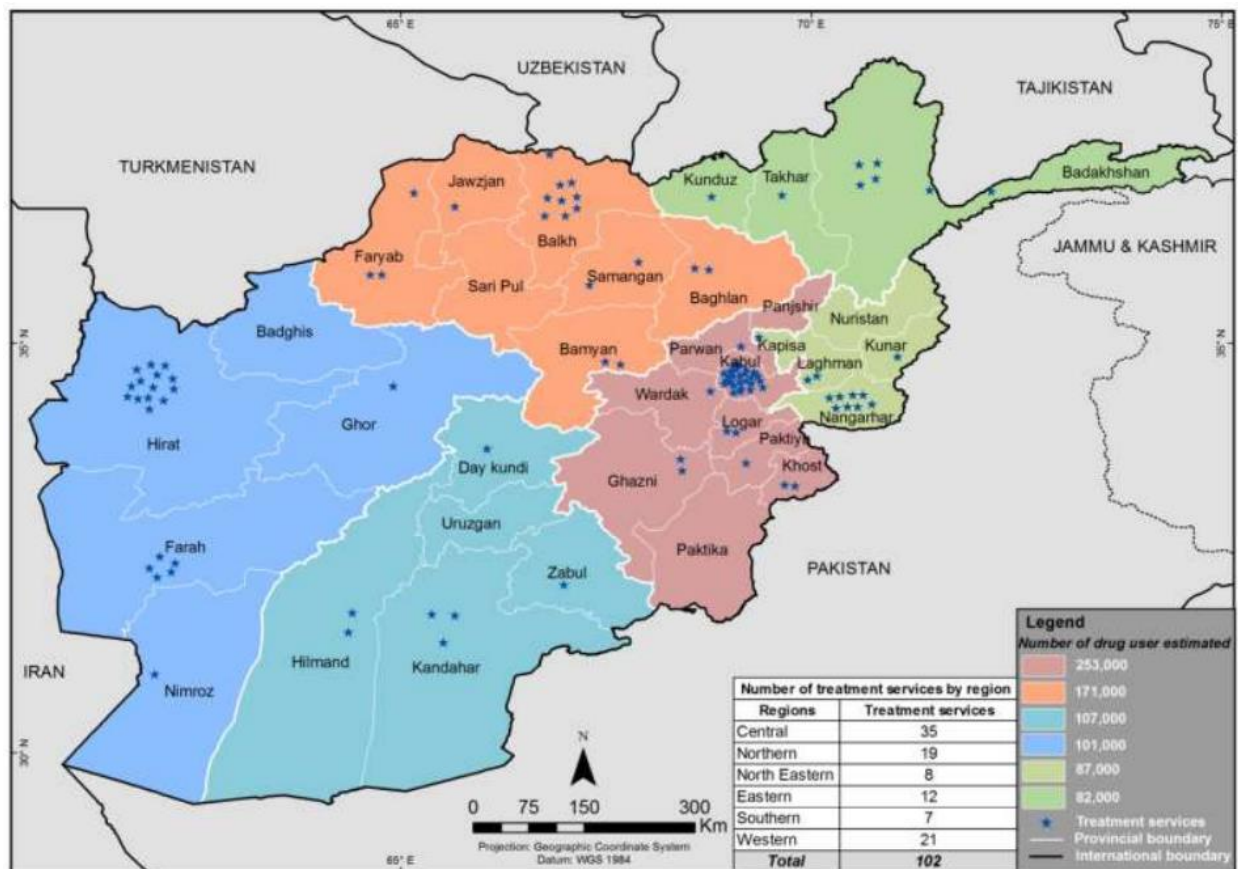
The financial and technical assistance provided by United States and international donors has helped Afghanistan build up a minimal framework of services nationwide to address various populations' specific health needs. Through this network, Afghans have access to in- and out-patient, home- and village-based treatment; psychological support; intervention; reintegration; and aftercare. Eight of the programs are dedicated specifically to drug treatment for women and children.

State Department-funded treatment centers have shown a 12 percent decline in reported use of illegal drugs among patients treated, with women reporting a 20 percent decline.<sup>127</sup> Other positive outcomes of completed treatment included increased attendance at work and lower participation in criminal activity post-treatment.<sup>128</sup>

### *Challenges*

Despite these gains, many challenges remain. Treatment centers have received limited funding, are primarily concentrated in urban areas, and do not reach enough of the drug-using population.<sup>129</sup> Rural regions where poppy is most commonly cultivated and consumed do not have the necessary treatment capacity. A 2009 survey found that a majority of respondents felt it was "difficult" to access treatment for adolescents and children, and two-thirds of respondents "expressed an urgent or considerable need for more drug treatment services in their local areas."<sup>130</sup> Clearly, there is a great need to both increase the number of treatment centers and establish them in more rural regions. In addition, Afghanistan would benefit from continued training and technical assistance to enable it to collect accurate data on the extent of its drug use problem, as well as continued training to implement science-based treatment methods.<sup>131</sup>

## Drug Users and Drug Treatment Services (by region)



Sources: Ministry of Counter Narcotics-DDR Department, Treatment services master list 2012; UNODC Drug Use Survey in Afghanistan 2009

### Future of Demand Reduction and Treatment

The Afghan government and the State Department have been working to develop demand reduction and treatment programs that the Ministries of Counter Narcotics and Public Health will be able to sustain without international assistance. The State Department has released a transition strategy with the goals to retain, train, and build on the country's drug treatment staff and to work towards the Afghan government's assumption of full financial and operational responsibility of the treatment programs, which is slated to occur over the next four years.<sup>132</sup>

Even with the release of the transition plan, the State Department has expressed concern about the ability of the Afghan government to fund its treatment centers in the long-term.<sup>133</sup> Funding will remain a crucial barrier to the expansion of treatment – the Afghanistan demand reduction and treatment system costs \$15 million annually. At present, the United States funds \$12 million, which includes

the operation of 76 treatment centers, and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health funds \$3 million, which includes the operation of 21 treatment centers.<sup>134</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Demand reduction programs and treatment services are a necessity for the people of Afghanistan, especially with the high addiction rates and the country's position as the world's leading producer and cultivator of opium. These programs have made progress in treating addiction in Afghanistan; however, more must be done. As the Ministries of Counter Narcotics and Public Health continue their work to bolster demand reduction and treatment programs, the Caucus recommends, within current funding constraints, that the United States continue to provide funding to support:<sup>135</sup>

- Demand reduction programs that include effective drug prevention education programs and outreach campaigns, especially to youth;
- Increased access to treatment;
- Training and technical assistance for the Afghan staff at the treatment centers to increase their capacity to implement proven, science-based treatment and rehabilitation strategies; and
- Assistance in conducting routine, accurate data collection on rural and urban drug use.

It is encouraging that, since 2003, Afghan treatment services have vastly expanded from virtually nothing. An estimated five percent of drug users who require treatment receive it. By comparison, in the United States and United Kingdom, roughly 10 percent of drug users who require treatment receive it.<sup>136</sup> The Caucus is hopeful that, if continued on the current trajectory, demand reduction programs and treatment efforts in Afghanistan can ultimately meet the country's needs.

## CONCLUSION

Simply put, the Afghan drug trade funds the insurgency, fuels corruption, and creates major public health challenges. Given its crosscutting nature, we cannot afford to divert our attention away from counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan. Yet, the United States faces difficult choices in terms of prioritizing diminishing resources and manpower to ensure that only the most effective programs and strategies are implemented.

Despite an overall U.S. investment of more than \$7 billion in counternarcotics efforts, poppy cultivation is at historically high levels. From 2012 to 2014, cultivation in Helmand Province increased 37 percent, while increasing by 118 percent in Badakhshan, 142 percent in Badghis, and 44 percent in Kandahar. Similarly, cultivation in Nangahar Province increased nearly six fold. That 89 percent of poppy cultivation occurred in the most insecure areas of the country and as international security forces began to diminish may be a harbinger of what is to come.<sup>137</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that, in addition to their traditional strongholds in the south, insurgent forces have already expanded their influence to the Tangi Valley and Kunduz.

U.S. approaches to counternarcotics in Afghanistan have largely failed thus far, due in no small part to the fact that the drug trade and corruption are so deeply embedded in Afghan society that they are often viewed as acceptable. However, the election of President Ghani offers a new opportunity for the United States to work in conjunction with the Afghan government to better account for these inherent challenges, and to produce and implement a counternarcotics strategy that could potentially result in decreased opium cultivation and production, insurgent activity, crime, and public health consequences.

Absent a comprehensive, coordinated counternarcotics strategy that is coupled with unprecedented levels of international cooperation, Afghanistan could well become a narco-state, whose drug trade will continue threatening those inside and outside of its borders, while jeopardizing the investments and hard won gains that the United States and our international partners have achieved over the past 12 years. With this in mind, the Caucus believes the recommendations in this report can serve as a blueprint for future counternarcotics efforts and congressional funding to support such efforts in Afghanistan. Accordingly, the Caucus recommends that the United States:

- Work in conjunction with the Afghan government to account for the inherent challenges that have previously stymied U.S. efforts to produce and implement a long-term, interagency counternarcotics strategy that includes goals and metrics to measure progress;
- Encourage additional countries to support counternarcotics programs in Afghanistan and provide resources to help better interdict narcotics leaving Afghanistan;
- Strengthen the rule of law in Afghanistan by developing an interagency anti-corruption strategy; providing training and support to DEA vetted Afghan counternarcotics units; and expanding the vetting process to include select members of the judicial sector;
- Ensure scarce resources are prioritized to support effective interdiction efforts and fund alternative livelihood programs that focus more intensely on non-farm income;
- Continue funding intelligence missions to disrupt drug-related criminal and insurgent activities, such as the Afghan Threat Finance Cell; and
- Continue implementing strategies and programs to prevent, reduce, and treat drug use in Afghanistan.

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## APPENDIX

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### **I. Additional views from Chairman Dianne Feinstein on Counternarcotics Cooperation Between the United States, Russia, and Iran**

## **ADDITIONAL VIEWS FROM CHAIRMAN DIANNE FEINSTEIN ON COUNTERNARCOTICS COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES, RUSSIA, AND IRAN**

The Afghan drug trade threatens the stability of Afghanistan and has far reaching impacts on countries near and far. Afghan heroin and opium have particularly devastating consequences on both Russia and Iran. The United States should increase counternarcotics cooperation with partners in both of these countries, which are equally concerned about the Afghan drug trade. Doing so will have the added benefit of creating diplomatic opportunities in otherwise difficult relationships.

### *Russia*

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that Russia is likely the largest consumer of Afghan heroin in the world. Russia has 1.7 million opiate users, which is nearly two percent of the country's population.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the Russian government has been outspoken about the perils of the Afghan drug trade and has stated that it wants to stop heroin production in Afghanistan to protect its citizens from future drug overdoses, yet it has provided virtually no foreign assistance for any counternarcotics efforts in the country. While U.S.-Russia relations are currently strained, our two countries have a common interest in combatting the Afghan drug trade.

The U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission has a Counternarcotics Working Group chaired by our respective drug czars, which has been suspended since 2013, but previously met semi-annually to discuss counternarcotics issues of interest. A positive first step in reestablishing the lines of communication between the two countries could be the restoration of this group to determine areas for future collaboration on counternarcotics issues. In addition, the Drug Enforcement Administration has intermittent low-level contact with their Russian counterparts that could be expanded as a "cop to cop" program to improve important working relationships and serve as a mechanism to encourage Russia to take greater action against Afghan narcotics.

Afghan heroin most often arrives in Russia via the so-called "northern route" through Central Asia. Given that both the United States and Russia have assisted Central Asian nations with border security improvements in the past, better coordination between the two countries could be another area to collaborate. A fall 2013 report from the East-West Institute's Joint U.S.-Russia Working Group on

Afghan Narcotrafficking suggests that the United States and Russia “could increase their leverage if they agreed on one message.”<sup>2</sup> Even this relatively small step could yield important progress against Afghan narcotics trafficking and prevent duplicative efforts. The United States and Russia could also chair an international donors conference to build international support for future counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan.

The simple fact is that Afghan narcotics pose serious security and health threats to both the United States and Russia. We should find opportunities to jointly address this shared problem.

### *Iran*

Iran also is heavily affected by the Afghan drug trade, particularly since the two countries share a 1,147 mile border. The International Narcotics Control Board estimates that “approximately 35 percent of the heroin trafficked from Afghanistan transits Iran, both for domestic consumption and further export.”<sup>3</sup> It is believed that Afghan opium fuels the appetites of some 1.2 million regular users and 800,000 casual users in Iran.<sup>4</sup> Because those same drugs fund the insurgency in Afghanistan, the United States should find ways to encourage Iran to combat the Afghan drug trade.

As with Russia, counternarcotics cooperation with Iran could be an ideal area of collaboration. Iran was second only to Afghanistan in seizures of heroin and illicit morphine from 2003-2012 and has an obvious interest in stemming the flow of illegal drugs through the country.<sup>5</sup>

Although it is important to work with Iran on shared counternarcotics challenges, the Caucus recognizes Iran’s problematic human rights record and strongly believes the United States must not strengthen programs that would support such actions. Cooperation should therefore be limited to working with Iran to prevent Afghan drugs from transiting the country. The United States should also encourage Iran to assist Afghanistan in expanding their treatment and alternative development programs. As one U.S. official who has worked on drug interdiction in Afghanistan stated, “the best way to work any border is from both sides.”<sup>6</sup>



## *Conclusion*

While there are many areas of disagreement between the United States, Russia, and Iran, counternarcotics is one area where our governments can jointly address shared goals to minimize the devastation caused by the Afghan drug trade. Collaboration on counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan could also potentially improve otherwise challenging international relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *The Opium and Heroin Market*. United Nations: Vienna, 2011. Web. 14 May 2014.

<sup>2</sup> East West Institute. *Joint U.S.-Russia Working Group on Afghan Narcotrafficking, Summary Report*. Brussels: East West Institute, 2013. Web. 11 Jun. 2014.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. *2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I*. Washington: 2014. Web. 24 Jun. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2014*. Vienna: United Nations, 2014. Web. 8 Aug. 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Briefing to Staff of Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. 9 Sept. 2014.