Combating the Opium Trade in Afghanistan

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I. Executive Summary

In spite of efforts by the international community to fight the narcotics trade in Afghanistan, officials estimate that the opium poppy crop produced during the 2006-2007 season supplied 82 percent of the world’s illicit opium.\(^1\) Although poppy production in Afghanistan declined by 19 percent in 2008, Afghanistan continues to be the world’s largest producer of opium poppy.\(^2\) This is a serious threat to the United States (US), as there is a connection between narco-trafficking and the funding of insurgency groups, regional instability, world health issues, and overall political instability in Afghanistan.\(^3\) The 9/11 Commission recommended that the US make a long-term commitment to the security and stability of Afghanistan, which makes counternarcotics policy a focal point for US Government (USG) officials.\(^4\)

Our paper will begin with an overview of the history of the drug trade in Afghanistan, and an assessment of why the illicit trade of opium is critical to US interests. We will then address the political and economic effects of the narco-trade on Afghanistan, which will identify possible impediments to successful implementation of counternarcotics plans. Next, we will discuss the Five Pillars Plan, which encompasses the five main policies of the US counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan. Through an understanding of these issues and assessments, we will be able to analyze whether US policy strategies will be effective and whether US counternarcotics policies are addressing these issues.

The issue of how to combat the Afghan drug trade will be viewed through the lens of the US Department of State (DoS) because the DoS’ Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (DOSINL) serves as the lead agency implementing narcotics issues and the Five Pillars Program in Afghanistan.\(^5\) The DoS works to improve Afghanistan’s elimination and
eradication capacity by supporting provincial governors and improving the capacity of the Counternarcotics Ministry’s centrally led eradication force.\textsuperscript{6} In fact, the DoS is responsible for funding, “the programs associated with the eradication pillar, including the provision of aerial protection for ground-based eradication forces through DOSINL’s air wing.”\textsuperscript{7}

However, the DoS is not the only government agency involved in the implementation of the Five Pillars. The Department of Defense (DoD), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Justice (DoJ), and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) play integral roles in US counternarcotics policies. The USG encourages strong interagency cooperation in order to have an effective counternarcotics plan. This interagency network of bureaucracies allows for accountability to be shared among three different institutions: the DoS, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the National Security Council (NSC). The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is responsible for creating policy, DoS implements the policy, and the National Security Council (NSC) serves as a coordinator on all issues regarding Afghanistan.

Since the main goal of US counternarcotics policy is to decrease production and trade of Afghan opium, one way to judge performance is to use statistics to measure if the quantity produced and traded has decreased. Data can be found in the ONDCP yearly assessment surveys, which monitor the production and trade of Afghan opium, and determine whether production has increased or decreased from previous years. The USG should also consider outcomes in addition to outputs, such as “good governance” in Afghanistan. For instance, the USG should track, to the extent possible, the amount of narco-corruption among Afghan officials. This will help the USG understand if government officials are an impediment or a promoter of counternarcotics policies.
The USG should also analyze how vested local government entities are in implementing counternarcotics policies. These factors will help assess if a counternarcotics movement is receiving support from within Afghanistan’s government. If Afghan government officials are involved in furthering illicit trade, there is a higher likelihood that counternarcotics policies will continue when USG decreases intervention.

The US pledged $1.02 billion of assistance in 2008 to support each of these pillars: Public Information, Alternative Development, Interdiction, Justice Reform, and Poppy Elimination. We recommend that current US policy objectives be continued; however, we recommend different pillars for each region based on individual needs. The feasibility and effectiveness of a certain pillar in each region is also of utmost importance. In summary, our recommendations are as follows:

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II. History of the Drug Trade and Importance to US Interests

The cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan began in 1978. Prior to 1978, Afghanistan was self-sufficient in food production. Agricultural produce accounted for 30 percent of its exports and earned the country approximately USD $100 million in foreign exchange. However, following the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the subsequent civil war, opium became one of the
few available commodities that could provide income.\textsuperscript{10} In fact, anti-Soviet mujahedeen leaders encouraged opium production and trade so they could tax it to boost the economy and support military financing.\textsuperscript{11}

In the 1990s, the Taliban centralized authority in Afghanistan and further increased opium poppy cultivation. In 1999, Afghanistan produced over 4,500 metric tons of raw opium, which led to increased international pressure to stop their narcotics trade.\textsuperscript{12} The Taliban responded to these pressures by banning opium poppy cultivation, but allowing the trade of opium to continue.\textsuperscript{13} The ban was designed to “increase the market price for and potential revenue from stocks of Afghan opium maintained by the Taliban and its powerful trafficking allies within the country” rather than address international pressures.\textsuperscript{14} Farmers incurred debt as a result of the ban on opium cultivation, which was their primary source of wealth. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Afghan farmers anticipated the fall of the Taliban Government and resumed cultivating poppy in order to pay back their debt. They knew without the Taliban there would be no entity in place that could or would enforce the ban on production.\textsuperscript{15}

The international community has attempted to implement measures to stop cultivation and trade of opium, such as the 2002 ban on opium cultivation issued by the UN-sponsored Afghan Interim Administration. Despite these efforts, Afghanistan has reestablished itself as the world’s leading producer of illicit opium since 2002.\textsuperscript{16} The increase in opium production and trade in Afghanistan leads to three areas of concern regarding the effects of opium trade on US interests.
The first area is the prospect for state failure in Afghanistan. Research from the World Bank indicates that there is a correlation between opium trade and an increase in political and economic trends that undermine efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, establish a rule of law, and restore a functioning licit economy.\(^{17}\) Instead of fostering stability, opium trade increases corruption and the formation of independent armed groups, whose interest counter those in power.\(^ {18}\) Second, US officials believe that Taliban insurgents and regional groups associated with Al Qaeda profit from the narcotics trade, and use money from the trade to finance their activities.\(^ {19}\) “Traffickers provide weapons, funding and personnel to the Taliban in exchange for the protection of drug trade routes, poppy fields, and members of their organizations.”\(^ {20}\) According to a 2004 report by Robert Charles, then Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotic and Law Enforcement Affairs, terrorist groups, such as Hizb-I Islami/Gulbuddin (HIG), Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and Al Qaeda, likely receive money or logistical support from drug traffickers.\(^ {21}\) The areas in Afghanistan with the most poppy production are the areas with the most active insurgent elements.\(^ {22}\)

Finally, world health officials believe that narcotics present social and public health risks to citizens of Afghanistan, as well as the rest of the world.\(^ {23}\) For example, heroin from southwest Asia currently constitutes up to 10 percent of the heroin available in the United States.\(^ {24}\) In addition, increased use of Afghan opiates has been associated with increased drug addiction and HIV infection levels.\(^ {25}\) This epidemic could also serve as an excuse for foreign countries, with agendas opposite of the US to interfere in Afghanistan. “These destabilizing factors could provide a powerful pretext for increased attention to and possible intervention in Afghan affairs on the part of regional powers such as Iran and Pakistan.”\(^ {26}\)
III. Political Context

The political situation in Afghanistan is by no means ideal. Historically, shifting alliances and fluidity amongst Afghan leaders has meant that the security situation can vary between districts and villages, which is creating a countrywide pattern of instability. Without stable leadership in place, the Taliban’s pursuance of the opium trade has grown exponentially. The drug trade has grown because citizens cultivate poppy fields instead of basic agricultural products, such as wheat, since doing so will earn them more money. Adding to the problem is the narco-corruption that is deeply embedded in Afghan politics; officials at all levels of state and local governments, including the executive and the police force, have been implicated in drug-related crimes such as bribery and trafficking. The lack of a developed judicial system in Afghanistan further undermines efforts to eradicate such corruption because the poor infrastructure and low wages of those who work for the judicial system prevent due process of law from occurring.

USG covert operations carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the 1980s exposed the expansion of opium production in Afghanistan and linked it to heroin production in Pakistan. Although opium production is illegal in Afghanistan, the weak enforcement power of the central government to uphold this law combined with US, Chinese, Iranian, and Pakistani backing of opposition forces in Afghanistan contributed to the growth of the opium trade, as many of these opposition forces were involved in illegal opium trafficking. Also, the growing reliance on opium production to boost the economy posed a huge political problem: regulation over poppy cultivation and production was limited to tribal leaders loosely connected to each other and the central government. With little regulation, the opium trade continued to expand
throughout the 1980s. As traditional smuggling routes to Iran were blocked by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it forced Afghans to rely on Pakistani smuggling routes, which brought the drug into Europe and North America at much higher rates.32

In 2001, US efforts to halt the Taliban resulted largely in driving Taliban forces out of Afghanistan and into Pakistan, with no real plan for combating those who might re-enter their home country. The Taliban took advantage of the lack of US planning by recruiting members from training camps, militant Islamic schools, and tribes who felt alienated by the new administration and offered them a way back into Afghanistan.33 Additionally, the inefficiency of the official Afghan leadership drove numerous citizens out of the country. The majority of those who remain in Afghanistan turned to the Taliban for resources and support most citizens believed the Afghan government was incapable of sufficiently providing.34 This dependence on the Taliban for basic resources and protection fueled the Taliban’s power base, which allowed them to pursue their lucrative opium trade with little effective interference from the legitimate government. Finally, due to the major shift in US counterterrorism strategy to focus on Iraq in 2003, the Taliban was able to regroup after defeat in the first stages of war and take advantage of the minimal US support of the fledgling Afghan government.35

Political efforts by the US to curb opium production and trade in Afghanistan have met some success. One of the strategies the US has employed to strengthen the central government has been working with Afghan President Hamid Karzai to bring down particularly dangerous regional leaders. Known as “warlords,” these leaders use profits from narcotics trafficking to purchase arms that sustain their local militias. In 2004, Karzai was successful in removing one of these leaders, Atta Mohammad Noor, from power within a militia in Mazar-e-Sharif. Although
Noor was resistant to central government control, Karzai marginalized his power by installing him in the less influential post of governor of Balkh province, which has been “cultivation free” of opium since August 2007.\(^{36}\)

Under President Bush, the post of Coordinator for Counternarcotics and Justice Reform in Afghanistan was created to help blend counternarcotics efforts with counter-insurgency operations already in place. Part of this effort included encouraging alternative livelihoods for Afghan farmers. An incentive for abandoning opium production came in the form of $39 million in Good Performance Initiative funds paid to provinces who were able to eliminate all poppy cultivation.\(^{37}\) The USG continues to support Afghan government initiatives to eradicate poppy cultivation because their stake in the obliteration of this crop is high. As of February 2009, 93 percent of the world’s opium poppy is cultivated in Afghanistan, despite recent decreases in overall poppy production in the country.\(^{38}\) Given Afghanistan’s efforts in worldwide drug trafficking, including successful transmissions of drugs to the US, the US has invested heavily in the Five Pillars Plan in hopes that it will lead to the complete elimination of the opium poppy crops.

**IV. Economic Context**

Afghanistan is largely poor, mountainous, and landlocked rural country where 85 percent of the population lives in isolated villages.\(^{39}\) The physical and demographic characteristics of the country coupled with a history of conflict have resulted in the economy remaining underdeveloped and dominantly agricultural. In fact, agriculture accounts for more than half of the nation’s employment, recruiting roughly 68 percent of the total workforce.\(^{40}\) An examination of Afghanistan’s opium economy and the challenges associated with creating licit sustainable
farming ventures will illustrate the importance of prioritizing economic restructuring in any drug control strategy for this country.

The population of Afghanistan totals nearly 31 million and the average annual per capita income is USD $800, leaving roughly 80 percent of the rural population in extreme poverty.\textsuperscript{41} The 2007 U.N. Development Program (UNDP) ranked Afghanistan number 174 out of 178 countries, using the Human Development Index, an indicator that measures education, longevity, and economic performance.\textsuperscript{42} The same study showed Afghans performing lowest on almost every development indicator including child mortality, life expectancy, literacy, and nutrition as 6.6 million people do not meeting their minimum food requirements.\textsuperscript{43} In such a poor and underdeveloped nation, opium cultivation has become an economic mainstay due to its high rate of return.

UNODC estimates that Afghanistan produced 7,700 MT of raw opium in 2008.\textsuperscript{44} According to U.N. and International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates, the export value of the opium harvest was USD $3.4 billion, representing a fifth of Afghanistan's estimated total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD $16.3 billion.\textsuperscript{45} The large proportion of revenue this crop generates in comparison to the rest of the economy has made farmers reliant on its cultivation and prevented other traditional and licit farming methods from surviving. The main problem with an economy so dependent on this illegal business is it requires involvement from armed groups to process, protect, and transport the poppy.

Afghanistan’s narcotics industry constantly threatens efforts to establish security, governance, and a licit economy. In 2008, the U.N. estimates that the Taliban and other anti-government forces collected USD $50 to $70 million in tax payments from opium farmers.\textsuperscript{46}
Additionally, USD $200 to $400 million in income was made by warlords, drug lords, and insurgents for their efforts in drug processing and trafficking. Narcotics traffickers provide revenue and material support, such as vehicles, weapons, and shelter, to the insurgents, who, in exchange, provide protection to growers and traffickers and promise to prevent the Afghan Government from interfering with their activities.

Each winter the UN conducts a study called the Opium Winter Rapid Assessment (ORA) to gauge the opium prospect for the next year’s crop as farmers are committing to grow the plants. During the 2009 ORA, village headmen from poppy-growing and non-poppy growing villages were surveyed to determine the reasons that drove farmers to cultivate opium instead of other crops. The dominant reason was the “higher sale price of poppy as compared to other crops,” and one third of respondents also cited “poverty alleviation” as their most influential motivator. In fact, none of Afghanistan’s licit agricultural products can currently match the income per hectare from opium poppy. Wheat is the highest yielding crop, with a reported market value of USD $0.60, compared to fresh opium at USD $61.74.

Afghanistan’s wartime economy has created a vested interest in continuing the status quo. Declining levels of external patronage to insurgent groups after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 forced warring parties to pursue alternative networks for economic sustainability beyond the country’s borders. There has been a shift in the economic center of activity in Afghanistan because the Taliban has directed the flow of the drug trade towards Kandahar and away from Kabul. The flow of goods has consequently radiated outwards to neighboring countries rather than inwards to Kabul. This cross border trade has effectively marginalized the official Afghan
economy and created the largest source of revenue for the warring groups in the form of customs duties for smuggling between Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia.  

Due to the accessibility and value of the opium crop, it has become the poorer population’s “only means of access to credit and land.” The traditional credit system, known as salaam, provides an advance payment on future crop and now favors opium poppy cultivation. This factor has led to a situation where access to credit is dependent on a farmer’s willingness to grow opium. The agreement to engage and develop capabilities for illicit cultivation has also determined the sharecroppers’ access to land, which is valued by its potential opium yield rather than wheat productivity.

The war torn and impoverished country of Afghanistan has been influenced to take the easier route with respect to profitable crop cultivation. Besides Islam forbidding the use of opium and the government making it illegal, there is little reason or incentive for farmers to look for lower yielding crops to replace the lucrative business that has given them access to land and credit.

V. US Counternarcotics Strategy- The Five Pillars Plan

1. Alternative Livelihoods

The first, and quite possibly most important, pillar in the US counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan is the establishment and development of a variety of programs aimed at giving Afghan farmers viable alternatives to growing poppy. To highlight the importance of the need for alternative livelihoods, a survey of Afghan farmers was taken in 2007 that found 98 percent of respondents stated that they would grow crops other than poppies if there was an economically feasible alternative. The main objective of the Alternative Livelihoods pillar is to
establish a licit crop economy through efforts that “increase commercial agriculture opportunities, improve agricultural productivity, create rural employment, and improve family incomes and well-being.” USAID’s Alternative Development and Agriculture Program (ADAG) oversee activity under this pillar.57

Beginning in 2005, DoS and USAID began a three-phased approach to establish alternative livelihoods for Afghans.58 The first phase was focused on increasing agriculture initiatives to increase, integrate, and improve infrastructure, farmer education, and micro-credit lending.59 The biggest obstacle to establishing a legitimate economy, was, and still is, the lack of infrastructure in Afghanistan. In this phase, efforts have focused mainly on integrating crop processing, storage, roads, and markets.60 The second phase is a “cash-for-work” program, which provides non-opium labor employment in rural areas.61 The program began in 2004, with 214,000 farmers being given jobs at a cost of $19.6 million.62 Additionally, approximately 650,000 farmers have been given seed and fertilizer for alternative crops in areas where counternarcotics efforts are being carried out.63 This strategy has worked increasingly well due to the drop in opium prices and the rise of wheat prices.64 The third phase, called the “comprehensive development phase” was started in 2005 in six provinces and focused on “long-term infrastructure development for urban and rural areas, credit and financial services expansion, agricultural diversification, and private investment support.”65 Each of these phases required written agreements from the participants that they would not grow poppies.66

Other counter-drug initiatives within the Alternative Livelihoods pillar supported by the US are the “food zone” program67 and the previously mentioned Good Performance Initiative (GPI).68 The “food zone” is a US supported, local government-sponsored program in the
Helmand province, which instituted a provision of wheat seed and fertilizer to over 30,000 farmers who agreed to stop growing poppies. GPI is a US and United Kingdom-sponsored incentive program that rewards provinces that are successful with the counternarcotics efforts. GPI rewarded 29 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan with $39 million for development projects. Each province was given $1 million if it performed counter-narcotic activities satisfactorily and high performing provinces were given an additional $500,000.

The lack of accountability and the inappropriate use of funds have plagued the development programs in the Alternative Livelihoods Pillar up to this point. Due to the lack of effective governance, there has not been a reliable system in some areas to enforce agreements with the Afghans once they are given aid. In the Southern and Western regions of Afghanistan, the percentage of farmers who receive assistance and grow opium is 66 percent and 30 percent respectively. This is markedly different than the rest of the regions in Afghanistan, where there is either very little or no growth of poppy when the agreements were signed due to the fact that local government are supporting the efforts.

2. Elimination and Eradication

The Elimination and Eradication Pillar is the most controversial and most expensive of the Five Pillars in the US counternarcotics strategy; it was estimated to have cost $258 million in 2008 alone. Three methods have been used in the eradication efforts to date: un-negotiated ground eradication, aerial eradication, and locally-run negotiated eradication. The un-negotiated ground eradication is done by force in areas where there is no government accountability or enforcement. Similarly, when aerial eradication was done in the past, it was carried out by spraying chemicals on the crops without the permission of the community. The latest focus of
this pillar has been on the locally-run eradication, which is enforced by the local governments. Of the three, the locally run, US-supported efforts have been the most successful because they establish governance more clearly with the Afghans. For example, as the US began to rely less on un-negotiated eradication efforts, in 2007, 19,047 hectares of poppy fields were cleared, which eventually decreased to only 5,480 hectares in 2008, due to a 19 percent drop in production based mostly on the success of Afghan efforts.\textsuperscript{76}

From 2004 to 2005, the United States, along with the United Kingdom, carried out un-negotiated eradication in some areas, which was unpopular and unsuccessful because it often left farmers with no source of income.\textsuperscript{77} In 2005, the United States changed its’ strategy and established “Poppy Elimination Programs” (PEPs), which consisted of seven-member teams of Afghans and internationals that directed and monitored locally-led eradication efforts.\textsuperscript{78} During the 2005-2006 growing season, the PEPs program was responsible for the eradication of 10 percent of the total opium crop in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{79} The United States has continued using this approach since that time and has begun training and advising an Afghan National Police unit that focuses specifically on eradication efforts in areas with little governance.\textsuperscript{80} The unit has approximately 600-800 trained police that, in 2008, eradicated 1,174 hectares of poppy fields.\textsuperscript{81}

Aerial eradication is the least favored of the methods used for eradication; in fact, President Karzai has rejected the idea outright.\textsuperscript{82} In 2008, Congress passed Public Law 110-161, which prohibits the use of counternarcotics funding on aerial spraying. Although aerial eradication is a feasible option because it is relatively easy to perform, in terms of program implementation and sustainable outcomes, this option is the least desirable. Even though the method has served as a deterrent in some cases, the effectiveness often only lasts as long as the
growing season and only hurts the farmers who no longer have a source of income. It can also be risky because of the increased opportunity for damaging crops other than poppy.

3. Interdiction

The objective of the Interdiction Pillar is to assist Afghanistan’s government in eliminating narcotics processing and trafficking by enforcing counternarcotics laws. Enforcement is comprised of seizing drugs, destroying drug labs, and arresting members of major drug trafficking organizations. Moreover, the Interdiction Pillar protects all aspects of the Five Pillars Plan. Successful interdiction requires attention towards law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan; more specifically, the National Interdiction Unit (NIU) of the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA). The DEA trains, mentors, and supports the NIU in laboratory raids, collecting evidence, apprehensions and prosecutions. The DEA has also established the Foreign-deployed Advisory and Support Teams (FAST) to conduct investigations with the goal of targeting and identifying drug trafficking organizations. Each FAST team consists of eight special agents, one intelligence analyst, and one supervisor. Two teams are deployed at a time for 120-day rotations.

The DoS noted that the NIU was capable of independently leading operations in 2009. From October 2006 through December 2008, 4.099 metric tons of heroin, 2.448 metric tons of opium, and 238.035 metric tons of hashish has been seized. Additionally, seventeen drug labs were destroyed and 1,012 kg of solid precursor chemicals and 592 liters of liquid precursors, used to make illicit drugs, have also been seized. Strong emphasis is also placed on disrupting the flow of drugs and chemicals to and from Afghanistan under Operation Containment.
Operation Containment consists of eighteen countries, including countries in central Asia, Europe, and Russia.\(^{92}\)

The Interdiction Pillar is effective if it is based strictly on the facts and figures. However, the southern region continues to cultivate opium poppy in large amounts. Furthermore, high value targets (HVTs) are still widespread in southern provinces, such as Kandahar, Nimruz, and Helmand. HVTs are significant because there is evidence of their direct association with terrorist activity.\(^{93}\) Arrests and convictions have not been effective in apprehending HVTs.

4. Judicial Reform

The intent of the Judicial Reform Pillar is to increase the overall rule of law in Afghanistan towards narcotics-related law enforcement. The DoS INL and DoJ work closely with the Counter Narcotics Tribunal (CNT), the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF), and the Afghan Attorney General’s Office. The CNT tries cases and has national jurisdiction in Afghanistan.\(^{94}\) Accordingly, the CJTF investigates and prosecutes mid- and high-level cases before the CNT.\(^{95}\) The Afghan Attorney General’s Office consists of thousands of prosecutors and is responsible for investigating and trying narco-corruption cases.\(^{96}\)

The DoJ plays a significant role in conjunction with each of the aforementioned organizations by providing mentoring and training activities in Afghanistan as part of the Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP), which was launched in August 2007 by DoS INL.\(^ {97}\) The JSSP focuses on three main objectives – building the central justice system, expanding to provinces, and increasing coordinated international justice assistance.\(^ {98}\) The JSSP consists of three-person teams who serve as advisors to police investigators and prosecutors.\(^{99}\) Working in conjunction with police investigators is significant; when they are able to work together, the JSSP team and
the police are more effective.\textsuperscript{100} The JSSP has also built and renovated forty judicial facilities. The JSSP teams currently are not deployed to all 355 districts of Afghanistan, as it is not a feasible option.\textsuperscript{101} However, JSSP advisors are expanding to police regional training centers, which the DoS INL believes it will provide the most effective impact in expanding to provinces.\textsuperscript{102} JSSP teams are currently deployed to three police regional training centers and will expand to seven by the end of 2009.\textsuperscript{103} Finally, the Government of Afghanistan, USG, and the international community, which includes the United Kingdom, are developing a comprehensive plan for judicial reform.\textsuperscript{104}

Since 2005, 1,550 opium violators were convicted.\textsuperscript{105} However, due to increased efforts to supply facilities, training, and mentoring to the Afghan police and prosecutors, there have not been any major drug trafficking arrests or convictions since 2006.\textsuperscript{106} Much of this is due to narco-corruption. Salaries for justice personnel are not commensurate with the roles and responsibilities of enforcing and adjudicating the Afghan Constitution and laws, which leads these officials to turn to bribery and other forms of corruption.\textsuperscript{107} Furthermore, narco-corruption poses a direct negative impact on the effectiveness of the courts and the judicial system in Afghanistan, which in turn is ineffective in producing successful outputs.

5. Public Information

The objective of the Public Information Pillar is to inform the Afghan public about the risks of cultivating poppy and participating in narcotics trafficking. The DoS INL plays a significant role in this pillar. Public information is shared by word of mouth initiatives. Local opinion and religious leaders who support the Five Pillars Plan are the major players in word of mouth initiatives.\textsuperscript{108} In southern areas of Afghanistan, many publicized messages elaborate how
participating in illegal narcotics trafficking supports terrorism. The Public Information Pillar supports all other pillars by publicizing its successful outputs.

The “Message Multipliers” program supplements the PEP by encouraging farmers to stop cultivation. Messages under this program are relayed by word of mouth from district governors, chiefs of police, and members of provincial councils. By the end of November 2006, the Message Multipliers program reached 363,804 people in 1,941 villages. Most public information campaigns for the Alternative Livelihoods Pillar were launched during the pre-planting seasons. These campaigns included print media, radio, and television messaging as well as community outreach programs. However, tracking outputs is not possible with these electronic methods. Public information campaigns regarding the Interdiction Pillar were released after successful interdiction operations were executed. Finally, public information campaigns aligned with the Justice Reform Pillar were publicized as major drug traffickers and political officials were apprehended, prosecuted, and incarcerated. Publicizing successful outputs from the Five Pillars Plan builds confidence in the Government of Afghanistan.

VI. Recommendations

Due to the weakness of Afghanistan’s central government, USG efforts to eradicate the opium trade must be focused at the local government level. Previous attempts to work with regional leaders, such as the GPI, have resulted in modest success. With increased funding, it is highly likely that expanding the Good Performers Initiative will serve as an incentive to help financially troubled provinces work toward establishing alternative livelihoods. The feasibility of this plan has been proven through our discussion of past performance. Furthermore, it is crucial to target US aid funds towards specific, measurable goals so that a means by which to gauge
progress exists. Past funding for Afghan central government initiatives have proven inadequate to improve the country's security situation.\textsuperscript{116}

Development aid given to Afghanistan has, in the past, done little to support stability and security in the region. When the Bonn Agreement, which established provisions for governance in post-Taliban Afghanistan, was signed in 2001, there were few accountability mechanisms put into place to ensure that aid designated for specific purposes actually went toward those goals. There was little clarity about who was to distribute aid within the government, as international institutions had an unclear mandate for the scope of their involvement in the country and internal leaders had little ability to prevent aid money from ending up in corrupt hands. Thus, some of this funding ended up supporting the poppy economy instead of combating it.\textsuperscript{117} By establishing clear goals for what US funding should achieve in Afghanistan's provinces, the USG will be able to assess each province's progress based on how they are using their funding to eradicate their poppy production.

The Five Pillars Plan currently does not have an action plan based on regions. The diversity of Afghanistan’s provinces in terms of stability, security, governance, and particular crop choice is currently very dependent on the outside funding it receives for development. Moreover, agriculture and climatic conditions are significant. Since there has been some documented success in certain regions, each province should have a different prescription for its development needs. Therefore, our proposed recommendations will focus on the allocation of the Five Pillars in each region.
Northern Region

The northern region of Afghanistan includes provinces of Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyan, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan, and Sari Pul. This region generally has poor climatic conditions, which makes poppy cultivation very difficult. A prevailing drought in 2008 had raised the prices of essential commodities. Furthermore, high levels of governance exist, which also deters poppy cultivation. Most farmers are discouraged from cultivating poppy due to the pressure from the local government. Finally, this region has minimal insurgent activity, which allows for lower security concerns. Special attention is needed for Baghlan and Faryab as both provinces are expected to cultivate poppy in 2009. One particular issue is that current alternative livelihood activities are primarily focused on certain provinces while overlooking others, such as Baghlan and Faryab.

We recommend increasing the level of alternative livelihood programs to provinces that were previously overlooked in the northern region. As alternative livelihood programs increase, we recommend that public information campaigns be positively correlated and increased as well. To successfully execute a public information campaign, there needs to be a method to measure its effectiveness. As previously mentioned, there has been documented success in the Message Multipliers Program. Thus, more emphasis needs to be placed on the word of mouth method. We recommend decreasing the number of electronic campaigns, such as television and radio advertisements, and using the funds allocated for those methods towards word of mouth initiatives in this region.
**Northeastern Region**

The northeastern region includes the provinces of Badakshan, Kunduz, and Takhar. Similar to other northern provinces, these provinces benefit from strong local governments. Furthermore, low opium prices and high food grain prices also contribute to the decrease in poppy cultivation. In this particular region, an increased demand for cereal crops exists, which serve as a viable replacement to growing opium. Despite the relative success of poppy eradication in the northeastern region, special attention must be retained in these provinces, particularly in Badakshan. In 2006, the cultivation of poppy was relatively high in Badakshan. To mitigate the risk of Badakshan reverting back to poppy cultivation, alternative livelihood programs need to be increased, similar to the northern region. Therefore, the same recommendations proposed for Baghlan and Faryab in the northern region will be applied to Badakshan in the northeastern region.

**Central Region**

The central region of Afghanistan includes provinces of Ghazni, Kabul, Khost, Logar, Paktika, Paktya, Panjshir, Parwan, and Wardak. As of 2008, the latest survey completed, most of the central region is expected to be poppy free. Poor climatic conditions, urban centers, and international monetary support of the local government contribute to the decrease in poppy cultivation. Weather also plays a critical role in the cultivation of poppy in this region. Most provinces in the central region have experienced severe droughts, which caused the land to be inept. Urban centers are mainly located in the central region. They provide alternative measures to cultivating poppy, as more non-farming employment opportunities are available. The only area of concern in the central region is the Surobi district of Kabul. The Sarobi district
of the Kabul province is linked with insurgent groups. This causes a concern as there is sufficient evidence that opium money is used to support insurgent groups.

In a survey conducted by the UNODC in 2008, the main reason for not cultivating poppy was the pressure from government authority. The next reason was that farmers believed that cultivating poppy was against the teachings of Islam. We recommend increasing the level of effort of public information campaigns, as explained in the northern region, as a precautionary measure to keep the central region predominantly poppy free.

**Eastern Region**

The eastern region of Afghanistan includes provinces of Kapisa, Kunar, Laghman, Nangahar, and Nuristan. The region has seen increasingly lower prices of poppy, an increased market price for licit crops, and the fear of eradication as significant mitigating factors for the poppy trade. To sustain this status, the efforts to create alternative livelihoods need to be extended outside of the provincial centers and be extended into the village at a "grass-roots level". Nangahar province, formally the highest poppy-producing province, is particularly vulnerable to this threat, so the alternative livelihood campaign is particularly crucial to the success of this region.

**Southern Region**

The southern region of Afghanistan includes provinces of Day kundi, Helmand, Kandahar, Urzgan, and Zabui. Due to a serious lack of security, and a high level of insurgent groups in the region, the southern region produces the majority of Afghanistan's poppy. There have been some successes in the public information programs and alternative livelihoods implementation, but the lack of governance has made it nearly impossible to make large-scale
differences in crop choice. The decrease in price for opium combined with large-scale
development, particularly infrastructure, will build sustainable alternatives for the farmers. The
period before planting is crucial and it should be when the majority of the efforts (public
information, eradication efforts, and licit crop capacity development) are undertaken.

Due to the lack of governance and security, combined with the high level of insurgent
groups operating in Afghanistan, we recommend using all efforts of the Five Pillars Plan to this
region and allocating most of the proposed funding here as well. The Interdiction Pillar should
focus on gaining more intelligence on large drug trafficking organizations and HVTs to remove
their influence and capabilities. Also, FAST teams need to be reorganized to account for the lack
of security in this region and should focus on apprehending HVTs. Therefore, we recommend
significantly raising the level of effort for the Interdiction Pillar. Additionally, Judicial Reform
should accompany the increased level of effort for the Interdiction Pillar because the threat of
imprisonment for growing opium poppy will serve as a deterrent for those who might still be
inclined to do so. We also recommend increasing the salaries of justice personnel to eliminate
bribery. We believe that an increase in salary will also improve the effectiveness of the courts. In
return, this will build confidence in the judicial system in Afghanistan. As the level of effort for
both the Interdiction and Judicial Reform Pillars increase, we propose a 10 percent increase in
funding to support these efforts as stated below in our funding recommendations.

**Western Region**

The western region of Afghanistan includes provinces of Badghis, Farah, Ghor, Hirat,
and Nimroz. The western region is similar to the south, but has been severely affected by
drought and the drop in opium prices. A small percentage of the development efforts have
been successful, but if the price of opium goes back up, the region is highly susceptible to falling back into heavy reliance on poppy growing.\textsuperscript{140} We recommend that efforts in this region should be focused on building agricultural infrastructure coupled with support for the Afghan government to increase good governance in the region.

\textit{Funding for the Five Pillars}

Funding for the Five Pillars plan has historically been focused on the Eradication Pillar. As shown in Table 1.1 below, close to half of the funds were allocated towards eradication.\textsuperscript{141}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
Pillar & Amount Funded ($ Millions) & Allocation \\
\hline
Alternative Livelihoods & $180 & 33.8\% \\
\hline
Eradication & $258 & 48.5\% \\
\hline
Interdiction & $65 & 12.2\% \\
\hline
Judicial Reform & $24 & 4.5\% \\
\hline
Public Information & $5 & 0.9\% \\
\hline
TOTAL & $532 & 100\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{2005 Actual Funding}
\end{table}

Table 1.2 below shows our estimated funding proposal for 2010. As part of our recommendations, we have restructured the allocation of funds to focus more on Alternative Livelihoods. We recommend reducing the funds allocated to Eradication by 15 percent and allocating 10 percent to Alternative Livelihoods, 2.5 percent to Interdiction, and 2.5 percent to Judicial Reform. In addition to our estimated funding, Table 1.2 below shows our proposed additional funding to account for an increased level of effort for both the Interdiction and Judicial Reform Pillars, which as discussed for the southern region. In Table 1.3, we kept funding for the Alternative Livelihood, Eradication, and Public Information Pillars constant with Table 1.2. We increased both the Interdiction and Judicial Reform Pillar by USD $67 million each, which accounts for 10 percent of total funding from Table 1.2.
Table 1.2 – 2010 Proposed Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Amount Funded ($ Millions)</th>
<th>Proposed Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Livelihoods</td>
<td>$590</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eradication</td>
<td>$451</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdiction</td>
<td>$265</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial Reform</td>
<td>$162</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Information</td>
<td>$13</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,480</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VII. Conclusions

The US requires a sound counternarcotics policy for Afghanistan to increase stability in that country, as well as protect our own interests both domestically and abroad. Based on our research, if the USG is unable to stop or prevent the trade and production of opium, there will be an increase in the strength of insurgent, paramilitary, and terrorist groups in Afghanistan. Counternarcotics policies must take into account the political and economic factors in Afghanistan if they hope to be successful at combating the problem. As Afghanistan is largely dependent on the production and trade of opium, USG policies need to ensure that there are licit economic venues to fill the opium production vacuum. Accordingly, we recommend that the Five Pillars Plan implemented by the DoS should continue with the same reform. Each region should implement the pillar, or combination of pillars, that best addresses their individual needs; we judge that doing so will require an overall increase in funding for the Alternative Livelihoods, Interdiction, and Justice Reform Pillars.
Notes


3 Ibid.


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.


10 Blanchard, Afghanistan, 7.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 8.


14 Ibid., 8.

15 Blanchard, Afghanistan, 9.

16 Ibid., 9.


18 Ibid., 87.

19 Blanchard, Afghanistan, 12.

20 Ibid., 15.

21 Ibid., 16.


23 Blanchard, Afghanistan, 12.

24 Ibid., 18.
25 Ibid., 12.
26 Ibid., 20.
29 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 952.
32 Ibid., 949.
33 Ibid., 58.
34 Ibid.
35 Rubin, Road to Ruin, 57.
37 Ibid., 20.
40 Ibid., 12.
43 Ibid., 3.
44 US Department of State. International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, par. 3
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., par. 4.
47 Ibid.
48 UNODC 2009, 10
49 Ibid., 19.
51 Ibid., 5.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 UNODC 2009, 7
57 US Department of State, State Releases Update, par. 13.
58 Blanchard, Afghanistan, 29.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 30.
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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 UNODC 2009, 10
65 Blanchard, Afghanistan, 30.
66 Ibid., 31.
68 Katzman, Afghanistan, 20.
70 Katzman, Afghanistan, 20.
72 Ibid., par. 21.
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75 Glaze, Opium and Afghanistan, 2007, 9
76 Katzman, Afghanistan, 20.
77 Blanchard, Afghanistan, 33.
78 Ibid., 34.
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84 Ibid., 54.

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86 Blanchard, Christopher, Afghanistan, 32.

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137 Ibid., 13.
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139 Ibid., 14.
140 Ibid.
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