

Opening Statement
Chairman Mark Souder

“Afghanistan: Law Enforcement Interdiction Efforts in
Transshipment Countries to Stem the Flow of Heroin”

Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy,
and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform

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Good afternoon, and thank all of you for coming. Today our Subcommittee will address the problem of transshipment of the various stages of production from poppy, to opium, and finally to heroin from Afghanistan, through the neighboring countries and elsewhere to market.

We will learn that the estimates of hectares under cultivation are now approaching the highest level of past production. The cultivation of poppy and production of opium under the Taliban rule reached an individual high of 4,600 metric tons in 1999, if you'll glance at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime chart on the easel. On the far right side of the chart, you can see that production estimates in the post - War on Terrorism period. On the second easel, you can see a four-year comparison, from 2000 to 2003, of the last full year of Taliban production, then the Taliban crack-down, and then the explosive growth during the U.S. led War on Terrorism.

A significant problem is the judicial system in Afghanistan. It does not exist for all practical purposes. Afghanistan does not have the facilities to incarcerate convicted citizens, notwithstanding any possibility of due process. The Taliban ordered farmers to stop raising poppy in 2001 and stockpiled what product there was. They enforced the ban with lethal force, not with judicial process. The farmers complied. The farmers also survived by growing other crops, in the interim. Some have

said that the Taliban's motive was not to rid the world of heroin, but to reduced the supply of non-Taliban narcotics, and significantly drive up the value of their supplis. The Karzai government and the U.S. led coalition has not resorted to such measures to enforce a reduction or outright ban on poppy growth. Therefore, there is no real penalty for growing an illegal cash crop like opium poppy.

So the question of disrupting this particular market must be focused on the region surrounding Afghanistan and the efforts to stop the various stages of heroin production from reaching any consumer market. We will learn which routes are commonly taken, through which neighboring countries, and what is being done to interdict these shipments. The graphic on the third easel shows what the UN thinks are the transshipment routes and major trafficking hubs.

This problem is worldwide, affecting entire continents. The magnitude of the transshipment problem is reflected in the destination markets. The United Nations' Research on Drug Abuse revealed that opiate abuse ranked first in 30 Asian countries, first in 34 European countries, first in the Australian continent, and second in North America, among drug users in treatment. Only Africa and South America had a minority percentage of drug users addicted and seeking treatment for opiate abuse. I am concerned about this problem because over 20,000 Americans die every year from drugs, and 7-10% of heroin sold in the U.S. comes from the Afghan region.

The next issue to examine is the matter of working relationships with international and with Federal law enforcement officials and agencies. Any effective interdiction efforts rely heavily on trust and shared information. The Department of State develops relationships with host nation law enforcement officials where we have embassies. The International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Bureau is establishing training relationships and seek and disburse assistance funding. Similarly, the Drug Enforcement Administration has agents assigned to many foreign countries to advise and assist host nation law enforcement officials with investigations, law enforcement technology, and training vetted units. With the consolidation of many other Federal law enforcement agencies into the new Department of Homeland Security, who passes information about a load in transit to DHS so that an interdiction can take place at sea, at ports of entry, or the areas

between ports of entry and how is the information passed? What is the working relationship, with respect to counternarcotics, with the Department of Defense in Afghanistan and the surrounding region?

I have recently returned from overseas, having visited Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. I have seen some of the challenges our witnesses will discuss, first hand. I am very interested in what the solutions are, however. What assistance does the United States provide to each of the countries in the region to help detect and interdict the opium product, the precursor chemicals, and the money? I hope the witnesses will address:

- The possibility of eradication programs within Afghanistan,
- The interdiction strategies by country in the region,
- The foreign assistance and alternative economic development plans, and
- Specific information on resource allocation and needs to properly address this crucial and grave problem.

This hearing will address all these difficult issues, as well as legislative and other potential solutions. We are pleased to be joined by Mr. Robert Charles of the Department of State and Mrs. Karen Tandy of the Drug Enforcement Administration who will share their insights, concerns, and solutions. Both witnesses have been to the region recently, so I expect we will engage in particularly insightful discourse.

I thank everyone for taking the time to join us this afternoon, and I look forward to hearing the testimony of our witnesses.