

**Statement by Acting Assistant Secretary Nancy J. Powell
Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Department of State
To the
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
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Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to update the Committee on our efforts against the drug trade in Afghanistan.

I would like to focus on our counternarcotics and police assistance programs and the particular challenges that we face in our collective efforts to defeat the drug trade in Afghanistan. Before doing so, however, let me say how much we appreciate all the support that Congress has provided for these programs. Your continuing support is central to achieving progress against the illicit drugs emanating from Afghanistan.

In 2004, Afghanistan produced a historically high opium poppy crop of 206,700 hectares under cultivation, with 4,950 metric tons of potential opium production, accounting for the majority of the world's illicit opium supply. There are unconfirmed reports that cultivation of opium poppy this year may be less than last, but whatever the level this year turns out to be, it will still be too high and there is no reason to expect that the drug threat in Afghanistan will abate anytime soon. We must continue to make combating the drug trade emanating from Afghanistan one of our major priorities in our overall efforts to help Afghanistan recover from the destitution and destruction of its recent past and to move into a brighter future.

Current Narcotics Situation

The Afghan government and the Afghan people face a major challenge in ending opium poppy cultivation, stamping out the processing of illicit drugs and curbing narcotics trafficking. Given the profound destruction and disruption of normal life brought about by more than 25 years of conflict, the weakness of legitimate income sources, and the limited

enforcement capacity of the national government, the overall environment in Afghanistan is still conducive to the expansion of narcotics production and trafficking.

Even though our programs to assist the Government of Afghanistan in combating the drug trade are working reasonably well in their initial stages, we have encountered some major challenges, notably with regard to helping the Afghan authorities dissuade farmers from growing poppy and destroy poppy fields when self-restraint is not sufficient to curb production. This year we have learned a lot of valuable lessons. We are working with the Government of Afghanistan and with our allies, most notably the United Kingdom, to rework some of our strategy aimed at assisting the Afghan authorities and Afghan people in the struggle against the opium poppy culture.

In addition to all the other nefarious and debilitating consequences of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, robust drug production and trafficking can be a meaningful source of financial and political support for terrorist organizations that threaten the United States and our allies and can contribute to an environment of corruption and of political and economic instability, and thereby undermine the democratically elected Afghan government. While the extent to which terrorist and extremist groups are involved in and benefit from the drug trade in Afghanistan is still unclear, it is clear that the drug trade could undermine what we have achieved and hope to accomplish in Afghanistan. It is important that we continue our collective and sustained efforts in helping to build the Government of Afghanistan's own capacity to establish the rule of law and to combat the drug trade.

Current Programs and Role of USG Agencies

Together with the United Kingdom (UK), which has the lead on coordinating international counternarcotics (CN) assistance in Afghanistan, and with other donors, we are increasing our support for the Government of Afghanistan's anti-drug efforts. Experience elsewhere shows that only a holistic approach, one that combines negative consequences for participating in the drug trade with legal alternative income options and a vigorous public education campaign, can succeed in shrinking the drug trade and turning the public against it. In coordination with the UK, Germany (which has the lead on international police assistance to Afghanistan) and Italy (which has the lead on international assistance for justice reform), the United States is

implementing a comprehensive five-pillar counternarcotics (CN) program that covers law enforcement, interdiction, eradication, alternative livelihood projects and public information campaigns.

We think we have the right overall approach, but acknowledge that we are involved here in a very complicated process in a country that has become excessively dependent on poppy cultivation and where a sustained effort against this culture will require long-term commitment – not only by the Afghans themselves but also by donors like ourselves and by the other friends of Afghanistan. There will be no easy solutions.

Law Enforcement: The immediate concern of the GOA is to establish security and rule of law throughout the country. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) assists lead-nation Germany in helping the GOA develop a competent, professional, democratic police force with the necessary training, equipment, infrastructure, institutional capacity and organizational structure to enforce the rule of law. To reach that goal, we are providing basic training to 50,000 national police (including 3,400 highway patrol) as well as to 12,000 border police.

INL is working closely with Germany and the GOA to enhance the training program with mentoring initiatives and support for reform at the Ministry of Interior (MOI), as well as providing critically needed infrastructure and equipment to ensure that the police have all the skills and tools they need to perform effectively and professionally.

We are working closely with other international donors and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to help the GOA plan and implement near-term governmental reforms that lay the necessary groundwork for effective law enforcement actions against the drug trade. The MOI established the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) in 2003 and has established, with help from the international community, three sections of the CNPA: investigation, intelligence and interdiction. In November 2004, the position of Deputy Minister for Counternarcotics was created in the MOI to oversee and coordinate CN enforcement activities. In December 2004, the GOA created a new Counternarcotics Ministry to coordinate and oversee Afghan CN policies and to facilitate communication between President Karzai and his CN policy makers and practitioners.

To support police training needs, INL established a Central Training Center in Kabul and Regional Training Centers (RTC) in Gardez, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Konduz, Jalalabad and Herat. INL has trained more than 40,000 police, including 2,600 border police and 770 highway patrol as of June 2005. FY 2005 Supplemental funds will enable INL to take the next step in training Afghanistan police by shifting the focus from classroom instruction in basic policing skills to field training. While the Field Training Officers (FTO) program was initiated in Kabul earlier this year, supplemental funds will provide the resources to expand the effort nationwide to ensure that police receive the monitoring, evaluation and feedback necessary to complete their training. Police Advisory Teams (PAT) will deploy to police stations throughout the country to engage in on-the-job mentoring and to provide guidance supporting Afghan FTO personnel and police trainers. INL will continue to support its training program utilizing the RTCs as well as expand and intensify the focus on training for border police and highway patrol.

INL will also continue to work with the GOA to implement police reform initiatives at the MOI to help it transition into a professional, democratic police organization. In 2004, INL deployed 30 senior police advisors to the MOI to address organizational reform and help develop revenue-generating initiatives, establish community policing projects (such as a model police station incorporating a bicycle patrol project piloted in Kabul earlier this year) and other important projects such as anti-corruption initiatives. In 2005, we will assist the MOI in implementing a major pay and rank reform initiative that will wholly restructure the police element of the MOI, eliminating the top-heavy nature of the current organization while simultaneously bringing pay for Afghan Police to a level commensurate with equivalent ranks in the Afghan National Army

INL also has programs for Afghanistan focused on strengthening the criminal justice and corrections sectors in order to improve Afghan capacity to enforce laws, including those applicable to counternarcotics. Aware that justice reform is a long-term process, the United States, United Kingdom and other donors supported Afghanistan's establishment of a Counternarcotics Vertical Prosecution Task Force in late 2004 in order to move expeditiously against narcotics criminals through the Afghan justice system. This program includes initial training of a select group of judges, prosecutors, and police in counternarcotics issues; increasing the GOA's

capacity to manage narcotics cases; and constructing a secure court and detention center to hold and try drug offenders.

The U. S. Department of Defense (DOD) is constructing a Counternarcotics Justice Center (CNJC) consisting of a secure court and detention center in Kabul to serve as the temporary headquarters of the CN Vertical Prosecution Task Force. INL will support the CNJC by training corrections personnel and helping the relevant Afghan institutions develop the capacity to maintain and operate the center. In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice has assigned two federal prosecutors to help the Task Force build and try cases. Senior U.S. prosecutors have also begun providing advice and assistance to the GOA with respect to the drafting of new money laundering, asset forfeiture, extradition and narcotics laws.

Interdiction: We are helping to build Afghan capacity to undertake interdiction operations and thereby increase the risk to those involved in the drug trade. In addition to the State/INL- supported police advisors in the Ministry of Interior, DOD helped to expand the capacity of the Afghan Special Narcotics Force (ASNF). In 2004 the ASNF conducted 14 major operations resulting in the destruction of 81 metric tons (mt) of opium/opiates, 28 mt of precursor chemicals, and over 70 opiate conversion labs. Successful ASNF operations have continued in 2005.

An Afghan National Interdiction Unit (NIU), capable of undertaking low- and mid-level target interdiction operations across the country, has been trained by DOD and recently conducted several successful interdiction operations under the tutelage of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). DEA is using Foreign-deployed Advisory Support Teams (FAST) to provide the NIU with mentoring, training, and direct operational support, with the objective of making the NIU capable of independent operations.

On March 15, 2005, U.S. military forces provided critical air support for a successful DEA/NIU operation against three drug laboratories located in Nangarhar province, one of the primary poppy-growing areas of Afghanistan. This successful operation resulted in significant evidence collection by the DEA and the destruction of approximately two metric tons of opium, 15 kilos of suspected heroin, as well as associated chemicals. On June 18, a similar operation in Nangarhar province produced even more positive results. Eventually, the NIU will be integrated with the other units

of the Counternarcotics National Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) to build a unified force with regional headquarters around the country.

Eradication: The credible threat of eradication is a major disincentive to opium poppy growers and in our view a very necessary component of any successful national counternarcotics strategy. There are some indications that the increased perception of risk in growing poppy is one of the factors contributing to reportedly lower poppy cultivation thus far in 2005. Largely funded by INL, an Afghan Central Poppy Eradication Force (CPEF) was established in May 2004 to carry out centrally directed, forced ground eradication across the country. There are currently four CPEF teams comprised of police, civilian laborers and international support staff.

The CPEF conducts forced manual eradication of poppy crops within areas approved by the GOA. Construction of a headquarters/training facility for the CPEF was recently completed in Kabul. In late 2004 and early 2005, the CPEF commander visited poppy growing districts to discourage cultivation of the 2005 crop. Simultaneously, the 495 Afghan police officers of the CPEF continued training and planning in preparation for the 2005 manual eradication season. This year, partly because of an exceptionally harsh winter, CPEF teams were deployed later than planned. In April they were sent into Kandahar province where they ran into strong opposition from local farmers and had limited cooperation from local authorities.

Our experience this year in supporting a central poppy eradication force has taught us some lessons that will be taken into account in the future as we seek ways to improve our counternarcotics efforts that bolster Afghan authorities' capacity to dissuade farmers from planting poppy and to implement forced eradication when that is required.

Some of these lessons include: (a) putting more emphasis on persuading farmers from planting poppy may reduce the need to eradicate poppy fields; (b) initiating eradication as early as possible in the growing season may decrease farmer opposition because the farmers should stand to lose less on their investment and still have time to plant alternative crops; (c) difficult transportation conditions favor establishing more eradication capacity at the provincial level; (d) commitment by local government officials and other local elites, including religious leaders, is critical for the success of a rural anti-drug campaign; (e) alternative livelihoods assistance for farmers should be tailored to specific local needs and produce an

immediate impact; and (f) public information campaigns should be tailored closely to local audiences and conducted throughout the year.

We are assessing these and other lessons learned from the 2005 crop eradication experience in order to develop better ways to work with the Afghan authorities and the Afghan people to achieve more productive results. Our goal is to assist the Afghans' own efforts to reduce the level of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan as fast as possible in a manner that will be sustainable.

Alternative Livelihoods: In order to combat effectively the drug trade in Afghanistan, it is essential to provide viable and sustainable legitimate income streams for the Afghan rural sector. Alternative livelihood programs, funded by foreign assistance and administered by USAID, are aimed at improving agricultural production in Afghanistan's major poppy-producing areas. This assistance trains farmers in technologies and techniques for the production of alternative high-value crops. It helps to provide the storage facilities, agricultural inputs and financing organizations needed to build strong rural markets. Cash-for-work programs that provide temporary employment and build rural infrastructure, such as irrigation and drainage canals, have already been rolled out in two principal poppy-producing provinces (Helmand and Nangarhar).

A comprehensive, multi-year USAID-supported development program is also currently being launched in concert with the Government of Afghanistan. This program will promote the cultivation of high-value licit crops, develop rural credit markets as well as financial and business development services, rehabilitate rural infrastructure, develop new internal and export markets for Afghan products, and remove administrative barriers that constrain businesses. We have also been actively encouraging other donors to contribute to alternative livelihoods.

Public Information: The goal of public information campaigns is to change attitudes in an Afghan culture where many people are still unaware that heroin production is illegal and that illicit drugs pose a major public health threat. In this effort, President Karzai has played an especially prominent and essential role, repeatedly addressing the Afghan people to reiterate his commitment to eliminate drugs and describe the danger and immorality of the drug trade. With the help of foreign assistance funding, we have assisted the Ministry of Interior and the former Directorate of

Counternarcotics in developing and conducting an anti-drug public affairs program aimed at reducing poppy cultivation, the illicit drug trade, and drug use and abuse across the country. The BBC and VOA are broadcasting anti-drug messages in both Pashto and Dhari that tie the drug trade to conflict, crime, corruption and warlordism.

Our public information programs work through electronic and print media, as well as through community leaders, mullahs, elected officials and civil servants to deliver President Karzai's anti-drug message. At present, given some of the lessons learned thus far in 2005, we are in the process of supporting an even more aggressive public information effort for Afghanistan that will focus over the next three months on an intensive campaign to persuade Afghan farmers to defer from planting opium poppy during the next growing season. If successful, this anti-poppy-planting information campaign will reduce the extent of next year's poppy crop and help the Afghans move closer to building a viable, legitimate economy.

Regional Cooperation

Our counternarcotics efforts cannot be confined to Afghanistan alone. Because the drug trade is developed throughout South and Central Asia, our efforts also include programs to improve counternarcotics coordination between Afghanistan and its neighbors. We expect to continue working with Afghanistan and other countries in the region to deter the drug trade.

The Way Forward

All of the measures that I have discussed are an essential beginning to a long process. Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is likely to continue until the Afghan government can expand its authority throughout the country and until rural poverty levels can be reduced through provision of alternative livelihoods programs that increase rural incomes. Sustained assistance to poppy-growing areas, diversification of crops, improved market access, and development of off-farm employment, combined with law enforcement, drug education, and eradication programs will reduce the amount of opium produced in Afghanistan. However, drug processing and trafficking can be expected to continue until security is established and drug law enforcement capabilities can be increased. Political stability and assistance by the donor community over many years will be required to help the Afghan government succeed. We are committed to this effort.