

Afghanistan: Where's the Cash?

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Afghanistan's US-run government was the world's largest producer and exporter of opium, morphine, and the end-product, heroin.

As it did after first seizing power in the mid-1990's, Taliban, the Islamic anti-drug and anti-communist movement, is shutting down the Afghan drug trade. Billions worth of heroin, opium and morphine that had been flowing into Central Asia, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Southeast Asia will be sharply reduced. Afghanistan's drug-based economy is now in dire jeopardy.

But you would not know this if you follow the biased western press, notably the big US TV networks, social media and the BBC which thinks it's Britain's old colonial office. Western media has focused almost exclusively on the supposed plight of well-off westernized Afghan women in Kabul. That's all you see on TV.

That these pampered ladies can't easily get their nails done is not Afghanistan's biggest problem. Nor is the closing of dance studios or fashion boutiques.

What really matters is that Afghan wedding parties and villages are no longer being savaged by US warplanes or B-1 and B-52 heavy bombers, or that wide scale torture by the Communist-run secret police, whose head, Amrullah Saleh, was a key US ally and the nation's real strongmen, has been ended by Taliban.

Meanwhile, western media simply ignores the plight of women in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. I well recall being twice arrested in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia by religious police for walking with an attractive lady (an Estee Lauder beauty consultant).

I was arrested in Kuwait under similar suspicion. I was whipped by Saudi airport security police. And yet all we hear about or see are films of wicked Taliban soldiers maltreating Afghan women.

What I really want to know is what happened to all the billions in drug money reaped by the

US-backed regime in Kabul and its allied warlords? Where are the pallets of fresh US \$100 bills flown in from Washington to finance the Kabul regime? We saw the same phenomena in US-occupied Iraq. These mountains of cash just went 'walkabout,' as the Aussies say. Americans and US Arab allies grabbed the majority of these missing funds.

Iraq and Afghanistan account for one of the biggest thefts of money in modern history. Much of this sordid story has been documented by the US government's own anti-corruption agency, SIGAR, which has waged a valiant battle to combat crime in Afghanistan during the \$2 trillion, two-decade war.

Many of the drug-dealing criminals have already bailed out of Afghanistan via a US/British/French airlift. Others, Taliban opponents, mostly Tajik and Uzbek gang bosses, have managed to gain refuge in neighboring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The most formidable opposition to Taliban came from the Tajik Northern Alliance in the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul. This US-allied group dominated the drug trade until run out of business by Taliban. Now it's trying to rally with secret backing from France, India and the US.

China is playing a cautious game in Afghanistan. I was invited by Chinese military intelligence to Beijing in 1981 to ask me if Beijing should begin supplying arms to the Afghan Islamic anti-Soviet resistance, aka 'mujahidin.' This was the most momentous act in the growing China-Soviet split. No one in Washington seemed to see or understand it.

Forty years later, China is still wrestling with this problem. Beijing wants good relations with Taliban but is seriously scared by the notion of Islamic wild men who support freedom and independence for the Chinese-ruled Uighur Muslims of Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan).

Meanwhile, the great American-Afghan money machine has ground to a halt as its produce is secreted away in US real estate and Swiss banks.

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Featured image: U.S. troops guarding an opium poppy field in Afghanistan.

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