

U.S. Militarism & the Drug Trade: the Afghan Dossier

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In *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, whose 1972 edition the CIA tried to suppress, Alfred W. McCoy writes,

Although the drug pandemic of the 1980s had complex causes, the growth in global heroin supply could be traced, in large part, to two key aspects of U.S. policy: the failure of the DEA's interdiction efforts and the CIA's covert operations. By attacking heroin trafficking in separate sectors of Asia's extended opium zone in isolation, the DEA simply diverted heroin exports from America to Europe and shifted opium production from southern Asia to Southeast Asia and back again—raising both global consumption and production with each move. Moreover, the increasing opium harvest in Burma and Afghanistan, America's major suppliers were largely the product of CIA covert operations. [Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*, Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991 edition, p. 440]

Fast-forward 30 years. Writing in today's [Guardian](#), Patrick Wintour informs us:

Afghanistan's opium economy will take up to 20 years to eradicate and require a £1bn investment from world leaders, according to a government study published yesterday. ... Its conclusions came as the UN produced fresh figures on the opium trade. The UN's Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) believes this year's crop will be similar to, or slightly lower than, last year's record harvest. ... In 2007 Afghanistan had more land growing drugs than Colombia, Bolivia and Peru combined.

This is the sad face of the “new” Afghanistan, “liberated” from the ISI-linked Taliban and hailed by the toxic Bush regime as the first “success” of its ballyhooed (and malign) “war on terror.” Preoccupied with stoning uppity women, applying sharia “law” (fully the “moral equivalent” of Blackwater Christian Crusaders), censoring journalists or padding Dubai bank accounts with assets looted from the Afghan people, the puppet Karzai regime — like the Taliban before it, and now — have a limitless source of “product” on hand to fuel their rapacious appetite for boodle.

UNODC's chief, Antonio Maria Costa, commenting on the report warns, “Europe and other major heroin markets should brace themselves for the health and security consequences.”

These consequences won't be long in coming.

The 102-page précis, compiled by the Department of International Development and the World Bank (dubious sources, to be sure), suggest what is needed to stem the flow of illicit drugs from the world's number one narco state are not more guns — or U.S. Apache helicopter gunships — but a concerted effort to rebuild Afghanistan's shattered economy.

But the likelihood of this happening any time soon, given America's propensity for shady alliances with far-right drug- and warlords, say in Colombia or Kosovo just for kicks, is virtually nil.

One might reasonably ask, what has become of the billions of dollars in "development" aid doled out by U.S., Asian and European taxpayers?

According to Anthony Fontenot and Ajmal Maiwandi, just about what one would expect from an American military and CIA "liberation" racket:

Amid the ruined mud-bricked buildings of a city that has been devastated by war and neglect, divided into sinister, heavily fortified, military compounds, and occupied by armed local and foreign mercenaries, stand randomly dispersed extravaganzas of glass-and-tile palaces: symbols of the plunder that currently provides the economic base for the "reborn" Kabul. One result of the so-called War on Terror in Afghanistan is that vast amounts of money are now pouring into luxury real estate. ["Capitol of Chaos: The New Afghanistan of Warlords and Infidels," in *Evil Paradises*, New York: The New Press, 2007, p. 69]

Yes, "luxury real estate." As if Kabul were a deranged subdivision in southern California, Afghan warlords and the local equivalent of the "Real Housewives of Orange County" loll in sumptuary excess. No matter that the masses of impoverished Afghan farmers and proletarians literally starve to death, their assets (such as they are in a society devastated by decades of war fought on behalf of foreign masters) expropriated by criminal gangs dressed to kill in Armani suits.

Fontenot and Maiwandi report: "As in many parts of the world dominated by chaos and the naked struggle for power, the eccentric Afghan aesthetic forged by businessmen, militia commanders, drug barons, and warlords represents the first signs of an emerging postwar order and pathology. ... a collage of generic international products fused with kitsch samplings of Afghan vernacular architecture and textile patterns, all of which reflect the schizophrenic psyche of a war-torn society." [op. cit. p. 75]

Such is the terminal logic of U.S. militarism, where CIA "specialists" and corporate mercenaries are the shock troops of a predatory capitalism gone wild. Like marauding Borg threatening to "assimilate" the entire planet to a cultural wasteland of shopping malls, the international drug traffic fuels an endless cycle of violence, where, in the immortal words of robber-baroness Leona Helmsley, "the little people" always pay the price.

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