Testimony of

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The US is scoring a major victory against global terrorism by defeating the al- Qaida network in Afghanistan, but until we tackle Afghanistan's drug problem head on we cannot consider the victory to be a permanent one.

Too long the international community has ignored or downplayed the security risks inherent in the drug trade, which derives from Afghanistan's poppy-crop. For most of the past decade, Afghanistan was the world's largest single producer of opium, and with every passing year it turned more and more of its opium into heroin. The drug traffic emanating from Afghanistan's poppy harvest, and the opium and heroin manufactured from it, have undermined the security of all the states of the region.

But prior to September 11, it was difficult to convince US policymakers that Afghanistan's drug industry was a US problem, and even now we have no concrete strategy to deal with renewed drug cultivation in Afghanistan in any sort of timely fashion.

Afghanistan is the source of less that 10 percent of all heroin consumed in the US. By contrast, about 80 percent of Europe's heroin traces its origin to Afghanistan, leading a series of US administrations to conclude that it was the Europeans' responsibility to take the lead in organizing and funding projects aimed at eliminating Afghanistan's narcotics industry.

Even though this was not always admitted publicly, a quick look at the pattern of US spending on international drug control measures quickly reinforces this conclusion. The US priority has been on eradicating production and interdicting drugs originating in the Andean states, in Central America, and the Caribbean, and not on those half a world away, in a seemingly ungovernable part of the world. Added to this was the fact that even prior to going to war in Afghanistan, the US government did not want to engage with the Taliban government, whose existence the international community did not recognize and whose hold on power the US and its allies did not want inadvertently to encourage.

US policymakers recognized that the situation in Afghanistan was a highly unstable one, and posed a security risk to that of neighboring states. But September 11, US security was not seen as at risk. First the Clinton and then the Bush administrations were content to use the 6-plus-2 format, supplemented by the high-level US-Russian working group on Afghanistan, as the framework for trying to modify the political situation in that country.

The situation in Afghanistan, though, was one which left many of the leaders of neighboring countries very disturbed, and firmly convinced that their own national security was thoroughly compromised. This was especially true of the leaders of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The latter two shared borders with Afghanistan, while the former was equally vulnerable, as was shown by the incursions of the IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) whose fighters crossed into Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan in summer 1999 and 2000, holding several settlements hostage. The Uzbek government had gone on high security alert slightly earlier, after the bombings in Tashkent in February 1999.

The repercussions of the latter were felt throughout Central Asia, as the Uzbek government virtually closed its borders with neighboring states, and began mining some of the national

boundaries that it set about unilaterally declaring. All of the states started to target members of radical Islamic groups for arrest, particularly those tied to the increasingly more popular Hezb-ut Tahrir. In Uzbekistan this campaign led to the persecution of religious believers on a scale not seen since the days Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

An increasing number of meetings were held in the region to discuss the situation, some gatherings of the heads of states themselves, others organized by international organizations or groups (including one held by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in May 1999), but all offered a virtually identical prognosis. Unless the growing opium and heroin trade through Central Asia were curbed, anti-state groups would have a continual and ready source of funding. Russia and Kazakhstan, both major transit points in the drug trade, shared the Central Asian leaders preoccupation with drugs and with what the leaders of the region termed "Islamic extremism." Given their escalating engagement in Chechnya, whose armed forces they saw as partially supported through the sale of drugs, Russia's interest was particularly keen. But many observers also saw the Russians as a part of the problem, complaining that Russian troops based in Tajikistan helped organize and facilitate the shipment of heroin out of the region.

This did not mean that US policymakers were completely ignoring the problems in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The US encouraged international efforts to monitor poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, and provided some support for improving the capacity for the neighboring Central Asian states to interdict the crop. However, until September 11, the eradication of drug cultivation in Afghanistan remained of secondary concern to US policymakers.

The Drug Trade Returns to Afghanistan

Afghanistan's drug trade was only one source of financing for the al-Qaida network. Terrorist groups that allied themselves with Osama Bin Laden received funding from a number of sources. Some of the money transfers they received came from legal income of their donors, but there was a highly beneficial symbiosis between Afghanistan's drug trade and those who preyed on the country's atmosphere of lawlessness to prepare cadres for their global battle.

Ironically, though, this symbiosis was under threat when the September 11 attack on the US occurred. Before the 2001 harvest the Taliban banned the cultivation of poppies, and the rigor with which they enforced the new restrictions resulted in a poppy crop that was only about five percent the size that of the previous year. The Taliban did not seize the country's considerable drug stores or destroy the small factories which produced the country's heroin. The stores of drugs in Afghanistan were so great that the actions of the Taliban government did little to staunch the flow of drugs through the country. It did, though, contribute to a rise in the price of heroin, which had been artificially lowered, it seemed, in order to raise the number of new addicts.

Many have argued that the Taliban would have allowed the 2002 crop to be planted. It is true that they continued to tax Afghanistan's drug trade until their ouster from power, but obviously there is no way to know whether their ban on poppy cultivation would have continued to be enforced. Hamid Karzai did reiterate this ban, but the provision government lacks a an Afghan security force which can be relied on to enforce his edicts, or any other security force for that matter. The effectiveness of the current ban depends upon the willingness of local warlords, those in control of the country's irregular militia forces to destroy the crop and discipline those who grow the poppies. But these men have absolutely no incentive to do so, as they are able to tax the crop or its transit with impunity.

The US continues to regard the issue of Afghanistan's narcotics trade as of secondary importance, and has been pursuing a policy on not being distracted by secondary concerns until the Taliban and the al-Qaida network are defeated throughout the country.

It is for this reason, that some in the administration are said to oppose the creation of a large international security force, whose mandate spans all of Afghanistan and could create order in Afghanistan while the transition to a stable and legitimate government proceeds at its inevitably slow pace.

The transition in Afghanistan must inevitably be a slow one, but while it occurs we should not sit by and acquiesce to the restoration of Afghanistan's drug trade. That Afghanistan's heroin does not dominate the US market should not make it of secondary concern to US policymakers. Heroin is a global commodity; thus, a harvest which meets the need in one part of the world frees up supply for all other regions.

Moreover we have already seen how the atmosphere of lawlessness in Afghanistan, which the drug trade helped facilitate, was a direct threat to US security.

Allowing or tolerating the Afghans cultivation of poppies once again simply transforms the tragedy of Afghanistan's poverty into a problem of regional security.

Some even argue that we should close our eyes to the restoration of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. Afghans have traditionally grown poppies and used opiates, they remind us, as have all Central Asian nationals. Moreover, growing poppies is easy and profitable, regardless of the relatively small percentage of profit that remains with the growers. After all, it is not like the Afghans have lots of choices today.

This line of argument though is quite dangerous.

One cannot minimize the economic disruption that the Afghans have faced in the past two decades, when, among other things, there has been virtually no investment in agriculture. But this doesn't justify the return to the cultivation of opium poppies.

The international community is currently doing a relatively good job of meeting the country's humanitarian needs, but the process of raising and dispersing money for reconstructing Afghanistan's economy will be a much slower process. Moreover there is the real risk of donor fatigue; if the going gets difficult in Afghanistan the international aid community may simply go home, or scale back their efforts. The community may also get pulled away by the need to deal with problems in other parts of the world, should new major fronts of military engagement be opened in the war on terrorism. Should this occur it would leave Afghanistan's drug lords in firm control of the country.

Afghanistan's drug dealers are committed to being a lasting force. So as USAID is spending some $15 million on a pilot program to create a seed bank, to reintroduce into cultivation strains of crops that were once indigenous to Afghanistan, Afghanistan's drug dealers are already out there paying for opium futures. They distributed seed or the money to purchase it in the fall, and are now primed to buy up the country's crop when it is harvested in March.

Despite the Taliban's ban on opium cultivation, Afghanistan's drug dealers were not short on cash when the Taliban government collapsed. These men were not left short on cash, as US bombing raids never directly targeted Afghanistan's drug stores or heroin producing facilities. Similarly, although some of them may have died as the result of US bombing raids, Afghanistan's narco-mafia has undoubtedly survived the months of fighting relatively unscathed. While many of them worked with the Taliban, and accepted being tithed by the clerics, Taliban rulers never took over the drug trade, they simply sought to profit by it. Moreover, even when the Taliban banned poppy cultivation, it continued in the territory controlled by the Northern Alliance.

One should not minimize how difficult it would be to sharply cut back drug protection in Afghanistan. The network of drug dealers is fully intertwined with the traditional local elite in many parts of Afghanistan, as it is in parts of Central Asia. Crop substitution programs alone will

not eliminate drugs from Afghanistan. Economic incentives will work for the farmers, only if the country's elite is forced to cease collecting from this highly lucrative trade. As in all civilized countries, Afghanistan's drug dealers must be subject to arrest and lengthy incarceration, and a serious effort should be made to find them. Pressing Hamid Karzai's government to punish Afghanistan's drug dealers will certainly cost it and us some friends, as too would a policy of refusing the law-enforcement services of warlords who are known to trade or profit from the trade in drugs. But this is precisely what must be done.

Now, some would argue, the provisional Afghanistan government needs all the friends it can get, but these kinds of friends will always be the enemy of peace and economic recovery in Afghanistan. No cash crop will produce the same income that a farmer earns from opium cultivation, nor allow a rapacious elite the same easy riches.

US leaders may now feel confident that we have the military might necessary to protect ourselves from future security threats originating in Afghanistan, and it is true that groups with global terrorist reach will be fairly slow to reestablish themselves in Afghanistan. But a US policy of responding with surgical strikes to cauterize festering points around the globe does not address ways in which Afghanistan's drug trade will undermine that country's economic recovery and the economies of Afghanistan's weakest neighbors, putting these states at greater risk.

Afghanistan's Drugs are a Regional Problem

In recent years, more than half of Afghanistan's drugs have exited through Central Asia, and the amount of drugs flowing through Central Asia has increased dramatically over the past decade. Interdiction has improved, but Tajikistan's chief narcotics control official estimates that only about one tenth of the drug traffic across his country is successfully interdicted. Moreover, the blend of drugs traversing Central Asia has changed in recent years, as the amount of heroin being produced in Afghanistan increased exponentially.

Heroin interdiction is even more challenging than stopping the opium trade. During a January 2002 to Tajikistan, I had the opportunity to tour the vault of the National Narcotics Control Commission, where I was able to gain a greater appreciation of the magnitude of the task that Tajikistan's law enforcement officials face, as the vault was filled with small or otherwise cleverly disguised parcels all of which werefilled with heroin. The skill displayed by Afghanistan's drug dealers in disguising their valuable packages was considerable. Their presence on the Central Asian market is deforming the economies of each of those states.

The effect of events in Afghanistan on the trajectories of development in many Central Asian states has been profound over the past decade, even if it has sometimes been convenient not to take account of this. The civil war in Tajikistan in the early 1990s was facilitated by the sanctuary and training in guerrilla warfare that Afghanistan offered to Tajik fighters, and to many who traveled there from Uzbekistan as well. In turn Tajikistan's civil war provided fertile field for drug traffickers, arms dealers and Islamic revolutionary thinkers to thrive. Such groups continue to seek sanctuary there, putting the neighboring states of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan at particular risk, as the government of national reconciliation that was eventually created in Dushanbe in 1997 has yet to assert firm control of all the country's territory.

If eyewitness reports are at all credible, then Tajikistan and Turkmenistan already meet some of the definitions of "narco-states" as the governments in both places have credibly been accused of sifting profits directly from the drug trade. The Turkmen profited from drugs transiting Taliban-held territories. The Tajiks worked through the Northern Alliance, and their main drug routes went across Kyrgyzstan and then into Kazakhstan and Russia. Kyrgyzstan too is at risk of

becoming a narco-state, as the low salaries paid to local government and security officials in the southern part of the country make them ripe for being suborned. Of greatest concern is the future of the approximately two hundred men who serve as officers for Tajikistan's National Drug Control board, and whose salary, quite generous by regional standards, is paid through funds provided by the UN Drug Control Program. Since this program went into effect, interdiction of heroin increased sharply in Tajikistan, but the funding for the project will run out in 2002. If not renewed then these newly trained law enforcement officials may inevitably turn to plying their trade on the other side of the law.

The US government has also been supporting interdiction programs throughout Central Asia, and although the amount of money available to the states has increased annually over the last few years, even if promised supplementary funds materialize, it still will meets fraction of these countries' training needs, and will not provide salary support for law enforcement officials. Moreover, if Afghanistan's drug trade increases, and it is likely that this will occur in the political vacuum of the transition period, then Central Asia's security forces could rapidly be overwhelmed.

Unless we move quickly to help the Central Asian states better protect themselves from the dangers emanating from Afghanistan--both directly through massively increased assistance to these countries drug interdiction efforts, and indirectly through efforts to end the cultivation of opium poppies in Afghanistan--then these countries could become the breeding grounds for future terrorist networks of global reach in much the same way Afghanistan did. Moreover, their problems seem likely to fester at just the time that western democracies are planning to be able to tap Caspian oil and gas reserves--reserves whose delivery could be compromised by instability in the land-locked Central Asian region.

New Initiatives Are Needed in Afghanistan

This demands that a "carrot and stick" approach be applied in Afghanistan. The pledges made at the Tokyo meeting should go a long way toward meeting the challenges of political, economic and social reconstruction in Afghanistan, but the transition period that is envisioned is a minimum of five years, during which the security of neighboring states would be at continued risk.

Moreover, international gatherings on Afghanistan have provided no clear guidance on the organization of an international security force is organized, and there isd no firm commitment to make it one of sufficient size to reach throughout the country, or to give it a mandate that clearly establishes the authority of its troops. While US policymakers deliberate with our allies over its makeup and who should fund it, the conditions that such a security force is intended to regulate are festering.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the area of narcotics control, as these forces will have to deal with new and more dangerous realities on the ground. Having returned to the cultivation of opium, Afghan farmers and traders alike have much greater incentive to reject international interference with their livelihoods. Given that most Afghans are armed, their opposition to international drug control efforts could lead to further bloodshed.

Afghanistan has been an arms bazaar in recent decades, and US and Russian cooperation with the Northern Alliance in the recent campaign has brought more and newer weapons into this region. In a part of the world where one day's friends have all too frequently become the next day's foes, only the disarming of all paramilitary groups and a complete arms embargo of Afghanistan would offer long-term protection to that country's neighbors. And though in some

parts of the country former opposition fighters have been successfully pressed to turn in their weapons, small arms abound throughout the country.

The presence of large stores of arms and markets for them in Afghanistan render the region's burgeoning drug trade even more deadly. This in itself should be sufficient incentive for the US to seek out and destroy current stores of opium and locate and then close down the heroin factories throughout the country, regardless of where they are found. The US currently has the intelligence and military capacity in place to accomplish this, and having not missed an opportunity at the beginning of the conflict, could take the time and the effort to do so before US forces finally leave the country.

The US should also take aggressive steps toward halting the resumption of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, through a multi-faceted approach of incentives and disincentives. Afghan farmers should be offered cash subsidies for destroying the current harvest in the field, or for turning it over to authorities charged with its destruction. Those who comply should qualify for trial or target programs of agricultural reform, while those who refuse should lose all priority for receiving future international development assistance.

Anything less means that the opium and heroin trade through Afghanistan will quickly recover, as all the traders along these well established routes seek to maintain their profit levels. The drug trade feeds on the poverty of this region, and allows radical Islamic groups to become self-financing. Drug dealers and arms traders propagate each other, and have long been cooperating in this part of the world.

This is bad news for the Central Asian states. The point of contagion for them remains Afghanistan. As one senior government official in Kyrgyzstan recently described the situation, the flourishing drug trade insures that anyone can buy his or her way into Central Asia at a price. Juma Namangani, head of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), was a master at maneuvering across borders. Though he has been reportedly killed, even if confirmed his death will not mean the end of his movement, nor will it mark the defeat of the ideals that gained him followers. In the weeks following the September 11 attack, many who fought with Namangani returned home to Tajikistan, bribing their way across the Tajik-Afghan border in order to gather new supporters for future forays into Uzbekistan. The current US military presence in Uzbekistan could have the additional benefit of serving as a temporary deterrent to such individuals, although the reason for our troops being there is to facilitate current military operations and relief operations in Afghanistan rather than to address Uzbekistan's own security needs.

The re-establishment of Afghanistan's drug trade through Central Asia is good news for those interested in the perpetuation of militant Islamic groups. The current religious ferment in the region is nothing new. It has persevered in much the same fashion for over a hundred years. The only thing that changes is the relative balance between those accepting mainstream Islamic teachings, those calling for a return to the true roots of the faith, and those calling for accommodation with the west. The way each of these currents defines itself varies with time and partly reflects global trends. Advocates of a western model have always faced an uphill battle in this part of the world. Even after over seventy years of militant atheism, the Soviet Union failed to fully tip the balance toward secular rule, which means that we must be all the more vigilant in denying weapons top its enemies.

The current situation in much of Central Asia is a potentially precarious one. Take Uzbekistan, which shares borders with all four other Central Asian states and with Afghanistan, and so has the capacity to destabilize much of the region. The government in Tashkent faces the challenge

of educating, integrating and employing a new generation of Uzbeks--over half of the country is under 21. Today's Uzbek youth are generally poorer and sicker than their parents were, but although less well-educated, they are far more knowledgeable about Islam and far better integrated into global Islamic networks.

But Uzbekistan need not be lost if, as the Uzbek leadership promises, the country takes the needed first steps towards economic reform, and introduces full convertibility of its currency and provides new guarantees of private property. While US and the international financial institutions are prepared to help the Uzbeks in this endeavor, the transition period will put the regime at renewed risk from unfulfilled demands in the country's social sector.

The resumption of the drug trade simply adds new pressures. In Uzbekistan, as elsewhere, the social sector is under severe strain. Narcotics addiction is growing throughout the region, in all five Central Asian states and in Iran, and HIV/AIDS is on the rise as well. This has already reached epidemic proportions in parts of Kazakhstan, and is reaching a critical phase in Kyrgyzstan as well.

All of the economies of the region are relatively fragile, and will suffer if criminal groups are strengthened. We have already seen how narcotics trade has served to undermine the governments of some of the Andean region states, funding terrorist groups. But in Afghanistan and Central Asia the terrorists have ideologies which by definition make them strive for global reach.

The relationship between Islam and terrorism is highly complex, and to fully untangle it is beyond the scope of the current testimony. Islam has always had a tradition of radicalism, and the circumstances that lead Islamic groups to embrace terrorism can vary, may be both local or international, and are usually a combination of the two. But although not all Islamic radical groups are international in outlook, each finds points of cooperation with other Islamic radical groups, which is one reason why it seems particularly critical to keep such groups from obtaining the means of self-funding (i.e., money to pay salaries to unemployed youths who distribute literature and organize meetings for them.).

Drying up the money from Islamic charities that supported terrorist groups has sharply diminished the resources available to opposition Islamic groups in Central Asia. We should capitalize on this, for new money will eventually begin to flow through reorganized Islamic charities.

Let Something Good Come from our Tragedies

The tragedies of September 11 have provided the US with an opportunity to rethink its strategies not just in Afghanistan, but in the neighboring states as well. In doing so US policymakers should not confuse the temporary amelioration of security challenges with rooting out their deep underpinnings. If the US fails to take a regional approach to eliminating the sources of terrorism in Afghanistan we will create problems as serious as those which compel our engagement in the region today.

Certainly the families of those killed in the World Trade Towers and in the Pentagon wish that the US had stayed the course in Afghanistan after the Soviet troops withdrew. Let us not repeat our earlier mistakes.

Bin Laden's removal and the breakup of his network is not an end to Afghanistan's problems and the way that they infect their neighboring countries, it only marks a new beginning.

As part and parcel of destroying the al Quaida network US policymakers must be prepared to engage in a serious way to sharply reduce--if not eliminate--the cultivation of opium poppies in

Afghanistan. The administration should propose concrete projects designed to do this as well as to stop the trafficking in narcotics across the states of Central Asia., and Congress should signal its willingness to supply the necessary supplementary funding to implement them.

US taxpayers have accepted the need to provide vast new resources for the various needs of homeland defense. But vigilance at home is only part of the solution.

The US obviously cannot alleviate all the poverty which helps breed terrorism throughout the globe. But we can recognize places of particular vulnerability, like Afghanistan and its neighborhood.

Afghanistan continues to have all the elements of a terrorist breeding ground: poverty, drugs, conventional weapons and a population accustomed to being permanently at war. Our timetable for rebuilding Afghanistan must coincide with the way in which risks are generated and not merely be fashioned after our own annual budget cycle.

While US policymakers should pressure our European allies to actively engage in this effort with us, including to help pay the cost of increased interdiction and crop substitution programs. More pressure must also be placed on the Russians to do a better job of combating the trafficking of narcotics across Russia as well. Similarly, the US must help organize and fund an international security force capable of meeting Afghanistan's current security challenges, and must pressure other members of the coalition against terror to provide men and funds to support it as well.

But most importantly, we have to make it clear to our new friends in Kabul, that the government of Afghanistan must do more than simply reaffirm the goal of ending drug production, that we expect them with international assistance, to implement a wide range of programs to deal with drug interdiction, as an integral part of developing a new national police force and civil service. Part of the latter's task must be to work with the local communities on projects designed to lead to crop substitution, and to develop programs which offer financial incentives for turning in criminal groups that seek to encourage the perpetuation of the drug trade.

This raises the question of who will fund these activities. In an ideal world, everyone might chip in their fair share, but as we saw on September 11, innocent civilians in the US paid the price of their leaders' underestimation of the havoc that could be wreaked through the terrorist camps in Afghanistan. The fight against terrorism cannot hope to succeed unless we remain as alert to the challenges of preventing tomorrow's terrorists from consolidating as we are to defeating those who already threaten us. As in the other battlefields of the war against terrorism, the US must be prepared to deal a blow to Afghanistan's drug trade, even if we must assume a disproportionate share of the financial burden to do so.