

U.S. sets the record straight on Myanmar's war on drugs

by Michael and Gail Billington

In September, the National Narcotics Intelligence Consumer's Committee (NNICC) released its Annual Report for 1996 on world drug production and consumption. The NNICC is an interagency committee representing the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and other intelligence and law enforcement agencies concerned with narcotics control, reflecting the policy direction of President Bill Clinton's "drug czar," Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. In a welcome departure from the recent rash of politically motivated diatribes against Myanmar as an "international pariah," complicit in drug production and distribution—charges lodged especially by London's Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, but also by the U.S. State Department—the NNICC report presents a truthful analysis of the increasingly successful drug suppression operations of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the military government of Myanmar. Except for the coverage in *EIR*, these facts have gone totally unreported in the Western press until this time.

The critical importance of the publication of this document can only be understood by contrasting it to the announcement by British Foreign Secretary Cook in Malaysia on Aug. 28. Cook declared a war against Myanmar and other nations using British intelligence operatives, under the cover of combatting "drug barons." For London, the headquarters historically and to this day of the global drug business (see *EIR*, Aug. 29, "George Soros: the Queen's Drug Pusher"), to justify a policy of illegal, subversive operations against sovereign nations out of alleged concern about the evils of drugs, is an irony not lost on the nations of Southeast Asia, each of which suffered the ignominy of being used as drug plantations by British, French, or Dutch colonial regimes.

Cook's pretensions were obnoxious and grotesquely hypocritical. According to the Aug. 29 *Times* of London, Cook

announced that the British government "would focus on attacking the drug supply chain at every stage, from stifling production at source to preventing profitability and stopping money laundering. Covert operations by MI6 officers abroad against international drug-trafficking and money-laundering networks will become one of the top priorities." The *Times* continued that there are an estimated 800 MI6 agents at British embassies, who will "have a strategic role, running deep penetration operations aimed at harming the drug barons where it will have a long-term impact. . . . The role of MI6 intelligence officers and their network of secret agents will be to mount long-term penetration of criminal organizations." The London correspondent of the Argentine newspaper *Clarín* went one step further in reporting on Cook's remarks, headlining her report that the British Special Air Services, whose legions of "retirees" now populate mercenary armies for hire around the globe, would also be brought into these covert operations.

Removing any pretense that such operations would be run legally, with the knowledge and support of the countries in question, Cook told reporters in Singapore: "Burma is the largest single world producer of opium, and it has achieved that infamous position precisely because it is a government that does not act against the drug barons" (emphasis added).

Statements by a Myanmar government official responding to Cook's pomposity were in keeping with recent, outspoken attacks by several Southeast Asian leaders against international speculators who have criminally subverted and looted economies of developing nations. "Whether Mr. Cook is ignorant of the fact or deliberately trying to cover up the most irresponsible and unforgivable criminal act Britain committed by forcefully introducing opium into Asia is anybody's guess," the official stated. "Britain should actually be taking the lead in assisting the victim countries to clean up the mess

she had originally and intentionally created instead of pointing fingers at Myanmar to cover up her own fault.”

The U.S. position

In contrast to Cook’s line, the NNICC report states unequivocally the impact of SLORC’s efforts since 1989 to take control over the areas bordering Thailand, Laos, and China, the infamous “Golden Triangle,” *for the first time since the early-19th-century colonization of Burma by the British*. The NNICC report includes the following (all emphases added):

- “Burma was the world’s largest producer of illicit opium and heroin in 1996. Most cultivation was located in eastern Burma’s Shan State *in remote mountainous areas controlled by armed ethnic groups*.”

- “In late 1995, under pressure caused by . . . the joint DEA-Thai Royal Policy Operation Tiger Trap . . . and attacks by the Burmese Army . . . , and the defection of thousands of ethnic Shan troops (to the Burmese Army), SUA [Shan United Army] leader Chang Chi-fu (a.k.a. Khun Sa) entered into negotiations with the Burmese government. A settlement was reached in December 1995, and by early January 1996, Burmese Army troops were garrisoned at key SUA bases.”

- “The SUA surrender disrupted trafficking patterns in the Shan State. . . . *Burmese authorities were able to seize a record 505 kilograms of heroin and destroy 11 heroin refineries*, a significant increase over the 70 kilograms of heroin seized and the three refineries destroyed in 1995. . . . *As a result of such developments, . . . refining activity slowed*.”

- “*These actions included the dismantling and relocation of refineries to sites on the Burmese borders with Laos and China. . . . Some soldiers who did not surrender moved to Laos to continue operations there. . . . For the first time in several years, there was some heroin refining activity in Thailand, as refineries formerly situated in Burma apparently relocated to Thai territory as Burmese forces occupied territory formerly controlled by the SUA*.”

- “Increases (in opium production in Laos and Thailand) were attributed to a temporary rise in the offering price for opium in Burmese border areas in mid-1996, following the destabilization of normal trafficking patterns with the capitulation of the SUA.”

In addition, the report documents the fact that 62% of the heroin seized in the United States came from Ibero-America, almost entirely from Colombia, which burst onto the scene as a heroin producer only in the mid-1990s. What is London’s policy toward Colombia, a nation run by a man, President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who was elected President with at least \$6 million in drug cartel money, and is now pledged to relinquish government control over the drug-producing regions to the cartels themselves? When Clinton decertified Colombia because of narco-President Samper’s support for the drug cartels last year, the British House of Lords protested the U.S. action, praising Samper’s “impeccable democratic credentials”!

United States vs. Britain

The release of the NNICC report with the backing of McCaffrey indicates that the United States will be taking a more honest, and a more effective approach to relations with Myanmar, in direct opposition to the British declared policy of subversion by covert intelligence operatives. Unfortunately, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and others at the State Department, have made several statements about Myanmar more in keeping with those of Cook. At the July meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Malaysia, Albright denounced SLORC as a “brutal dictatorship [which] protects and profits from the drug trade.” Hopefully, the evaluation in the NNICC report will lead to a revision of U.S. policy, including U.S. assistance to Myanmar for drug interdiction and eradication. The DEA station chiefs in Myanmar in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Angelo Saladino and Richard Horn, both strongly recommended U.S. support for SLORC’s anti-drug effort, which they considered both serious and relatively successful, given the lack of resources and technology available to the government. Both also complained that support was denied for *political* reasons, despite the good that could be achieved, for the people of Myanmar and the people of the United States, by helping destroy the largest source of heroin in the world.

A revision of U.S. policy would also isolate Soros, the primary sponsor and funder of the political destabilization campaign against Myanmar around the world, under his Open Society Institute’s “Burma Project.” McCaffrey has already come up against Soros within the United States, where Soros financed the voter referenda in California and Arizona to legalize drugs, including heroin, and in financing programs to provide hypodermic needles to heroin users in the urban ghettos. President Clinton and McCaffrey have declared war against these Soros-financed efforts to push drugs in the United States, and deployed considerable resources to that end.

With the truth of Myanmar’s anti-drug efforts now in the official record as part of the NNICC report, it should be evident that Soros, and the British Crown, intend to *prevent* the Myanmar government from closing down the production of drugs in the Golden Triangle, even if it takes sending covert MI6 agents into the country to protect the supply. This is nothing new for the British, who have run both the production and the financing of the Golden Triangle drug business since they set it up in the 19th century. After Burma won its independence from Britain in 1947, the British sponsored at least 16 ethnic drug armies, preventing the unification of the country by the Burmese government. Together with the control of the flow of drug money through the Hongkong and Singapore banking centers, the “controlled anarchy” in the Golden Triangle ensured that Dope, Inc. would run smoothly, without interference from Yangon or from anyone else. This is the continuing policy guiding Foreign Secretary Cook, with help from the likes of Soros. It’s time the United States helped put an end to it.