

NEW OPIUM WAR THREATENS WORLD PEACE

Wage a War on Drugs in Afghanistan, or Pull Out

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

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April 9—Can a war be won in which 1) the enemy, 2) the nature of the threat, and 3) the war aims, are all falsely defined? Obviously not! This is exactly what we are now experiencing in the case of the war in Afghanistan, of which [German] Minister of Defense [Karl-Theodor] zu Guttenberg said, that what is going on there could be “colloquially” described as a war!

As long as these three misdiagnoses are not corrected, the dangers posed by Afghanistan will increase, and Bundeswehr [German Army] soldiers will continue to put their lives at risk and lose them—for a military mission that absolutely cannot be carried out!

U.S.-Russian Cooperation Needed

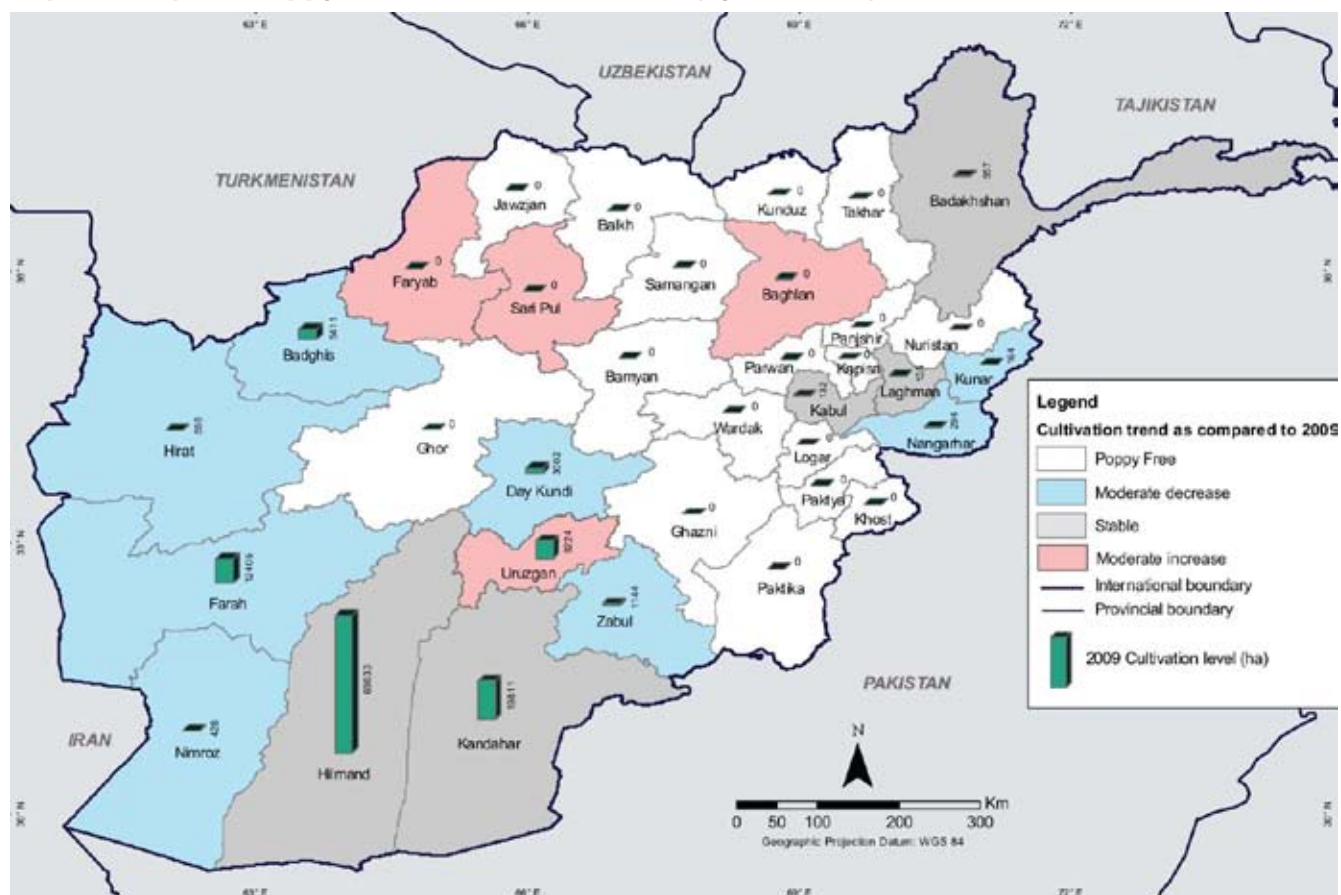
The main problem in Afghanistan is the drug cultivation and trafficking: 90% of world heroin production occurs there and constitutes the main source of funding for, among other things, the recent terrorist attacks on the Moscow subway and on other cities in Russia and the Caucasus. The refusal of NATO and the British and American governments, up to now, to act jointly against the drug cultivation and trafficking, threatens

to expand into a serious strategic conflict with Russia. However, important military circles in the United States have recently been responding with increasing openness to Lyndon LaRouche’s proposal that only joint U.S.-Russian action against drug production can defeat the threat. Such cooperation would also involve Iran, China, and India, which are themselves affected.

Meanwhile, it has become crystal clear who is identifying drugs as the primary problem, and who is protecting the drug lobby. Victor Ivanov, the head of the Russian drug enforcement agency, the FDCS; Adm. James Stavridis, the commander of U.S. forces in Europe (EUCOM); and Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), formerly President Clinton’s drug czar, are unanimous that the greatest threat from the production and trading of opium, heroin, and hashish in Afghanistan is that these drugs are not only killing more people than the military operations, but that the drug trade also financed the most recent terrorist attacks in Russia and Central Asia. They further agree that absolutely nothing can be accomplished in Afghanistan without international agreement to dismantle the drug trade. But this is not the mission of NATO’s ISAF troops at all, since the Obama Administration canceled the programs for drug eradication [in March 2009].

Ivanov stressed that drugs are a special kind of

FIGURE 1

Expected Opium Poppy Cultivation Trends, 2010 (by Province)

Source: UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment 2010*.

weapon of mass destruction, and that the situation in Russia has reached the dimensions of a national catastrophe. Indeed, in Russia during the last year alone, 30,000 addicts, ages 18-24, died from an overdose of heroin; according to official statistics, there are 2.5 million drug users, a figure which is rising explosively. According to McCaffrey, Afghan heroin kills about 10,000 people per year in the NATO member-states, which is five times as many as NATO loses in all its combat actions. No less dramatic for national security in Russia is the fact that the terrorist attacks that shook Russia in recent weeks were perpetrated by terrorist groups that are financed by the proceeds of the Afghan drug trade.

At the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council in Brussels on March 24, Ivanov offered the NATO countries his country's cooperation in the fight against drug production in Afghanistan. The Western states' refusal

to participate actively in destroying opium fields led the Russian Foreign Ministry to issue a statement the following day, condemning this decision and accusing the United States of "conniving" with the drug lords in Afghanistan.

Obstruction from Obama, London

But while EUCOM chief Admiral Stavridis warned at a conference that the Caucasus is developing into a "zone of terrorism," and that especially the heroin from Afghanistan and the associated human and weapons smuggling are contributing to growing instability of the region, and that NATO must do more to stop the influx of heroin from Afghanistan, neither Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the head of the ISAF troops in Afghanistan, nor Richard Holbrooke, special representative of the Obama Administration for Afghanistan and Pakistan, see any reason to do anything against drugs. Hol-

brooke disputes the idea that opium production and trafficking are a significant source of funds for the Taliban, while U.S. troops, under the command of General McChrystal, are under explicit orders to leave the opium poppy fields alone.

In January 2009, Gen. Bantz John Craddock, NATO's Supreme Commander in Europe (SACEUR), authorized NATO military operations against the drug lords, drug dealers, drug laboratories, and storehouses in Afghanistan. But in the same month, the magazine *Der Spiegel* leaked a secret NATO document on the matter, and a short time later, Craddock's term as SACEUR ended, and with it the attempt to combat drug cultivation.

Shortly afterward, in March 2009, Richard Holbrooke announced in Brussels, that the fight against Afghanistan's opium cultivation was being discontinued because it cost too much, and deprived Afghan farmers of their livelihood, driving them into the arms of the Taliban. In May 2009, Obama suddenly fired the commander of the Afghanistan mission, Gen. David McKiernan, who had supported the action against drug lords and laboratories, and replaced him with Gen. Stanley McChrystal, under whose command the troops are explicitly instructed to leave the poppy fields, laboratories, and storehouses alone.

The fact is that opium production has risen 40-fold since the start of the U.S. and NATO occupation of Afghanistan in 2001! The fact is also that Helmand Province, the main growing area, which has been controlled by the British since 2005, produces about 60% of the total, or about 4,000 tons of opium a year. So the Brits are the most determined opponents of fighting drugs. "Nobody knows better than Afghan politicians do, the history of their people and their way of life. Therefore the best thing is for them to decide themselves, what to do with the plantings. Without participation from the international forces," said Richard Connelly, a British officer with the ISAF.

According to a report by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), control of the drug trade has been consolidated since 2005; a pyramid of drug lords has been constructed, financed by sales revenues; district police chiefs and local police provide protection for the cultivation, trafficking, and the so-called Hawala system which transfers the drugs and money, and is closely linked to the financial centers of Karachi, Dubai, Mumbai, and London. UNODC Director Anto-

nio Maria Costa told the Austrian magazine *Profile* where the laundered drug money ends up: There are indications that since the credit crunch broke out as a result of the financial crisis, money from the drug trade and other illegal activities was used to "save" some banks.

If you think about the role of the British Empire in the Opium Wars of the 19th Century against China, then the British policy of protecting Afghanistan's drug cultivation is as unsurprising as the role of laundered drug money in the financial system. Another urgent reason to establish a Pecora Commission, which will have to clarify all these relationships.

There can only be a solution for Afghanistan if the measures proposed by LaRouche, Ivanov, and McCaffrey are implemented. The poppy and cannabis fields must be eliminated by proven methods. The heroin laboratories and storage buildings must be destroyed from the air; the authorization and obligation to do so must be included in the ISAF mandate. The United States and Russia, in particular, must cooperate in this program.

Sufficient resources must be made available to the farmers for an alternative crop. Only if the United States, Russia, China, India, and Iran cooperate in implementing this policy and destroy the drugs apparatus, including the money laundering, can there be a real reconstruction program, particularly the expansion of infrastructure, energy and power generation, and the creation of at least 2 million jobs.

The Bundeswehr

As long as these conditions are not met, the Bundeswehr has no business being in the Hindu Kush, and must immediately be withdrawn. Only after drug cultivation and trafficking are eliminated, can the Bundeswehr's Pioneer Corps be deployed for the economic development of Afghanistan!

The facts that opium production has risen 40-fold since the war began in 2001; that, according to McCaffrey, 68% of the Afghan people have never known peace; that life expectancy there is 44 years; and that Afghanistan has the highest maternal mortality rates in the world—all this makes unmistakably clear that the Afghanistan War is a total failure, because the war aims were wrongly defined.

Not a single additional Bundeswehr soldier's life should be sacrificed to a war that only serves those who gain from the new Opium War!