Fact Sheet: Prohibition and Financing Terrorism

*It is not the demand for drugs that creates repressive regimes that generate terrorists, but rather prohibition. “Prohibition pushes drugs into an underground market making them highly profitable.”*

- According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, narcoterrorism is defined as terrorism financed by profits from illegal drug trafficking.\(^1\)

- Drug prohibition has enhanced criminal activity and organizations around the world by generating an extremely profitable black market in drugs. Prohibition also helps finance terrorist groups.\(^3\)

- The drug trade could not finance terrorism to any significant degree, without prohibition. The black market generates an ample profit; where as the legal sale of drugs would amount to a much smaller fraction.\(^4\)

- 18 of the 42 groups considered terrorist organizations by the U.S. government are funded by drug trafficking.\(^5\)

- Worldwide drug trafficking accounts for an estimated $322 billion annual market according to the United Nations.\(^6\)

- Illegal drugs account for 8% of all international trade whereas textiles comprise 7.5% and motor vehicles make up 5.3%.\(^3\)

- Afghanistan is the world’s largest supplier of opium, 2007’s output represents 93% of the world supply.\(^7\) Opium production exceeded last year’s record by 34%, achieving an all-time high of 8,200 metric tons.\(^8\) Afghanistan’s total amount of land used for opium poppies rose by 17%, from 165,000 hectares to 193,000.\(^9\)

- Prohibition leads to financing terrorism because the Taliban in Afghanistan makes money by charging poppy farmers for protection and taxing traffickers.\(^10\)

- Columbia supplies about 90% of America’s cocaine\(^11\)

- Columbia’s Revolutionary Armed Forces make a profit of $500 million to $1 billion from drugs annually.\(^12\)

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4 Ibid.


8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Join Together, 9/10/2007