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What are illegal drugs, except another commodity to be traded?

Either our drugs policy is stupid or crafty. I suspect the latter.

Stupid - if it believes that sending troops abroad to eradicate crops would stop drugs coming in. The evidence in Afghanistan and Colombia proves that it has the reverse effect.

Crafty - if, under the guise of 'eradication' or a 'war on drugs', it actually 'secures' control of illegal supplies and is able to maximise profits by keeping these cheap foreign-made drugs expensive so they don't compete with medicines produced in the UK.

It is feeble minded to suppose that today's British elites take no pointers from our historic past or have suddenly become disinterested in margins...

As with so much of the debate on Comment if Free, the media's framing of discussion of UK involvement in Afghanistan assumes an altruistic intent that was never there in the first place.

A more likely scenario is that our troops are doing great work internationally ... to support our commercial interests.

Leading UK companies produce OIL, GUNS & DRUGS.

To put the following in perspective, BP's reported profits were about £10 billion in 2005. Here are some figures for the heroin trade from Afghanistan, rounded up/down for simplicity and extrapolated from government and UN figures.

1000g opium from Afghan Farmer costs £50
1g street heroin from UK dealer costs £50

1000g opium makes around 150g pure heroin
or 375g street heroin (40% pure)
Afghan Farmer gets £50 for 1000g opium
UK street seller collects £18,750 for 375g heroin
Afghan Farmer sees just **0.26%** of the final sale value

The sale value of heroin in UK is **375 x** the cost of basic raw material (opium) needed to make it.

4200 tonnes opium produced in Afghanistan in 2004
from which 650 tonnes pure heroin may be made
Cost to buy in Afghanistan = £210 million
Can make 1600 tonnes street heroin (40% pure)



Street value in UK /Europe = **£80 billion**

Opium production under Taliban in 2001 = 185 tonnes

Opium production under Karzai in 2004 = 4200 tonnes

Ends | 10 July 2006 | The Leg

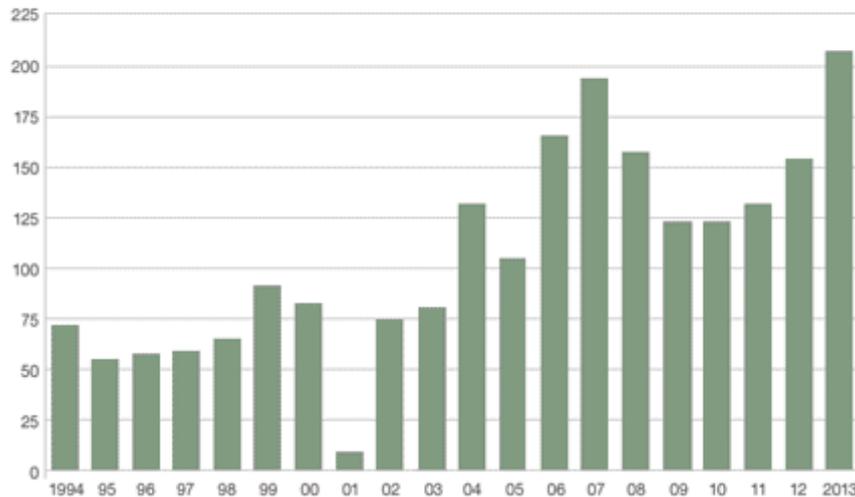
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Related Graph:

Opium cultivation in Afghanistan, 1994-2013

Hectares (thousands)



Source: UNODC Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013

Graph: Pumping up the volume post US/UK invasion in late 2001. The British public were told that part of the rationale for a UK troop presence would be opium eradication.

Interesting 1:

'Using its market power to compel Bengalis ryots [peasants] to cultivate opium at below the cost of production, the Company harnessed its monopoly position in such a way that it was making 2000 per cent profit by the time each chest of 63kg was sold in China... the Company was keen to disown any direct responsibility and ensured that the drug was shipped into China by independent agency houses... the opium was grown under Company monopoly in India... The Company also intervened with military force to protect its dominant position...Sales of opium provided the Company with one in seven of its tax rupees in India...Crucially, by 1828, the Company was generating enough revenue from its sales of opium ... to pay for its entire purchase of tea... and, with a tenth of government revenues back in Britain derived from tea duties, the entire imperial edifice rested on a mountain of opium... Extensive parliamentary inquiries... found few faults in the Company's conduct; most agreed that the imperial benefit of the opium trade justified its blatant illegality... only in 1907 did Britain finally agree to stop the export of Indian opium.

From *The Corporation that changed the World - How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* by Nick Robins, p151-167

Interesting 2:

'As in Southeast Asia and later in Southwestern Asia (Afghanistan and Pakistan), the CIA's secret war in South America led it into conflict with official US policy. The CIA provided arms and equipment (including air transportation) for uniformed warlords who were financed by revenues from cash crops grown by peasants and processed into narcotics. Such operations created a network for clandestine international arms deals that could finance illegal CIA wars without congressional knowledge, much less oversight... Laws against marijuana, cocaine, and heroin did not stem the demand or, therefore, the supply. Local warlords or military and police officials, using arms and equipment provided by the CIA and the Pentagon "to fight communism", established protection rackets that often mushroomed into full-scale trafficking, including processing plants and laundering money through banks. As with Air America and Southeast Asia, the CIA's aviation contractors in Latin America became indirectly involved in the trade by asking few questions about the cargo of CIA clients or became directly involved as participants in drug runs.'

From Thy will be Done by Gerard Colby with Charlotte Dennett p524

Related Articles:

2014:

Record \$1bn opium harvest in Afghanistan with our help...

2013

Film: The House I live in: Illegal drugs fix for jobless US poor?

OAS's report & future scenarios for drugs policy in the Americas

Hard hit Latin Americans lead call for decriminalisation of drugs

Do CIA's bags of cash buy influence... or drugs in Afghanistan?

US to retain 9 military bases in Afghanistan post 'withdrawal'

Note the impact of British forces patrolling Helmand - it is the world's No1 opium cultivating province

2012

Prohibition increases any harm related to recreational drugs

Opium production under Karzai in 2012 = 5800 tonnes

2011

Another of Karzai's warlord allies assassinated

Karzai's brother Walai - a drugs trafficker on CIA payroll - killed

Research finds uncontaminated MDMA doesn't wreck minds

2010

War on drugs perpetuates illegal trade says former Minister

50% US took prescription drugs in 08 - antidepressants lead

Drugs being shipped out of Afghanistan in military aircrafts?

Legalise - 28,000 killed in Mexico thanks to 'war on drugs'

'Concealment of civilian casualties' in Afghanistan

940,000 Russians with HIV & 80% infected by dirty needles?

Estimated 2 million addicts in Russia - mostly down to heroin

35% Afghan villages to farm poppy despite falling prices (p11)

2009

Ministers force out drug advisers who refuse to tow the line

"Legalise the production, supply and consumption of all drugs"
 Argentina decriminalises marijuana for personal use



Oil & Gas provide 30% of all UK corporation tax receipts
 Full report (4MB PDF): Portugal 8 years after decriminalisation
 Decriminalisation in Portugal since 2001 cut teen drug use
 US air strike kills 120 Afghans villagers
 Decriminalise illegal drugs to stop spread of HIV/Aids
 Legalise - stop crime costing UK taxpayers £14bn a year
 Legalise drugs to stop violence, corruption & intrusive policing
 Russia now has 2.5m addicts hooked on Afghan heroin
 'War on drugs' has not reduced drug trade
 The Economist: Legalisation is the least worst option
 Civilian deaths up by 40% to 2118 Afghans in 2008
 US installed Karzai government profits from opium trade

2008

After 7 years of Karzai... a world glut of heroin
 Coalition air strike kills 23 children at a wedding party
 Opium crop of 7700 tonnes likely in 2008
 Karzai government has lost all trust
 US rendition flight plane crashes carrying 3.3 tons of cocaine
 Health watchdog Nice attacks drug giants over huge profits
 Ex- UK drugs policy director calls for legalisation
 76 civilian Afghans killed in air strike, most of them children
 Illegal drugs industry worth 41% of legal alcohol market in UK
 Coalition air strike kills 47 wedding guests including the bride
 UK - the world No1 arms manufacturer and dealer in 2007?
 At February 2008 there are 60,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan
 Swiss back scheme to give addicts free heroin

2007

British public kept in the dark about operations in Afghanistan
 US bomb and kill sleeping road builders in Afghanistan
 Chief Constable of N.Wales advocates legalising all drugs
 Taliban agree to talks if troops leave, so UK sends in 2000 Paras
 Violence in Afghanistan up almost 25% in 2007
 2007: 93% market share. Harvest of 8200 tonnes predicted.
 Brits watch over 49% growth in Afghan opium harvest in 2006
 Is this what we mean by 'Enduring Liberty'?
 US drop yellow food parcels, and yellow cluster bombs
 Bloodshed is spreading, warn aid workers

Opium production gets underway in post invasion Iraq
DEA accused of monopolizing the shipment of drugs
British military sanctions Afghan poppy cultivation
Record harvest of 6100 tonnes predicted in 2006

2006

Prohibition: a crippling habit
The not so free market in drugs
Britain "substantially responsible" for the poppy boom
Karzai appoints 13 police chiefs linked to drugs smuggling

To 2005

Prohibition sustains extraordinary illegal drug profits
Drugs Trade Profit Margins Colombia/Afghanistan : Source