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THE SICILIAN CONNECTION:
SOUTHWEST ASIAN HEROIN EN ROUTE TO THE UNITED STATES

Report
by
Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
to the
Committee on Foreign Relations
&
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate

July 13, 1980

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PREFACE.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon labeled drug abuse "public enemy number one" and at the same time announced an "all-out offensive...to fight to defeat this enemy," including an ambitious program for controlling the illicit trafficking of drugs, primarily heroin. Now, nearly 10 years and \$5 billion later, the General Accounting Office concludes that although gains have been made in controlling illegal drugs, "the drug trade flourishes."

Soon after a concerted diplomatic and law enforcement strategy disrupted the so-called French Connection, President Nixon announced that we had "turned the corner on drug abuse." However, we saw the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia replace the opium fields of Afyon in Turkey and later Mexico replace Laos, Thailand and Burma as the primary source of what seemed to be a limitless supply of heroin to the United States. Next, just as Justice and State Department officials finished congratulating themselves about successes in disrupting the Mexican production, new storm clouds have appeared on the horizon -- Southwest Asian heroin produced from opium grown in the uncontrolled tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Approximately one thousand tons of illicit opium production in this area in 1979 -- dwarfing anything we have known before in Mexico, the Golden Triangle or Turkey -- plus the efforts by organized crime elements in Italy, France and the United States to create an international merchandising system, threaten to reverse the progress we have made in reducing heroin traffic.

This report examines the evidence indicating that the United States is now undergoing the initial stages of a new heroin epidemic

and that the source of this wave of heroin is Southwest Asia. The report also explores whether a new international "Connection" -- perhaps based in Sicily -- that will exert control over the production, shipment and merchandising of this new quantity of heroin has been established. Finally, the report recommends initiatives which our government and our allies might take to thwart the establishment of this "Connection". It is my intention that the initial findings, conclusions and recommendations contained here will be used as the focus for more in-depth public hearings before the Criminal Justice Subcommittee in the summer of 1980.

The report is based on hearings and staff investigations I have supervised in the Judiciary Committee and the Intelligence Committee as well as on a trip I took to the Mediterranean and Middle East in early April, 1980, under the auspices of the Foreign Relations Committee. The hearings I have conducted or currently have planned in all three committees are focused primarily on this new Southwest Asian heroin threat.

On the recent trip I visited three capitals, Ankara, Athens and Rome, along with a member of the staff of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice. We interviewed host government officials at all levels as well as American embassy staff and officials of the Drug Enforcement Administration and other intelligence agencies.

The report is based in part on those interviews we conducted on that trip and intelligence we reviewed concerning Turkey, Greece, Italy and other countries on the Southwest Asian heroin trail. Certain information that appears in this report has already appeared publicly, but nowhere else has it been consolidated in a comprehensive statement.

Conditions have never been better for a concerted international effort. Western Europe is for the first time suffering from a heroin epidemic of its own, and our European allies are finding it very much

in their own interest to work with us on what has become "their" problem as much as "ours." This country has a wealth of experience upon which to base an international war on drugs -- an experience which we must share with Europe if we are to conquer our common enemy.

One conclusion is absolutely clear from my first year as Chairman of the Criminal Justice Subcommittee with responsibility for oversight of the Drug Enforcement Administration: The United States alone cannot control the multi-billion dollar international drug trade. Eradication of illicit opium at its source is the most effective method of disrupting heroin production, yet the opium poppy flourishes in fields far beyond the direct control of the United States. So in 1972, President Nixon proposed that all opium production, illicit and licit, be ended. But we have made little progress toward that goal. In 1979 it is estimated that there were 500 more tons of illicit opium produced than in 1972.

The political instability of the opium-growing areas of the world, the tremendous demand for heroin and immense profits that fuel the market for the drug all make prospects for a short-term victory slim--even if a world-wide attack could be mounted. But we and our allies have little choice but to proceed. The potential escalation of heroin addiction and related crime in this country and the reality of the heroin epidemic already raging in Western Europe pose a severe threat to the increasingly fragile social order of the West.

I. INTRODUCTION

In early 1979, officials of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Department of State began to talk ominously of the new threat of large quantities of illicit opium -- estimated as high as 1,600 tons a year -- originating in the uncontrolled tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. These predictions were based on our intelligence operations and foreign liaison in those two countries, Iran and Turkey as well as on similar activities carried out by police from West European countries.

During late 1978 and early 1979, Western Europe began to experience a heroin epidemic not unlike that which plagued the United States in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The heroin addict population, as indicated by overdose deaths, increased 60-fold in Germany in the 10 years ending in 1979. The absolute number of people dying from heroin-related causes in West Germany is greater than in the United States. The increase in Italy, although not as precipitous, is quite serious, as the per capita addiction rate in Italy now exceeds that of the United States. Further, France and Switzerland are both reporting recent increases in heroin abuse problems.

Western European police officials have uncovered reliable evidence that the source of the new flood of heroin is Southwest Asia. According to DEA, the seizures of Southwest Asian heroin in Europe are increasing by geometric proportions. For example, in 1977, 121 kilograms of Southwest Asian heroin were seized in Europe, but for 1980, the top DEA official in Europe estimates that approximately 1,200 kilograms of Southwest Asian heroin will be seized there. Also, according to DEA, approximately 55 percent of all traffickers arrested in Europe are Turks dealing in Southwest Asian heroin.

Our narcotics enforcement officials were concerned that, as Western European markets become saturated with Southwest Asian heroin, it would begin to appear in the Eastern United States. They were not surprised to see an increase in the use of Southwest Asian heroin among our own addict population soon after use of the drug reached epidemic proportions in Europe.

In the summer and fall of 1979, DEA agents purchased samples of heroin on the streets of a single neighborhood in New York City. In the summer survey, 42 percent of all the heroin bought had originated in Southwest Asia. By the fall of 1979, as much as 60 percent of the heroin was from Southwest Asia. Between 1978 and 1979, the estimated imports of Southwest Asian heroin increased from 0.4 tons (approximately eight percent of the heroin illegally imported into the U.S.), to 0.6 tons (17 percent of the total imports).

Southwest Asian heroin has begun to show up all along the East Coast and in other parts of the country as well. Figure 1 lists recent seizures involving the Southwest Asian drug in the United States. Perhaps the most alarming seizure was one in January, 1980, at JFK Airport in New York City, of 24 kilograms of high-purity Southwest Asian heroin. According to DEA, "a seizure of this magnitude has not been seen in the United States since the French Connection era of the early 1970's."

<u>DATE OF SEIZURE</u>	<u>SEIZURE LOCATION</u>	<u>AMOUNT SEIZED IN KILOGRAMS</u>
<u>1979</u>		
October	2 Detroit	.044 kg heroin
	3 Washington, D.C.	.020
	5 Washington, D.C.	.014
	5 Detroit	.043
	5 Detroit	.004
	9 Los Angeles	.104
	10 Detroit	.212
	11 Washington, D.C.	.012
	12 JFK Airport	.132
	16 Washington, D.C.	.050
	19 JFK Airport	.093
	24 Washington, D.C.	.013
	26 JFK Airport	5.000
November	2 Washington, D.C.	.156
	5 JFK Airport	.132
	5 JFK Airport	.002
	7 JFK Airport	3.360
	9 Baltimore	.227
	28 New York City	.680
December	3 JFK Airport	.050
	7 San Francisco	1.360
	12 New York City	.026
	13 New York City	.784
	29 JFK Airport	.002
	29 JFK Airport	2.270
	31 JFK Airport	1.300
<u>1980</u>		
January	1 San Francisco IAP	.750
	11 New York City	1.000
	16 JFK Airport	24.040
	16 Los Angeles	.560
	29 Dallas/Fort Worth	2.000
	31 JFK Airport	.032
February	2 San Francisco	.001
	5 Washington, D.C.	3.227
	11 JFK Airport	3.015
	27 Cleveland	.002
	27 Cleveland	.002
March	3 New York City	.500
	12 Phoenix	3.760
	17 Washington, D.C.	.012
	18 Washington, D.C.	.042
	22 Huntington Beach	.244
April	7 Modesto	.056
	15 Los Angeles	.500
	15 Chicago	4.500
	21 Detroit	.380
May	2 Erie	.010
	10 Los Angeles	.500
	12 Boston	.140
	12 Detroit	.030
	20 Erie	.014

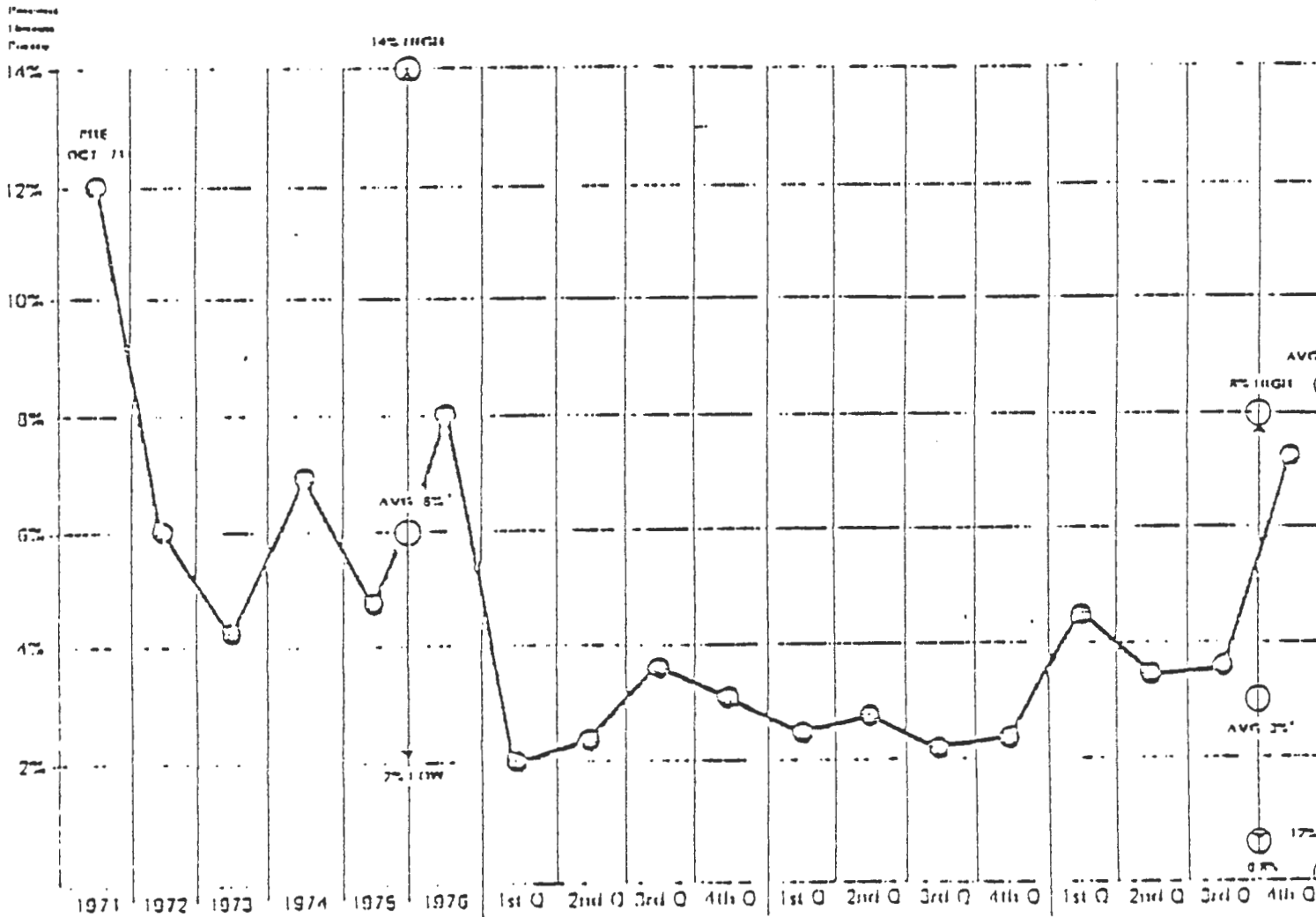
TOTAL KILOGRAMS OF HEROIN SEIZED ----- 61.460 kg heroin

Soon after that seizure, the National Institute of Drug Abuse announced that, for the first time in more than three years, the heroin being sold on the streets of New York City had increased significantly in purity. Figure 2 displays the purity of street heroin in New York over the past eight years. After being driven down to a low of two percent in early 1977 and remaining near that level for more than two years, heroin purity abruptly increased to nearly eight percent late in 1979. Accepted by authorities as a primary indicator of the drug's availability, high purity confirms the existence of a major new heroin source.

The apparently related facts of increasing purity and of identifiable Southwest Asian heroin appearing in New York no doubt led to DEA's conclusion "that this new major source poses the greatest heroin threat to the United States since the dominance of the French and the Mexican connections during the 1970's." In the spring of 1980, an interagency narcotics intelligence committee concluded that "the increase in availability of Middle Eastern heroin that has occurred in 1979 may well reverse the four-year decline in the number of heroin users in the United States."

FIGURE 2

N.Y.C. Street Level Heroin Purity
1971-1979



SOURCE: NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

In economic terms, the epidemic in Europe and the incipient epidemic in the United States is easily explained. The estimated 1,600 tons of illicit opium produced in 1979 in Southwest Asia is nine times greater than the illicit production elsewhere in the world; that is, the Golden Triangle and Mexico combined. Even if a thousand tons of opium is consumed in Southwest Asia, the morphine base to produce 40 to 60 tons of heroin remains available for export. That is more than 10 times the amount of heroin currently available for consumption in the United States. Readily available heroin plus the tremendous financial incentives to illegal trafficking is the driving force behind the appearance of a heroin epidemic. One kilogram of Southwest Asian heroin sells for several thousand dollars at the source, sells for approximately \$60,000-\$70,000 in Western Europe and commands a staggering \$200,000 at the wholesale level in New York.

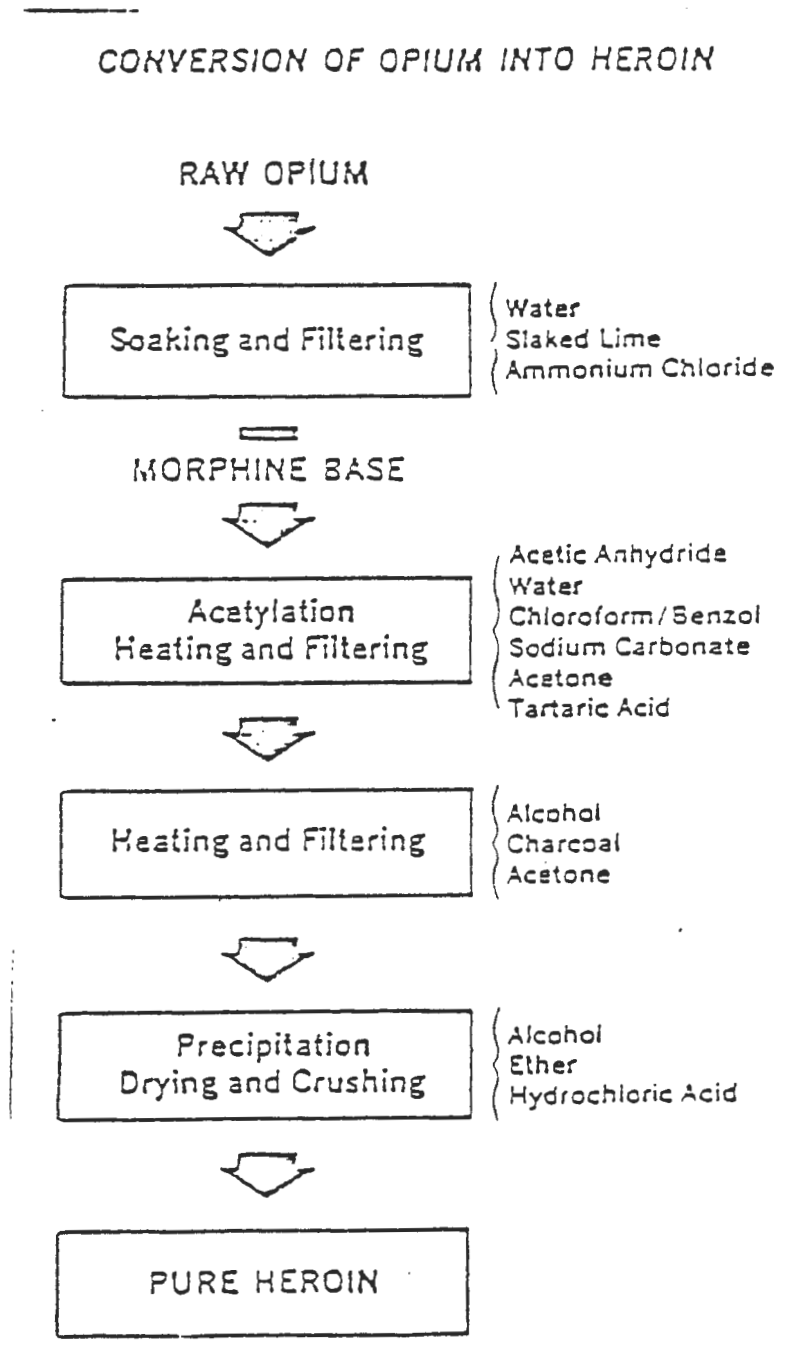
To understand the economics of heroin trafficking, it is necessary to examine the rudiments of heroin production. A report by the Foreign Relations Committee in 1972 and the following chart (Figure 3) describe quite simply the process by which opium is converted into heroin.

According to that Foreign Relations Committee report:

The opium poppy is a plant, easily grown and beautiful in bloom, which is cultivated for utility and profit in many nations of the world. For each poppy, there is a main stalk ending in an egg-sized pod and a large flower, and there are side branches ending in smaller blooms and pods. The flowers may be white, pink, red, purple, lavender, or violet; most commonly they are white, with a large purple spot at the base of the petal. The plant grows in a small field. From the pods on each plant, the grower of the opium poppy may, with skill and patience, extract a small amount of gum. While the remainder of

the plant has some use, both as food and fuel, it is this gum which is the poppy's principal product: it is raw opium, and it is desired by many people.

FIGURE 3



SOURCE: HEROIN TRAILS by the Editors of
Newsday

As Figure 3 indicates, there are two critically important conversion processes. First, there is the conversion from opium to morphine base, and second, the conversion of morphine base to heroin. The simpler process is the conversion from opium to morphine base -- it is often done in the field with very simple equipment. The conversion of morphine base to heroin is much more complicated and usually requires a trained chemist.

From the perspective of international initiatives which might thwart illicit trafficking, there are three important stages that are subject to law enforcement action. The first stage is the actual growth of the opium in the fields -- in this case, in the rugged Khyber Pass area of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Second is the conversion of the opium to the morphine base in the rudimentary "bathtub" style laboratories -- in this case located in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, and also in other areas of the Middle East: Lebanon, Iran, Syria, and Turkey.

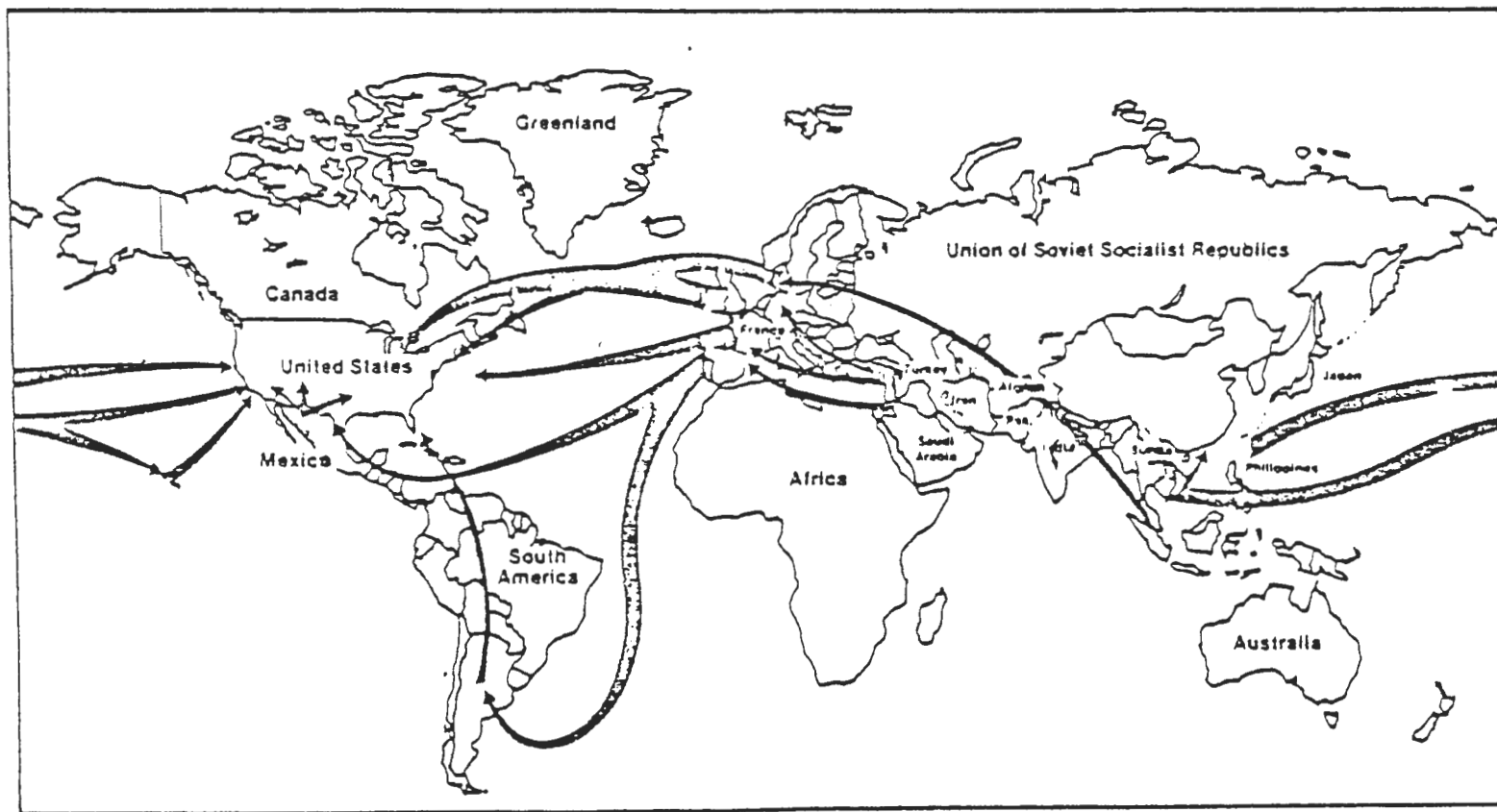
The third critical stage is the processing in the more sophisticated laboratories that convert morphine base to heroin. As will be seen in the remainder of this report, there are strong suspicions that such sophisticated labs are appearing in Northern and Southern Italy, Sicily, and the Marseilles area of France. Laboratory activity is also suspected in Corsica, Lebanon, Syria and other Middle Eastern countries.

There are three major illicit heroin sources in the world -- Mexico, the so-called Golden Triangle in Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia (Figures 4 and 5). This report focuses on the Southwest Asian source, and as subsequent chapters will indicate, the primary growing

areas for Southwest Asian opium are in Iran and in the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

FIGURE 4

OPIUM GROWING AREAS & GENERAL TRAFFICKING ROUTES

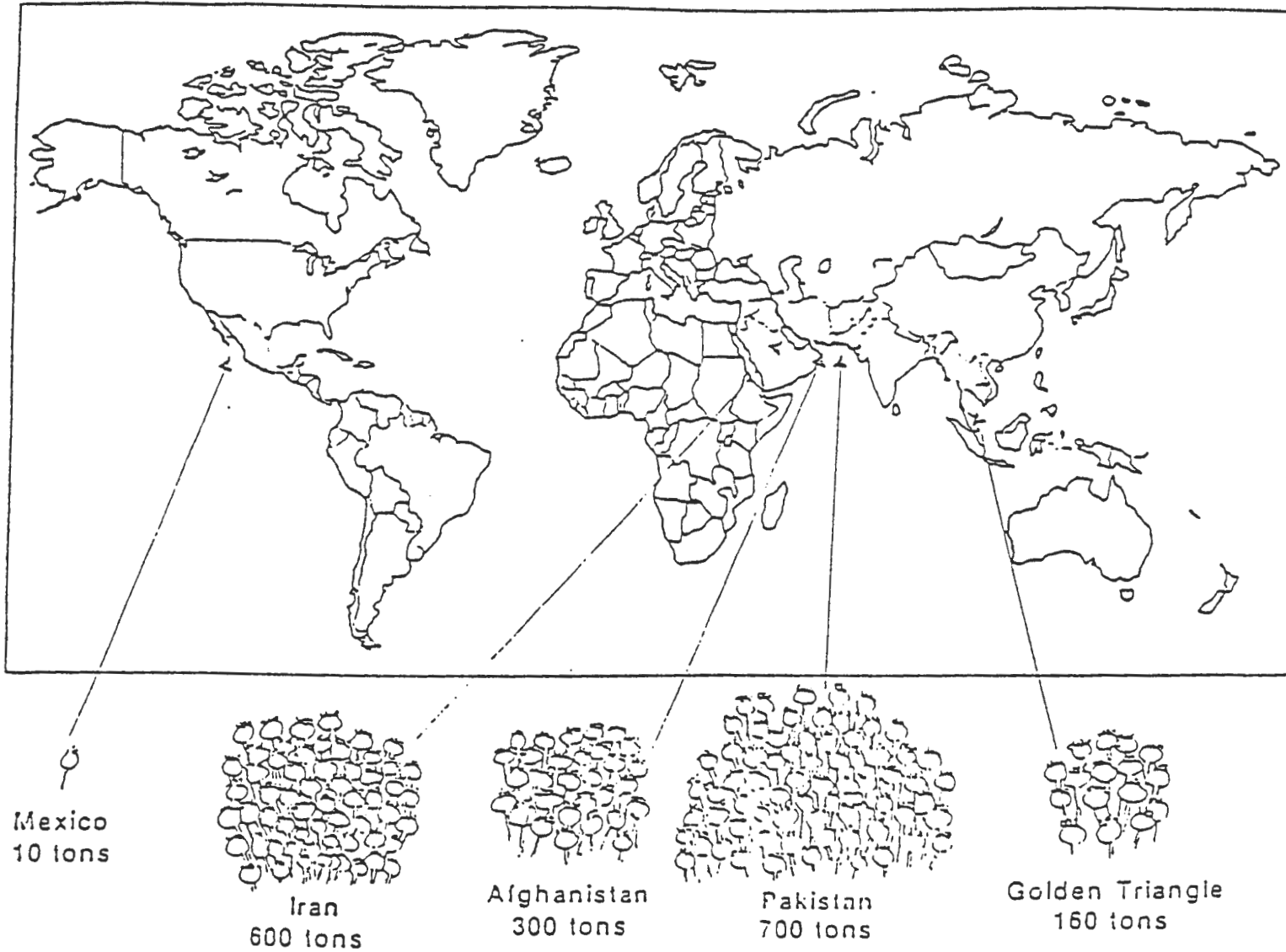


■ OPIUM GROWING AREAS OF THE WORLD

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration, 1979

FIGURE 5

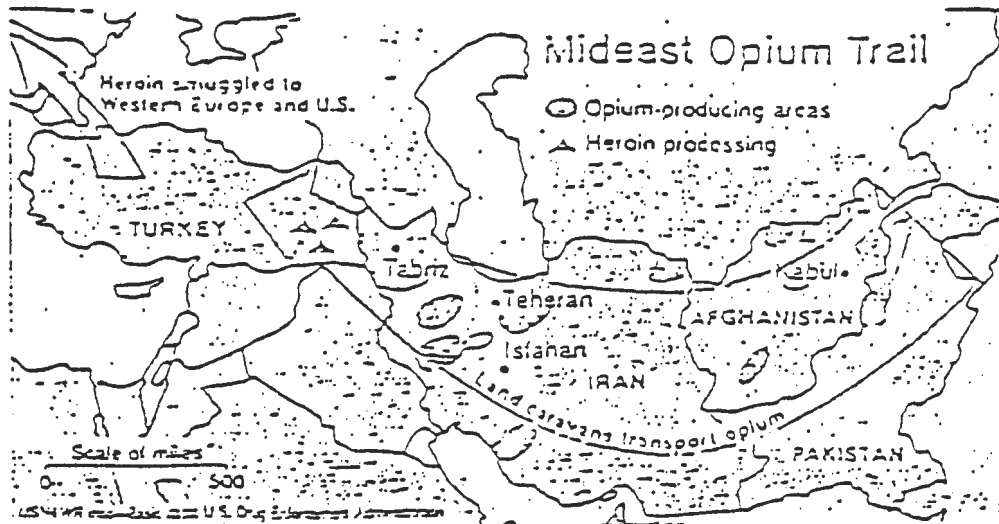
(ESTIMATED)
1979 ILLICIT OPIUM PRODUCTION



SOURCE: DEA, 1979.

Although intelligence on the question is rather sparse because of the loss of U.S. embassies in Tehran and Kabul and diminished information collection capabilities in Southwest Asia, the following general outline of the Middle East opium trail is certain.

FIGURE 6



As Figure 6 indicates, morphine base is apparently carried by mule train or automobile across Iran and into the unpoliced areas of Eastern Turkey to the cities of Gazientap and Diyarbakir (Figure 7). In many cases, Turkish workers bound for jobs in West Germany drive through the cities of Ankara and Istanbul, through the Balkans and from there into Western Europe (Figure 3). Morphine base conversion laboratories are located in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iran and Pakistan. Heroin bound for the United States is reportedly converted in laboratories located in Lebanon or Syria, or more likely in Italy, Sicily or Southern France (Figure 9). Heroin produced in laboratories in Turkey, Iran and perhaps Pakistan has also been detected.

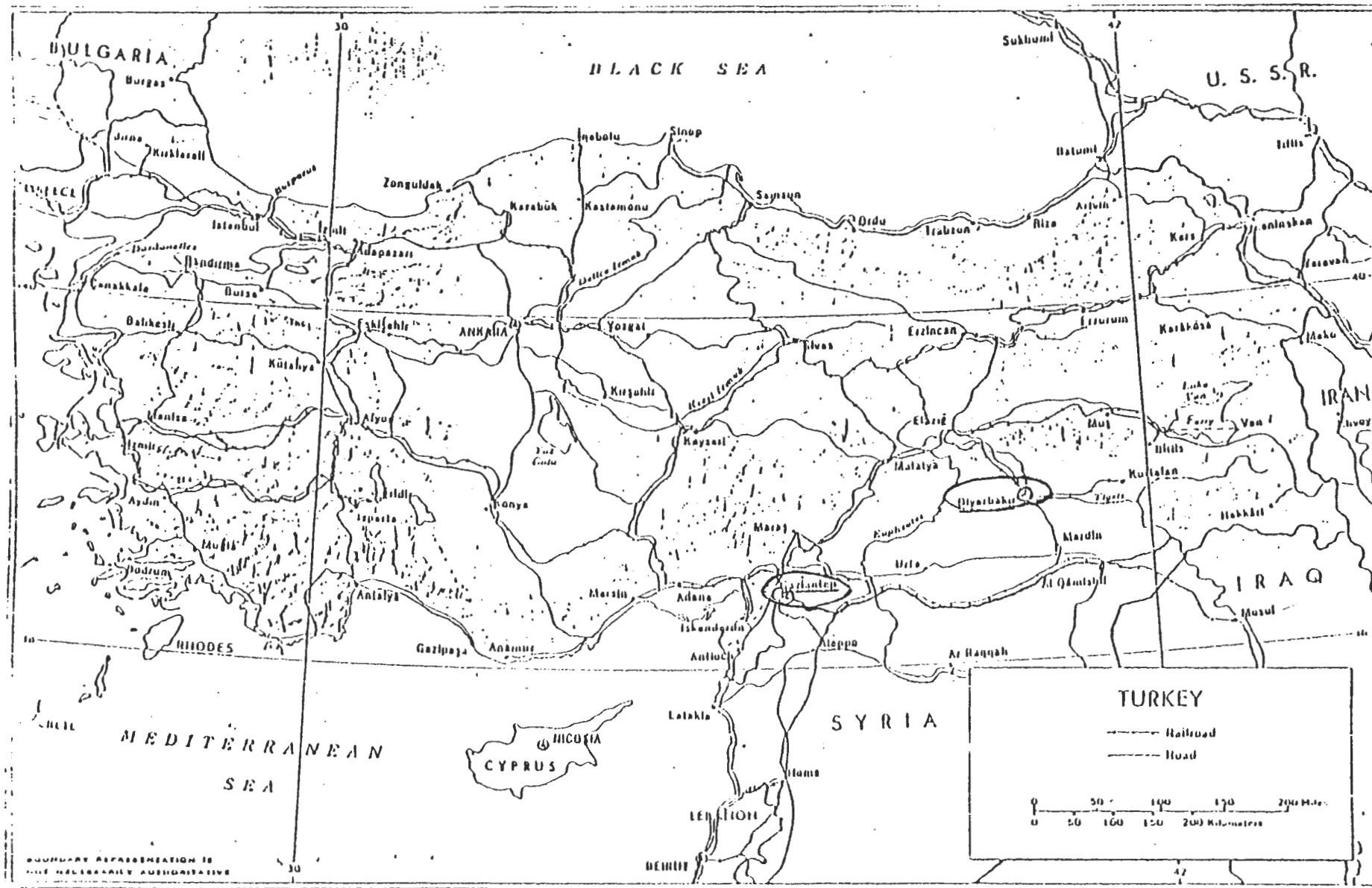


FIGURE 8



FIGURE 9

Heroin Laboratory Activity 1979-1980



★ Laboratories Seized ■ Areas of Lab Activity

This brief overview of the mechanics of heroin trafficking and the financial characteristics of the world heroin market makes it easier to understand the indicators that our government uses to measure the impact of potential trafficking systems on our country. There are at least three such indicators.

The first indicator is an increasing heroin addict population in any country or part of the world. Western Europe, for example, experienced more than 1,000 heroin overdose deaths in 1979, which represents a substantial increase over recent years.

Second is the appearance of large amounts of morphine base in the black market. The movement of significant amounts of morphine base is usually an indication that major traffickers are involved in heroin production. Sophisticated organized criminals prefer to deal with morphine base rather than opium because the base is so much easier to handle (one-tenth the volume of opium) and because they make greater profits through their own conversion of morphine base to heroin. Seizures of morphine in Europe have increased alarmingly from 30 kilograms in 1978 to 134 kilograms in 1979.

A third indicator is the transfer of large amounts of cash in heroin trafficking. As suggested earlier, huge profits can be derived from cheap and extremely pure Southwest Asian heroin. As I point out later in this report, there have been large cash seizures made by European police officials in the past year. As one DEA official told me, "Heroin is the hardest currency in Turkey, perhaps in Europe."

II. THE SOURCE: AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

"We have grown poppies here for about fifty years," a man told me. Do the villagers use opium? "Oh, no, it is bad for the health." I ventured that some of the opium from these poppies may end up in the United States. He grinned shortly: "It's possible."

"An Eye for An Eye: Pakistan's Wild Frontier" by Mike Edwards - National Geographic, January, 1977

The speaker is a villager in the Swat Valley in the upper central part of the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. He is one of the thousands of farmers of the Pathan tribes who live in the Northwest Province (Figure 10) and grow opium as their major source of income.

In 1977, the typical Pathan farmer grew a few acres of poppies and for each half acre collected approximately \$400 for the gum he scraped from the punctured flower pods. That is a significant source of income in a country where the average farm brings in less than \$200 a year. In 1979, the average farmer devoted approximately 1.14 acres to poppies with an average yield of seven kilograms of opium per acre. The present price for the opium gum is down significantly to approximately \$50 a kilogram.

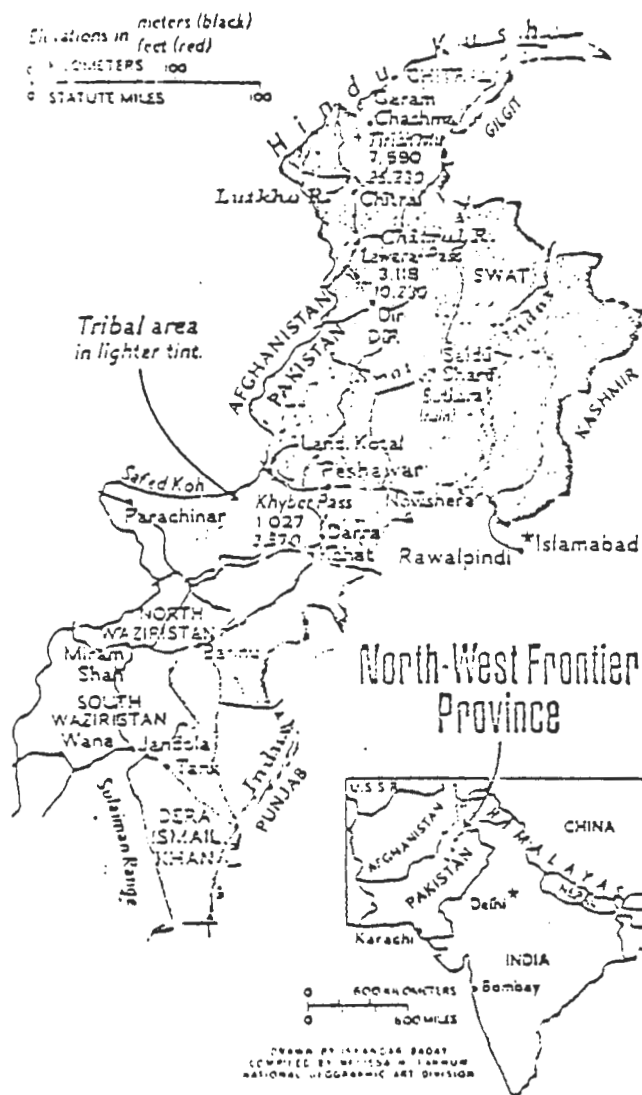
The same National Geographic article described the Northwest Provinces of Pakistan and the Pathans as follows:

A mountainous belt 20-80 miles wide along a 350 mile border with Afghanistan, the tribal area is a stronghold of the Pathans, those wiley and war-like tribesmen who, in a thousand skirmishes and ambushes, earned grudging admiration from the British as the best guerilla fighters in Asia.

The Pathans also inhabit the mountainous regions of Afghanistan and respect only tribal borders, not the national borders of the

two countries. Apparently, the Soviet troops in those same mountain areas are now learning of the fierce fighting capabilities of these Pathans -- the same unwelcome lesson that the British learned a hundred years ago.

FIGURE 10



The Soviets, the British and even the Pakistanis know that the freedom-loving Pathans of the highlands do not respect externally imposed laws and governance. They are not only fiercely independent, but are prepared to defend themselves with force if necessary. Tribal feuds are known to last for generations and almost every male member of a Pathan tribe has a gun.

As the National Geographic points out, the famous Khyber Pass, which connects the Pathans of Afghanistan to the Pathans of Pakistan, "bristles with reminders of violence: forts, picket posts top every dominating crag, even concrete dragon's teeth planted to stop German tanks when Britain feared a strike into India in World War II."

It is no wonder that the Pakistani government and the British before them allowed the Pathans to engage in the smuggling of all kinds of goods. As one current government official is reported to have said, "If we didn't provide the tribes with a source of living, they would become criminals."

The Pathan tribesmen legally control all the countryside except for the main roads which belong to the government. In the last few decades, the tribes have spoken openly of uniting around the traditional center of Pathan culture -- the city of Peshawar.

Although General Zia, the President of Pakistan, has taken some firm narcotics control initiatives recently, he must be cautious out of fear that the Soviets might encourage such an independence movement. As one State Department official pointed out, "The general and his aides might not want to alienate or test the loyalty of the Northwest Frontier Province Pathans by taking too firm a stand against the lucrative opium trade."

According to DEA, there are numerous opiate conversion laboratories in the Khyber Pass area, some of which convert morphine base to heroin but most of which are of the simple "bathtub" variety that convert opium to morphine. The appearance of sophisticated heroin laboratories in these remote and lawless areas would be an extremely sinister development, meaning major traffickers could make a direct "connection" in the field. However, the intelligence on the laboratory situation is sufficiently sketchy that quick conclusions to that effect must be avoided.

Even before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan last December, an increased military presence in the Afghan countryside -- both Afghan and Soviet Army units -- began to result in increased seizures of opium, according to DEA. As of September, 1979, 21,000 kilograms of opium had been seized compared to 17,000 seized in all of 1978.

Further, a DEA report issued this spring estimates that the 1980 production in Afghanistan should be smaller than the 270 tons of illicit opium produced in 1979. The report explains:

"...many tribesmen in the opium-growing areas have been too preoccupied with fighting to work in the opium fields. Other Afghan tribesmen, who normally might have labored in the opium fields, crossed over into Pakistan to avoid participation in the insurgency."

But a DEA official who had been in Kabul, Afghanistan, provided somewhat different information. The interview with the official took place in Washington this past January -- immediately after the Soviet invasion -- and is therefore somewhat more dated than the DEA report discussed above. However, he postulated that the Soviet invasion would not affect the opium traffic because the traffickers would avoid Soviet troops by going along the Pakistani border in the Baluchistan Desert rather than through Afghanistan into Iran. He made no comment

about the impact of the fighting on opium farming itself.

President Zia has initiated a transformation of the legal system in Pakistan toward the more traditional Islamic style of criminal justice. Integral to this system is a strict religious prohibition against use or production of intoxicating substances, including opium. Therefore, it was encouraging although not surprising for President Zia to issue a ban on the growth of opium on February 10, 1979.

The impact of the ban in the tribal areas of the Northwest Provinces is unclear. The Zia government is quite cautious in any law enforcement action in this volatile area of Pakistan. Pakistani officials have reported a 23,000-case backlog of unfined violations of the opium ban in the Northwest Frontier Province. However, it appears that many farmers have complied with the ban -- in part because of the sharp decrease in the price of opium resulting from over-production in the area during 1978-1979. According to recent State Department reports, 30,000 of the 75,000 acres that produced illicit opium in 1979 may be taken from production in this growing season. This reduction in production may also be because the governor of the Northwest Frontier Province took a very militant position on enforcing the ban. He is reported to have said that he would bring in bulldozers and troops to destroy the fields.

Despite this dramatic cutback in opium production, Pakistan will remain a very substantial source country because of the stockpiling of opium. According to one DEA official who just returned from that area, several hundred tons of opium -- enough, if converted to heroin, to supply the U.S. addict population with heroin for several years -- are being withheld from the market until the price increases or the right U.S. organized crime connections can be made.

III. IRAN

"Many Iranians, so as not to leave their country empty-handed, convert their money and sometimes their goods into heroin available locally."

L'Express -- March 15-18, 1980

According to DEA, the revolution in Iran has led to a progressive deterioration of narcotics control in Iran. This breakdown gravely affects international narcotics control efforts because Iran is a source of opium production as well as a major transshipment point for morphine base and heroin originating in Iran and in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to DEA, the street price of opium in Tehran is half of what it was before the revolution.

Of course, the seizure of our Embassy in November of 1979 ended for all practical purposes DEA's liaison with the Iranian government and its narcotics control program. Even at the time the Embassy was seized though, DEA did not have a permanent representative in Tehran. However, DEA reports that, with the assistance of the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, it was making some limited progress with the Iranian government in narcotics control efforts. As has General Zia in Pakistan, the Ayatollah Khomeini has taken the position that growing and using opium are prohibited under the laws of Islam and promised a serious effort to gain control of narcotics trafficking.

A May 22, 1980 article in the Washington Star suggests that the Iranian government may be taking more vigorous steps against major drug dealers. According to that article, 20 drug dealers were executed by a firing squad "in what was believed to be the biggest mass execution in Iran since the overthrow of the Shah."

The executions were supervised by the Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali, known as Iran's "Judge Blood." Khalkhali told an interviewer on state television that, "We consider drug peddling the worst kind of counter-revolutionary activity. I advise smugglers to save their lives while there is still time." Khalkhali also criticized what he termed former Prime Minister Barzagan's "emphasis on moderation and gradualism" in controlling narcotics:

"His step-by-step policy was a green light to criminals, traitors and social parasites. Tons and tons of heroin were smuggled in during the first months of the Islamic government."

A recent DEA intelligence report cannot confirm whether the victims of the firing squad really were major drug dealers. However, this may just be a function of the present paucity of our intelligence coverage in Iran.

Even before the fall of the Shah in January, 1979, DEA found evidence that opium and morphine base were being smuggled into Iran from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Narcotics control in Iran began to deteriorate in the last year of the Shah's reign, but by early 1979, Iran had still not become a significant threat to the United States as a source of heroin. Most of the opium and heroin produced in Iran was destined for its own estimated 50,000 heroin addicts and half-million opium users. Because of the loss of DEA and State Department presence in Iran, it is hard to determine what portion of the opium produced in Iran is consumed locally and whether there is a significant excess of production that is being exported.

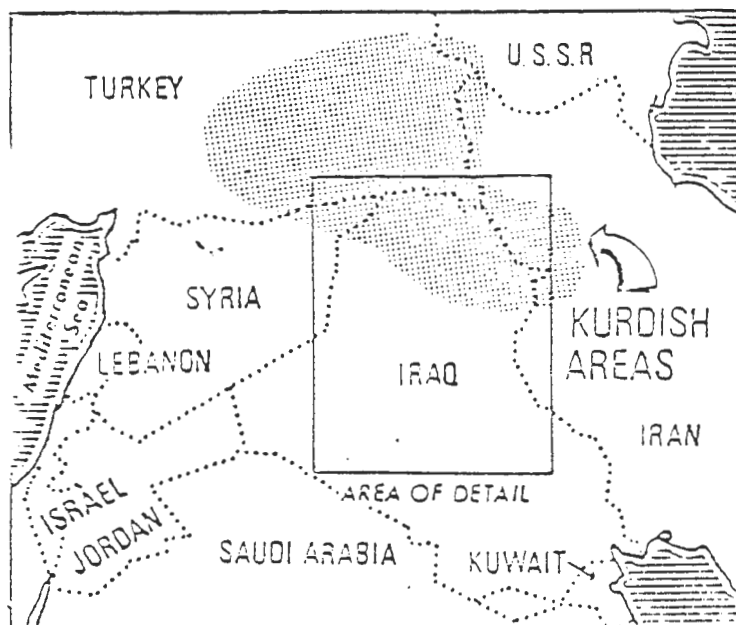
However, there is evidence to confirm the allegation made in the L'Express article that Iranian nationals are using heroin as a currency to circumvent the U.S. freeze on financial assets. According

to DEA, the typical Iranian arrested for narcotics smuggling is a 20 to 30 year old male -- a student, former government employee or resident alien. Most of the trafficking is in small quantities -- one to three kilograms of heroin -- and destined for the United States, United Kingdom or West Germany.

Despite the reported harsh punishment of drug traffickers, the continued instability of the government and the reported trading of opium for guns by rebel Kurds in Western Iran both strongly suggest that Iran will continue to serve as a transshipment point for Southwest Asia heroin.

Kurdistan, overlapping the borders of Iraq, Iran and Turkey, is an area similar to the Northwest Province of Pakistan (Figure 11)

FIGURE 11



It is an area of great political instability and strong tribal independence controlled by the ethnic group known as the Kurds. The Kurds are the fourth most numerous people in the Middle East. There are between six and thirteen million Kurds living in the border area between Iran and Turkey. The geography of the area is as rugged, starkly beautiful and as rich in history as the Khyber Pass area of the Northwest Frontier Provinces of Pakistan. The mountain areas of Eastern Turkey are the source of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers; and the ancient city of Nineva and Mount Ararat, identified as the final resting place of Noah's Ark, are both located in the area.

The Kurds have been a source of much of the recent political instability in both Iran and Turkey. For example, the recent insurrections in Tabriz, Iran, were at least in part the result of Kurdish nationalism. The recent Kurdish unrest is a frequent topic of conversation in Ankara. Dyarbakir, Turkey, is the center of Turkish Kurdistan. It is the home of the Kurdish intelligensia and has played an increasing role in Kurdish nationalistic movements.

DEA intelligence coming out of Tehran immediately before the American Embassy takeover, as well as more recent intelligence from Ankara obtained by DEA and other agencies, suggest that both the Iranian central government and the Turkish government are extremely reluctant or unable to exercise an aggressive government presence in the Kurdish areas. The border between Turkey and Iran is very easily crossed and provides an excellent environment for transporting the illicit opium and morphine base coming from either Afghanistan or Pakistan, or from Iran itself. DEA also believes this border area to be the location of significant laboratory activity.

The nature of the laboratory activity is the subject of some controversy within DEA. Although there appears to be consensus that there are laboratories in the area, and some have even been seized in joint DEA/Turkish National Police operations, there is disagreement within DEA as to the significance of the laboratories there. For example, most of the DEA agents we talked to seemed to believe the laboratories were the unsophisticated opium-to-morphine base "bathtub" style laboratories. They acknowledge that rather primitive heroin laboratories do exist in the area, but there seems to be no significant evidence of the most sophisticated large-scale morphine base-to-heroin laboratories -- the kind similar to those recently seized in Northern and Central Italy operated by major organized crime syndicates attempting to develop a merchandising network involving either Western Europe or the United States . . .

25.

IV. TURKEY: NO LONGER A SOURCE

"Turkey in the past 10 years has gone from pre-eminent source country to a pre-eminent processing country."

-- DEA Report

Discussions with DEA and Turkish officials led us to conclude that Turkey has indeed become, like Mexico, a success story in U.S. source eradication efforts to reduce the production of illegal opium. There is substance to a 1979 report by the UN's International Narcotics Control Board:

"Since the cultivation of the poppy exclusively for the production of unlanced capsules was begun in 1975, the government has continued to take vigorous action to prevent the production of opium in Turkey. The authorities have applied stringent control measures introduced with UNFDAC (United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control) support, which must be considered as very successful."

Although we found evidence of some minor leakage from the licit production program, we believe that the Turks have been sincere and successful in implementing their control program. The U.S. government should congratulate them on their success.

However, a Turkish official concluded that because of Turkey's "convenient geographic location, the quantity (of illicit heroin) being smuggled throughout the country is assuming alarming proportions."

Before reviewing the new role of Turkey as a significant transit country, it is important to retrace briefly the stormy history of the relationship between the United States and Turkey on the narcotics issue and Turkey's accomplishments in gaining control over illicit opium production.

Since 1923 the United States has urged the Turkish government to implement a crop substitution program. It was not until 1964, with the adoption of the Single Convention on Narcotics, that the basic international framework for developing controls on licit opium production was established. In 1966, the U.S. government first approached the government of Turkish President Suleyman Demeril on the question of eliminating illicit production. In 1968, our government made its first opium control loan to the Turks of \$3 million. In 1971, President Demeril was ousted by a military coup. The next Turkish head of government, Prime Minister Nihat Erim, established a priority of creating an effective licensing and control program.

In the early 1970's, the Nixon Administration, through an international program of illicit opium production controls, placed great pressure on the Turks to establish a complete ban on opium production. The military regime under Prime Minister Erim adopted such a ban on June 30, 1971, apparently in exchange for a \$35 million loan from the United States. This arrangement and the opium ban itself were the subject of considerable controversy in Turkey's next popular election in October, 1973. It had been particularly unpopular in the opium growing areas of Turkey, areas from which the right-wing Moslem National Salvation Party (NSP) drew most of its constituency. In the fall of 1973, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit was elected and organized a government with the help of the NSP. Having run on a platform of ending controls, and having formed a government with the NSP, the Ecevit government had no choice but to lift the ban.

Our current Ambassador to Turkey, James Spain, in an article published before he became Ambassador, explains rather vividly why 75,000 farmers in the Afyon province of Turkey (the opium growing province) prefer poppy cultivation:

"In some remote and impoverished mountain villages, the poppy was the only crop that made a subsistence existence possible. To Afyon (the very name means opium in Turkish) and the other hardcore provinces, the poppy means at least as much as tobacco to Kentucky."

Obviously, endorsement of strict controls or a ban would be politically unacceptable in that region of Turkey.

Of course, the lifting of the ban evoked a strong reaction in the United States, just as the imposition of the ban had tremendous political fallout in Turkey in 1973. In July 1974, soon after the Turks lifted the ban, the New York Post called it "an act of war."

The vitriolic U.S. and Turkish press reactions have since cooled down, especially with the success of the licensing and control program the Turks have now implemented. Under this program, Turkey allows the growth of opium in a few provinces, but the opium poppies themselves may not be lanced and instead must be cut at the base and processed in a modern facility being constructed in the opium growing provinces with \$60 million in German economic assistance. This program, involving unlanced poppy capsules -- called poppy "straw" -- is a much more effective way to control illicit leakage because only a very sophisticated facility can extract the opium gum from the straw as opposed to the traditional processing by lancing opium bulbs and collecting the gum in the field. Any lancing of the bulb is quickly identified and, according to DEA, violators are swiftly punished.

The political turmoil that this issue has created in both countries has the potential of jeopardizing at any time the effectiveness of the Turkish control process. For example, the Turks are still upset that, by cutting off aid to Turkey as a result of the invasion of Cyprus, we have not fulfilled our original promise to make available the full \$35 million to assist in their control program. At the same time, there are members of Congress who are still upset that the Turks ever lifted the ban in the first place.

Necmetim Erbakan and his National Salvation Party with its opium growing constituency in the Afyon province remains a persistent political factor in determining Turkish policies on opium control. At present, Demeril governs with the cooperation of the NSP. Although there is some controversy among our diplomatic and intelligence communities on the relative power of the NSP in this fragile political arrangement, there is little doubt that if Erbakan and his party were to play a larger role in the government (if, for example, he would gain cabinet posts which oversee the licensing program or the police), it would seriously undercut effective control of the opium licensing program.

The present government is very serious about narcotics control. Turkish officials we interviewed were disturbed about the alarming traffic of illegal heroin through Turkey. They talked of damage to Turkey in two senses. First, they are concerned about what they allege is a significant exchange by Kurdish and other resistance fighters in Turkey of illegal heroin for illegal guns. Second, the trafficking contributes to a general attitude of lawlessness and gives rise to a black market in many commodities -- both of which are subverting the general economic and political well-being of Turkey.

Therefore, the Turks seem to be seriously involved in a number of diplomatic initiatives with their neighbors to curtail the trafficking. For example, according to Foreign Ministry representatives, the Turks have concluded bilateral arrangements with Syria, Egypt and Bulgaria and have proposed such initiatives with Iran, Iraq, Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania. Thus, the Turks may be able to conclude bilateral arrangements on trafficking with countries, such as Iran, to which we have no meaningful access.

According to DEA, the Turkish National Police are determined to identify major traffickers and to immobilize them. But there is a reluctance on the part of the Turkish government to mount major operations in the Kurdish areas. Officials in our embassy believe that such operations are extremely risky and perhaps not worth the potential instability to the Turkish Government which might be the price of a major opium control program in Kurdistan. As one DEA official stated, enforcement and control in Kurdish areas by an "outside race, like the Turks, is extremely difficult and dangerous."

There appears to be a clear consensus among DEA, State Department and Turkish officials that the heart of the Turkish trafficking problem is the Kurdish area and, in particular, Gazientap and Diyarbakir. Not only are there clandestine labs in the Kurdish mountain areas (although there is disagreement as to how many and how sophisticated) but also, most of the heroin and morphine base traffic flows through these two major Kurdish cities. Approximately one million Turks work in Germany and commute regularly to and from this area of Turkey. Apparently, on the pretext of vacation travel, these Turks move large quantities of morphine base and heroin into Europe through Istanbul.