

DRUG WAR, from page 5

Capone years. Alcohol is a substance with problems, but when we tried making it illegal, the whole thing was worse. I began to think drugs — yes, there's some problems with usage, but the fact that it's illegal is what's creating the violence, the gangs shooting each other over drug turf, the murders, the stray civilians getting accidentally killed in the middle of all this mayhem, and it was helping to foster an underclass, of mostly men, who had no other real options.

As years went by, I was reading more about the effects of incarceration — what does it do to children to have a father not in the picture? He's either unmarried because he's got no income, or even if he is married to the mother of the children, if he's off in jail, here's the child without a father in the household, so there's all kinds of social pathologies. It all just seemed to come back to drugs.

E.G.: Can you talk about poppy production in Afghanistan today and how it fits into the global drug supply chain?

I.F.: Prior to about 1980, there was very little poppy production in Afghanistan; it was mostly in what's called the Golden Triangle, Burma, Thailand. Mostly through U.S. efforts and some economic development, production of poppy was pushed out of there. The supply may have been pushed, but the worldwide demand did not change. Simultaneously, the Russians invaded Afghanistan, and with the social breakdown and lack of government during all those war years, and a pretty good climate for growing poppy, all the production moved over to Afghanistan.

In 2000, the Taliban prohibited poppy growing, and that sure enough stopped it, because I think they cut off heads. In retrospect, it looks like what they were doing was stockpiling and cornering the market, which made more profit for them. Then in 2001, the U.S. comes in. Afghans thought there was finally going to be some peace and quiet and economic development. We, maybe with good intentions but misguidedly, brought a lot of the warlords who had been fighting in the 1990s back into government. I think the general population hoped that they would all be gone, but we brought them back in because they caught on real quick that all they had to do was say, "We'll fight al-Qaeda for you."

Governance fairly quickly started falling apart again, and all this time the worldwide demand for heroin poppy continued. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime statistics, figures from 2009, was that the worldwide ultimate street value of what came out of Afghanistan was about \$60 billion, and when there's money like that, people are going to get in the business. As breakdown in governance in Afghanistan continued over the last decade, with little economic development, poppy is a cash crop for many farmers. They grow wheat to eat and poppy for the local savings account.

We made some haphazard efforts to eradicate poppy, and the Taliban has stepped up to protect farmers. They also reportedly tax the poppy trade about 10 percent. As governance is deteriorated and the insurgency has grown, the cycle has kind of fed on itself. And heroin poppy is a piece of it, although relatively little of the



PHOTO COURTESY OF INGE FRYKLUND
Inge Fryklund outside a police station in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Election Day 2009.

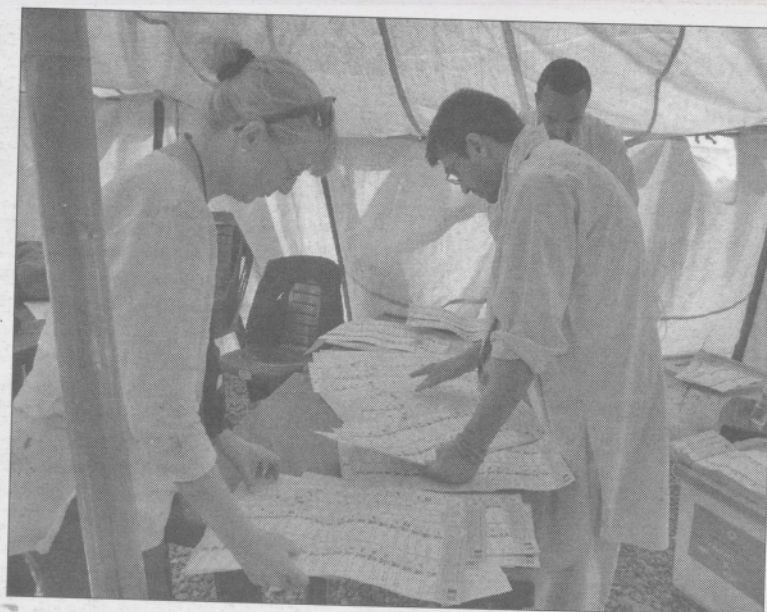


PHOTO COURTESY OF INGE FRYKLUND
Inge Fryklund participates in the ballot fraud investigation in Kandahar after the Afghan presidential election in 2009. The Bend resident is an expert on Afghan governmental systems and goes overseas frequently to advise the U.S. military.



PARWIZ/REUTERS
A worker in Jalalabad Province, Afghanistan, extracts the sap from an opium poppy.

profits stay inside Afghanistan. And with something illegal — partly because we're there and we insisted it be illegal — it's led to a great deal of governmental corruption. I remember 2011-12, I was working in southwestern Afghanistan along with the (U.S.) Marine Corps, and what I heard from the Marines is that local Afghans were paying \$150,000 a year to buy the position of local chief of police. So illegality was driving governmental corruption and crime in Afghanistan and helping to fuel this whole insurgency.

E.G.: What effect is U.S. drug policy having on its counterterrorism efforts?

I.F.: I think it's making things more complicated. There are a number of myths about this. One is that the poppy trade is what funds terrorism. When I was with the Marine Corps, I kept asking people, "What does it cost for the insurgency to stay in business?" The highest estimate I ever got was about \$350 million a year. This is peanuts. We're spending billions. The insurgents don't have much equipment. They're all carrying their own AK-47s, mostly not in uniforms, a lot of them don't even have boots; they're wearing flip-flops. So it's a low-budget operation, and yes, they get money locally wherever they can get it, and since poppy is the main cash crop and the word on the street seems to be very consistent that they're taxing it 10 percent,

there is some funding of the insurgency. But if there were no poppy, I think the insurgency would do just fine.

There is so much money that goes to the insurgents coming out of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia — there's plenty of international money. But the drug trade undermines governance. Afghan citizens seem to be quite well aware of all this. They know that local police chiefs are buying their position, and on the street level, police are, in turn, extorting citizens at checkpoints. I don't know how many different times I saw a report of Afghans saying, "Gee, it was really nice of the Americans to build this road for us, but we can't drive on it because the police have put up these road blocks and extort us, and we have no idea how much money we're going to have to pay. At least the Taliban were pretty reliable at 10 percent."

The insurgency is not so much a direct result of the drug trade as the drug trade is driving failures of governance, which in turn are driving a lot of the anti-government insurgency.

E.G.: Are we seeing the kind of drug-related violence from cartels in Afghanistan that we're seeing in Mexico and Central America?

I.F.: No, because the trade is different. The poppy's produced by a lot of individual farmers. Representatives of local drug trade pick up the product from the farmers,

bundle it; a lot of it goes out through Pakistan, some goes the northern route through Tajikistan and into Russia, which is one of the big customers. But it's mostly moved by local tribesman.

It reminded me so much of Chicago drug gangs. Here's the Afghan network, and we were literally mapping these things out when I was with the Marines. They're fighting over a couple square miles of territory, so they were simply defending their drug turf. The term "insurgents" or "Taliban" gets used as a generic (designation) for people with a whole lot of different reasons for fighting.

From their perspective, this is simply trade. They were importing Toyota parts and exporting heroin poppy. They had nothing against the Americans. Their only political agenda was their own independence. This was a business, and it was well enough organized, except for these small local networks fighting over the territory. There weren't the cartel problems. Now once the product left Afghanistan, I don't know how much violence there was connected with that.

E.G.: To your knowledge, have we lost any American service members to conflict that rose out of drug turf disputes or anything like that?

I.F.: During the six months I was in Helmand (Afghanistan's largest opium-producing region) with the Marines, I was going to two or three ramp ceremonies a week as bodies were being sent home — people who had been killed in fighting around there. And as near as I could tell, most of the local tribesmen had no interest in the U.S. one way or the other. We're on the other side of the world, and they didn't care. But they were fighting with each other. If we decided that they were insurgents and started to clear an area out, and people were tenaciously holding onto their drug territory, yeah, that's how we got casualties. It's hard to point to any particular death and say, "This one is due to the war on drugs," but if we weren't there, getting into the middle of their turf wars, and if our policies did not promote this massive corruption

See DRUG WAR, page 7