



Afghanistan's Heroin Crisis and US Foreign Policy: A Former CIA Officer's Testimony

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A former CIA senior investigator reveals how U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan deliberately enabled massive heroin poppy production to weaken rival nations—a strategy now mirrored domestically through the fentanyl crisis. He testifies that the Taliban eliminated poppy cultivation before 2001, but U.S. occupation immediately reversed this, with attempts to expose the truth systematically suppressed.

SAŽETAK

This testimony from a Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigator (2009–2011) exposes alleged U.S. complicity in Afghanistan's heroin boom. During a 2010 field visit to Helmand Province, the speaker encountered poppy farmers who claimed American personnel explicitly permitted opium cultivation in exchange for intelligence on militant whereabouts. When he attempted to document and publish findings, a DEA contact bluntly told him the report would never be released, explaining that flooding Iran and Russia with heroin was deliberate policy to destabilize those societies. The speaker draws a stark historical contrast: Afghanistan produced zero heroin under Taliban rule in 2000 and was a net food exporter; within years of U.S. occupation, it supplied 93% of global heroin. He then connects this foreign policy doctrine to America's current fentanyl epidemic, arguing the same destabilization logic has been applied domestically. Throughout, the speaker wrestles with his disillusionment—having served the CIA with idealistic expectations, only to discover what he characterizes as morally indefensible strategic calculations. He also reflects on geopolitical relationships, criticizing the adversarial stance toward Russia while advocating for diplomatic cooperation on counterterrorism, counter-proliferation, and counter-narcotics.

KLJUČNE PORUKE

Afghanistan produced zero heroin poppy under Taliban rule in 2000 and was a net food exporter; the explosive growth of opium cultivation directly followed U.S. military occupation, suggesting intentional policy rather than spontaneous market forces.

A poppy farmer in Helmand Province testified that American personnel explicitly told him he could cultivate opium in exchange for intelligence about militant locations, indicating ground-level coordination between U.S. forces and drug production.

A DEA official explicitly stated that the U.S. government wanted Iran and Russia addicted to heroin to weaken those societies, and blocked the congressional investigator's report from publication.

The fentanyl crisis devastating American communities today mirrors the heroin destabilization strategy applied to rival nations—the same logic of deliberate drug proliferation to weaken a target population, now turned inward.

The speaker emphasizes that no internal CIA or policy meeting included moral objections to heroin trafficking; discussions focused solely on tactical advantage and geopolitical positioning, revealing an institutional failure to apply ethical reasoning.

Diplomatic cooperation with Russia on counterterrorism, counter-proliferation, and counter-narcotics is possible and pragmatically necessary, yet systematically blocked by reflexive Cold War mentality regardless of which U.S. political party is in power.

The speaker left the Democratic Party and advocates for a non-linear political perspective where ideological opposites can find common ground on specific issues—positioning himself outside traditional left-right partisanship.

CLANAK

A Senate Investigation into Afghanistan's Poppy Production

Let me tell you a story from my time as senior investigator on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, from 2009 to 2011. I approached the then-chairman, John Kerry, with a request: I wanted to travel to Afghanistan to conduct a formal Senate study on the heroin poppy crop. At that time, Afghanistan was producing 93% of the world's heroin supply. I flew to Bagram Air Base and requested transport to Kandahar and then to Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand Province. As a senior congressional staff member, I held the rank of brigadier general—the only time in my life I ever pulled rank on someone. When they initially refused to take me to those locations, I told them plainly: "I'm not asking you. I'm telling you. You are going to fly me to Kandahar, and then we will fly to Lashkar Gah, and then we'll fly back to Bagram." They relented.

When we arrived in Lashkar Gah, the sight was overwhelming. As far as the eye could see, there was nothing but heroin poppy fields. I decided I wanted to go directly into

those fields and speak with a farmer. With my security detail and a Pashto translator, we drove out into the fields and found a poppy farmer. I asked him what I thought was a straightforward question: "Why don't you grow crops with two growing seasons instead, like tomatoes, onions, or pomegranates?" His response stopped me cold. He said, "The Americans told me in 2001 that if I told them where the Arabs were, I could grow all the poppy I wanted."

The Suppressed Report

I pressed him further: "What Americans told you that you could grow poppy?" But just as I asked that question, my military handler pulled me by the arm and said, "We're under threat. We have to go back to the base." I never got an answer. We returned to the jeep, and they rushed me back to the helicopter. I flew back to Bagram. It felt like something out of a movie.

When I returned to Washington, I told the chief investigator: "I'm onto something here. This is not good." I wrote up everything I had collected and reached out to a friend at the DEA—the Drug Enforcement Administration. I said, "I'm going to send you a paper, eyes only. I just want your thoughts on it before I send it to John Kerry." A couple of days later, he called me back with a clear message: "Buddy, you know you're not going to get this paper published." I asked why, and his answer was direct: "Afghanistan produces 93% of the world's heroin. Almost all of that heroin goes to Iran and Russia, and we want them to be addicted to heroin. It weakens their societies." I never got it published.

From Afghanistan to America: The Same Strategy

Fast forward to today. Years later, we now face a fentanyl epidemic in this country. That fentanyl is coming from China and Mexico. They want us to be addicted to fentanyl because it weakens our society, and that's why we're in the predicament that we're in. You see, this isn't a new strategy—it's the same one applied domestically.

The evidence for this conclusion isn't based on anything more than simple facts. Do you know how much of the world's heroin was produced in Afghanistan in the last year of Taliban rule, in 2000? None. Zero. Not only did they not grow heroin poppy in 2000, they were a net food exporter to Iran and Pakistan. And as soon as we took over Afghanistan, it became all about the heroin. That statistic is quite amazing—and quite terrible.

I never sat in a meeting where anyone said, "You know what? We're the United States. We can't flood other people's countries with heroin. That's just immoral." The meetings were always about: "How do we win? How do we get a leg up? How do we implement the policy that we want a country to follow?" But if you intentionally flood other people's countries with heroin, it's hard to tell yourself you're the good guy. That's

something I struggled with for at least half of my career at the CIA. We're supposed to be the good guys. So why are we doing so much of this? I just never understood it.

Real Politics and Lost Idealism

The answer, I came to realize, was that I had stars in my eyes. I wasn't fully understanding real politics—the pragmatic, sometimes amoral calculations of international affairs. I was naive about how the world actually works. And frankly, I find this disgusting. I don't want my government to be involved in any way in heroin trafficking. I don't want that at all.

I also don't understand why Russia is our enemy. Even if there were good reasons for Russia to be an adversary, I still wouldn't support flooding their cities with heroin. After Russia invaded Ukraine, I was one of seven independent journalists invited to lunch with the Russian ambassador in Washington. He wanted our ideas on how the US and Russia could continue to cooperate diplomatically even during wartime. I went prepared, and I said: "The US and Russia have identical interests in counterterrorism, counter-proliferation, and counter-narcotics. We should never stop cooperating on those three issues." I added a fourth point: "Your Excellency, when you arrest an American female basketball player and give her a draconian sentence for having a little bit of weed oil, it's a bad look."

That was the only time he got angry. He said, "Do you have any idea how many Russians are in American prisons? 1,500. I know it's 1,500 because I have to send my staff out to visit them. So if you want to talk about not arresting people, talk to your own government about it." Frankly, I see that as an opportunity—yet another thing on which we should be engaged with the Russian government, and we're not. It doesn't matter who's in the White House, Democrat or Republican. We have this idea that the Russians are bad, bad, bad, and we shouldn't be cooperating with them.

A Different Perspective on Geopolitical Threats

My former wife was also a senior CIA officer. As recently as 2017, she said to me, "The Russians are the gravest threat that the United States has ever faced." And I said, "What newspapers are you reading? Because I know these people, and they want to work with us. They're not going to roll over for us, but they want to be engaged diplomatically." I would be far more worried about the Chinese than about the Russians. And frankly, I'm far more worried about threats from Mexico.

Beyond Left and Right

I actually left the Democratic Party years ago because I thought it had moved too far to the right. The truth is that the ideological spectrum is not a straight line from left to right. It's a circle. There are a lot of issues on which the right and the left can meet and agree. That's where I am—at the point where the circle meets. Some of my former

friends won't speak to me because they say I've gone too far to the right, that I've joined the MAGA movement, and they just don't want to be friends anymore. But if they won't speak to me over political disagreements, then they weren't real friends anyway.

I agreed with Donald Trump's policy about building the wall, and I lost a lot of friends because of that. But you have to look at it rationally. I read the Greek press every single day—I'm a relatively recently naturalized dual US-Greek citizen now. Turkey takes something like a billion and a half euros every year to hold economic refugees in camps until they can be processed and resettled in places like Germany, Sweden, and France. But what Turkey really does is put them on little boats and send them to Greece in the middle of the night, with the purpose of crashing the Greek economy and destroying Greece. What the Greeks did is build a wall. And all of a sudden, nobody can cross the border where the wall is. The Greeks now focus on the islands and have the coast guard intercept these boats that come in almost every night. The wall works. Our border with Mexico is long—much of it is just desolate, desert, wasteland—but the wall works. Of course it does. That's why Israel has them.

#U.S. foreign policy

#Afghanistan

#drug trafficking

#heroin epidemic

#fentanyl crisis

#CIA operations

#geopolitics

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