

Addendum

Presented on Tuesday, October 28, 2009

To the Statement for the Record

Dated Wednesday, October 21, 2009

By

Michael A. Braun

**Before the U. S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics
Control**

Regarding

‘U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan’

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Chairman Feinstein, Co-Chairman Grassley, and Distinguished Members of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, just five short days after I testified before you on October 21, 2009 about the Taliban's growing involvement in the Afghan heroin trade, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Agents Forest N. Leamon, Chad L. Michael and Michael E. Weston, along with seven U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers, died heroically near Badghis, Afghanistan after conducting a dangerous, nighttime narco-terrorism raid on a Taliban controlled opium bazaar. Several other Soldiers and Marines, and another DEA Special Agent, were wounded.

At approximately 5:00 a.m. on October 26, U.S. Army Special Forces Soldiers, U.S. Marines assigned to the Marine Corps' Special Operations Command, and DEA Special Agents assigned to the Foreign-Deployed Advisory and Support Teams (FAST) program and the Kabul Country Office, were departing the targeted area in U.S. Army MH-47 Chinook helicopters when the last helicopter crashed shortly after takeoff from the landing zone. They had successfully conducted a raid against a large-scale heroin trafficker's operation where I imagine they seized drugs, improvised explosive device (IED) bomb making materials and other crucial evidence. Bomb making materials, IEDs, PKM machine guns, AK-47 assault rifles, rocket propelled grenade launchers, terrorist training manuals and Taliban propaganda are now routinely discovered during narcoterrorism operations in Afghanistan—all co-located with the drugs.

In my testimony last week I lauded the outstanding accomplishments of the DEA in Afghanistan and I addressed the exceptional cooperation and support the DEA was receiving from our Military, especially from the Special Forces community. In my initial Statement for the Record I declared, "When you fuse the unparalleled tradecraft that seasoned DEA agents bring to the fight with the exclusive war fighting techniques of highly experienced Special Forces operators, you create a counter-insurgency capability that is second-to-none. More of this blend would definitely be better, and would be a wise investment of taxpayer dollars."

Madam Chairman, Co-Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Caucus, that statement is being validated over and over again in Afghanistan in joint narco-terrorism operations conducted by our U.S. Military Special Forces and the DEA. It was just such an operation that resulted in the deaths of the brave Special Agents and Special Forces Soldiers who perished on October 26, 2009 near Badghis, Afghanistan.

I am immensely proud of our valiant DEA Special Agents and Special Forces Operators who are conducting these hazardous missions. Significantly, the professionalism and dedication to duty exhibited by the DEA in Afghanistan is nothing short of amazing. I no longer officially speak for the DEA, but I will always be a DEA Special Agent at heart. Accordingly, I feel compelled to voice some concerns and make a few critically important recommendations before this hearing is officially adjourned.

DEA's Operation Snowcap, the predecessor to the FAST program conducted during the mid 1980s to mid 1990s was a highly successful program where DEA 'Snowcap'

Agents were also specially trained and equipped by U.S. Military Special Forces, just as the FAST Agents are today. The Special Agents worked closely with host nation counterparts on tactical counternarcotics operations in the jungles of South and Central America. This highly effective program was **disbanded** after an airplane crash claimed the lives of five DEA Special Agents on August 27, 1994 in the Peruvian jungle. Consequently, the DEA had absolutely no bona fide capability to enter war torn Afghanistan in early 2001 - 2002 to rapidly engage in operations and begin collecting vitally important intelligence. It took the Agency over three years and a great deal of hard work to construct the FAST program and build the initial capacity to embark on its mission in Afghanistan and the region.

Although there is no indication that a similar path will be taken with the FAST program or with the DEA operations in Afghanistan as a result of the recent tragedy, I ask that you remain vigilant to the possibility and be prepared to carefully assess any basis whatsoever for such a proposal should it ever arise. As this Caucus well knows, the work of the DEA involves constant, significant human risk in both foreign and domestic environments. The recent loss of the three brave Special Agents in Afghanistan should never be used to terminate or limit the FAST program or DEA foreign operations, which have proven essential to counter the narcoterrorism threat in Afghanistan and elsewhere around the globe.

DEA's presence in Afghanistan and its efforts against narcoterrorists are warranted given that Afghanistan is now the world's largest exporter of heroin and the opium used to produce it, supplying close to 90 percent of the world market. While most of the heroin abused in our country currently comes from Colombia and Mexico, this Caucus understands clearly that this trend could change rapidly, especially with the ever-increasing pressures placed on the traditional Western Hemisphere based cartels by Colombia, Mexico and the United States. Further, most experts agree the contraband revenue derived by the Taliban's involvement in the Afghan heroin trade is by far the most significant source of their operational funding.

The DEA's global mission increasingly requires the capability of specially trained and equipped Special Agents who can safely and effectively serve shoulder-to-shoulder with our military forces, especially in areas where insurgent and terrorist groups rely heavily on the global drug trade to generate a virtually unlimited supply of funding for their war chests. The FAST program provides the DEA and our military with greater capacity to effectively conduct joint military/civilian narco-terrorism operations. The fact that at least half of the 45 terrorist organizations designated by our government are now involved in one or more aspects of the global drug trade strongly reinforces the need for an expanded FAST capability.

Thanks to your support, Congress funded two additional FASTs last year for service in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The FAST program is clearly an amazingly effective tool for the DEA Administrator—as well as our Military's Combatant and Theatre Commanders, especially in complex irregular environments. As a lasting tribute to the heroic DEA Special Agents and Special Forces operators who perished in Afghanistan on

October 26, 2009, I strongly recommend that you work with the DEA to determine if additional teams and resources are needed to enhance the safety and effectiveness of the FAST program.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this addendum to my original Statement for the Record. And thank you for your continued outstanding service and leadership during these most difficult of times in our Nation's history.