

**Michael Braun**  
**Questions for the Record**

1. Interdiction operations are an important aspect of our counternarcotics program in Afghanistan. The DEA has FAST teams in place to conduct operations and provide training for Afghan interdiction units.
  - Do we have enough FAST teams and mentors in place to ensure the success of the program?
    - **Answer:** Although I no longer speak for DEA, I clearly understand that additional FASTs are needed by the Agency in Afghanistan. I base that statement on the fact that as the former DEA Chief of Operations, I am intimately familiar with all aspects of the FAST program, and was also responsible for the strategy and plan leading to the extensive DEA expansion in Afghanistan this past year. The current number of FASTs dedicated to Afghanistan is three, which only allows for the deployment of one 11-man team at a time in Afghanistan. I believe that five to seven additional FASTs would provide the DEA with the flexibility and nimbleness needed to effectively conduct counter narco-terrorism operations throughout Afghanistan, and extend the Rule of Law to the farthest reaches of the country. Virtually all counter narco-terrorism operations are now conducted by the DEA jointly with the U.S. Military Special Forces, Afghan Army Commandos and the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan; however, the DEA does not have enough FASTs to sustain the current and anticipated future operations tempo in Afghanistan. **The bottom line—our Military has discovered the value that DEA brings to the fight, and the Military’s ever-increasing demand on the Agency will continue to outpace the DEA’s capacity to deliver.**
  - What are some of the biggest impediments to conducting effective interdiction operations?
    - **Answer:** The DEA finds it extraordinarily difficult to travel to most areas of Afghanistan without the support of DOD and/or DOS helicopter assets, some of which are refurbished, vintage Russian Hind MI-17 helicopters. The Agency’s counter narco-terrorism operations and vitally important intelligence gathering missions are routinely delayed, often for several days, because the DEA lacks it’s own organic helicopter assets in Afghanistan. The problem is compounded by the fact that the DOD/DOS helicopters are usually scheduled for other work, so they are most often difficult if not impossible to come by. UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters are the safest and most reliable airframes needed to

transport DEA Special Agents, and their U.S. Special Forces and Afghan colleagues into the remote mountainous terrain where FASTs most often find themselves working. Accordingly, the DEA needs fifteen UH-60 Blackhawk and three CH-47 Chinook helicopters to support its operations in Afghanistan; however, the Agency sorely lacks the funding for such an acquisition. The DEA also requires the funding to hire and train the aircrews and mechanics, as well as the funding for operations and maintenance (O&M) and facilities for the airframes. Keep in mind that these assets would also be supporting our U.S. Military Special Forces, who accompany the DEA on virtually all of the Agency's counter narco-terrorism missions.

The DEA has the largest U.S. federal law enforcement presence on the ground in Afghanistan, and will soon have 11-man teams of Special Agents and Intelligence Analysts embedded in all of the U.S. Military and NATO Regional Commands. These teams will also be responsible for providing counter narco-terrorism support to the remote U.S. Military Forward Operating Bases spread throughout the country. The Agency will not be able to support our Military without its own organic helicopter assets to quickly and effectively move Special Agents and Analysts about the country. **Our Military will leave Afghanistan one day, but the DEA is in Afghanistan for the long haul.** The DEA desperately needs these assets to support and sustain counter narco-terrorism operations over the long term.

**Finally, these assets will allow the Afghan government, the DEA and our Military to extend the Rule of Law to the farthest reaches of the country.**

2. Drug traffickers and drug kingpins derive more money from opium than the farmers who produce the poppy. You stated in your testimony that the DEA is focused on building cases against 15 to 20 high value targets (HVTs) in Afghanistan.
  - Do you know how many HVTs may currently be operating in Afghanistan and how many have been caught and prosecuted thus far?
    - **Answer:** While I do not know how many HVTs are currently operating in Afghanistan, I feel comfortable stating that the DEA is typically focused on 15 to 20, all of which are members of the Taliban, or are unequivocally linked to the Taliban. Accordingly, many of DEA's HVTs are also CENTCOM and NATO/ISAF HVTs. I believe you will see the number of DEA HVTs increase significantly over the next 12 months as the Agency aggressively expands the size of its workforce, going from 13 Full Time Employees to over 80 in just one year.

It is also important to note that the DEA has a regional strategy to counter the Afghan narcotics trade. Therefore, the Agency also has a number of HVTs identified for investigation and eventual prosecution who are directly linked to the Afghan drug trade, and who operate in a number of countries throughout the region.

As an example the DEA, coordinating with law enforcement counterparts in Romania, Greece, Austria, the Netherlands, Turkey and Pakistan, investigated and dismantled the Hussein Rikabadi drug trafficking organization after the arrest of Haji Bashir Noorzai during an elaborate DEA undercover operation successfully lured Noorzai to New York City where he was arrested. Noorzai, one of the five original founding fathers of the Taliban Ruling Shura in Kabul, was the world's single largest heroin trafficker. Rikabadi, an Iranian who had been living in Romania and responsible for trafficking multi-ton quantities of Noorzai's deadly heroin around the globe, cooperated against Noorzai and testified against the Taliban drug kingpin at his (Noorzai's) trial for drug charges in federal court in New York City. Noorzai received a life sentence and Rikabadi was sentenced to 20 years as a result of the DEA investigation.

- What efforts are being made to shut down the major opium trafficking routes, especially along the Afghan border?
  - **Answer:** In early 2002 the DEA held a targeting conference in Turkey that brought together executive level law enforcement officials from over 20 countries in the region. The conference resulted in the creation of Operation Containment, an enforcement strategy and operation designed to impact the flow of opiates and drug money out of Afghanistan, and the flow of precursor chemicals into the country. Operation Containment has been widely successful; however, the DEA and many Op Containment participating countries lack the funding necessary to achieve the strategy's full potential.
- 3. It is my understanding that the Taliban derives a significant amount of funding from the drug trade.
  - Do you have information that Al-Qaeda is also getting some of its funding from drugs?
    - **Answer:** It is my understanding that the DEA does not currently possess evidence or intelligence that unequivocally links Al-Qaeda directly to the Afghan drug trade. However, evidence clearly reveals that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda share a long-standing, powerful strategic relationship that is truly symbiotic. To say that Al-Qaeda does not reap benefits from the Taliban's involvement in the global drug trade would be ludicrous. Further, the drug linkages to Al-Qaeda could well be just around the corner. The DEA's ability to make the direct link to Al-Qaeda's

involvement in the global drug trade begins to increase exponentially as the Agency significantly expands its footprint in Afghanistan, and in Southwest and Central Asia.

- What other insurgent groups get their funding from Afghan opium?
  - **Answer:** The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is involved in various aspects of the Afghan drug trade, and reaps millions of dollars in profit from the activity. I know of no other insurgent or terrorist groups that are receiving funding directly from the Afghan drug trade.
  
- 4. In your written testimony, you discussed the important role of the U.S. military for ensuring the success of DEA counter-narcotics operations. In addition to providing vital air and ground support and the use of equipment and assets, the military is helping to train many of the Afghan police and military personnel in counter-narcotics operations.
  - Has the counter-narcotics training been effective for the Afghan personnel as they conduct actual operations with DEA personnel? What additional training would you recommend to help them improve their performance?
    - **Answer:** The specialized training that the DOD and DOS has funded for the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNP-A) has been very successful. I strongly believe that many more CNP-A officers need to be identified and integrated into additional 'Vetted Units,' which are DEA's force multiplier abroad. These teams routinely undergo polygraph and drug testing, and receive advanced training to hone their law enforcement investigative and analytical skills. These additional teams should be co-located with the DEA teams that will be embedded in all of our Military's Regional Commands.

Over 70% of Afghanistan's citizens are illiterate, and that obviously has a negative impact on the ranks of Afghan law enforcement, military and other internal security forces. A great deal more needs to be done by the DOD and DOS to teach these critically important personnel how to read, write and effectively communicate.
  
  - With regard to the DoD/DEA relationship in Afghanistan, what areas would you recommend for improvement to ensure that the DEA continues to conduct effective interdiction operations in Afghanistan?
    - The DOD/DEA relationship that currently exists in Afghanistan is the idyllic example of a military/civilian (mil/civ) confluence effectively applied to 21<sup>st</sup> Century warfighting. However, the DEA and Special Forces operators who make this happen need dedicated air assets to engage their adversaries rapidly, effectively and as safely as possible. Our Military will leave Afghanistan one day, but the DEA plans on being in

the country for the long haul. Consequently, the air assets that I identified earlier in this QFR response should be provided to the DEA, and the Agency should have operational responsibility for their use.

5. In response to a question asked during the hearing, you refuted the idea of purchasing opium crops from farmers and provided examples of how this policy has failed in the past. You went on to state that the U.S. Government, instead, “needs to apply what has worked in other places.”

- Please expound on that statement for the record, providing specific information about counter-narcotics programs and policies that have proven effective so we can apply them in Afghanistan.
  - **Answer:** In 34 years of law enforcement I have never witnessed an effective counter-narcotics strategy in a production country that did not include an aggressive drug crop eradication program. Now may not be the ‘opportune’ time for eradication in Afghanistan, but eradication will need to be implemented at some point in the future—sooner rather than later.

I have received a number of phone calls from people working in DOD and DOS, as well as high-level British colleagues who I worked with while serving in DEA, who are asking me why our Governments should not just purchase all of the poppy grown in Afghanistan. As the saying goes, “Those who are ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it.” This may make sense on the surface when one considers that Afghan farmers are paid five to ten times more for their poppy crops than they are for growing legitimate crops. However, drug crop ‘buy out’ programs have been undertaken in several drug production countries over many years—and all have resulted in abject failure. These programs typically result in vast numbers of legitimate farmers shifting their efforts to illegitimate drug crop production.

Rather than corrupting and ‘criminalizing’ vast numbers of legitimate farmers, which is ultimately what happens with drug crop ‘buy out’ programs, I have strongly recommended that we purchase legitimate crops from Afghan farmers at the price being paid for poppy crops. Once we ‘wean’ the farmers off illegitimate crop production, we can then begin to refine and manage the payment system over the long term to match the true value of their legitimate crops. This scenario, when integrated with other alternative livelihood development projects, could be a powerful tool for absolute, long-term change in Afghanistan.