

Afghans Look Other Way As Drug Outflow Expands

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

KABUL, Afghanistan, Nov. 13—Steady streams of opium and hashish flow over the unpatrolled and porous borders of this landlocked kingdom and through its two airports, aided by a largely indifferent Government and many of its officials and employees.

Most of the opium—about 100 tons a year—crosses the forbidding mountainous border into Iran, carried by camel or donkey caravans guarded by heavily armed nomad tribesmen. No evidence has been turned up to show significant quantities of Afghan opium reaching Europe or America.

However, qualified American sources estimate at one to two tons a month the amount of Afghan hashish—the best and most plentiful—reaching Western Europe, the United States and Canada, with a third going to the United States.

American officials fear that the growing cleverness of the hashish smugglers, combined with the possibility that Turkey's ban on the cultivation of opium poppies will cause an eventual shortage of heroin for the lucrative American addict market, will tempt the hashish traffickers to move Afghan opium to the United States.

"By interfering with the hashish traffic now, we will help to close an opium route to the United States," said the American Ambassador, Robert G. Neumann, in an interview.

The United States receives

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only minimal cooperation from the Afghan Government. Although Mr. Neumann praised what he called a change in attitude from minimal interest in the narcotics problem to greater concern, it appears evident that Afghanistan has made no significant attempt to curtail the outflow of opium and hashish.

Qualified official sources, Americans as well as experts from other nations, are convinced that Afghans in positions of power, reaching into the family of King Mohammed Zahir Shah and members of his court, are engaged in the narcotics traffic or tolerating and protecting it, out of financial or political gain.

"In a country where it requires a Cabinet minister's approval to spend \$5 of Government money," one of the experts said, "it is inconceivable that so large a traffic could be going on for so many years without its being tolerated at the top."

Few seizures are made independently by the Afghan authorities, the sources asserted, unless they are directed against operators who have bypassed normal trade channels to avoid paying customary bribes to certain officials. After such seizures the traffickers quickly resume their established payoffs.

U. S. Agents Frustrated

The two agents of the United States Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs assigned to the embassy initiate many investigations and provide much intelligence — although indications are that not all intelligence is shared with Afghan officials for fear it would tip off the traffickers—but their attempts to bring offenders to justice are usually frustrated.

Last summer, for example, an American agent arranged a raid by the Kabul police on a luxurious home where Americans were operating a distillery for liquefied, highly concentrated hashish. Twenty-five gallons, worth perhaps \$6-million when broken down for sale on the streets in the United States, were seized.

Two of the Americans were captured; three or four others known to have been involved were not there and escaped. The two, who gave their names as Jacob Black and Saul Walters, were jailed by the Afghan authorities. Shortly thereafter they escaped in return for a \$3,000 bribe to an official.

Their organization, part of Dr. Timothy Leary's Brotherhood of Eternal Love, supplied them with new passports as false as those they had when

they were arrested, and they went to Hawaii.

The sources said that the hashish for the distillery had been supplied by a leading politician who has long been engaged in the smuggling of opium to Iran.

Dramatic Growth Reflected

Another source of supply to the brotherhood has been identified by United States agents as Hayatullah Tokhi, an Afghan. According to the agents, Mr. Tokhi's rise to great wealth from small-time peddling in his native town of Kandahar is indicative of the dramatic growth of the hashish traffic.

A few years ago Mr. Tokhi graduated to the purchase of a hotel for young transients in Kandahar. Soon thereafter, the American agents say, he installed a garage next to it, which made it possible to drive Volkswagen campers, a favorite vehicle of Western smugglers, into the garage. In one operation "traps"—secret compartments—were installed and filled with hashish.

Mr. Tokhi's American associates are known to have invited him to the United States and entertained him lavishly, including a visit to Disneyland.

About 20 to 30 big hashish operators have been identified by the experts here. They have come a long way from the world-traveling hippies who discovered Afghan hash about a decade ago, although some are known to have begun that way.

"People sometimes pretend to turn their backs on Western materialism," Ambassador Neumann said. "Their concern is something I regard with suitable cynicism."

And Then the Payment

The operators — American, West German, Canadian, British and Italian—usually station one of their associates here, to handle the buying, payoffs to officials and arrangements for shipment. Another member arrives when all is set, takes up residence at the fashionable Inter-Continental Hotel and makes payment.

The Kabul airport and, to a lesser extent, that at Kandahar are the largest leaks through which hashish flows. Ranking airport and customs officials have been implicated in smuggling by foreign experts but remain in their positions.

The hashish, usually listed as drugs or antiques, is flown to destinations in Europe. A favorite method is to station a member of the gang in such a transshipping center as Frankfurt, a port of call for Ariana, the Afghan airline. He arranges for immediate forwarding to an American destination without

clearance through West German customs, so the hashish arrives in the United States with a German waybill, which arouses less suspicion than cargo openly originating in Afghanistan.

Airline employes are favorite contacts for smugglers, and a large number of hashish operators are former airline employes. Recently a \$50-a-month Ariana steward, dismissed on suspicion of involvement in smuggling, met his death here when he crashed his expensive new Mercedes-Benz into a truck.

Unlike opium smugglers, who tend to conform to the popular image of the gangster, hashish traffickers appear to be a new breed—younger, more educated and of middle-class origin.

Some Deal on Their Own

In addition to large-scale shipments by air or road, sizable quantities of Afghan hashish are carried out by individuals acting on their own or as couriers. The dark brown malleable drug has been sewn into the linings of clothing or shaped into inner soles and stuffed into hollowed antiques or the false bottoms of suitcases.

Since the development of liquid hashish, worth \$300 an ounce to American wholesalers, couriers have taken to swallowing rubber containers filled with the substance, to be recovered after nonstop trips to the United States.

The rewards of smuggling are great. A 100-pound shipment, including purchase price, bribes and courier fees, is estimated to cost an average of \$10,000; its wholesale value in New York or Montreal is about \$90,000.

Diplomatic sources, as well as the rare impartial Afghan observer, believe that all forms of smuggling and corruption are so deeply imbedded into the

way of life of this country, one of the world's most backward, that little will change unless the Afghans reach a higher level of development. Few believe that this is near.

The farmers who raise opium poppies—many are switching to hashish, which brings them a higher return per acre—have no other cash crop that they can take to market in a country that has almost no roads except the major highways built by the United States or the Soviet Union.

Law enforcement is entrusted to a police force whose officers generally owe their jobs to family connections that they must protect and whose ordinary policemen are made up of the lowest 10 per cent of military conscripts.

Police literacy is estimated at 2 per cent and the pay of an ordinary policeman at 80 cents a month. No pistols, badges or identification cars are issued lest they be sold.

Although West Germany has maintained a police advisory mission here for 12 years and has trained 140 officers in German academies, well-placed sources say, unjokingly, that the mission has succeeded mainly in creating the most highly organized criminal element in Afghanistan.

Afghan officials are suspected of carrying sizable quantities of hashish on their official trips abroad. A ranking member of the national Olympic body is known to have secreted almost 100 pounds in the equipment bags of the wrestling team that went to Munich last summer.

King Mohammed Zahir Shah is believed to be incapable of acting against the pervasive corruption that surrounds him because his power is weak in a country with no developed sense of nationhood, in which his survival is largely dependent on his success in balancing strongly independent-minded tribes and clans.