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# Golden Triangle: Increased Military Actions Against Narcotics Traffickers



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An Intelligence Assessment

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GI 83-10248  
October 1983

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# **Golden Triangle: Increased Military Actions Against Narcotics Traffickers**



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**An Intelligence Assessment**

This paper was prepared by   
International Security Issues Division, Office of  
Global Issues. Comments and queries are welcome  
and may be directed to the Chief, Strategic Narcotics  
Branch, OGI, 

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**Golden Triangle:  
Increased Military Actions  
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**Key Judgments**

*Information available  
as of 30 September 1983  
was used in this report.*

The Governments of Thailand and Burma have independently stepped up their antinarcotics efforts in the Thai-Burmese border area, the center of narcotics trafficking in the Golden Triangle (Thailand, Burma, and Laos). Fighting along the border has forced traffickers to move deeper into Burma, relocate refineries, and abandon or modify previously used smuggling methods. More importantly, these efforts have signaled narcotics traffickers that they can no longer operate freely in the border area.

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The fighting has not affected Golden Triangle opium production, however. The principal growing areas are well removed from the Thai-Burmese border and in the case of Burma are mostly outside government control. We estimate from [ ] US Embassy reports that the opium output for 1983 is between 615 and 665 metric tons, more than enough to service regional users and to maintain sufficient stocks for export:

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- Opium production in Burma largely determines the amount of opium available for export from the Golden Triangle. Good weather and continued widespread cultivation produced an estimated 550 to 600 tons.
- Thailand's opium output has fallen by approximately 30 percent to about 35 tons, the result of poor weather and reduced planting prompted by low prices and the threat of crop eradication.
- Opium production in Laos, also affected by poor weather, did not exceed 30 tons.

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Traffickers have altered patterns of operations to market their surplus production and to avoid the risks entailed in operating along the Thai-Burmese border. For example, Burma and India are increasingly used as transit countries for export of heroin to the West, and traffickers have shifted some of their heroin-refining operations to the Thai-Malaysian border area. The Shan United Army, the primary target of Thailand's military campaign, is still the dominant trafficking organization in the Golden Triangle but has formed alliances with other groups to market their products more aggressively abroad. Other groups—in particular the Burmese Communist Party—have become directly involved in the production of heroin.

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Such developments can be viewed as a measure of the effectiveness of antinarcotics efforts in the area, but they also further complicate interdiction efforts for both the Thai and Burmese Governments. For that reason and because we believe the European market is already saturated with heroin from Southwest Asia, we expect that increased amounts of Golden Triangle heroin will be shipped to the United States. Indeed, US Drug Enforcement Administration seizures indicate that this has already begun. During the first half of 1983 seizures of Southeast Asian heroin nearly quadrupled, compared with the same period in 1982. Golden Triangle heroin currently accounts for almost one-fourth of the heroin imported to the United States, up from 14 percent in 1982.



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**Golden Triangle:  
Increased Military Actions  
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**Introduction**

Increased Thai and Burmese military actions since January 1982 have disrupted narcotics trafficking along the Thai-Burmese border. Trafficking groups, particularly the Shan United Army (SUA), can no longer operate freely in the border area and, according to US Embassy reports, have been hit hard financially. Although traffickers have been forced to shift operations, the region's capability to supply large quantities of narcotics to regional and international markets has not been permanently affected. This assessment examines enforcement actions taken by regional governments against Golden Triangle narcotics traffickers, estimates opium production in 1983, and assesses the outlook for trafficking in Southeast Asia.

from the hill tribes who do. Chinese own the refineries that convert the opium to heroin and, to a limited degree, are engaged in smuggling and distributing opium products from wholesale points to consuming centers. They are supported by government officials, who are highly paid to provide police, military, and political protection. The SUA and the Chinese Irregular Force (CIF), two groups that have historically controlled a major share of the traffic within the Golden Triangle, are both controlled by ethnic Chinese. Burmese Communists have been increasingly involved in Golden Triangle narcotics in recent years, and, according to US Embassy sources, they too are controlled by ethnic Chinese.

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**Golden Triangle Opium Producers and Traffickers**

The rugged area along the Thai-Burmese border is the center of narcotics trafficking and heroin processing in Southeast Asia. Various ethnic-based insurgent and warlord groups move opium grown largely in northern Burma to clandestine heroin laboratories at the border, where most of the heroin exported from the Golden Triangle is produced. The border area is ideally suited to narcotics trafficking:

- Opium supplies are readily available from hill-tribe cultivators who normally produce 500 to 600 tons of opium annually.
- A good transportation system through Thailand facilitates access to the chemicals needed to process opium as well as to both regional and international markets for processed narcotics.
- The rugged terrain along the border is difficult to police and provides sanctuary for traffickers against government attacks.

Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia have a long tradition as narcotics smugglers and are the dominant processors and traffickers of opium produced in the area. They do not grow opium, but they help collect it

**Antinarcotics Operations**

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The major narcotics trafficking organizations have been effectively harassed by the Thai and Burmese Armies since January 1982. Military operations have been aimed at traffickers' armed positions, heroin refineries, opium caravans, transshipment/storage sites, and trafficking routes. All of the military activity has occurred along the Thai-Burmese border, with several cross-border incursions by both the Thai and Burmese. These incursions have penetrated as far as 5 to 6 kilometers and apparently with tacit approval of both governments. Despite the common narcotics problem, there have been no joint Thai-Burmese military efforts against narcotics traffickers nor, given the historical animosities between the Thai and Burmese, is there likely to be.

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**Thai Military Actions**

Recent operations by the Thai follow several years of tolerance of narcotics trafficking along the Thai-Burmese border. Thai governments in the past focused their antinarcotics efforts on urban enforcement

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**Golden Triangle Narcotics Trafficking Groups**

- *The Shan United Army (SUA) purports to fight for independence of the Shan State in Burma but is principally a narcotics trafficking group. Formed from remnants of the Loi Maw KKY (Home Guard Militias) that were commissioned by the Burmese Government to fight Communist insurgents but were disbanded in 1971, the SUA by 1978 was the most important trafficking organization in the Thai-Burmese border area. By 1981, according to US Embassy sources, it controlled 70 percent of the narcotics processing and trafficking in the Golden Triangle.*
- *The 3rd and 5th Chinese Irregular Force (CIF) are remnants of Chinese Kuomintang divisions that retreated into Burma in 1949-50. They have no discernible political goals but, in the tradition of Chinese warlords, have sought to develop zones that are autonomous of either Rangoon or Bangkok. They are heavily involved in opium trafficking and narcotics refining, in addition to a wide range of other illicit smuggling activities.*
- *The Burmese Communist Party (BCP), one of Burma's oldest insurgent groups, operates in the northern Shan State with an army estimated at 10,000 to 12,000 men. A reduction in Chinese support to the BCP in the late 1970s prompted the BCP to move deeper into the narcotics business to finance operations. The BCP has recently become involved in heroin processing.*
- *The Shan State Volunteer Force (SSVF), headed by Lo Hsing-han, once the "Opium King of the Golden Triangle," has been authorized by Rangoon as a people's militia unit to fight insurgent forces operating in the Shan State. Reportedly, Lo has returned to narcotics trafficking.*
- *The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) is an ethnic-based insurgent group operating throughout the Kachin State and in the northern Shan State, purportedly to achieve autonomy for the Kachin ethnic areas within the Burmese Union. The KIA has formally cooperated with the BCP since 1982. This group gets some support from the BCP but has increasingly turned to smuggling and narcotics trafficking.*
- *The Shan State Army (SSA) is an ethnic-based insurgent group (primarily Shan) in the northern Shan State. The SSA was formed by dissident university students from Rangoon and Mandalay and was once known as the Shan State Independence Army. The organization aims to achieve full independence for the Shan State with guarantees for the rights of all ethnic groups. Two distinct military commands (SSA/North and SSA/South) are engaged in narcotics trafficking.*
- *The Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA) is a splinter group of the Shan State Army. It claims to seek autonomy for the Shan State but engages primarily in smuggling, narcotics trafficking, and refining.*



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**Antinarcotics Operations**

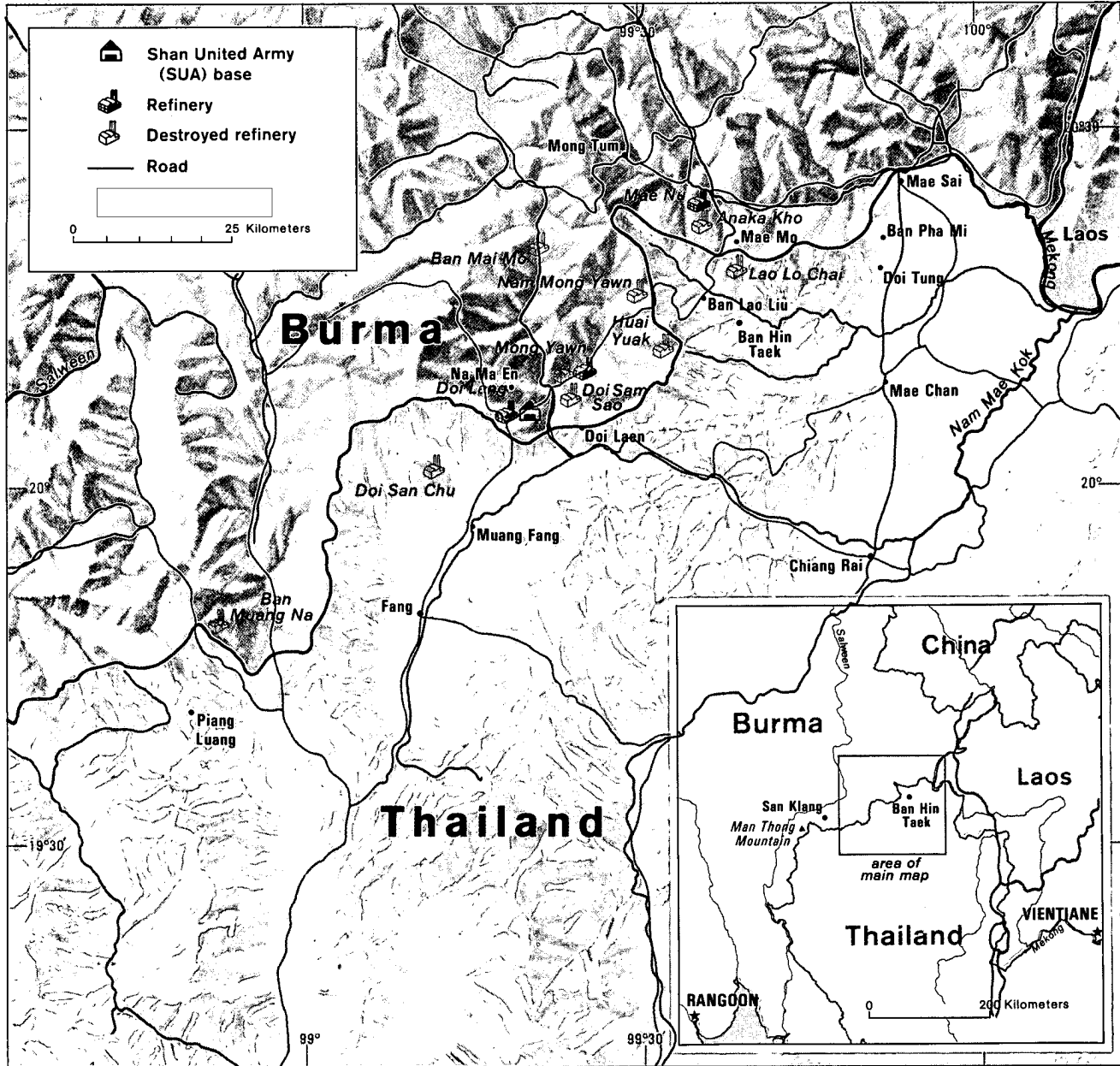
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		<i>Area</i>	<i>Accomplishment</i>
1982	January	<i>Ban Hin Taek, Thailand</i>	<i>Thai military units destroyed SUA headquarters.</i>
	May	<i>Ban Lao Liu, Thailand</i>	<i>Thai military units destroyed second SUA headquarters, several SUA positions, and a refinery inside Burma.</i>
	June	<i>Doi Lang, Thai-Burmese border</i>	<i>Burmese military units attacked several refineries.</i>
	July	<i>Doi Lang/Doi Sam Sao, Thai-Burmese border</i>	<i>Thai units attacked SUA military positions, destroyed a refinery, and captured equipment.</i>
	September	<i>Doi Lang, Thai-Burmese border</i>	<i>Thai units overran SUA military positions, destroyed refineries, and captured supplies and equipment.</i>
	October	<i>Doi Lang/Soi Sam Sao, Thai-Burmese border</i>	<i>Thai units destroyed two refineries and disrupted SUA supply routes.</i>
	November	<i>Lao Lo Chai, Thai-Burmese border</i>	<i>Thai units destroyed a refinery and military positions and captured chemicals and equipment.</i>
	November	<i>Ban Muang Na, Thai-Burmese border</i>	<i>Burmese units attacked a SURA camp inside Thailand.</i>
	December	<i>Doi Lang, Thai-Burmese border</i>	<i>Thai units destroyed refineries, a major chemical storage site, and SUA military positions.</i>
1983	January	<i>Ban Muang Na, Thai-Burmese border</i>	<i>Thai units destroyed refinery of the 3rd CIF/SURA.</i>
	March	<i>Man Thong Mountain, Burma</i>	<i>Thai units destroyed SUA refinery and military positions.</i>
	April	<i>San Klang, Burma</i>	<i>Burmese Army closed down six heroin refineries.</i>
	June	<i>Anaka Kho, Burma</i>	<i>Thai units destroyed refineries and military positions and captured some chemicals.</i>
	August	<i>Huai Yuak, Burma</i>	<i>Thai units overran SUA positions and captured a large refinery, some narcotics, and chemicals.</i>
	August	<i>Mong Yawn, Burma</i>	<i>Thai units destroyed three refineries and SUA military positions.</i>

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Figure 1  
Targets of Thai and Burmese Military Operations



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and relied on the Border Patrol police to interdict traffickers in the border area. The SUA and CIF operations in Thailand apparently were tolerated because the groups provided a buffer against Communist encroachment. [REDACTED]

Within the past few years, however, publicity detailing the extent of SUA trafficking operations and the location of its headquarters at Ban Hin Taek, Thailand, have reflected negatively on the government's commitment to narcotics control. Consequently, in January 1982 the Thai Army moved against the SUA headquarters in a US-supported effort to drive the SUA out of Thailand and to curb narcotics trafficking in the region. After the attack against Ban Hin Taek, the SUA fled into Burma but returned to Thailand within a few weeks, building a new headquarters only 4 to 5 kilometers away from Ban Hin Taek. The rapidity with which the SUA attempted to reestablish itself inside Thailand apparently convinced Thai authorities of the need to regain control of its northern border. The Thai responded with a second military action in May that dislodged the SUA from Thailand. Although SUA families and dependents were allowed to remain in Thailand, according to US Embassy sources, the continued Thai Army presence in the border area has kept the SUA from infiltrating back across the border. Other military actions to date:

- Pushed the SUA farther into Burma and restricted its ability to operate freely in the border area.
- Forced the SUA to relocate to Doi Lang when special Thai military units—the Tahan Phran irregulars—shut down the Lao Lo Chai refinery complex.
- Interdicted long-established routes for narcotics and chemicals, destroyed a number of refineries, and forced other refineries to close—at least temporarily disrupting narcotics production.
- Destroyed major chemical storage sites inside Burma, causing the loss of 780 kilograms of acetic anhydride—the principal chemical used in making heroin. The amount destroyed in one operation was roughly equivalent to one year's supply for an average refinery. [REDACTED]

With the SUA pushed well into Burma, the Thai Government moved against other narcotics traffickers in the border area and continued its assault against SUA refineries:

- During a January 1983 military operation in the Ban Muang Na area, three traffickers from the 3rd CIF were captured, confirming CIF involvement in narcotics trafficking along the border. In the past, the CIF had been careful to mask its narcotics activities, operating out of Chinese resettlement villages in Thailand to avoid the attention of the Thai Government.
- In June 1983 Thai forces captured the SUA's most productive refinery at Anaka Kho, Burma, and a major storage and transshipment site in the Lao Lo Chai area. Both of these areas had been hit during previous Thai operations.
- In August 1983, despite heavy rainstorms, the Thai Government launched two major attacks against SUA refineries and a large narcotics caravan belonging to the SUA. [REDACTED]

#### **Burmese Military Operations**

Burma, whose narcotics control program is deeply intertwined with its counterinsurgency program, has mounted military operations against heroin refineries and narcotics traffickers since 1975. In June 1982 the Burmese Army attacked the Doi Lang area, then the second most important refinery complex along the Thai-Burmese border. According to US Embassy reporting, refineries operated by the CIF, the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), independent operators, and smaller trafficking groups were destroyed, and these groups were forced to vacate the area. The target of the Burmese attack was the A Bi group, which is closely aligned with the Burmese Communist Party. In November 1982 the Burmese Army conducted a cross-border raid against SURA positions 5 kilometers inside Thailand near Ban Muang Na. The area was used as a transshipment point for supplies and chemicals destined for the CIF-SURA refineries in the Piang Luang area. [REDACTED]

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In their most recent operation in April 1983, the Burmese Army, approximately 1,500 strong, attacked and overran six heroin refineries in the San Klang area in Burma. According to US Embassy reporting, the traffickers were warned well in advance of the impending attack and removed most of the narcotics. The element of surprise was lost in this operation because of corrupt local officials and low-level military personnel and because of logistic problems in the mountainous terrain. Although this raid, like other operations, was limited to specific targets along the border, it appears that the fear of additional attacks has caused many traffickers to cease their refining activities temporarily. [redacted]

**Other Antinarcotics Efforts by Thailand and Burma**

Both the Thai and Burmese Governments also try to control opium production through nonmilitary programs. Such programs, some of which are longstanding, have had only limited success and have been overshadowed by the military activity. Thai *crop substitution* efforts, for example, have been pursued for more than 15 years, originating with the King's project in Chiang Mai Province. US- and UN-backed programs have been in place for about 10 years. Although there has been some success in promoting alternate crops such as coffee, potatoes, and red beans, such crops are financially attractive only when opium prices are severely depressed. [redacted]

[redacted] the Prem government attempted *crop eradication* during the 1981/82 crop year in areas designated as opium-free zones, all of which were in Chiang Mai Province. [redacted]

[redacted]

some farmers were deterred from planting poppy in 1983, and, in our view, failure to continue the eradication program will reinforce growers' skepticism concerning the Thai Government's resolve to enforce its 1979 ban on poppy cultivation. [redacted]

The Burmese have attempted to eradicate poppy manually since 1975. The Burmese poppy crop destruction program appears to have leveled off during the past few years to an annual rate of about 4,000 hectares. This area is equivalent to about 7 percent of

the estimated poppy-growing area in Burma and would produce approximately 40 to 50 tons of opium annually. According to the US Embassy in Rangoon, opium eradication is carried out by the Army and local village militia forces in relatively secure areas near military bases or People's Police Force camps. The high cost of maintaining field-destruction teams and their relative ineffectiveness against poppy cultivation have spurred the Burmese Government to develop plans for aerial herbicide eradication of opium poppies, although none of these plans has as yet been implemented. Other Burmese programs—some supported by the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control—include addict rehabilitation and crop substitution. [redacted]

**Laotian Antinarcotics Efforts**

Laos has taken no military action against narcotics traffickers and does not have an antinarcotics program. The Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) maintains that it has a policy of discouraging opium use. Eventually, it would like to replace the opium cultivation with other crops; but for now, because of political and economic reasons, it must tolerate, if not encourage, opium production. The government earns export revenues and reduces the risk of insurgency by purchasing opium from hill tribes for subsequent trade with Communist countries. According to an official five-year export plan for 1981-85, the LPDR intends to ship 5 tons of opium per year to Soviet-allied countries. [redacted] some of these supplies have been directed into Thailand and Burma by corrupt Laotian officials to obtain the higher black-market prices available in those countries. The Lao National Police and the Customs Service have the responsibility for narcotics enforcement, but the political realities of Laos do not augur well for strict drug enforcement. [redacted]

**Opium Production**

Although Thai and Burmese military actions have disrupted Golden Triangle narcotics trafficking, there appears to have been little effect on opium output.

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Most of the fighting occurred away from key poppy-growing areas. [redacted]

[redacted] and US Embassy reports, we estimate that opium production in the Golden Triangle this year reached between 615 and 665 tons, a 5-percent decrease from the 700 tons we estimate were harvested in 1982. Despite this decline—occasioned by shortfalls in the Thai and Lao-tian crops—current production combined with stocks from earlier bumper crops has kept Southeast Asia an important source of opium for both local and international markets. [redacted]

**Burma—Key Producer**

Opium production for 1983 in Burma is estimated at about 550 to 600 tons. In a US-supported effort to survey the opium crop, the Burmese Air Force acquired aerial photography of some 540 square kilometers of some of the poppy-producing areas in the northern Shan State. [redacted]

[redacted] substantiates reports that there has been some expansion in the total area under cultivation in Burma; but the new poppyfields were in generally less productive areas, which tended to lower the average opium gum yield. The major areas of production span a region that encompasses most of the Shan plateau, from the eastern Kachin State along the Chinese border south nearly 960 kilometers into the Kayah State, with the most intensive area of cultivation east of the Salween River and north of Keng-Tung. Much of this area remains beyond central government control and is immune to antinarcotics measures. [redacted]

[redacted] hill tribe cultivators in these areas are encouraged and even coerced into growing opium poppies by insurgent groups and other opium buyers who contract for the harvest well in advance of actual planting. [redacted]

**Thailand—Reduced Production**

Opium production in Thailand for 1983 declined to an estimated 35 tons—according to US Embassy reporting—from an estimated 57 tons in 1982. [redacted]

[redacted] Most of this cultivation was in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai Provinces.

We believe the year's downturn in Thailand's production is due to:

- A lack of rainfall during the critical growing period; yields averaged about 6 kilograms per hectare—about 40 percent of opium yields in a normal crop season.
- Low opium prices resulting from large opium harvests during the past three seasons that have prompted some farmers to try alternate crops. Before the 1983 growing season, raw opium prices ranged between \$41 and \$54 per kilogram, compared with \$60 per kilogram in 1982, \$136 per kilogram in 1981, and \$420 per kilogram in 1980.
- The destruction by the Thai Government during 1982 of small amounts of opium poppies in areas designated as opium-free zones. According to US Embassy reports, some cultivators returned to legitimate crops. [redacted]

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**Laos**

Opium production for 1983 in Laos is estimated at 30 tons. [redacted]

[redacted] the greatest concentration of poppy cultivation is in central northern Laos—particularly in the Phongsali and Louangphrabang Provinces—with lesser concentrations in the Louang Namtha and Oudomxai Provinces. Approximately 5,000 hectares of opium poppy are estimated to have been planted in northern Laos during the 1983 season. We believe the same poor weather conditions that damaged the poppy crop in Thailand existed in Laos, resulting in the drop in production from last year's 50 tons. [redacted]

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**Traffickers Adjust**

The trafficking groups have been quick to adjust to the military operations along the Thai-Burmese border. The Shan United Army and the Chinese Irregular Force continue to dominate narcotics trafficking in [redacted]

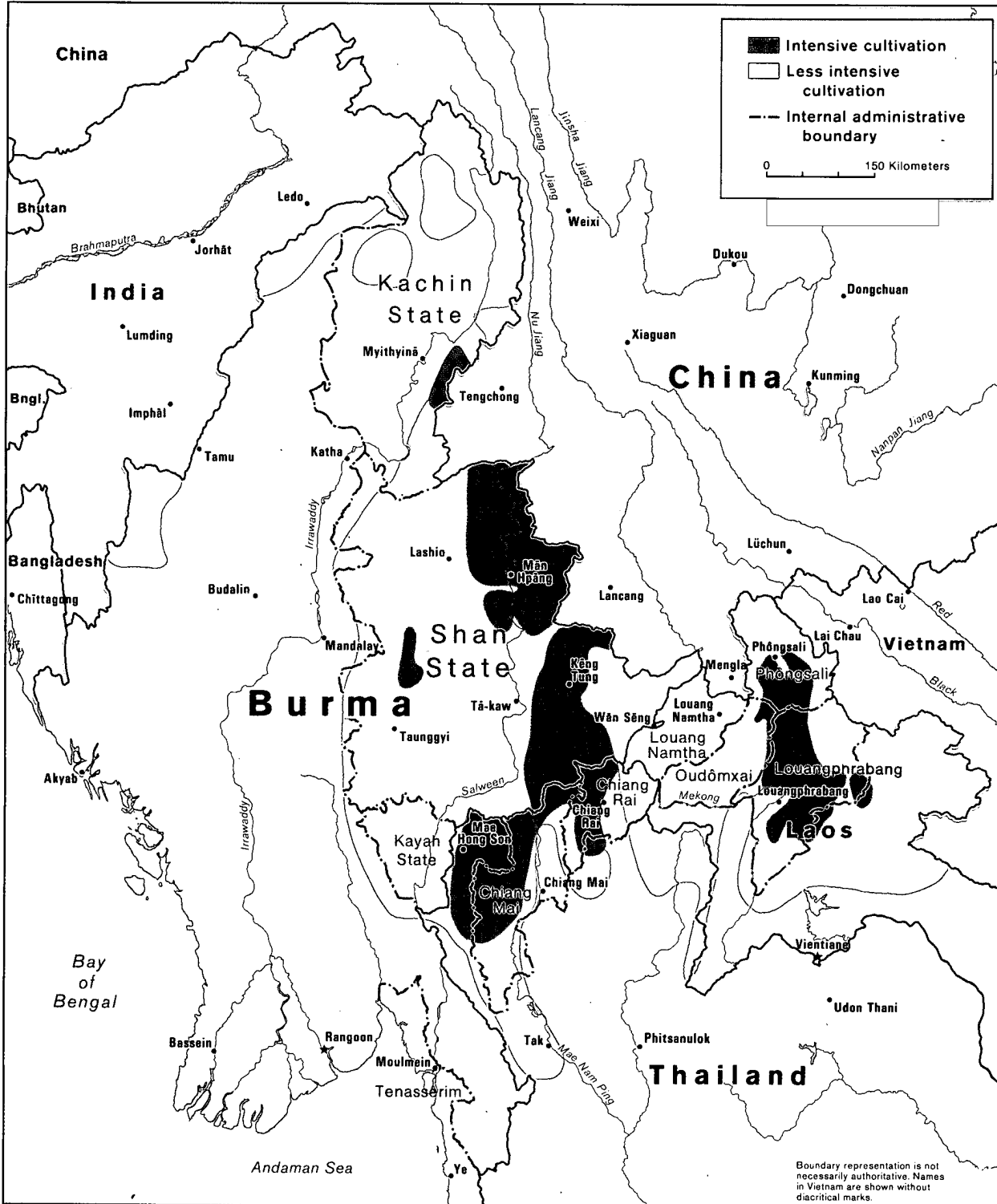
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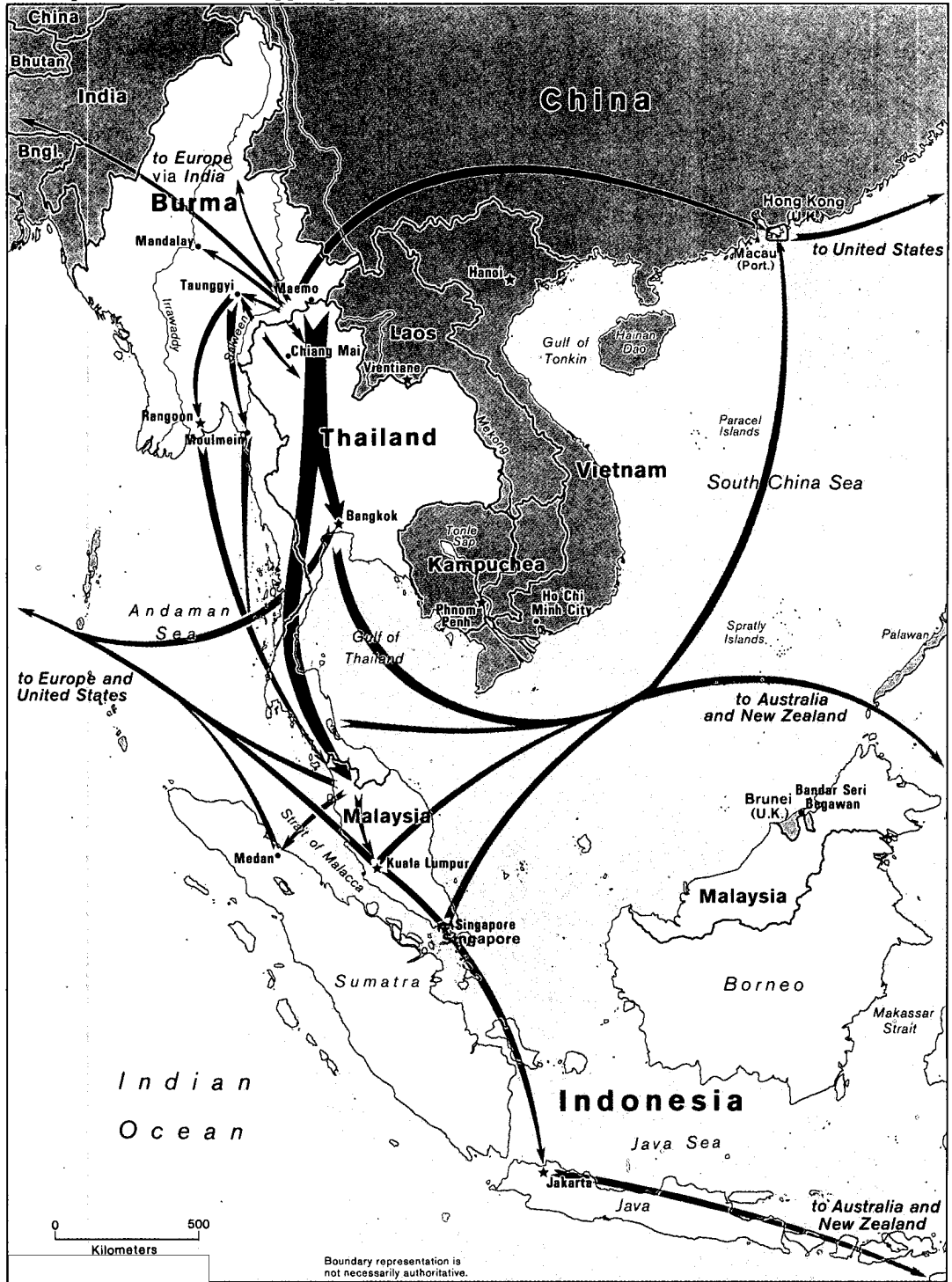
Figure 2  
Poppy Cultivation in the Golden Triangle



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**Figure 3**  
**Principal Narcotics Smuggling Routes in Southeast Asia**



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the Golden Triangle. Although the operations intimidated some of the smaller groups and numerous independents, these groups have formed alliances with both the SUA and CIF to counter interdiction efforts and to reduce their losses. According to US Embassy reporting, the SUA also reached an accommodation with the 5th CIF on the use of CIF bases as transshipment points for supplies and chemicals. Similar cooperation agreements exist between the 3rd CIF and the SURA and other trafficking groups, assuring access to opium supplies and security of smuggling routes. [redacted]

The Burmese Communist Party (BCP) has expanded its role in Golden Triangle narcotics activities. Before 1982 the BCP limited its operation to growing and selling opium to the SUA and other trafficking groups and protecting, for a fee, caravans carrying opium purchased in Communist-controlled areas in Burma. Now, [redacted]

[redacted] the BCP also operates a heroin refinery in northeastern Burma. [redacted] the BCP has reached an agreement with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) to establish narcotics routes to northeast India. Reportedly, it also entered into an arrangement with notorious narcotics trafficker Lo Hsing-han that calls for Lo to supply the BCP with chemicals from India and to establish contacts with Thai-based international narcotics dealers, who refuse to deal directly with the Communists. [redacted]

The number of facilities processing narcotics in the Golden Triangle fluctuated in 1982 and early 1983 as operators were forced to close, at least temporarily, because of Burmese and Thai raids. Refinery facilities along the border are generally small in scale and do not produce significant quantities of narcotics. As a group, however, their production is still considerable. Although total output is difficult to assess, on the whole there appears to be no significant long-term decrease in opium-refining capacity:

- Traffickers still move raw opium to border refineries despite the military operations. According to US Embassy reports, SUA caravans delivered 3.8 tons of opium to border storage sites during January 1983 and the equivalent of another 3 tons to a border location in August 1983.

- Most of the refineries closed down during military operations last year are reportedly back in operation in more protected areas deeper inside Burma. The mobility and rudimentary apparatus of heroin refineries allows them to be reestablished within weeks.

- Thai enforcement activities against chemical suppliers in Bangkok and against major shipping points created a shortage of chemicals at border refineries during early 1982. Chemicals are now supplied by dealers in India and China, [redacted] In March 1983 Burmese officials seized nearly 100 gallons of acetic anhydride from an Indian/Burmese organization.

- Military pressure against heroin refineries along the Thai-Burmese border has apparently caused a shift in some heroin-processing operations to laboratories along the Thai-Malaysian border, according to US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) sources. [redacted]

In addition, traffickers are actively seeking alternative routes to market their products. Although the major share of processed narcotics for world markets still transit Thailand, an increasing amount is being moved through Burma. Only a small portion is retained in Burma to meet the expanding domestic drug market; the larger portion is smuggled out along the largely unpoliced Tenasserim coast to Malaysia or south through Rangoon and other Burmese cities into India and Bangladesh for shipment to the West. In either case, the successful operation of many traffickers depends on the corruption of government officials. Police, military, and other government officers have reportedly been involved in the narcotics traffic; some have been active in the transport of narcotics, and others have accepted bribes for allowing safe passage through police checkpoints. [redacted]

**Outlook**

The border raids of the Governments of Thailand and Burma have successfully disrupted narcotics trafficking—at least for a time. The resiliency of the traffickers, however, has given rise to problems that may

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**Corruption in Burma**

Corruption among low- and middle-level government, police, and military personnel is endemic in the Golden Triangle countries. In Burma it is part of a well-entrenched system of symbiotic relationships between local business people and traffickers and Burmese Government and military officials. The system extends into legitimate business interests, such as customs, government contracts, and the flow of consumer goods. [redacted]

During the past eight months, [redacted] numerous high-level Burmese Government officials facilitate large-scale international narcotics trafficking. The activity centers in the Ministry of Home and Religious Affairs, which is responsible for the government's narcotics-suppression programs. The Military Intelligence Service (MIS) and the Department of Defense Intelligence Service (DDSI) have been implicated among the key drug trafficking agents in Burma. They arrange transfers of money, sell drugs seized in government antinarcotics campaigns, and issue passports to trafficking financiers and couriers. Their positions allow them to arrange illegal transactions with ease. [redacted]

Ne Win's once heir apparent Brig. Gen. Tin O was removed from office because of his involvement in corruption and his blatant attempt to expand his political power base. Until May 1983 Tin O was the

Burma Socialist Program Party's (BSPP) joint General Secretary—number three in the party as well as the third-ranking member of the Central Executive Committee and popularly thought of as the second most powerful man in Burma. [redacted]

[redacted] Ne Win accused Tin O specifically of nepotism, ostentatious displays of wealth and power, and protecting the corrupt activities of former Minister of Home and Religious Affairs Bo Ni. In fact, a Ne Win-directed investigation appears to link Tin O with Bo Ni's illegal smuggling and narcotics trafficking activity. [redacted]

Bo Ni was the key person in charge of drug enforcement/antidrug abuse in Burma and was in charge of the People's Police Force. [redacted]

[redacted] Bo Ni was a shareholder in a major narcotics syndicate responsible for trafficking narcotics and other black-market activities. Bo Ni on several occasions used his influence to delay trials or to have arrested traffickers released and to obtain illegal passports. [redacted]

[redacted] numerous Burmese military/intelligence personnel were involved in the syndicate, from tactical commanders in the north to drivers, military intelligence officers, pilots, and the like. Indeed, the entire operation within Burma was reportedly conducted either exclusively by or with the assistance of Burmese Government personnel. [redacted]

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further complicate interdiction efforts of both governments:

- During 1982, [redacted] the BCP moved directly into heroin processing and trafficking. The BCP has successfully resisted government forces for some time, and it is likely that the trafficking efforts will proceed largely unchecked.
- The more diversified smuggling networks used by traffickers may be even more difficult to police, inasmuch as they traverse areas in Burma, Thailand, and Malaysia, where there is little government presence.

- Trafficking operations may become even more widespread. Although Laos does not currently figure heavily in Golden Triangle trafficking, Shan United Army overtures to Laotian traffickers have been reported by US Embassy sources during the past year. There are as yet no known heroin refineries on the Laotian side of the border, but refineries could be easily established there and narcotics smuggled into Thailand or Burma at almost any point along the Mekong River. [redacted]

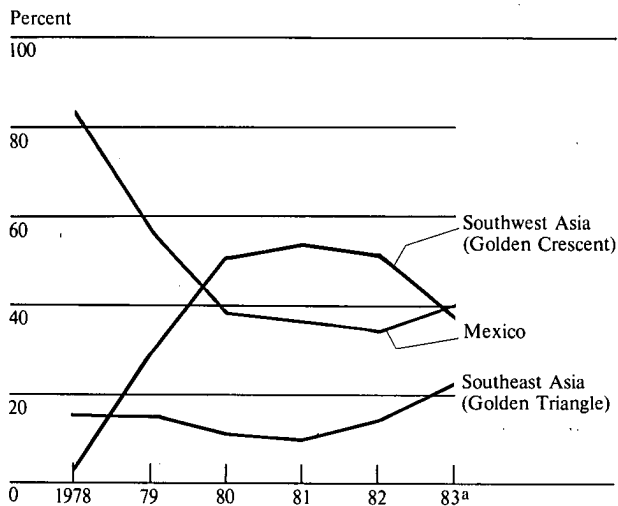
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**Figure 4  
Heroin Market in the United States,  
by Area of Origin**



<sup>a</sup> January through June.

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Faced with competing economic, political, and security demands, it is unlikely that the Governments of Thailand, Burma, or Laos will bring to bear the will and resources necessary to control the narcotics trade in the near future:

- In Burma, it is not likely that the government will gain control of the opium-producing areas, most of which are largely controlled by insurgents. Nor does the government have the economic resources to mount the kind of crop eradication program needed to eliminate illicit opium production. Moreover, there is conclusive evidence that high-level government and military officials, including some officials directly responsible for government narcotics-suppression programs, have profited from protecting drug traffickers, raising major doubts about the effectiveness of any Burmese Government program.

- The Thai Government will probably continue to harass narcotics traffickers along the Thai-Burmese border. It will move more slowly, however, on eradicating opium poppy and instituting financial laws that would slow the flow of the millions of drug dollars that are funneled into Thailand.
- Given the current economic and political situation in Laos, we do not foresee any improvement in the Laotian narcotics situation. Laos may even play an increasingly important role in the Southeast Asian opium trade if the border area is denied to traffickers.

In any event, the United States will probably be the focus of Southeast Asian traffickers as the European market is already saturated with heroin from Southwest Asia. Indeed, evidence is already accumulating in that regard. Seizures of Golden Triangle heroin in the United States for the first six months of 1983 equaled 100 kilograms, 370 percent more than for the same period in 1982. According to DEA, Golden Triangle heroin accounts for 22 percent of the heroin imported into the United States, up from 14 percent in 1982.

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