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Narcotics Control in Pakistan: Problems Persist



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An Intelligence Assessment

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GI 84-10053
April 1984

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Narcotics Control in Pakistan: Problems Persist

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An Intelligence Assessment

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**Narcotics Control in Pakistan:
Problems Persist**

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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 1 March 1984
was used in this report.*

Pakistan is playing an increasingly dominant role in the Southwest Asian narcotics trade. Although much less opium is produced in Pakistan than in either Afghanistan or Iran, much of the Afghan opium that enters the international narcotics market passes through or is processed into heroin in Pakistan. Because of this flow, Pakistan has emerged as a major heroin processing center. Pakistani traffickers probably now handle 25 to 30 percent of the heroin entering the United States and possibly more than half of the heroin going to Europe. Heroin use in Pakistan has grown rapidly as well: the addict population—negligible just three years ago—

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may now number as many as 100,000, [redacted]

Stepped-up antinarcotics efforts by Pakistani authorities in recent years were initially successful in helping to cut opium production in Pakistan. Progress on all fronts, however, has since been stymied:

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- *Opium production in Pakistan*, down markedly from the levels reached in the late 1970s, is now in the hands of the most intransigent growers, who resist government efforts to get them to abandon cultivation.
- Afghan poppy growers appear to have increased opium production substantially over the past two years, ensuring an ample *opium supply for Pakistani traffickers*.
- Pakistani traffickers are able to operate *heroin laboratories* in Landi Kotal, the key Pakistani processing center near the Afghanistan border, despite a November 1982 government-inspired crackdown by tribal leaders. Tensions remain high as tribal traffickers and government authorities clash over the narcotics issue. [redacted]

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Rather than risk a politically costly confrontation with militant tribesmen in the North-West Frontier Province—the center of narcotics production and processing in Pakistan—we believe authorities will instead put greater effort into cracking down on domestic heroin peddlers in the larger cities and on traffickers shipping heroin to the West. These efforts are likely to lead to increased arrests and seizures, especially if Pakistani authorities have access to the training needed to improve their investigative skills and intelligence collection capabilities. Nevertheless, substantial headway against the lucrative drug trade is unlikely as long as opium and heroin remain available in areas outside the government's control. [redacted]



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Figure 1
Opium-Growing Areas in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1983



 Concentrated cultivation
 Scattered cultivation
 0 ————— 200
 Kilometers

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

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Narcotics Control in Pakistan: Problems Persist

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The Southwest Asian narcotics trade is now centered in those areas of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) that are dominated by Pushtun tribes. The NWFP is the major opium processing region in Pakistan, the outlet for large amounts of Afghan-grown opium, and the location of several heroin refineries. Pakistani traffickers in this region now handle 25 to 30 percent of the heroin entering the United States and possibly more than half of the heroin going to Europe. During the past 18 months, Pakistani authorities have taken some action against opium and heroin producers in the NWFP, but the caution taken to avoid provoking the militant tribesmen has hampered the ability of government authorities to retard this trade. Domestic concern, heightened by a rapidly escalating heroin addiction problem, and the pressure of international publicity about Pakistan's role in heroin trafficking have led some Pakistani officials to urge more forceful action against drug traffickers. Others are concerned that such action would spark widespread hostilities in the already volatile Afghanistan border area.

Opium Availability

Vast amounts of opium—much of which is converted into heroin for Southwest Asian, European, and US markets—are available in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. Some of the opium comes from Pakistan, where a decline in production, under way since 1980, appears to have bottomed out. Most, however, comes from Afghanistan, where production has expanded considerably over the past two years,

Opium Production in Pakistan. Pakistan once was the leading opium producer in the Golden Crescent, but the size of the opium harvest has dropped sharply in recent years. Pakistan's opium is produced principally in the North-West Frontier Province, where a record 700 to 800 metric tons of opium were harvested in 1979. According to US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) sources, approximately 60 to 65 percent of this crop was grown in the province's *merged* areas, where the government must

share authority with the militant Pushtun tribesmen, or in the *tribal* areas along the Afghanistan border, where the government exercises little or no control. The remainder was produced in the *settled* areas, where provincial and federal laws prevail.

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By our estimate, production was only some 50 to 75 tons in 1982 and 45 to 60 tons in 1983, nearly all produced in the *merged* and *tribal* areas, as well as collateral information, we estimate that the area under cultivation fell from 30,000 hectares in 1979 to approximately 3,000 hectares in 1983. The precipitous drop in area under cultivation and in production is the result of two factors:

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- Opium brokers, responding to the glutted market occasioned by record production in the late 1970s, dropped the price they were offering farmers from \$200 per kilogram in 1978 to \$40 to \$45 prior to the planting of the 1980 crop. As a result, poppy became less profitable than some competing crops, causing growers to withdraw thousands of hectares from poppy cultivation. The persistence of depressed opium prices—dropping to as low as \$30 per kilogram before the planting of the 1983 crop—has been important in keeping production levels in Pakistan down.
- President Zia banned opium production in 1979. Even though there is little evidence that the ban was aggressively enforced, the threat of government action undoubtedly deterred many farmers from planting poppy in the *settled* areas. Pakistani Government officials report that, except for Gadoon, the *settled* areas have been poppy free since 1980.

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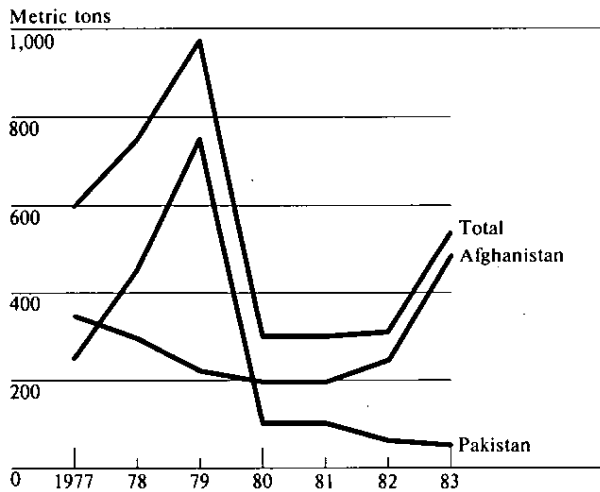
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Figure 2
Opium-Growing Areas in Northwestern Pakistan, 1983



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Figure 3
Opium Production in Pakistan and
Afghanistan, 1977-83



[Redacted]

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Opium Production in Afghanistan. The Southwest Asian narcotics trade has continued to flourish despite the decline in Pakistani production. Drug traffickers initially countered the production drop by drawing on stocks from the earlier bumper harvests; recently they have been able to rely on opium from Afghanistan. Reporting is sparse, but we believe Pakistani traffickers are probably importing more than 200 tons of Afghan opium a year in order to fill the gap created by shrinking opium production in Pakistan and expanding domestic and foreign narcotics markets. According to a US Embassy source, Afghan farmers are willing to market their crop for as little as \$25 a kilogram. According to DEA sources, Afghan-produced opium is now available in 100-kilogram quantities at bargain prices in many of Pakistan's tribal-area smuggling bazaars. [Redacted]

Afghan cultivators seem to have overcome any adverse effects on production caused by the Soviet invasion. [Redacted] opium production in Afghanistan has been rising over

the past two years. Much of the increase is in the traditional eastern growing areas near the border with Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province:

- UN officials reported that Afghanistan's 1982 opium crop may have reached 250 tons, a slight increase over the estimated 1980 and 1981 harvests. They added that production was possibly increasing in the eastern provinces.

[Redacted]

poppy plantings in some key growing areas of Afghanistan had increased by "threefold or fourfold" in recent years.

- DEA sources who traveled through opium-producing areas of Afghanistan during the 1983 crop season reported record poppy hectareage in several key provinces. A DEA assessment based on such reporting puts Afghanistan's 1983 opium harvest between 400 and 575 tons [Redacted]

Afghan opium is smuggled easily into Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. Pushtun tribesmen, who live along both sides of the border, are traditional smugglers eminently familiar with the opium trade, having been involved long before the Soviet occupation in smuggling opium westward from Pakistan to Iran. The border region's rugged and diverse terrain, including more than 200 passes (and trails), clearly works to their advantage.¹ These passes are extremely difficult to patrol. Moreover, some trails, such as those controlled by Shinwari tribesmen around the Khyber Pass, cut through territory belonging to the most militant opponents of narcotics control efforts.

[Redacted]

The Current Situation. We believe opium will continue to be abundant in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area during 1984. The 1984 crop will be harvested in

[Redacted]

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**The Pushtuns of the Afghan-Pakistani
Borderlands**

The Pushtuns (Pathans) constitute one of the largest remaining tribal societies in the world. An estimated 15 million—6 million in Afghanistan and 9 million in Pakistan—they inhabit the southern and eastern slopes of the Hindu Kush, a strategic area that includes the fabled Khyber Pass. Pushtun tribal lands are arid, lacking in resources, and overpopulated. Herding and the cultivation of crops, the two traditional Pathan pursuits, no longer sustain the tribal economies; remittances of tribesmen employed elsewhere, government subsidies, and income from the production and smuggling of opium, heroin, and other valuables make up the deficit. [redacted]

By tradition, Pushtuns have a fierce spirit of independence, both personal and tribal, and they cling strongly to their tribal identities. Their lives are governed by pushtunwali, the traditional Pushtun code of honor that influences most aspects of tribal life. The code calls for blood vengeance, regardless of cost, for a perceived wrong; asylum to all fugitives; and generous hospitality to all guests. To transgress the code risks disgrace and ostracism and retribution by fellow tribesmen. The tribes find an outlet for their individuality in continuous feuding. Vendettas often exist between tribal subgroups and family groups. Frequently they begin in innocence when a member of one group acts against a member of another in the course of army or police work. [redacted]

The Pakistani control system in tribal territory is a legacy of British Indian policy developed to deal with aggressive, militant, and frequently hostile Pushtun tribes. The British used various means to monitor the frontier: they established forts and outposts, built roads to connect and supply their military garrisons, engaged in periodic shows of force in the tribal areas, and subsidized tribal leaders. Present government policy toward the tribal territories stresses gradual assimilation, avoiding the use of force or confrontation. Government control is spread through the mechanism of development: schools, hospitals, electric lines, tube wells and irrigation projects, and especially roads. [redacted]

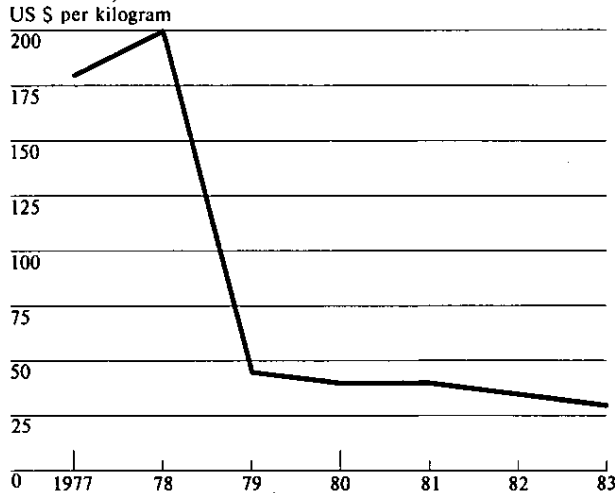
April and May; there is no indication that the area under cultivation in Pakistan or Afghanistan will differ markedly from 1983. [redacted]

The sharp decline in Pakistani opium production, in our view, has bottomed out; additional success in diverting farmers from planting opium is unlikely. Even those authorities who attribute the decrease in Pakistan's opium production largely to the government's actions are pragmatic enough to recognize the limits to enforcing the ban. These same authorities were reluctant to use force against defiant poppy growers in the merged and tribal areas and often expressed sympathy for farmers who were dependent on opium for a cash income. In September 1982, three years after proclaiming the ban, President Zia told the media that poppies were being grown in tribal areas and that cultivation would not be eliminated until developed countries helped Pakistan address the economic needs of these farmers. Authorities recognize that a major crackdown on the well-armed Pushtun growers could trigger widespread disturbances in the NWFP. US officials visiting Pakistan have often been told by high-level authorities, such as NWFP Governor Fazle Haq, that narcotics enforcement in the province had to be balanced against the government's relations with the tribesmen, whose good will was needed to sustain the Afghan resistance.

[redacted] an analysis of the 1982 and 1983 crops shows that in many areas of Pakistan—especially those where government control is the weakest—the area under cultivation has remained essentially unchanged or has increased slightly:

- In Dir, a sprawling, isolated, and rugged district along the Afghanistan border, we estimate approximately 400 hectares were cultivated in 1983. The number of fields declined insignificantly from 5,300 in 1982 to 5,200 in 1983. This remote area, inhabited by some of the most aggressive tribesmen in Pakistan, has been largely ignored by enforcement authorities.

Figure 4
Opium Prices at the Farmgate in
Pakistan's North-West Frontier
Province, 1977-83



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- [redacted] more extensive cultivation in two key *tribal* areas [redacted]. In Bajaur we estimate that 220 hectares of poppies were cultivated in 1983, [redacted]. In Mohmand, we estimate that the cultivated area was at least 160 hectares, [redacted].
- Cultivation also may have increased in the Malakand Agency in spite of considerable deterrence efforts. In an area where the United States is funding a development project, [redacted]. satellite imagery reveals a slight increase in the number of fields under cultivation.

The weather is currently drier than normal, and crop development is subsequently some two weeks late, according to US Embassy officials. This may lower average yields somewhat, but we do not foresee a drop in yield severe enough to greatly affect production.

Even less is known about production prospects in Afghanistan. There appear, however, to be no meaningful constraints to maintaining production levels. As noted, the Soviet invasion has had little impact in the poppy-growing areas. Moreover, because farmers have few alternative cash crops, they are less sensitive than Pakistani farmers to low prices. [redacted]

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Beyond 1984. In the long run, of course, a substantial resurgence in opium production is possible, although we view prospects for such an expansion limited. Should prices for opium increase significantly, however, many Pakistani growers—at least those in the *merged* and *tribal* areas—would presumably return to poppy as their cash crop. Farmers in these areas produced some 400 to 500 tons in the late 1970s. The production limits in Afghanistan are unknown. Tribal leaders in Pakistan presumably understand that widespread planting would be an affront the Pakistani authorities could not ignore, prompting efforts to establish a government presence in the *merged* and *tribal* areas that would interfere with tribal authority in a broader sense. Moreover, with Afghan producers willing to maintain production at high levels despite currently low prices, prospects for a price increase prompted by supply disruption are dim. [redacted]

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Heroin Trafficking: On the Rise

During the past three years, rising heroin production has surpassed poppy cultivation as the most serious narcotics problem in Pakistan. Once content to merely provide opium to the West, where it was converted into heroin, Pakistani traffickers are now prominent heroin suppliers, producing 6 metric tons annually, according to recent US Embassy estimates. Most of the opium processed in Pakistan comes from Afghanistan. Late in 1982, President Zia tried to end this trade by ordering a crackdown on processing laboratories near the Khyber Pass. This effort has not significantly reduced the activity. Moreover, the resulting countermeasures taken by traffickers and tensions between Pakistani authorities and tribesmen have made enforcement more difficult. [redacted]

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The Heroin Trade. Although Pakistani traffickers have had the capability to convert opium into morphine and morphine sulfate since the early 1970s, they did not begin manufacturing heroin on a large scale for the international market until 1981. By then, the fall in opium prices plus the government's 1979 ban on opium production encouraged traffickers to deal in the more lucrative heroin trade. As a result, in 1981 authorities in Europe and the United States began arresting more Pakistani traffickers with multikilogram quantities of heroin worth millions of dollars on the wholesale market. By early 1982 Pakistani narcotics officials were publicly reporting that as many as 30 laboratories, collectively capable of producing tons of heroin, were operating in Landi Kotal, an ancient smuggling city on the Afghanistan border. [redacted]

The Government Reacts. President Zia ordered a crackdown on tribal laboratories in November 1982, perhaps prompted by widely publicized evidence that a heroin epidemic was spreading throughout Pakistan as well as by pressure from US authorities. The government was reluctant, however, to confront the laboratory operators directly. A February 1982 laboratory raid in Darra, near the Khyber Pass, had resulted in a tense standoff between thousands of heavily armed tribesmen and government forces, an event that we believe led authorities to decide to transfer the risks and onus of enforcement to the tribal leaders. Even so, when tribal elders—under the direction of government agents in Khyber—ordered laboratory operators to surrender their equipment or face severe fines, riots broke out in Landi Kotal. Fighting between Afridi tribesmen, who were willing to comply with the order, and defiant Shinwaris resulted in several casualties. Eventually, however, Pakistani authorities reported that traffickers had been persuaded to surrender the hardware from 27 laboratories and that heroin production had ceased in the Khyber area. [redacted]

The Trade Continues. Heroin trafficking from Pakistan continued to be heavy throughout 1983, a sign that the crackdown on laboratories had little lasting effect. In the 12 months following the operation, Pakistani authorities claimed to have seized a record 2,600 kilograms of heroin, over 200 kilograms more than the amount confiscated in 1982. Despite these seizures, Pakistani heroin trafficking organizations

remained intact because Pakistani authorities failed to arrest and immobilize the major smugglers identified by DEA officials. During 1983 government authorities in several large European drug markets indicated to US officials that Pakistani heroin was still available in large quantities. According to the press, British customs officials, for instance, reported that 80 percent of the heroin in the United Kingdom was still coming from Pakistan. DEA officials reported that the availability of Pakistani heroin in the United States, especially in the northeast, increased significantly during the first half of 1983. [redacted]

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Many of the processors in Landi Kotal and its environs apparently moved their small, mobile laboratories "underground," as a ranking Khyber official had predicted would happen following the raids, or they simply reestablished their operations in nearby Afghanistan, beyond the reach of Pakistani officials:

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- According to Pakistani authorities, a raid on a Landi Kotal heroin laboratory in April 1983 netted three traffickers, including a ringleader who allegedly was responsible for operating six of the seven laboratories that officials believed had been reestablished in the city.
- Pakistani authorities also reported that heroin shops in Bara and Jamrud Fort, both within 35 kilometers of Landi Kotal, were raided in June 1983 and several traffickers were arrested.
- In November, Khyber authorities told DEA officials that they suspected two laboratories were operating in the Khyber Agency.
- [redacted] some Shinwari tribesmen had accepted an invitation from Afghan officials to reestablish their laboratories in Afghanistan.
- A DEA source recently claimed that newly established laboratories are operating in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, possibly in the town of Tor Khan, just across the border from Landi Kotal.

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In the meantime, Khyber traffickers have publicly objected to the narcotics ban and subsequent enforcement operations, viewing both as an infringement on their tribal sovereignty as well as a threat to their narcotics trade. Authorities have had to move cautiously as periodic rallies by tribesmen in defense of arrested drug traffickers have kept tension in the Khyber area high:

- In May a Pakistani authority reported to American officials that he was calling upon the Khyber Rifles almost daily to control anti-enforcement demonstrations organized by the United Federation of Tribesmen, a small but vocal group of agitators whose membership reportedly includes heroin traffickers.
- Hundreds of Shinwari tribesmen, demonstrating in December against the arrest of several alleged traffickers and their sympathizers, repeatedly blocked the road connecting Landi Kotal with Tor Khan, a principal trade route with Afghanistan.
- A Khyber official recently told DEA authorities that laboratory operators had become the most troublesome traffickers in Khyber. In a statement that probably reflects his concerns about the volatility of the area, he said that, before carrying out an operation against a laboratory, he would have to be "absolutely sure" that his information was correct—a nearly impossible requirement considering the remote and hostile nature of the tribal areas. [redacted]

Addiction in Pakistan. A vast number of Pakistanis are becoming victims of the NWFP heroin trade. Although Pakistani officials have no comprehensive data on drug addiction, the increase they report in overdose deaths and the number of patients seeking treatment in drug rehabilitation centers leads them to believe that heroin addicts in Pakistan have increased from hardly any in 1980 to probably 70,000 to 100,000 by late 1983. This is in addition to an estimated 150,000 opium abusers in the country. Drug abuse surveys have found that most of the heroin addicts are young skilled and unskilled laborers living in the squalor of Pakistan's crowded, volatile urban slums such as Karachi's Layari district. Some officials fear that students and middle- and upper-class youths are also becoming addicts. Many of these

addicts were not previous opium users, and health officials have found them difficult to treat. There is consensus among Pakistani officials that the addiction problem has spread to all parts of the country and that it shows no signs of abating. [redacted]

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Enforcement—The Government's Dilemma

Pakistani authorities now face a difficult enforcement dilemma. The government is coming under increasing pressure, as a result of Pakistan's growing importance in the international heroin trade as well as the spreading heroin epidemic at home, to take more stringent measures against drug traffickers. Forceful action in the drug-producing areas, however, is likely to cause confrontations with tribesmen that could have destabilizing consequences in the NWFP. [redacted]

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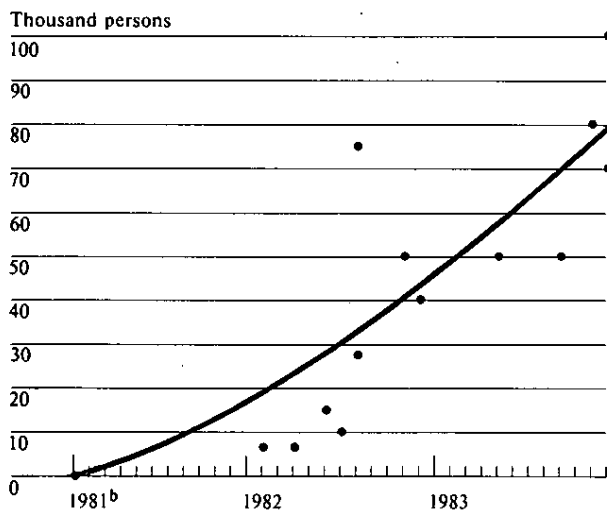
Much of the domestic pressure on the government is from the Pakistani people, who are becoming increasingly aware of Pakistan's growing drug abuse problem:

- Extensive media coverage is being devoted to the narcotics problem. A September 1982 narcotics conference in Quetta, which brought together drug abuse experts from Pakistan and the West, was well covered in the press. In October 1983 the Pakistani Narcotics Control Board (PNCB) sponsored a mass media narcotics workshop in Islamabad.
- By the end of 1983, several public drug-awareness groups had been formed in different parts of the country. In Peshawar, doctors, journalists, educators, and social workers formed an organization to combat the increasing use of heroin and provide treatment to addicts. The NWFP branch of the Pakistani Medical Association has called for a nationwide attack on drug trafficking, even recommending the death sentence for convicted heroin traffickers. In Karachi, men and women demonstrated peacefully for several days, protesting several heroin overdose deaths in the city. They called for a stronger police crackdown on heroin traffickers.

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Figure 6
Heroin Addicts in Pakistan, 1981-83^a



^a By month.

^b First reported in February 1981.

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- Partially in response to international and domestic pressure, President Zia signed last December a long-promised law intended to deter drug trafficking and make narcotics enforcement easier. It imposes mandatory and harsher sentences on convicted drug traffickers and extends the opium production ban into the tribal areas. [redacted]

A number of Pakistani authorities have argued that the government needs to abandon its cautious and ineffective policy of relying on threats and the influence of tribal leaders. Comments by officials who have candidly reported to US Embassy personnel on the Khyber laboratories suggest that tribal justice has been slow, uneven, and ineffective. In August the Khyber Political Agent told Embassy officials that wealthy and influential Khyber traffickers are able to disregard with impunity the commitments to drug control made by their tribal leaders. Several Pakistani officials have stressed that sustained enforcement efforts beyond those provided by tribal leaders and greater enforcement elsewhere in Pakistan will be



Figure 7. Chasing the Dragon. Pakistani addicts smoking heroin in a Quetta narcotics den. [redacted]

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needed to end the Pakistani trade. The NWFP Home Secretary expressed the opinion that stronger enforcement against processors rather than negotiated settlements with tribal leaders would be required to slow the trade; the chairman of the PNCB has stated that 25X1 the time has come to arrest major traffickers and try them in military courts; and in December the Khyber Political Agent told DEA officials that cracking down on the laboratories could not succeed unless enforcement against heroin traffickers and users was carried out in the rest of the country. [redacted] 25X1

The most decisive action yet against poppy growers was taken recently by the Malakand Commissioner. Last October, in a surprise move, possibly without authorization from higher levels, he ordered the arrest of several prominent poppy growers and warned other cultivators that, if they did not voluntarily destroy

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their newly planted fields, government agents would plow them under. The arrests sparked several days of protests, and in a shootout with police one demonstrator was killed and several were wounded. Nevertheless, the provincial government backed the Commissioner's threat—calling in several hundred troops to maintain order—and more than 175 hectares of poppies were destroyed by the local militia. Although this was equivalent to only about 5 percent of the 1983 crop, it constituted the largest eradication effort to date in Pakistan. [redacted]

Other influential narcotics officials, however, caution that narcotics enforcement in the drug-producing areas of the NWFP must be balanced against the risks of upsetting the region's stability. We believe authorities are reluctant to order the enforcement measures that could jeopardize their relationship with the tribesmen. According to Governor Haq and President Zia's Chief of Staff, General Arif, the tribesmen's good will is needed in order for the government to sustain the Afghan resistance and maintain order among the 2 million Afghan refugees settled in the NWFP. Consequently, the preservation of public order—not the control of narcotics trafficking—is the greatest concern of government officials in these areas. [redacted]

Outlook

With Pakistan now suffering from a serious and widely recognized heroin epidemic, the government will not be able to turn its back on the narcotics problem. Despite crop control measures, a crackdown on heroin refineries, and new antinarcotics legislation, Pakistan still faces a decidedly uphill battle in bringing the trade under control. [redacted]

We doubt that the government will put aside its concerns with security in the border area and make full use of the new narcotics laws to pursue NWFP drug producers. Although these laws should facilitate enforcement, there are limitations to what they can accomplish in areas where the government's control is weak. Governor Haq recently advised US officials that the laws will be implemented in phases and only

where tribal leaders have granted permission to government authorities to operate. Moreover, Pakistani enforcement officials told DEA personnel that the impact of extending Federal laws to the tribal areas would be diminished because officers would probably conduct their raids and investigations from government-controlled areas closer to Islamabad rather than from the tribal areas. [redacted]

Stymied by their inability to discourage opium production by intransigent growers and to close down the heroin laboratories, we believe Pakistani authorities will redirect their efforts toward investigation of major international traffickers operating from such brokering centers as Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi. Authorities are also likely to go after the heroin peddlers who often have been the objects of protest in the antinarcotics demonstrations in large cities. By cracking down on drug peddlers, the government will be responsive to pressure from the metropolitan centers to deal with the heroin epidemic; and, by targeting major narcotics brokers, it will be contributing to the control of the international drug trade. Problems posed by the lack of coordination among Pakistani enforcement agencies and insufficient manpower, intelligence, and investigative skills will, however, still have to be resolved. Moreover, the government's success is likely to be only temporary as long as the root of the problem—opium and heroin production in areas where the government has little or no control—remains unresolved. [redacted]

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