

Afghan History Suppressed: Islamists, Heroin and the CIA

Part I

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(Part one of a three-part series)

The *Wall Street Journal* reported on April 7 that the Syrian government reversed a ban on women teachers wearing Islamic face cover in the classroom. The concession to Western-backed Islamist protestors is instructive, since the secular socialist Assad government is clearly in the crosshairs of City of London bankers attempting to redraw the political map of the Middle East. As in Libya and Afghanistan, the bankers are counting on fundamentalists to carry out their counter-revolutionary agenda.

Though Western intelligence had earlier cavorted with Islamists in attacking nationalist movements in Iraq, Indonesia and Iran; it was in Afghanistan where they unleashed the full force of their young Frankensteins.

This disastrous experiment came to a head last week when 2,000 Afghans attacked a UN compound in usually sedate Mazar-e-Sharif, killing 7 staffers. Though set off by the burning of a Quran by our own Florida version of the Taliban (see my Left Hook article "Pastor Jones & Mohammed Atta"), one must understand this nation's history to fully comprehend Afghan anger towards their Western occupiers.

Afghanistan was founded in 1747 and ruled by a bloodline monarchy with rumored ties to the legendary *Roshaniya*—the all-seeing ones. In 1933 King Mohammed Zaher Shah took the throne, ruling the country in feudalistic fashion until deposed by his cousin Mohammed Daoud in 1973. [1]

In April 1978 Daoud was killed in a popular revolution led by socialist leader Nor Mohammed Taraki, who became President and embarked on an ambitious land reform program to help poor Afghan sharecroppers, who were traditionally forced to work land owned by the king and his cronies.

Taraki built schools for women who were banned from education under the monarchy. He opened Afghan universities to the poor and introduced free health care. When counter-revolutionary bandits began to burn down universities and girl's schools, many Afghans saw the hand of the CIA. As the campaign of sabotage intensified, Kabul revolutionaries called on Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev to send troops to repel the bandits. Brezhnev refused.

In 1979 pro-Taraki militants, convinced of a CIA destabilization plot, assassinated CIA Kabul Chief of Station Spike Dubbs. Indeed, in April 1979, a full seven months before the much-ballyhooed Soviet “invasion” of Afghanistan occurred, US officials met with Afghan warlords bent on overthrowing Taraki. On July 3, 1979 President Carter signed the first national security directive authorizing secret aid to Afghan warlords. Carter National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski said he convinced Carter that in his “...opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention.”[2]

Taraki appointed Tabizullah Amin as Cabinet Minister in charge of land reform. Amin, who Soviet KGB Chief Yuri Andropov came to believe was a CIA deep cover agent *provocateur*, launched a brutal campaign of terror against political opponents. This turned world opinion against the Tariki government. Andropov believes the CIA had Amin infiltrate the Kabul government intent on discrediting the revolutionaries.

Taraki traveled to Moscow to consult with the Soviets on a strategy to get rid of Amin. The day he returned to Kabul, Amin had Taraki executed and seized power. A few weeks later CIA-backed warlords massacred dozens of Afghan government officials in the western city of Herat. The combination of these two events finally convinced Breznev to send troops into Afghanistan. [3]

In December 1979 Soviet tanks rolled across the Panshir Valley, while KGB operatives stormed the Royal Palace in Kabul. They assassinated Tabizullah Amin and installed Babrak Karmal as the new leader of Afghanistan. Brzezinski now had the justification he’d been looking for to begin overtly arming counter-revolutionaries in Afghanistan. Though the Afghan conflict killed two million people, Brzezinski later boasted, “That (Carter’s secret directive) was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap.”[4]

CIA agents streamed into Peshawar in Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier Province. The city lay at the foot of Khyber Pass, the gateway to Afghanistan. Tens of thousands of Afghan refugees had flooded into Peshawar to escape the looming war. With help from the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), the CIA scoured the refugee camps looking for modern-day Islamic fundamentalist Assassins who were prepared to intensify the guerrilla war on Kabul’s socialist government and now, to repel the Soviets from Afghanistan.

The Company found what it needed in *Hezbi-i Isbmi*, a force of feudal-minded Islamist fighters assembled and trained by the Pakistani military with CIA oversight. Their leader was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a fanatic who in the early 1970’s had ordered his followers to throw acid into the faces of Afghan women who refused to wear their *burkhas*. In 1972 *Hezbi-i Isbmi* murdered hundreds of left-wing students in Afghanistan then fled to Peshawar, where they escaped prosecution under the protection of the US-allied Pakistan military government. [5] The group was feared and despised by Afghans and Pakistanis alike, who viewed them as a terrorist organization.

Pakistan became the third largest recipient of US military aid in the world, behind only Israel and Egypt. Much of that aid was going to arm the *mujahadeen* who launched raids into Afghanistan, seizing large chunks of real estate. A pattern emerged.

Each time the *Hezbi-i Isbmi* secured land, they immediately planted it to poppies. Between 1982-1983 opium harvests along the Afghan/Pakistani border doubled in size and by 1984

Pakistan was exporting 70% of the world's heroin. [6] During that time the CIA Station in Islamabad – Pakistan's capital – became the largest spook den in the world. Golden Crescent heroin output surpassed that of the Golden Triangle just as the CIA began its biggest operation since Vietnam.

While Hekmatyar's troops planted poppies, *mujahadeen* leader Sayed Ahmed Gailani was supplying the Turkish Gray Wolves syndicate with Pathan opium. The Gray Wolves' Iranian supply had dried up when their good friend the Shah was deposed and Iranian revolutionaries cracked down on the country's heroin epidemic.

Gailani was a wealthy Afghan aristocrat with ties to former King Zaher Shah. He owned the Peugeot dealership in Kabul and his drug smuggling was underwritten by the Saudis. [7] A 1989 State Department report admitted that Afghanistan had become the world's leading source of heroin.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar followed squarely in the footsteps of Vang Pao, Phoumi Nosavan and Khun Sa – the CIA heroin lords of the Golden Triangle. Soon Hekmatyar was recognized as the world's heroin kingpin. Alfred McCoy, in his excellent book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, first exposed the CIA's role in facilitating the guns-for-drugs *quid pro quo*. He terms the CIA approach "radical pragmatism".

This same approach would seem to belie the CIA's penchant for backing Islamic extremists.

In 1978 Lieutenant General Fazle Haq was appointed governor of Northwest Frontier Province where Peshawar became an arms supermarket for the *mujahadeen* and home to hundreds of heroin refineries. Haq was one of the largest depositors at the CIA's Bank of Credit & Commerce International (BCCI). He was President Zia's closest confidant and a good friend of Zia's son, who ran the BCCI Karachi branch.

Haq became *de facto* overlord for *mujahadeen* operations and provided protection for the heroin labs. Hekmatyar himself ran six labs further south in Baluchistan Province. A State Department Narcotics Suppression Officer based in Islamabad accused US Ambassador to Pakistan Ronald Spiers of refusing to forward any evidence of Pakistani military officials' involvement in the heroin trade to DEA, though it was widely known that Haq and others were key players. [8]

In the 1980's Pakistan became the world's poster child for political corruption. The Islamabad *junta's* unflagging support for Reagan's *mujahadeen* was at the root of the corruption. A senior US official stated that, "key Hekmatyar commanders close to the ISI run heroin laboratories in southwest Pakistan and the ISI cooperates in heroin operations". [9]

In September 1985 the *Pakistan Herald* reported that military trucks belonging to the National Logistics Cell of the Pakistan Army were being used to transport arms from the Port of Karachi to Peshawar on behalf of the CIA, and that those same trucks were returning to Karachi sealed by the Pakistani military and loaded with heroin. The practice, according to the *Herald*, had been going on since 1981, just as Hekmatyar's forces began planting poppies.

Two high-ranking Pakistani military officers were caught with 220 kilos of heroin, but were never prosecuted. The US had seventeen DEA agents stationed in Pakistan. During their tenure they made zero arrests. Golden Crescent heroin captured 60% of the US market,

where bricks of hashish appeared stamped with a logo of two crossed AK-47 assault rifles circled by the words, "Smoke out the Soviets". From 1982-1992, roughly the period of US involvement in Afghanistan, heroin addiction in the US rose by 50%. [10]

There was evidence that President Zia himself was involved in the heroin trade. In 1984 a Pakistani national named Hamid Hashain was caught smuggling heroin into Norway. During a routine search of Hashain, customs officials found original copies of President Zia's personal bank statements. The incident caused a major scandal in Pakistan, where allegations of Zia's corruption grew louder. The US increasingly saw him as a liability.

In 1988 Zia's helicopter went down in a ball of fire. Both he and US Ambassador to Pakistan Arnold Raphael were killed. The crash bore an eerie resemblance to the one that killed Panama's President Omar Torrijos in 1981, which even General Noriega, who rose to power because of Torrijos' death, later claimed was a CIA assassination. The US blamed the Soviets and US Air Force officials cordoned off the wreckage, barring Pakistani authorities from investigating the crash. Reagan offered his condolences, citing Zia as, "a strong supporter of anti-narcotics activities in Pakistan".

It is no coincidence that virtually all Arab nations which the West considers allies embrace Islamic fundamentalism, a repressive belief system which is quite congruent with global monopoly capitalism. Both are based on a return to rule by feudalistic monarchy and a diminished role for government and thus democracy.

Most US Arab enemies embrace secular socialism, which aims to stop the exploitation of oil resources by the Four Horsemen and their Rockefeller/Rothschild owners. Great Arab leaders including the Egyptian Nasser, the Algerian Boumedienne, the Libyan Qaddafi, the Syrian Assad and the Iraqi al-Bakr support(ed) a secular socialism (though Qaddafi proclaims himself precisely to be anarcho-syndicalist), which poses a very real threat to the neo-liberal globalization agenda.

Interventions in Libya and Syria follow the same counter-revolutionary template employed by the City of London banksters in Afghanistan.

Part II: ISI, bin Laden and Chevron

[1] "Nation Endures History of Turbulence". Greg Myre. *Springfield News Leader*. 11-10-01. p.9A

[2] "War Criminals, Real and Imagined". Gregory Elich. *Covert Action Quarterly*. Winter 2001. p.23

[3] "Soldiers of God". CNN Presents. 12-23-01

[4] *Washington's Secret War Against Afghanistan*. Philip Bonosky. International Publishers. New York. 1984.

[5] *Convergence*. Christic Institute. Washington, DC. Fall 1991

[6] Ibid

[7] *The Great Heroin Coup: Drugs, Intelligence and International Fascism*. Henrik Kruger. South End Press. Boston. 1980. p.222

[8] *The Outlaw Bank: A Wild Ride into the Heart of BCCI*. Jonathan Beaty and S.C. Gwynne. Random House. New York. 1993. p.49

[9] *Convergence*

[10] Beaty and Gwynne. p.303

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