

War “on” drugs:

The reasons and consequences of the CIA’s involvement in the drug trade and the phoney “war” against drug dealers.

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Mémoire de Master en Civilisation américaine
Soutenu à Grenoble en juin 2007
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr Francis McCollum Feeley for his help and support all along the year to the accomplishment of this research paper.

Table of contents

Introduction	5
Part 1: The Vietnam War and Drugs:	7
1.1 The Golden Triangle	7
1.1.2 The Historical Context	8
1.1.3 Covert Wars in Laos	9
1.1.4 Alliance with Drug Lords in Burma	11
1.1.5 Corruptions in Thailand	13
1.1.6 Heroin: Destroying the Asian Community	15
1.2 The GIs Problem	17
1.2.1 Drug Habits among the GIs to Fight Depression	18
1.2.2 How to turn a GI into a Heroin Addict	20
1.2.3 The Effects and Consequences of Drugs on the U.S Troops	22
1.2.4 The GIs: a New Market	24
1.2.5 The Consequences of Heroin Addiction in the United States	25
PART 2: Covert Wars in Afghanistan and Drugs	28
2.1 The Golden Crescent	28
2.1.2 The Historical Context	29
2.1.3 The Pakistan Ally	32
2.1.4 Afghanistan and the Alliance with a Drug Lord: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar	33
2.1.5 Iran, a Different Situation	34

2.2 Causes and Consequences	35
2.2.1 Arming anyone who would Fight Communism	35
2.2.2 An Increasing Number of Heroin Addicts	36
2.2.3 Heroin; a Lucrative Business	37
PART 3: Drugs and Covert Operations in America:	39
3.1 The Situation in Central America	39
3.1.2 A New Threat: Narcoterrorism	39
3.1.3 How to Find the Money to Finance a Covert War	41
3.2 The Situation in the United States; Drugging America	44
3.2.1 Smuggling Cocaine into the United States	44
3.2.2 The Crack Cocaine Explosion	45
3.2.3 Protecting the CIA	48
3.3 Targeting the African American Community	50
3.3.1 Reinforcing Racism, the Black Paranoia	51
3.3.2 The Increasing Rate of African Americans in U.S Prisons	53
3.3.3 The War on Drugs: a Means of Control?	55
Conclusion	57
Appendixes	60
Bibliography and sources	63

INTRODUCTION

Looking back on the American history throughout the twentieth century, it seemed that the main concern of the government was to protect National Security. In such a purpose, different agencies were created to operate under the directive of the U.S government. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was one of them. Established in September 1947 as a substitute to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the CIA was in charge of foreign intelligence gathering and covert actions only. In other words, domestic intelligence or intervention was completely forbidden to the agency. Therefore, the CIA was provided with a large scope of operations outside U.S borders. However, since its creation many authors or journalists¹ have reported stories of criminal conducts by the CIA. Such criminal activities included corruptions, assassinations and involvements in the drug trade. The CIA's involvement in the drug trade has been witnessed and reported by former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents such as Celerino Castillo III or Michael Levine.² However, the connection between the CIA and drugs has always been denied by the agency and the U.S government. In the poem, CIA Dope Calypso, Allen Ginsberg wrote:

First they stole from the Meo tribes
Up in the hills they started taking bribes
Then they sent their soldiers up to Shan
Collecting opium to send to the Man

Pushing junk in Bangkok yesterday
Supported by the CIA

Brought their jam on mule trains down
To Chiang Mai that's railroad town
Sold it next to the police chief "s brains
He took it to the town on the choochoo train
Trafficking dope to Bangkok all day
Supported by the CIA³

¹ Such as Alfred McCoy, Gary Webb or William Blum.

² Michael Levine has written The Big White Lie: The CIA and the Cocaine/Crack Epidemic and Celerino Castillo III has written Powderburns: Cocaine, Contras and the Drug War.

³ Allen Ginsberg, CIA Dope Calypso, January, 1972.

In his poem, Ginsberg denounced the agency alliance with drug lords during the Vietnam War. Pejorative words such as “junk” or “dope” are used several times to suggest the negative aspect of the CIA’s activities. “Sold it next to the police chief’s brain” refers to the idea of corruption. Also, Ginsberg gave more credibility to his poem as he used real locations and real names of drug lords such as Phoumi Nosavan, General Vang Pao or Mr Phao (See Appendix 1). His allegations were to be confirmed a few years later by New York Times columnist C.L. Sulzberger (See Appendix 2).

Starting from the assumption that the CIA was involved in the drug trade, the purpose of this study is to understand the reasons of such involvement. As the agency executed the will of the U.S government, what was its role in the drug trade? What was the connection between the agency and drugs in countries such as Vietnam, Afghanistan or Nicaragua? What were the consequences?

To begin with, the CIA’s covert operations during the Vietnam War started in the Golden Triangle. Alliance with drug lords occurred in countries such as Laos, Burma or Thailand. We shall study the impact on such alliances on the Asian community and the GIs soldiers who fought during the Vietnam War.

Then, a study of the CIA’s intervention during the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan will be presented to better understand the reasons why the CIA decided to get involved in the drug trade.

In a third part, we shall analyse the CIA’s covert operations in Central America to bring light on its involvement in the drug business and the consequences for the American population, more precisely the consequences for the African Americans. This study is organized in a chronological way in order to highlight the different aspects of the CIA’s involvement in drug trafficking.

PART 1: The Vietnam War and drugs

Writers such as Alfred McCoy and William Blum who have studied the history of the CIA involvement in the drug trade would agree that the Vietnam War was a war governed by corruption, illegal activities and high private profits. For such a purpose, legal means could be adopted to achieve goals, or extreme illicit methods could be used. Those extreme measures might include assassinations, bribes, secret operations and alliances with drug lords. Moreover, the American historian Gabriel Kolko was one of the many authors who have argued that the Vietnam War was not a war fought to defend the interest and liberty of the Vietnamese people but mainly to defend the U.S government's own interest.

In order to understand the reasons for the subsequent CIA involvement in the drug trade in South East Asia, it is important to locate the place known as the world's largest source of opium, morphine and heroin: The Golden Triangle. As the CIA was in Vietnam for various reasons, we shall try to determine the cause of its presence in South East Asia and its influence on the Asian community and the U.S troops.

1.1 The Golden Triangle:

The Golden Triangle has been known as the Asian largest illicit opium production area *of* "around 350,000 square kilometers that overlaps the mountains of three countries of Southeast Asia: Burma (Myanmar), Laos, and Thailand."⁴ Opium or "Papaver somniferum L"⁵ is a European plant that was first introduced by the Arab traders who passed it on to the Indians and then to the Chinese. The word "Golden Triangle" first appeared in 1971 because of the shape it took out of the three countries.⁶ It is interesting to observe that before U.S intrusion in Southeast Asia the cultivation of opium was part of the tradition within the Asian community and it was even integrated into their social code. During the

⁴ Encyclopaedia of Modern Asia.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Vietnam War it was the place where most of the CIA's secret interventions occurred. While the US government took responsibility for their actions in Vietnam, the CIA took actions in the Golden Triangle.

1.1.2 The Historical context:

The context in which the CIA intervenes in the Golden Triangle is important to notice. The Vietnam War started in 1955 during the period of the Cold War. In a wish to stop the imminent invasion of the Soviet Union's ideology in Southeast Asia the United States decided to intervene in Vietnam to prevent any further expansion of communism. Many young Americans were sent to Southeast Asia to fight communism which was already present in the northern part of Vietnam and which was believed to move southward. Backing the South Vietnamese resistance the US government decided to reinforce its military power by asking the CIA to find some extra help. So the CIA turned to mercenary men who were ready to fight for them in an American wish to eradicate communism. Those men that the CIA was going to find were in Laos and were known as the Hmong people or the Meo.⁷

⁷ Meo is a derogatory name for the Hmong that Westerners adopted from the lowland people of China, Thailand, and Vietnam during the colonial period. Alfred McCoy, The Politics of Heroin: CIA complicity in the Global Drug Trade (revised and expanded of the 1972 publication The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia, Lawrence Hill books, revised edition 2003), 195.

1.1.3 Covert Wars in Laos

As the CIA got involved in Laos it needed a way to convince those Hmong people to fight for its cause and one of the way to convince them was to buy their opium.⁸ By 1960, “the CIA battled local communists with a secret army of 30,000 Hmong-a tough highland tribe whose only cash crop was opium.”⁹ As argued by authors such as Alfred McCoy the CIA decided to ally with people who were involved in the plantation of opium in its covert war against the communist. Under the CIA protection Laotian generals like General Vang Pao, commander of the CIA’s Secret Army, opened heroin laboratories and Hmong officers loaded opium on the CIA’s own airline Air America¹⁰ which aim was to supply weapons to the Hmong but was also used to fly drugs all over Southeast Asia which was sold to the CIA protégé such as Laotian General Phoumi Novasan. However, McCoy in his analysis, only focuses on the involvement of the CIA trying to give proof of its complicity in the drug trade and one can legitimately ask: why would the U.S Congress, turn a blind eye on such an alliance? First, it is easy to understand that such a superpower nation as the United States could not possibly admit having any connections with drugs while so many American citizens could see the outcomes of the war from beginning to end through television and on a regular basis. But not only that, could it be seen as “the end justifies the means” mentality that American politicians adopted during many periods of conflicts. It seems that there are no established rules concerning the winning of a war. Whether it is legitimate or not, the means used by the CIA to enrol any kind of additional military assistance was enough to fight the evil enemy. The past history or background of the allies doesn’t matter (even if it has roots in the drug trade) as long as they can be controlled and used to satisfy the Central Intelligence Agency’s interest. The manipulation and controlling

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Excerpt from Alfred McCoy, Drug Fallout, Progressive magazine, August 1997. taken from internet site: http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/CIA/CIAdrug_fallout.html. 18/03/2007.

¹⁰ Ibid.

of people is part of the indoctrination process that the government often used in time of war. For instance the indoctrination of young American teenagers in an attempt to provoke a feeling of hatred against the communists was done in the purpose of making them wish to go on battle in a patriotic attitude to fight a war in which they are not aware of the consequences. The indoctrination can be seen as a good tactic to rally people to a particular cause.

As far as the alliance with Hmong tribes is concerned, it can be assimilated more to corruption rather than indoctrination but the aim is similar: to fight the spread of communism. Basically, the CIA's plan was not to be directly involved in the war, the purpose was to find someone who can do the "dirty job" for them so that they could deny the whole thing if it was to turn wrong. As William Blum pointed out in his book Killing Hope:

"Laos was an American plantation, a CIA playground...Heroin was refined in a laboratory located on the site of CIA headquarters in northern Laos. After a decade of American military intervention, Southeast Asia had become the source of 70 percent of the world's illicit opium and the major supplier of raw materials for America's booming heroin market."¹¹

Even if the CIA has always refused to admit having any connection with drugs, the contribution of Laos in the worldwide opium distribution strangely coincided with the period when the CIA was known to be active in the country. Therefore the connection between drug production in Southeast Asia and the CIA has been proved. But what is even more unusual is the reason of such a connection.

A great part of the exported opium from Laos went to Vietnam. Since opium was not grown inside the country:

¹¹ William Blum, Killing Hope. (Black Rose Books, Montreal/ New York/ London, 1998), 142.

All of the country's drugs had to be imported from the Golden Triangle region to the north, the source of all the country's opium and heroin. Also it has become the world's most important source of illicit opium.¹²

Once introduced in the country; the drugs could be used to weaken the Vietnamese pro-communist side. In fact, exporting heroin to addict the rebels is a good way of winning a war. As a matter of fact, it is easier to fight a heroin-addicted soldier who can barely use his rifle than a fit and trained soldier on the alert. The use of drugs to control people can be useful in time of war.

Also drugs could be utilized against prisoners to obtain intelligence that could not be getting out of a non-cooperative enemy. The use of drug as a psychological torture has been employed for interrogation just as physical torture has been employed by the CIA to collect information. It is interesting to notice that the other part of the exported opium went to the GIs' in service during the Vietnam War (this will be treated further in the analysis).

Since the CIA has played an important part in Laos, supplying heroin during the Vietnam War, what was the role of the CIA in the two other spots that are parts of the Golden Triangle: Burma and Thailand?

1.1.4 Alliance with Drug Lords in Burma:

First of all, the relation between Burma and the CIA goes back to the 1950s' and therefore a little bit before the Vietnam War. During this period, the CIA supported Nationalist Chinese forces in an attempt to invade communist China. This Nationalist Chinese guerrilla was known as the Kuomintang army or KMT and was trained by the CIA, needless to say that all this was done under strict confidentiality. But after being defeated, some generals in the KMT army which was settled in the Burmese Shan state

¹² Alfred McCoy, op.cit, 196.

started to get involved in the opium production by mainly “terrorizing the local villagers into growing it for them.”¹³ Eventually, the KMT army’s opium production changed over to drug lords such as Yunnanese opium warlord Khun Sa or Laotian General Ouane Rattikone. As a result, the CIA by failing to support anti-communist Chinese forces in the war against communism worsen the situation in the Golden Triangle making Burma one of the largest opium production area. One can disagree and say that the CIA had nothing to do with the KMT’s involvement in the opium production but still, they were the one chosen by the CIA to battle on the field.

However, we can wonder why the CIA didn’t prevent any further KMT’s production of opium in the Burmese area since it was probably aware of such illegal activity. Why would the CIA leave its defeated army terrorize poor Burmese villagers into growing opium? The answer could be that the CIA did not want to interfere with the personal interest of its allies. The agency did not want to lose those who worked for it by banning or rebuking the production of illicit drugs. Instead, the CIA chose to keep quiet on the matter allowing the KMT soldiers to become drug lords while enjoying themselves from the drug trade using local people in Burma.

What about those villagers who were forced to produce more and more opium? What was their situation? The condition in which they lived? They must have been badly treated doing hard labours. But worst than that they found themselves in the middle of a conflict they were not involved in. But who cares? Certainly not the CIA, whose interest was much more political than social or cultural. In fact, the threat of losing a war was obviously present in the minds of American politicians. The U.S government surely did not want the U.S to appear as a defeated nation, so the idea of being humiliated by the Soviet Union forced the U.S government to take whatever measures to win the war. Secretary of Defense John McNaughton said that 70% of the U.S involvement in the Vietnam War was devoted

¹³Mark Zepezauer, The CIA’s Greatest Hits (Odonian Press, 1994), 57.

to avoid “a humiliating defeat, 20% was to keep S.V.N territory from Chinese hands while only 10% was to permit the people of S.V.N. to enjoy a better, freer way of life.”¹⁴ It seemed that the CIA, under the U.S government direction, did not pay much care about those poor manipulated villagers and even more because those very villagers were Burmese. Besides, the idea of manipulation has for a long time been associated to the CIA as it appeared in Thailand.

1.1.5 Corruptions in Thailand:

Thailand has a long history of corruptions. Corruptions in the highest level of the Thai government whether it is in the military or in the police institution. From 1947 to 1957, Thai politics has been dominated by two military divisions: one under the direction of General Phao Siyanan, “the country’s notoriously corrupt police commander”, and the other was Marshal Sarit Thanarat, the army’s commander in chief.¹⁵ Both of them were known to have connections with the drug business in Thailand but only one of them had connections with the CIA: General Phao. The situation in Thailand concerning drug activities was tightly linked with the situation in Burma. As a matter of fact, all the drugs that moved towards Thailand came from Burma thanks to the CIA who gave contacts from their KMT allies in Burma to their new “friends” in Thailand. Thanks to the CIA’s Sea Supply Corporation, the anti-communist general Phao received full military supplies: from vehicles and weapons to aircraft.¹⁶ Those same aircrafts were then used to fly drugs. No one can say if it was under the acknowledgment of the CIA, but after what happened in Laos or Burma there is a strong case against the CIA concerning its involvement in the drug trade that cannot be denied. Once again, the point is to fight communism.

¹⁴ William J. Fulbright, The Arrogance of Power (Copyright 1966), 108.

¹⁵ Alfred McCoy, op.cit, 181.

¹⁶ Ibid.

But was the CIA only an accomplice in all this? In his book, McCoy says:

“Whether the CIA actively organized the traffic is something only the agency itself can answer.”¹⁷ McCoy asks a good question but does not answer it, however we do. The CIA was more than just a collaborator. As an associate the CIA could have easily make possible such traffic; the agency had the money and the technology to facilitate everything. Being thousand miles away from home, in a foreign country during a period of war could have allowed the CIA to act without culpability as long as it could serve well in the war against communism. Moreover, thanks to its position as a secret agency it would have been easy for the CIA to deny it all while blaming on corrupted people in Thailand. In any case, the result was shameful for the Thai community whose population included the largest number of opium smokers in Southeast Asia and whose country had the largest addict population¹⁸. Still today, the Thai population is struggling against the spread of methamphetamine that devastated the younger generation putting more and more teenagers into medical centres.

Also the impact of the CIA’s role in the drug trade was not only disastrous for the Thai people but also for the entire Asian community as well. More particularly the Vietnamese people whose direct involvement in the war already took the life of many civilians.

¹⁷ Ibid, 192.

¹⁸ Ibid, 194.

1.1.6 Heroin: Destroying the Asian Community:

It is ironic that the CIA World Factbook mentioned illicit drugs in Vietnam, reporting that Vietnam is a:

Minor producer of opium poppy; probable minor transit point for Southeast Asian heroin; government continues to face domestic opium/heroin/methamphetamine addiction problems despite longstanding crackdowns.¹⁹

Since it was reported that Vietnam did not have heroin laboratories or opium poppies, how could they be producing opium? Moreover, according to the CIA World Factbook, Vietnam is suffering from a domestic drug problem like many other countries in the world today. But the Factbook does not tell us that the CIA was one of the causes of this domestic drug problem. Among the effects of the drug business that surrounded the Vietnam War was its dreadful consequences on the Asian community. As a matter of fact, by providing protections and help to drug lords in the Golden Triangle, the CIA did not think about the consequences on the Vietnamese people who directly suffered from the massive flow of drugs into their country.

As far as Vietnam is concerned, the first thing that can be said about the drug business was its consequences on the Vietnamese people. In fact, a great number of Vietnamese children found themselves involved in the drug business selling heroin to American GIs as heroin could be found anywhere in the country: “Fourteen-year-old girls were selling heroin at roadside stands on the main highway from Saigon to the U.S army base at Long Binh.”²⁰ Some of them did it on their own but a great number of them were forced to sell

¹⁹CIA - The World Factbook 2007, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html>. 15/03/2007.

²⁰Alfred McCoy, op.cit, 223.

drugs by the drug mafia. Given the wide-spread poverty, anyone in Vietnam could be a potential drug dealer:

Saigon street peddlers stuffed plastic vials of 95 percent pure heroin into the pockets of GIs as they strolled through downtown Saigon; and “Mama-sans,” or Vietnamese barracks’ maid, started carrying a few vials to work for sale to on-duty GIs.²¹

Selling drugs became an important source of income and many saw no other choice but to do it in order to get out of their misery.

Also, young Vietnamese dealers could be tempted to take drugs as they were selling it, and become locked into the activity. Therefore, drugs could become a vicious circle for anyone who is involved in the traffic because once implicated in such a self-perpetuated environment one must find it hard to get through it.

Moreover, the increase of drug dealers in Vietnam must have been a threat to the country as more and more conflict between rival drug dealer gangs would have intensified. As heroin could be found anywhere, local dealers would have been tempted to get the monopoly of the selling of drugs, thus increasing tensions and conflicts. But this not only concerned small local dealers but also Vietnamese officials who organised and protected the drug market under the CIA’s negligence. In fact, during the 1970s’ South Vietnamese drug business was to be divided among three major factions whose interest for money created a growing tension:

Element in the South Vietnamese air force, the civil bureaucracy (police, customs, and port authority) and the army, navy and National Assembly’s lower house²².

All of those factions being in conflict in time of war were to be dangerous for the country when uniformity was to be recommended. As a consequence, the CIA’s alliance with drug

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, 225.

lords in the Golden Triangle could be seen as one of the major causes of the Southeast Asian drug problem. The increasing flow of drugs in Vietnam provided by the Golden Triangle has completely ravaged the Asian community damaging the health of its population. Drugs became devastating to the Vietnamese people but also to the stability of the country whose infrastructure could not have overcome. Besides, drugs became devastating to people that the U.S government certainly did not expect: the GIs.

1.2 The GIs Drug Problem:

The use of drugs among the GIs during the Vietnam War has been a great matter of controversy. At first, officials in the U.S government tried to minimize the problem by arguing that only 5 percent of the GIs were hard-drug users.²³ This has been seen as an attempt to reassure the parents of all the American soldiers sent in Vietnam but in 1971, the Pentagon recognized that nearly 35 percent of American troops in Vietnam had tried heroin and that 20 percent had been addicted at some time during their tour in Vietnam.²⁴ The GIs' drug problem and a significant increasing interest brought by the U.S media on the issue led President Nixon to launch his infamous "War on Drugs". But before dealing with the consequences of the GIs' drug use, it seems interesting to deal with the reasons of their drug-addiction.

²³ Gabriel Kolko, Anatomy of a War (Pantheon books: New York, 1986), 363.

²⁴ Ibid.

1.2.1 Drug Habits among the GIs to Fight Depression:

One of the main causes of the GIs addiction to drugs was simply monotony. As argued by Gabriel Kolko: “The drug epidemic that followed was to some extent related to the sheer boredom among enlisted men, as long day on bases replaced search-and-destroy missions.”²⁵

When they were not on the field fighting for a war some of them did not want, U.S soldiers spent their day in the camp trying to occupy themselves the best they could. So the use of illicit drugs which was forbidden in the U.S army became common among the GIs. Most of the time U.S soldiers started to smoke Marijuana to forget their boredom. A good account of soldiers smoking marijuana could be seen in Oliver stone’s movie: Platoon. This movie was to be partially based on Stone’s own experience as a soldier during the Vietnam War and it was also an attempt by the director to show what the war was really like. In the movie, we happened to see the soldiers spending their night in the base camp enjoying themselves while smoking marijuana. The character of Chris played by Charlie Sheen smokes marijuana for the first time:

Chris wondering what he's doing here.
His eyes roving over LERNER, CRAWFORD, MANNY, FLASH, FRANCIS,
HOYT, TUBBS, DOC, other from the Platoon, about 9 or 10 of them.
Rhah eyes him back, hands him the bowl.

RHAH

You lame Taylor?

CHRIS

What?

RHAH

You lame or something?

²⁵ Ibid.

KING

(smiling)

... go ahead on, smoke it man.

Chris understands, takes the bowl. Hesitates.

Then smokes it.

The contact fumes are almost enough to knock him out.

He starts coughing. They're all laughing.²⁶

Such a scene helps us understand the situation in which the GIs found themselves during the Vietnam War and why they started using drugs. The confusion that surrounds the main character who “is wondering what he’s doing here” reinforces his lack of understanding of the war. Being so far away from home in a hostile environment led him to take drugs to escape boredom but also the incomprehension of the war. By smoking, the GIs could “escape” the war but it could also be seen as a way to escape the army itself as a great number of soldiers in Vietnam started to complain about the conditions of life imposed by the army and the situation in which they got involved. Also, the 1960s’ was the period of the Hippies in the United States who were known to be non-violent, large drug users and anti-war protestant. Smoking could be seen as the GIs’ way of opposing to the war. Maybe most of the young men sent to Vietnam were already smoking in America when they were at school or at the university. The use of marijuana was common to the GIs as they would even smoke while patrolling in the jungle. However, the use of drugs could be more psychologically disturbing to the GIs as some of them would turn into hard-drug consumers.

²⁶Oliver Stone, *Platoon*. 1986, Script taken from: <http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/platoon.html>. 21/04/2007.

1.2.2 How to turn a GI into a heroin addict:

As we have seen earlier, smoking marijuana was a way of escaping the war but when this war became too horrible and violent for the GIs some of them turned to the use of hard-drugs to deal with the atrocity of the war. As they were asked to kill more and more people; they would therefore turn to heroin which was cheap at this time and which was invading Vietnam. According to U.S army medical officers, by mid 1971:

“About 10 to 15 percent, or 25,000 to 37,000, of the lower-ranking enlisted men serving in Vietnam were heroin users.”²⁷

The problem of heroin addiction among U.S soldiers became a matter of great significance as in 1971; there were more American heroin addicts in South Vietnam than in the entire United States.²⁸

There is also another reason to explain the shift from marijuana to heroin among the U.S soldiers. According to a report made by Dr. Norman E. Zinberg, a psychoanalyst and professor of education at Clark University, who went to Vietnam in 1971 on a fact-finding mission for the United States Department of Defense and the Drug Abuse Council:

“. . . The Army itself is universally credited with causing the swing to heroin through its own blunder: the campaign against marijuana,”²⁹

During the Vietnam War, GI soldiers were forbidden to have or smoke marijuana, as marijuana is bulky and detectable by smell (which is not the case for heroin) GIs soldiers started to get heroin instead. Thus, the rise of heroin consumption among GIs could be attributed to the U.S army itself whose desire to prevent the use of marijuana led them to find another alternative. But according to McCoy the only and main reason for the GI heroin epidemic was the Vietnamese officials who “organized and protected the heroin

²⁷ McCoy, op.cit, 223.

²⁸ McCoy's excerpt, Drug Fallout, Ibid.

²⁹ The consumers' union report on licit and illicit drugs by Edward M. Brecher and the editors of consumer reports magazine, 1972 taken from website:
<http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/Library/studies/cu/CU20.html> . 22/04/2007.

traffic.”³⁰ It is true that the spread of heroin use among the GIs was somehow connected to those at the higher level of the drug business (including the CIA) but on a smaller scale, it is important to notice the responsibility of the U.S army on such an important matter whose negligence emphasised the GI’s heroin epidemic. As military officials were pushing their young and inexperienced soldiers into the atrocity of the war, they did not think about their possible fragile psychological state of mind that led them to the use of illicit narcotics.

Furthermore, The U.S army became so concerned by the increasing rate of soldiers addicted to heroin that they started a crackdown on drug abuse in 1971 doing urine test on GIs to detect any use of hard-drugs, but some of the GIs managed to pass the test by bringing “a buddy's "clean" urine” to the test and substituting it for their own.³¹ Also, the U.S government tried to lessen the problem by providing two arguments favouring their optimism against the GI’s heroin problem:

(1) The urinalysis test administered to GI soldiers before their return to the United States showed that no more than 5 percent of them were heroin users; (2) a great majority smoked or snorted heroin and they would have no problem kicking the habit once back home.³² We can observe that the U.S administration falsely reported the number of heroin users, claiming that only 5 percent of them were heroin addicts. Whatever the means employed by the U.S government and the army to prevent drug use among the GIs, it seemed that there was nothing they could have done to succeed. By 1971, it was too late since 34 percent of all U.S soldiers in South Vietnam were heroin addicts³³, a number which was to increase as more and more soldiers became involved in the use of hard-drugs. Given such a perspective, what would be the consequences for the U.S army to have so much drug addicted soldiers? Such a question can be answered by studying the effects of drugs on the GIs in Vietnam.

³⁰ McCoy, The Politics of Heroin, op.cit, 224.

³¹ Ibid, 256.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, 258.

1.2.3 The Effects and Consequences of Drugs on the U.S troops:

We have seen so far that marijuana as a soft-drug was used by the GIs as a form of entertainment, a way to deal with their ruthless condition of life. However, when it comes to hard-drugs things are a little bit different. We have seen that easy access to heroin (in part due to the CIA) during the Vietnam War has favoured its spread among the GIs. Furthermore, heroin was considered to be harmful for those who were not strong enough to overcome a possible dependency. As a result, a lot of GIs turned themselves to treatment. In the year 1971, heroin was to be the greatest threat to the GIs during the Vietnam War, even more than the North Vietnamese opposition. The U.S army had to deal with such an important crisis in its side while on a war against the communists. GIs and officials started asking themselves who was behind the soldiers' heroin epidemic.³⁴ What most of them did not know was that the very same agency who was supposed to be fighting along with them (the CIA) was responsible for all this. Instead of protecting the U.S military force, the CIA was protecting drug lords in Southeast Asia.

Also, heroin was killing GIs in Vietnam as in 1970, drug overdose deaths increased by 175 percent in August and September with 46 deaths occurring, while during the first three weeks of October 35 soldiers died.³⁵ Another problem was that some GIs turned into heroin pushers, as we have seen for the Vietnamese who became drug dealers, GIs could turn into the selling of drugs to make money. Moreover, a soldier under the influence of heroin could be a real danger for himself and the other U.S soldiers while on the battlefield as heroin could lead him to do things he would not normally do. As we have seen it previously, drug could come in handy when it comes to fight someone who has taken drugs but at the same time drugs could turn someone into a violent killing machine. It could also

³⁴ McCoy, op.cit, 223.

³⁵ Ibid, 225.

make a soldier being unaware of the danger. Even on the Vietnamese side, drug addicted soldiers were used for battle as argued by McCoy:

“Heroin-crazed North Vietnamese regulars [were] making suicide charges up the slopes of Khe Sanh with syringes stuck in their arms.”³⁶

One of the consequences of GIs’ addiction was the fact that the U.S army could lose control on its soldiers. As some of the enlisted men in Vietnam were into heroin to overcome their boredom, other could turn to heroin and then turned against the army. The result was that some GIs fled the army and became deserters or even more defectors. In 1972, there were known to be some “3,000 deserters living in the Saigon suburb of Cholon alone.”³⁷

In his article, The POWs, CIA and Drugs, Mickael C. Ruppert argued that the CIA was ordered to use “nerve gas to kill defectors and deserters in Southeast Asia”³⁸ because they could be a threat to the U.S government as important information could be leaked and used against them by the enemy. The consequences of drug use among the GIs were to be of greater importance for the U.S government as they wanted to win the war in Vietnam. Also taking drugs was one of the reasons why some GIs didn’t want to go home because heroin was so cheap and easy to find in Vietnam that they feared they will not to be able to find drugs when they will have to go back in the United States. Besides, the GIs were considered to be a new and profitable market for the drug dealers.

³⁶ Ibid, 223.

³⁷ Michael C. Ruppert, “The POWs, CIA and Drugs”, 1998. taken from website: <http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/pandora/POW.htm>. 10/04/07.

³⁸ Ibid.

1.2.4 The GIs: a New Market:

As more and more U.S soldiers were addicted, an increase in the GIs demand for heroin supply began to appear. Consequently, the addiction of all those U.S soldiers created a new market for drug dealers whose appeal for money led them to maintain this market. As argued by McCoy, the South Vietnamese officials were the one behind the organization and the protection of heroin traffic (see supra.p.13). We can ask ourselves why they would protect such traffic when they needed the U.S army's firepower. The reason is the money. In fact, GIs in Vietnam "spent an average of \$12 a day on four vials of heroin. Over a year this came out to \$88 million."³⁹ In a poor country such as Vietnam drug dealers were making money while villagers were suffering from the war.

As a consequence of the GIs' drug business, heroin started to be smuggled back to the United States. In fact, the GIs drug market could have been seen as a consumer test for Asian drug dealers whose unsold heroin to U.S soldiers was to be shipped overseas. Even the GIs themselves were trying to bring back heroin after their duty in Vietnam. Sometimes heroin was smuggled to the United States "in the body bags of dead servicemen."⁴⁰

Somehow the CIA, who tolerated opium production and even worst helped transport it to Vietnam, participated in the smuggling of drugs to the United States addicting at the same time many U.S citizens. Dealing with the issue of the heroin smuggling to the United States, one question comes to mind: Why would drug dealers in Vietnam and the Golden Triangle take the risk of exporting so much heroin back to the U.S when it could be sold to closer countries like Germany or any other European nation? There could be several reasons to this. As previously said in the analysis, the GIs' market could have been

³⁹ McCoy, op.cit, 224.

⁴⁰ Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St.Clair, Whiteout: the CIA, Drugs and the Press (Verso, London, New York 1998), 249.

considered as a consumer test for future drug exportation. As the GI's drug business was very profitable, drug dealers probably thought that smuggling heroin to the United States was worth a try. Besides, America is considered as the most powerful nation and also the richest country in the world. Selling drugs to U.S rich citizens could be a good reason for exporting it as heroin could be sold at a higher prices than in Vietnam. Also, but this is a less probable reason; drug dealers in Southeast Asia sent heroin to the United States in retaliation for the troubles caused by the Vietnam War or simply in an attempt to move the drug business out of their country. As for the CIA whose complicity in the drug trade has been documented (see McCoy), the smuggling of heroin could be seen as a way of targeting a certain category of people who was considered as a threat to the U.S national security, for instance the African American community (this will be discussed in the last part of the analysis).

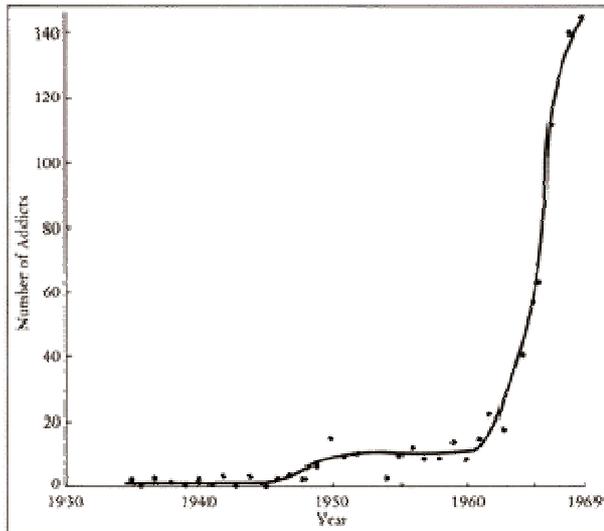
1.2.5 The Consequences of Heroin Addiction in the United States:

As far as the heroin problem in the United States is concerned and according to statistics made by The Haight-Asbury Medical Clinic in San Francisco⁴¹, addiction to heroin significantly increased during the late 1960s and became the most popular illicit drug among the U.S younger generation.⁴²

⁴¹ The Consumers Union Report on Licit and Illicit Drugs by Edward M. Brecher and the Editors of Consumer Reports Magazine, 1972 taken from website:

<http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/Library/studies/cu/CU20.html>. 22/04/2007.

⁴² Ibid.



⁴³ Source: First Use of Heroin by Addicts Attending Haight-Ashbury Medical Clinic in the Years 1967-1969 <http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/Library/studies/cu/CU20.html>

In response to this, President Nixon declared a war on drugs and in 1973 N. Rockefeller, the governor of New York demanded during an address that every illegal drug dealer be punished with a mandatory prison sentence of life without parole leading the war on drugs to become the most concerned problem in the United States. As heroin addiction increased in America during the late 1960s, early 1970s the U.S government feared a new menace; GI soldiers returning from Vietnam with their heroin addiction were to be seen as a potential danger to the nation as they could for instance extend their addiction to their family or friends and little by little contribute to the addiction of the citizens of the United States. This is why the returning soldiers were considered a threat as some of them could commit felonies to finance their addiction. The result was that all GIs returning from Vietnam with a drug addiction problem were marginalized by the U.S government. In a way it contributed to the unpopularity of the GIs after the Vietnam War and the abandonment of the Vietnam veterans by the U.S government. Using a drugs-as-disease-metaphor the government went on a war against the drug flow in America in which the CIA was somehow responsible for. As for the Vietnam veterans who came back with the

⁴³ Ibid.

addiction (even those who came back without it), a great part of them carried on their drug habit back in the United States to fight their awful nightmare about the Vietnam War. In an article by Jane Gross from the New York Times:

These men are among the 800,000 Vietnam veterans – a quarter of the Americans who served in Southeast Asia - who experts say are still plagued by a host of psychological and behavioural [Sic] problems associated with their time in combat. There are no reliable data about how many of them are drug abusers or alcoholics, but experts agree that Vietnam veterans - especially those who saw a great deal of combat - are at special risk for addiction.⁴⁴

The flow of heroin in the United States helped those Vietnam veterans to keep on taking drugs while they were at the same time, excluded by the American society. For a lot of them, the war is not over as they have to fight against their heroin addiction while dealing with the memories of the atrocity of the war.

We have seen that the CIA's involvement in the drug trade during the Vietnam War had a great impact on both the Asian community and the GIs. In a war against the communists, the massive introduction of drugs in Southeast Asia but also in the United States largely contributed to the addiction of many individuals. Such consequences were not enough for the CIA to stop its activities, as similar involvement in the drug trade has been observed in Central Asia.

⁴⁴ Jane Gross, "Veterans of Vietnam Gaining New Aid to Fight Addiction", The New York Times, December 26, 1985. taken from internet site: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=health&res=9B02EFDF133BF935A15751C1A963948260.19/03/2007>.

PART 2: Covert Wars in Afghanistan & Drugs:

To better understand the reasons of the CIA's involvement in the drug trade, it is important to study the situation in Central Asia. We shall try to analyse the U.S government and the CIA's intervention in Afghanistan during the Soviet Union's invasion to identify their motives. Once identified, we shall try to determine the consequences of such an intervention.

2.1: The Golden Crescent:

For a better understanding of the situation in which the CIA's intervention took place, it is interesting to locate the source of opium known as the Golden Crescent. The Golden Crescent is situated at the crossroads of Central, South, and Western Asia. This area partly covers the countries of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. While so many people have heard about the Golden Triangle in Southeast Asia, a lot of people are less familiar with the Golden Crescent. Then, why is it less popular? One can answer by saying that the Golden Crescent emergence as a heroin producer occurred during a covert warfare. Another reason could be that the Golden Triangle received massive media coverage because of the Vietnam War, thus eclipsing the Golden Crescent. Also, we have to understand that the CIA's covert intervention in Afghanistan happened at a time when the U.S government was fighting the war on drugs in Latin America. All those things contributed to the lower recognition of the Golden Crescent amidst the popular culture.

What may be interesting to state, is the fact that the Golden Crescent, despite its unpopularity, has even more contributed to the world's addiction to heroin than the Golden Triangle. This was mainly due to its location. As a matter of fact, its central position allowed it to distribute drugs to the United States but also to Europe which was not the

case for the Golden Triangle. Since the seventeenth century opium poppies have been grown in the Golden Crescent. It was in such an area that the CIA was going to intervene.

2.1.2 The Historical Context:

Because of its closeness with the Soviet Union, Afghanistan has had a strong relationship with Russia. As stated by William Blum: “the country had been under the strong influence of its powerful northern neighbour (Russia) which had long been its larger trading partner, aid donor, and military supplier.”⁴⁵ Because of that particular relationship, the U.S government had tried to convince Afghanistan to pull back the Soviet Union’s influence over the country. With the help of the Shah of Iran and Afghan’s president Mohammad Daoud, the CIA was allowed to set up radar installations to observe the Soviets. But after Daoud’s overthrow in 1978 a pro-Soviet regime was established by the new president of Afghanistan and conflicts between rival communist groups began. In December 1979, the Soviet Union’s Red Army invaded Afghanistan to which U.S President Carter responded by mobilizing covert military aid for Afghanistan’s mujaheddin guerrilla. With the help of Egypt, Pakistan but also Saudi Arabia, the CIA was able to provide the necessary armaments to the Afghans. Part of the money used to finance the mujaheddin rebels came from the drug traffic. As pointed out by Blum:

Moujahedeen commanders inside Afghanistan personally controlled huge fields of opium poppies, the raw material from which heroin is refined. CIA-supplied trucks and mules, which had carried arms into Afghanistan, were used to transport some of the opium to the numerous laboratories along the Afghan-Pakistan border,⁴⁶

⁴⁵ William Blum, op. cit., 339.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 351.

As in Laos and Burma, the CIA decided to carry out its war through local commanders.

One can ask: why would the U.S government carry on what has been done in Vietnam? Shouldn't they learn the lessons of the Vietnam War? As the White House advisor on drugs of the time, Dr. David Musto, recalled when he told to the Congress in May 1980:

That we were going into Afghanistan to support the opium growers in their rebellion against the Soviets. Shouldn't we try to avoid what we had done in Laos? Shouldn't we try to pay the growers if they will eradicate their opium production?⁴⁷

A possible answer could be related to the fact that drugs and conflicts had always been linked. It had been the case during the Vietnam War for instance but also in Nicaragua (we shall see that in the last part). By tolerating their ally to be involved in the drug business, the U.S government could allow them to gain control over a strategic area for instance. Then taxes could be imposed by the guerrilla army on opium growers or drugs could be used as goods for transit. In every case, the drug business was very lucrative. With the profits from the drug sale they could buy more military supplies. Besides, it could be seen as a way for the CIA to finance its covert operations.

Another explanation for the support of the mujaheddin by the U.S government could be seen in the fact that such collaboration began before the Soviet Union's invasion. In his book McCoy revealed that the Carter's administration aid to the mujaheddin was prior to the Soviet invasion. Officially, the CIA's aid to the mujaheddin began in 1980. But in fact, the U.S assistance to the Afghan guerrillas began in mid 1979. On the advice of White House security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter ordered a secret support to the Afghans. As Brzezinski later wrote to the president: "in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention"⁴⁸ In an interview given by Brzezinski and

⁴⁷ McCoy, op.cit, 461.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 476.

reported by McCoy in his book, Brzezinski confessed: “We didn’t push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would...”⁴⁹ After the Soviet invasion he wrote to the president: “We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War”.⁵⁰ We can suggest that the U.S government not only decided to ally with Afghan rebels, who were involved in drug trafficking, but also premeditated the whole thing to justify its intervention. This could explain why Dr. Musto did not receive answers from the government when he opposed to the support given to the mujaheddin. It also showed what the U.S government was capable of in a wish to eliminate communism. In the book, Whiteout, writers Cockburn and St.Clair suggested that the Carter administration’s objective was to “bleed the Soviets, hoping to entrap them in a Vietnam-style quagmire [...] the war seemed destined to be a slaughter, with civilians and the rebels paying a heavy price.”

In their war against the communists, the CIA allied with what Reagan called the “freedom fighters” or the mujaheddin, who engaged in illicit traffics to finance their rebellion and most likely for their personal enrichment. The CIA’s secret war in Afghanistan was going to be its most expensive one as it had reached \$2 billion.⁵¹ Despite the enormous amount of dollar spent in the war effort, the CIA also asked the assistance of such a country as Pakistan.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Cockburn & St.Clair, Whiteout, op.cit, 259.

2.1.3 The Pakistan Ally:

It is important to study the role played by Pakistan during the CIA's intervention in Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, Pakistan played a central role in the CIA's choice of Afghan rebels. In their war against the communists the CIA decided to ally with General Zia, leader of the strategic front-line state of Pakistan. Zia took power in 1977 and two years later, executed his main opponent, former president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Regardless of Zia's past, Ronald Reagan who became president of the United States in 1980 announced a \$3 billion military aid to Pakistan.⁵² Through his Inter-Service-Intelligence or ISI, General Zia had a close relationship with Afghan guerrillas. Moreover, he opened Pakistan's border to three million Afghan refugees. CIA operatives would run training camps for mujahedeen, Zia's military forces would control the arms delivery of the CIA in Pakistan. The weapons were then trucked to the Afghan rebels. Just like in Laos, the means and protections provided by the CIA for the delivery of arms were used to move opium out of Afghanistan back to Pakistan's heroin laboratories. The heroin was then introduced to Europe but also to the United States: "in 1979-1980, Pakistan's opium production grew nearly tenfold to 800 tons. Within a year, Pakistani heroin supplied 60 percent of America's illicit demand and even a greater share of Europe's."⁵³

It may be interesting to notice that before the CIA's intervention, Afghanistan and Pakistan only grew small quantities of opium which sole destination was Iran and India.⁵⁴ Given such a case, we can link the rise of opium in the Golden Crescent to the CIA whose protection of drug lords allowed them to benefit from the drug trade. We may then suggest that the CIA, in its covert war against the Soviet Union turned a blind eye on drug trafficking because of its personal interests.

⁵² Ibid, 475.

⁵³ Ibid, 479.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 466.

2.1.4 Afghanistan and the Alliance with a Drug Lord: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar:

Part of the job assigned to the Pakistan's ISI by the CIA was to select Afghan leaders and to arrange a meeting with the agency so that it could choose its new "recruits".

As stated by McCoy: "The United States subcontracted to General Zia and ISI the main political decision about which Afghans to support."⁵⁵

Instead, the ISI recommended Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to the CIA, to whom the agency agreed. Hekmatyar was the leader of the Hezb-i Islami guerrilla group. As an Islamic militant, he founded the fundamentalist Muslim brotherhood and asked his followers to "throw vials of acid into the faces of women students who refused to wear veils."⁵⁶ He was also accused of the murder of a leftist student. Thanks to the CIA's support, he had been able to build a strong guerrilla force but also to become one of "Afghanistan's leading drug lords."⁵⁷ The CIA was then going to give its support and a large share of its armaments to the most extreme Afghan guerrilla groups. Hekmatyar would then use his weapons to get control of poppy fields compelling Afghan peasants to increase the production. The opium collected was brought back to Hekmatyar's heroin factories in Koh-i-Soltan.⁵⁸

Why would the CIA support such a fanatical man as Hekmatyar? One can answer by saying that to achieve its goal, the U.S government used all means available including the alliance with such an extremist as Hekmatyar. Perhaps the agency knew what the man was capable of and that is why it has precisely chosen Hekmatyar to lead the Afghan guerrilla forces. Nevertheless, Hekmatyar used the weapons provided by the CIA to enrich himself through the drug business; terrorizing peasants and gaining control over territories such as the Helmand Valley where sixty percent of the Afghanistan opium was cultivated⁵⁹. Also,

⁵⁵ Ibid, 474.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 475.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 475.

⁵⁸ Cockburn & St.Clair, op.cit, 264.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 257.

during the time of the CIA's covert war in Afghanistan the American press depicted Hekmatyar in a rather positive way. But this started to change after the Soviet Union's withdrawal in 1989 and U.S newspapers such as the New York Times reported the "sinister nature of Mr. Hekmatyar."⁶⁰

2.1.5: Iran, a Different Situation:

The situation in Iran regarding drugs was different from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Long before the Afghan war, Iran was a major opium producer but also a major consumer. In 1949, "Iran had an addict population of 1.3 million, or one opium user for every nine adults."⁶¹ Despite an opium ban in 1955 imposed by the Shah of Iran, the consumption of opium lessened but not completely disappeared as people started to consume drugs imported from Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Iran, the use of opium was common amidst the different social classes and Iranian people had a soft attitude towards opium; rich people would smoke it with family members or special guests.⁶² The consumption of opium was part of the tradition and banning opium was only increasing the flow of drugs coming into Iran. In 1969, the Shah resumed the cultivation of opium and three years later the addict population of the country grew by 15 percent.⁶³ The problem of drugs in Iran was linked to the fact that not only its own population depended on the drug business, but also consumed most of the country's opium production. The U.S did not see in Iran a potential drug supplier for the world heroin market and consequently did not intervene in the Iranian drug problem. In contrast, Afghanistan or Pakistan had not such drug problems, not until the early 1980s when the U.S government and the CIA came in Afghanistan.

⁶⁰ McCoy, op.cit, 478.

⁶¹ Ibid, 468.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, 469.

2.2 Causes & Consequences:

As the CIA got involved in the Afghan war, what were the consequences for such countries as Afghanistan or Pakistan? What did the CIA could possibly gain from such a conflict? What were the rewards for the U.S government? We shall try to answer those questions by studying the consequences of the Afghan War. We shall try to define some of the CIA's true motives behind its involvement in the drug trade.

2.2.1 Arming Anyone who would Fight Communism:

The first reason for the CIA's Afghan war was the eradication of communism. Thanks to the geographical position of Afghanistan it was almost a direct confrontation with the communists. For the first time, the U.S had the possibility to inflict damages to the Soviet Union on its territory. By arming anyone who would fight communism, the purpose of the CIA alliance with Afghan rebel groups was to humiliate the Soviets. Ignoring or tolerating drug trafficking was the American way of fighting communism in Afghanistan. As the U.S government top priority was to end the cold war, it has made the decision to sacrifice the war on drugs to fight the war on communism. Charles Cogan, former CIA director during the Afghan war, stated: "Our mission was to do as much damage as possible to the Soviets... There was fallout in terms of drugs, yes. But the main objective was accomplished. The Soviets left Afghanistan."⁶⁴ In its war against communism, the U.S government completely ignored the consequences of such a "fallout". Furthermore, sacrificing the war on drugs was to be of great consequences for the Afghan and Pakistan populations.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 486.

2.2.2 An Increasing Number of Heroin Addicts:

As a result of the CIA alliance with General Zia who allowed heroin to come into Pakistan, the country became one of the world's largest addict populations. As stated before, Pakistan did not have a heroin problem before the CIA's covert war in Afghanistan. As pointed out by McCoy: "From zero addicts in 1979, numbers rose to 5,000 users in 1980, 70,000 in 1983 [...] to over 1.3 million in 1985."⁶⁵ During the Afghan war the U.S government was clearly aware of the increasing number of heroin addicts in Pakistan. However, they did not try to intervene in the Pakistan growing drug problem. Again, according to McCoy, Pakistan became the "prime opium source for U.S heroin". In such a case, we can wonder why the U.S did not prevent the proliferation of drugs as they were on Pakistan soil. In an article made by the Washington Post and reported by McCoy in his book: "the United States had failed to take action against the heroin traffic because of its desire not to offend a strategic ally, Pakistan's military establishment."⁶⁶ As a result, the United States were flooded with Pakistan's heroin during the early 1980s despite the U.S government's awareness. Furthermore, such tolerance from the U.S government for the flow of heroin in Afghanistan and Pakistan could be seen as a way to weaken the Soviet side. As previously stated, the U.S government wanted the Soviet Union to experience what the American experienced during the Vietnam War. Heroin was one of the greatest threat to the GIs fighting in Vietnam; it could also be the same for the Soviet Union's army. As we have seen it in the first part, being under the influence of drugs could turn a soldier into a killing machine.

Another and maybe more murky answer could be seen in the fact that the drug business not only profits to Afghan or Pakistan drug lords but also to the U.S government.

⁶⁵ McCoy, op. cit, 480.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 479.

2.2.3 Heroin; a Lucrative Business:

After the Afghan war, Afghanistan had to deal with a country devastated by a decade of conflict. As pointed out by McCoy:

After investing \$2 billion in Afghanistan's destruction, Washington refused to invest any diplomatic or financial capital in its reconstruction-leaving the country devastated with 1.5 million dead, three million refugees, a ravaged economy, a ruined central government, and a well-armed warlords primed to fight for power.⁶⁷

As a consequence, the country fell into a civil war. Afghan rebel groups fought for the control of Afghanistan and the country became subjugated by the drug "industry". The situation became worst in Pakistan where money from the drug traffic dominated the political scene. Such attitude taken up by the U.S government who refused to invest in the reconstruction of Afghanistan revealed how less concerned they felt after their victory over the Soviet Union.

As far as Afghanistan is concerned, those who took profit of the situation were the Taliban who came to power in 1996 making opium a source of taxation. "The Taliban collected a 5 to 10 percent tax in kind on all opium harvested."⁶⁸ However, in a bid for international recognition, Taliban's leader Mullah Omar imposed in 2000 a ban on opium cultivation which at the same time destroyed the country's major source of income. In an article written by Kurt Nimmo, he explained how the Taliban who destroyed the opium crop also "cut off billions of dollars in revenues that had been previously laundered through western

⁶⁷ Ibid, 501.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 508.

banks and Russian financial institutions connected to them.”⁶⁹ This is a quote extracted from Nimmo’s article:

Prior to the WTC attacks, credible sources, including the U.S government, the IMF, le Monde and the U.S Senate placed the amount of drug cash flow into Wall Street and U.S banks at around \$250-\$300 billion a year.⁷⁰

If such is the case, then we can understand why the U.S government did not interfere with the drug problem of an ally such as Pakistan whose drug money was put in banks such as the Bank of Credit and Commerce (BCCI) or the Habib Bank. As stated by Cockburn and St.Clair: “The opium revenues were ending up in off-shore accounts in the Habib Bank [...] and in the account’s of BCCI. The CIA was simultaneously using BCCI for its own secret transactions.”⁷¹ Despite constant denials of the CIA regarding cash deposits in the BCCI, the link between the CIA and the Pakistan bank has been studied by many authors such as Peter Truell and Larry Gurwin. The close relationship with the bank allowed the CIA to deposit large amounts of money that could be passed over in the interest of national security. Such example could explain the CIA’s tolerance for drug trades. Allowing heroin to invade a country was such a lucrative business for the CIA whose budget could depend on.

Looking back on the CIA’s intervention in Afghanistan one can state that such intrusion was dominated by illicit activities. Given the agency alliance with drug lords, the drug money was clearly a means to finance the conflict. The reward for the U.S government was a Soviet withdrawal but the consequences were disastrous for the Afghan population who had to deal with a country ravaged by such a conflict. The CIA’s

⁶⁹ Kurt Nimmo, "Afghanistan: Drug Addiction Lucrative for Neolib Bankster, Cia" Global research, May 21, 2006. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=2488>, 06/05/2007.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Cockburn and St.Clair, op.cit, 264.

involvement in the drug trade could be highly profitable to the agency as a connection with obscure banks has been demonstrated. We shall see that the CIA's involvement in the drug trade also took place in America but, for different reasons and with different consequences.

Part 3: Drugs and Covert Operations in America:

This part will help us understand how the CIA's alliance with drug lords affected its credibility. We shall focus on the CIA's covert operations in Central America to bring light on its involvement in the drug business and also to show its impact on the American population. Then we may try to find what were the true intentions and motives of the U.S government through the use of the agency.

3.1 The situation in Central America:

The situation in Central America was quite different from the one in Southeast or Central Asia. As a matter of fact, the purpose of the CIA's intervention there was not exclusively linked to a Soviet Union's threat. In such a case, what were the purposes of the CIA's involvement with drug lords? Why would the U.S government carry on what has been done in Vietnam or Afghanistan? What were the reasons and consequences for such an involvement? As we will see in Nicaragua, The agency's covert operations and alliance with drug lords seemed to serve others objectives than just a fear of communism. We shall try to define those purposes to understand the CIA and consequently the U.S government's real intentions.

3.1.2 A New Threat: Narcoterrorism:

When President Nixon declared a war on drugs in June 1971, he's aim was to act in response to the GI heroin epidemic and the flow of drugs that was invading the United States. In a special message to Congress he stated: "If we cannot destroy the drug menace in America, then it will surely in time destroy us."⁷²

When Ronald Reagan became president of the United States in 1981, one of his ultimate goals was to put an end to the expansion of communism in the Third World. However, the reminiscence of the Vietnam War that altered the American's opinion about anti-communism forced President Reagan to find an alternative to revive the fear of a communist threat. Narcoterrorism was to be the answer. By associating communism with drugs, Reagan had found a good justification for his intervention in Nicaragua. As he said:

The link between the governments of such Soviet allies as Cuba and Nicaragua and international narcotics trafficking and terrorism is becoming increasingly clear. These twin evils- narcotics and terrorism- represent the most insidious and dangerous threats to the hemisphere today.⁷³

We can see that every means of persuasion were used by President Reagan to persuade people of the good intention of the U.S government and creating a new threat was part of the government's attempt to change the public opinion. By declaring drug trafficking as a threat to U.S national security, Reagan legitimated the use of military forces to fight the drug menace outside the United States. From then, the war on drugs previously launched by Nixon was going to extend outside U.S borders, thus allowing the CIA to intervene. But this time, the U.S government target was not heroin but cocaine.

⁷² McCoy, The Politics of Heroin, op.cit. 390.

⁷³ Peter Scott Dale & Jonathan Marshall, Cocaine Politics (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998), 23.

During the 1980s, the cocaine exportation to the United States came from Latin America. One of the main cocaine suppliers was Colombia⁷⁴ who provided 75 percent of U.S cocaine using Contra forces in Nicaragua.⁷⁵

In 1979, the government of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua was defeated by a new regime known as the Sandinistas. In an attempt to overthrow the Sandinistas, Reagan offered help to the Nicaraguan resistance known as the Contras. But after the U.S congress refusal to assist Nicaragua through the Boland Amendment, the Reagan administration launched a secret operation which aim was to give military support to the Contras. Such assistance to the Contras was provided by the CIA and the National Security Council under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, whose involvement in the Contra-drug connection has been documented by many authors⁷⁶. Despite an amendment set by the U.S congress, the Reagan administration violated an official law for their private interest. In addition, the U.S government engaged in criminal activities to finance its covert operations.

3.1.3 How to Find the Money to Finance a Covert War:

As the U.S government supported the Contras in Nicaragua, President Reagan used the CIA to organize a secret war against the Sandinista government. However, such an illegal activity required an important amount of money and a great part of it came from the drug business. For that reason, we can wonder why the U.S government, whose aim was to put an end to the drug trafficking, deliberately chose to get involved in the drug trade to finance its covert war. Why would President Reagan qualify narcotics as “a dangerous threat to the hemisphere” when he would tolerate drug trafficking in Nicaragua. To answer

⁷⁴ Through the well-known Medellin Cartel.

⁷⁵ Peter Dale Scott & Jonathan Marshall, op.cit, 23.

⁷⁶ Such as Peter Dale Scott, Gary Webb or Michael Levine.

such question, we need to take into account the fact that during the conflicts in Nicaragua, the U.S congress prohibited any kind of support to the Contras. Consequently, the U.S government circumvented the Congress interdiction and organized covert operations in an attempt to provide the necessary funds to the Contras. As they were forbidden to help the Contras, the U.S government engaged in illegal activities to obtain what they sought.

Firstly, the assistance to the Contras was established by covert arms-supply operation.⁷⁷ The money earned from the selling of U.S arms to Iran (a scandal revealed by the press and known as the infamous Iran-Contra affair) would serve to finance the shipping of arms to the Contras.⁷⁸ But as the U.S government needed more money to finance its covert war, the CIA tolerated drug business by Nicaraguan drug dealer such as Norwin Meneses. Such situation could be compared to the situation in Southeast Asia. As in Vietnam, the shipping of weapons to the Contras in Nicaragua served for the shipping of cocaine back to the United States.

In 1986, the U.S State Department paid four contractors \$806,401.20 to supply “humanitarian help” to the Contras; those contractors were known as drug traffickers.⁷⁹

In April 13, 1989, Senator Kerry’s subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Operations confirmed the Contra-drug connection:

There was substantial evidence of drug smuggling through the war zones on the part of individual Contras, Contra suppliers, Contra pilots, mercenaries who worked with the Contras...⁸⁰

What the committee failed to corroborate was that the CIA was at least an accomplice in the Contra-drug connection, an information which has been confirmed by such authors as

⁷⁷ William Blum, Rogue State: a Guide to the World’s Only Superpower (Common Courage Press, 2000) 221.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Peter Dale Scott & Jonathan Marshall, op.cit, 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 10.

McCoy or Webb. What is interesting to observe is the fact that the Justice Department and the FBI tried to prevent the Kerry's committee from investigating the Contra-drug connection because it could have significantly exposed the CIA. Such effort made by the U.S government to downplay the role of the CIA in the Contra-drug connection acted against its credibility and somehow showed the lack of concern of the U.S government regarding the drug problem.

Moreover, the CIA allied itself with General Manuel Noriega who was a CIA asset and collaborator despite knowledge by the U.S drug authorities of his involvement in drug trafficking and money laundering.⁸¹ In fact, General Noriega played an important role in the CIA's war against the Sandinistas as he contributed to more than \$100,000 to Contras operating in Costa Rica.⁸² Another case of CIA protection of drug dealer concerned a Mexican smuggler, Miguel Felix Gallardo. Known as a supporter of the Contras, he was responsible for the smuggling of four tons of cocaine every month into the United States.⁸³ Despite knowledge by the CIA of his smuggling activities, the Mexican trafficker has been ignored by the agency because of his support to the Contras.⁸⁴

As in Southeast Asia, the CIA used its connections with drug lords for its personal interest which was to raise money to fight supposed Soviet allies in Nicaragua. The ends justify the means mentality prevailed among the members of the U.S government whose obstinate fight for communism led them to act illicitly and to lie to their fellow citizens about their true intentions.

As we reviewed some of the reasons why the CIA allied with drug lords in Nicaragua, it is interesting to study the situation in the United States and its consequences.

⁸¹ William Blum, *op.cit*, 220.

⁸² Cockburn & St.Clair, *op.cit*, 287.

⁸³ Peter Dale Scott & Jonathan Marshall, *op.cit*, 37.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*.

3.2 The Situation in the United States; Drugging America:

What was the situation in the United States? What was the role played by the CIA?

3.2.1 Smuggling Cocaine into the United States:

As previously noticed, Colombia through the Medellin Cartel became the major cocaine supplier of the United States in the 1980s. As a whole, cocaine mainly came from Central and Latin America. Whether it came from Mexico, Nicaragua or Panama the consequences on the American people were alarming as many Americans became addicted to cocaine. The CIA, whose tolerance or complicity with drug lords in Nicaragua, allowed drugs to be shipped and then sold on the American territory. Hence, cocaine exports significantly increased so that between 1982 and 1985, the number of cocaine users in the United States rose by 38 percent which was ten times more than the number of heroin addicts.⁸⁵

This trend could be explained by the fact that cocaine came from countries like Mexico or Colombia which were close to the United States whereas heroin mostly came from Asia. The proximity of the countries who exported cocaine has contributed to this substantial number of users in America.

Of all the illicit drugs available in America, cocaine accounted for \$29 billion out of the \$79 billion total drug sale.⁸⁶ In response to that, the U.S government spent money on law enforcement and reinforced its intervention in Latin and Central America while the CIA looked the other way when drug traffickers in Nicaragua were doing illegal business. It is ironic to see that on the one hand, the U.S government tried to appear concerned about the drug problem while on the other hand the selling of drugs was secretly tolerated by that

⁸⁵ McCoy, The Politics of Heroin, op.cit, 487.

⁸⁶ McCoy, op.cit, 487.

very same government. In addition, the CIA deliberately held back DEA's enforcement efforts in Nicaragua creating a conflict between the DEA's drug war and the CIA's Contra operation.⁸⁷

We can observe that conflicts took place within the U.S administration thus highlighting the U.S government's involvement in the cocaine business.

As for cocaine, when it first appeared in the United States it was too expensive and was considered as a drug only affordable by wealthy people. However, crack cocaine was going to change it all.

3.2.2 The Crack Cocaine Explosion:

In his book, Dark Alliance, author and former news reporter Gary Webb explains how crack cocaine can be made:

“Put cocaine powder in a pan, add some water and baking soda, and heat until it starts crackling. Done.”⁸⁸

Webb also explains in his book how two Nicaraguan drug dealers supporting the Contras (Norwin Meneses and Oscar Danilo Blandon) used a Black ghetto dope dealer known as Ricky Ross to sell drug for them in Los Angeles which would then become the “crack” capital of the world. In his article of the same name Webb stated:

This odd trio -- a smuggler, a bureaucrat and a driven ghetto teen-ager -- made fortunes creating the first mass market in America for a product so hellishly desirable that consumers will literally kill to get it: "crack" cocaine.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ McCoy, op.cit, 492.

⁸⁸ Gary Webb, Dark Alliance :The CIA, The Contras and the Crack Cocaine explosion (Seven Stories Press First Edition, New York, 1998), 139.

⁸⁹ Gary Webb, “Dark Alliance: the Story Behind the Crack Explosion” August, 1996, taken from internet site: <http://www.narconews.com/darkalliance/drugs/start.htm>. 18/04/2007.

It is easy to understand that the money earned by those drug dealers did not entirely go to the Contra cause. Thanks to the CIA's protection of the drug ring they were even able to enrich themselves while claiming that the purpose of their drug business was devoted to the Contras. Somehow, it shows how the U.S government felt about drugs. Allowing cocaine to be smuggled in their country has been an accepted fact among CIA officials as long as it served the interests of the U.S government.

Then, what is the true purpose of such a government? To protect its citizens from any incoming threats or to eliminate communism in Third World Countries as it had been the case in Vietnam or Afghanistan? The answer would be that the U.S government was more interested in eliminating communism rather than protecting its own people. It could be seen as an attempt to eradicate all ideologies that is different from capitalism. If such is the case, then we can suppose that the U.S government's intention is to somehow get control over Third World Countries to extend its supremacy.

As far as cocaine is concerned and as argued by Gary Webb, Ricky Ross was going to be the first to sell crack cocaine affordable to anyone including African Americans. "By early 1985, crack had become widely available in every inner-city neighbourhood..."⁹⁰

As a result, many African Americans became addicted to cocaine which was considered to be a "substance that his tailor-made to addict people."⁹¹

What Webb also claimed and which was going to be a matter of great controversy in the U.S, was the fact that the link between the CIA, the two Nicaraguan dealers and Ricky Ross was responsible for the crack epidemic in the Black ghettos of the United States. In fact, in an attempt to restore Somoza's former army, the CIA hired a man called Enrique Bermudez who was the Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense's⁹² (FDN) military chief. Bermudez asked Blandon and Meneses to raise money for the Contras which they did by

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² The Nicaraguan Military Force.

smuggling and selling tons of cocaine in the United States. The cocaine was then sold in Los Angeles through Ricky Ross. What is interesting to notice is that the only person who was eventually incarcerated for drug sales was the Black dealer Ricky Ross who did not know about his “employers” involvement in the Contra cause. As for the two Nicaraguan men, Meneses remained free and Blandon was discharged. This could be seen as one of the many examples that led the African American community to believe that they were the scapegoat of the drug problem in the U.S. (We shall study that in a subsequent part).

An other important point, was the fact that Ricky Ross sold crack cocaine in Los Angeles to such street gangs as the Crips or the Bloods:

“The cocaine that flooded in helped spark a crack explosion in urban America ... and provided the cash and connections needed for L.A.'s gangs to buy automatic weapons.”⁹³

As a result, those street gangs were dealing cocaine in all the major neighbourhoods of the United States allowing them to buy weapons, thus increasing street crimes in all Los Angeles.

Given the fact that the CIA was -through its connection to drug dealers- responsible for the crack cocaine sudden increase, it is interesting to study how the U.S government and the press tried to minimize or refute such a connection as people started to question the function of the CIA.

⁹³ Gary Webb’s article, “Dark Alliance”, Ibid.

3.2.3 Protecting the CIA:

In the mid-1980s, the Iran-Contra affair has been one of the biggest scandals revealed by the U.S media about Ronald Reagan's secret activities. Gary Webb's article: "Dark Alliance, The Story Behind the crack Explosion" exposing the CIA's participation in the crack cocaine invasion was going to be of bigger consequences. Because of Gary Webb's allegation that the crack epidemic that flooded in Los Angeles was due to CIA's operations in Nicaragua, the U.S government through the press tried to discredit Webb's work. In the book: Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press. Authors Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St.Clair explain how Gary Webb's work has been destroyed by CIA supported press such as the Washington Post or the New York Times. As Washington Post's president, Katharine Graham said to CIA recruits in 1998:

There are some things the general public does not need to know, and shouldn't. I believe democracy flourishes when the government can take legitimate steps to keep its secrets and the press can decide whether to print what it knows.⁹⁴

The Washington Post's president was not the only one to think that way as some journalists attacked Webb as well. Journalists such as Walter Pincus and Roberto Suro wrote articles claiming the lack of evidence concerning the link between the CIA and cocaine. What is ironic is the fact that Walter Pincus was a former CIA operative.⁹⁵ Such situation shows how the CIA managed to get through charges raised against them using their connections in the mainstream media. In addition, the CIA made an internal investigation to discharge itself as it was the case with the General Hitz report.

⁹⁴ Cockburn & St.Clair, Whiteout, op.cit, 31.

⁹⁵ Webb, Dark Alliance, op.cit, 450.

In 1996, under the request of John Deutch (CIA's Director at the time), Frederick Hitz, the CIA's Inspector General was asked to make an investigation of allegations of connections between the CIA and the Contras in drug trafficking. The Hitz report came out in two volumes. It concluded that the CIA was not directly or indirectly involved with drug traffickers raising money for the Contras as it stated in the conclusion of volume I:

No information has been found to indicate that the drug trafficking activities of Blandon and Meneses were motivated by any commitment to support the Contra cause or Contra activities undertaken by CIA.⁹⁶

Once more the irony lies in the fact that the CIA did not find any evidence of its involvement in the drug trafficking. It is also interesting to notice that several former C.I.A. officers responsible for the contra operation refused to cooperate with the Inspector General and one can easily question the credibility and seriousness of the agency. The comic strip below shows how incongruous was the Hitz report:

⁹⁶ General Hitz Report of Investigation Volume 1, taken from internet site: <https://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/cocaine/report/conclusions.html>, 10/04/2007.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Source: <http://ciadrugs.homestead.com>

As an excuse for the flow of cocaine coming into the United States, the CIA claimed that the drug problem was considered as a second priority and that any connection with drug dealers was to gain their confidence. What about the African American community? What were the consequences for them? As argued by Gary Webb, the flow of cocaine into the United States has had an unequal impact on the African American people. We shall study such impact for a better understanding of the situation.

3.3 Targeting the African American Community:

Dealing with the crack cocaine epidemic in the United States, Gary Webb states:

For the better part of a decade, a San Francisco Bay Area drug ring sold tons of cocaine to the Crips and Bloods street gangs of Los Angeles and funneled millions in drug profits to a Latin American guerrilla army run by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency...⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Tom Tomorrow. "This Modern World". taken from Internet site: <http://ciadrugs.homestead.com> 12/05/2007.

⁹⁸ Webb's article, "Dark Alliance", Ibid.

However, Webb did not explain why crack cocaine landed on Black neighbourhoods. Following his article, the African American population started to wonder about the CIA's role in the crack epidemic of the 1980s. Did the CIA deliberately choose to tolerate cocaine to be sold in every Black neighbourhood? Was it a random choice or a premeditated one? Was it a combination of circumstances? We shall try to answer those questions by studying how the African American community reacted to Webb's article but also by studying the incarceration rate of African American in the United States.

3.3.1 Reinforcing Racism, the Black Paranoia:

The African American population has always struggled against racism. From the slave period to the present day, freedom and equality has been constantly denied to their community. Many events incited the African Americans to regard themselves as the victim of racism which led them to consider the notion of a Black paranoia. An example of this Black paranoia could be seen in the Tuskegee experiments. In 1932, 600 black men were recruited for a study made by the Tuskegee institute⁹⁹. Researchers found that 400 of them were infected with syphilis and were given a fake treatment. In fact, the purpose of the experiment was to study the natural progress of the disease. Another example could be seen in the FBI's COINTELPRO program. The purpose of the program was to discredit and neutralize black organizations during the 1960s. Every black leader who was a potential threat was to be neutralized if not assassinated; it has been the case for Black Panther leaders for example.

When Gary Webb claimed that the CIA was responsible for the cocaine epidemic that ravaged their community, African American people legitimately raised the topic of segregation and black paranoia. Webb's article had caught the attention of so much African

⁹⁹ Cockburn and St.Clair, op.cit, 69.

Americans so that in November 14, 1996, CIA director of the time John Deutch was invited in South Central Los Angeles to face public questions about the impact of crack cocaine in the Black neighbourhoods. During the meeting he argued that people could not possibly know the truth about the agency's activities because of its confidentiality thus suggesting the fact that Webb's allegations were inconsistent. He added that an investigation of the charges was going to be done by the CIA inspector general (see the Hitz report)¹⁰⁰. In sum, no real answers had been given to the public which led them to mention the question of the reliability of the agency. We can observe that such a meeting did not serve the CIA's credibility but strengthen Webb's declaration and somehow reinforced the idea of a black paranoia in the African American community. Consequently, we cannot say for sure that the CIA deliberately targeted the black community during their Contra-drug support. Nevertheless, we can say that the U.S penal system targeted African American as drug dealers as stated by Webb "Critics, who include some federal court judges, say it looks like the Justice Department is targeting crack dealers by race, which would be a violation of the U.S. Constitution"¹⁰¹

As we shall see, a great number of Americans incarcerated for drug charges are African Americans, whether it is for drug use, possession or selling.

¹⁰⁰ The Hitz report, see supra p.10.

¹⁰¹ Webb's article "Dark Alliance", Ibid.

3.3.2 The Increasing Rate of African Americans in U.S Prisons:

Since Nixon launched his war on drugs, the laws regarding drug abuse in the United States have been the world's most repressive ones. In 1986 the Anti-Drug Abuse Act passed and new minimum mandatory sentences were introduced. Among them were the death penalty for drug "king pins" and prohibited parole for minor possessions.¹⁰² Still today the laws which have the greatest impact on the prison outburst are those concerning drugs. Since 1986, the crack laws have been the most punitive. In fact, Congress made a distinction between crack and powder cocaine based on a testimony that "crack was fifty times as addictive as powder cocaine."¹⁰³ As crack is the result of ready-made powder cocaine, one can wonder how it could possibly be more addictive. Because of the correlation between the two, the possession of crack cocaine somehow implies the possession of powder cocaine hence nullifying the distinction made by the Congress.

As far as the incarceration for drug abuse is concerned, Cockburn and St.Clair stated:

Congress established a 100-to-1 sentencing ratio between possession of crack and powder cocaine [...] possession of 5 grams of crack carries a minimum five-year federal prison sentence. The same mandatory minimum is not reached for any amount of powder cocaine under 500 grams.¹⁰⁴

Crack is the only drug that entails a mandatory prison term for possession whether or not the intent is to sell. As the purpose of such laws was to punish those who use or sell crack, the war on drugs could be seen as a war against African American. As Webb mentioned in his article:

¹⁰² Cockburn and St.Clair, op.cit, 75.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

"Socio-economic factors led certain ethnic and racial groups to be particularly involved with the distribution of certain drugs," the Justice Department argued in a case in Los Angeles last year, "and blacks were particularly involved in the Los Angeles area crack trade."¹⁰⁵

What the Justice Department forgot to mention is the CIA's contribution to such socio-economic factors. Furthermore, it has been proven that people who are involved in illegal drug business are more likely to be people of color since they are those who are the most vulnerable to destabilization.

In 1995, 84 percent of the people arrested for possession of crack were black, 10 percent were white. Concerning the selling of crack, 88 percent of those arrested were black, while 4 percent were white.¹⁰⁶ Arrest of African Americans was much higher than arrest of whites, although both use drugs at the same rate. Cockburn and St.Clair also gave an interesting figure: "Defendants arrested for powder cocaine possession were 58 percent white, 26 percent black." Such a figure could be seen as an explanation of the Congress inclination for more repressive prison sentences towards crack users and dealers, consequently African Americans.

It could be seen as an attempt by the Congress to protect the white while targeting the black thus reinforcing segregation.

As the war on drugs was one of the causes of the explosion of the prison population, one of the causes of the high incarceration rate of African Americans was crack. Between 1986 and 1991, the number of black males convicted on drug crimes increased by 429 percent.¹⁰⁷ As a result of this high incarceration rates, many African Americans felt destabilized, many family ties were broken thus favouring juvenile delinquency. Such figures could justify the black paranoia felt by many African American people.

¹⁰⁵ Webb "Dark Alliance", Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Cockburn and St.Clair, op.cit, 75.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 76.

Considering all these figures, we can wonder if the purpose of a law such as the Anti-Drug Abuse Act was to weaken the African Americans. On a larger scale, we can wonder if the war on drugs was an attempt by the U.S government to gain control over a certain category of the U.S population who could be seen as a potential threat to the national security. Could the war on drugs be a means of social control?

3.3.3 The War on Drugs: A means of Control?

When looking closely at the situation of the African Americans regarding the drug problem, one can conclude that the war on drugs allowed the U.S government to gain control over the African American population. When the Chinese were brought to the United States to build the transcontinental railroad they came in with opium smoking. But when the recession of the 1870s came, the Chinese who were seen as challengers to the decreasing number of vacant jobs were to be excluded. “In 1887 the U.S Congress weighed in with the Chinese Exclusion Act, which among other things, allowed Chinese opium addicts to be arrested and deported”.¹⁰⁸ Dealing with the drug problem, the U.S government has always pointed out African Americans as cocaine consumers, Mexicans as marijuana smokers. Harry Anslinger, head of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs claimed that marijuana “can arouse in blacks and Hispanics a state of menacing fury or homicidal attack”¹⁰⁹ In fact, the U.S narcotics policy has always been targeting people of color. In such cases, the war on drugs could be seen as a way to control ethnic minorities.

Also, the war on drugs has been used by politicians to gain support in times of election. When N. Rockefeller demanded in January 1973 that every illegal drug dealer be punished with a mandatory prison sentence of life without parole, he became vice-president of the

¹⁰⁸ Cockburn & St.Clair, op.cit, 70.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 72.

United States a few months after the ratification of the law. The issue of drugs has been used by many politicians to frighten people in an attempt to gain public support. The mainstream media (whether it is the press, radio or television) has been one of the means used by the government to gain such support, scaring people with shocking articles or stories. Such things were done to influence the citizens' vote before an election.

When looking back at the U.S government's drug policy in Central and Latin America, the issue of drugs could be seen as a way to penetrate foreign countries to somehow gain control and influence over the governments of such countries. As previously stated, the war on drugs could be seen as a desire to extend the hegemony of the United States.

When it comes to drugs, we have seen that the U.S government through the CIA played a double game: on the one hand declaring a war on drug while on the other hand tolerating cocaine to be smuggled into the country. The impact on the American people was unequal for the African Americans who appeared to be the scapegoat of the drug problem as too many of them were incarcerated. Besides, the war on drugs seemed to hide shadowy intentions on the part of the U.S government.

CONCLUSION

The long history of the CIA's involvement in the drug trade has been proved by many authors who depicted the CIA's activities as malevolent thus acting against the agency's credibility. Whether it was in Vietnam, Afghanistan or Nicaragua it seemed that the CIA constantly sought to ally itself with drug dealers. The nature of such alliances seemed to be linked to a fight against communism. Ironically, the U.S government launched a war on drugs but kept on allying with drug lords. Using all means available, the U.S government in its crusade against the "evil enemy" designated the CIA to conduct illegal secret activities in ways that was supposed to leave no trace. Those activities included corruptions, bribes and alliances with hazardous drug dealers. Most of the time, weapons and political protections were guaranteed to those dealers who took profit of the situation by making money or by taking control of an area, a land or a country. Unfortunately for the agency, such activities have always been reported by writers or journalists in search of the truth despite constant denials by the CIA and a massive counter attack of the U.S mainstream media.

Looking closely at the CIA's involvement in the drug trade, one may suggest that the reasons for such an involvement are more obscure. Gary Webb claimed that the CIA alliance with Nicaraguan drug dealers was aimed at the African American community in America. However, McCoy refuted such allegations claiming that there was no proof that the CIA targeted Blacks in South Central Los Angeles just as there was no evidence to the "proposition that the CIA in Laos wanted a third of the U.S troops fighting in Vietnam to become heroin addicts."¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ McCoy, op.cit, 529.

Although many experts agree to the statement made by McCoy, we may suggest that Gary Webb's claims are probably true. Given the CIA's past involvement in the drug trade, its connections with drug dealers, an invariable desire to hide the truth about its activities and an unequal high rate of African American men in U.S prison, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that Webb's allegations might be correct.

It seems that the reasons for the CIA's involvement in the drug trade were not exclusively related to a fight against the communists. Some authors have exposed more ambiguous facts about the CIA. For instance, the link between the agency and Pakistan banks such as the BCCI. When it comes to drug money, there is a lot of cash to be diverted. One may suggest that the CIA took profits of its involvement in the drug trade to increase its "black budget". In addition, one can put forward the idea that the issue of drugs has been exploited by many politicians; whether it was for political support or ethnic control.

As for the consequences, the CIA's involvement in the drug trade contributed to an increasing number of drug addicts in the United States. During the war on drugs that mostly occurred outside U.S borders such consequences were disastrous for many Americans. One may suggest that looking abroad for ways to reduce drug abuse was maybe not the right solution. As a result, many Third World countries ended up with a significant number of drug addicts. Destroying the lives of many individuals in Vietnam or destabilizing the African American community. The CIA's involvement in the drug trade also contributed to the emergence of "narco-state" countries such as Pakistan or Afghanistan; where drug lords and extremist groups control the nation but also where the drug industry has planted its deadly roots.

Such a country as Afghanistan is still facing the drug problem today and this is mainly due to the CIA. As pointed out by McCoy:

During the U.S invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, the CIA recruited regional warlords as the main U.S ground force for an attack on the Taliban, and then encouraged them to seize local power once the Taliban defeated. Since these warlords were also the country's top drug lords, Afghanistan's opium cultivation and heroin production soon revived to dominate the world market.¹¹¹

We can suggest, therefore, that the CIA's ability to recruit drug lords is a common routine.

In such a case, one can legitimately ask whether or not it is time to abolish such agency as the CIA.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 531.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

CIA Dope Calypso

In nineteen hundred forty-nine
China was won by Mao Tse-tung
Chiang Kai Shek's army ran away
They were waiting there in Thailand yesterday

Supported by the CIA

Pushing junk down Thailand way

First they stole from the Meo Tribes
Up in the hills they started taking bribes
Then they sent their soldiers up to Shan
Collecting opium to send to The Man

Pushing junk in Bangkok yesterday
Supported by the CIA

Brought their jam on mule trains down
To Chiang Mai that's a railroad town
Sold it next to the police chief's brain
He took it to town on the choochoo train
Trafficking dope to Bangkok all day
Supported by the CIA

The policeman's name was Mr. Phao
He peddled dope grand scale and how
Chief of border customs paid
By Central Intelligence's U.S. aid

The whole operation, Newspapers say
Supported by the CIA

He got so sloppy and peddled so loose
He busted himself and cooked his own goose
Took the reward for the opium load
Seizing his own haul which same he resold

Big time pusher for a decade turned grey

Working for the CIA

Touby Lyfong he worked for the French
A big fat man liked to dine & wench
Prince of the Meos he grew black mud
Till opium flowed through the land like a flood

Communists came and chased the French away
So Touby took a job with the CIA

The whole operation fell in to chaos
Till U.S. intelligence came in to Laos

Mary Azarian/Matt Wuerker I'll tell you no lie I'm a true American
Our big pusher there was Phoumi Nosavan

All them Princes in a power play
But Phoumi was the man for the CIA

And his best friend General Vang Pao
Ran the Meo army like a sacred cow
Helicopter smugglers filled Long Cheng's bars
In Xieng Quang province on the Plain of Jars

It started in secret they were fighting yesterday
Clandestine secret army of the CIA

All through the Sixties the dope flew free
Thru Tan Son Nhut Saigon to Marshall Ky
Air America followed through
Transporting comfiture for President Thieu

All these Dealers were decades and yesterday
The Indochinese mob of the U.S. CIA

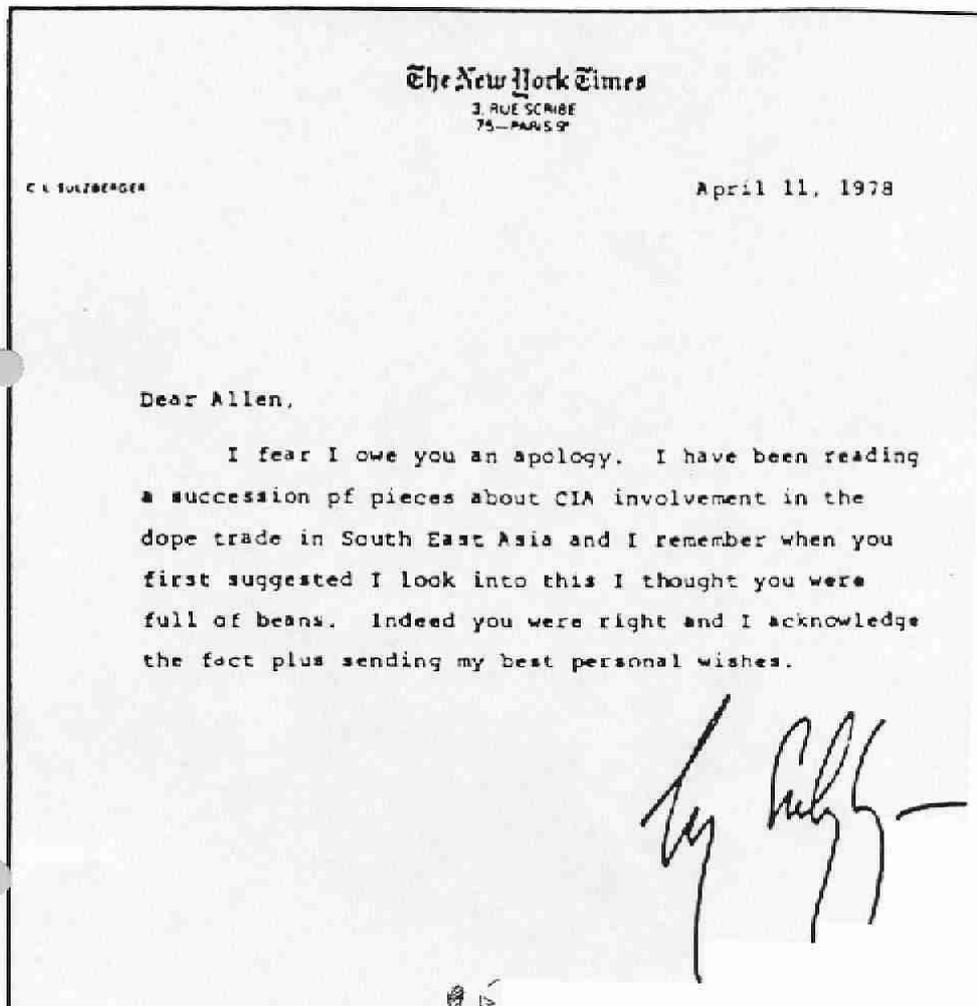
Operation Haylift Offisir Wm Colby
Saw Marshall Ky fly opium Mr. Mustard told me
Indochina desk he was Chief of Dirty Tricks
"Hitch-hiking" with dope pushers was how he got his fix

Subsidizing the traffickers to drive the Reds away
Till Colby was the head of the CIA

Allen Ginsberg

Poem by Allen Ginsberg. (p.4)

Appendix 2



C.L. Sulzberger's letter to Allen Ginsberg. (p.4)

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