

# THE NEW YORK TIMES

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## Pakistan, Terrorism and Drugs

To the Editor:

“Militants Escape Control of Pakistan, Officials Say” (January 15, front page) doesn’t cite perhaps the prime factor assisting the rebels, including Al Qaeda and the Taliban: the opium and heroin produced and transited in that nation and neighboring Afghanistan.

Pakistan is fast evolving into the same drug-financed chaos, financing Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, which Afghanistan has already become. Afghanistan supplies 92 percent of the world’s heroin-producing opium, and Pakistan now transports a growing 36 percent of Afghanistan’s illicit opium, according to a State Department report last year.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are the No. 1 export and transit nations in the world for opium used for heroin. Opium production, on our watch, has increased 33-fold from 185 tons in 2001 to more than 6,000 tons in 2006.

As Senator Charles E. Schumer reported during passage of an amendment in 2006 to strengthen counternarcotics assistance to Afghanistan, stripped by the administration and Republicans in conference, “The Taliban generates roughly 70 percent of its income through the production and sale of opium.”

It appears that the United States military presence, afraid to disrupt supposedly friendly Afghanistan and Pakistan’s economies, has maintained a blind eye rather than eradicate the drug trade.

Far from blocking drug trafficking, the government of Pakistan’s negotiated truce with rebels in northwestern Pakistan, with ties to the Taliban and Al Qaeda, has provided carte blanche to grow, transport and get big money from the illicit crops.

In both Afghanistan and Pakistan, our military should be helping theirs to fight drugs. There must be bolder surveillance and eradication of poppy fields, stronger enforcement of cross-border anti-smuggling measures, and bank freezes of traffickers’ finances.

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Washington, Jan. 17, 2008

*The writer was spokesman for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, 1995-2001. (RW note: John Larmett assisted in writing this letter.)*

(Link to original: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/19/opinion/lweb22pakistan.html?ref=opinion> )