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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
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COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION & THE  
WORKFORCE

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON  
VETERANS AFFAIRS

June 7, 2004

The Honorable Duncan Hunter  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2120 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ike Skelton  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
2120 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton:

As you know, I remain concerned about the exploding drug problem that exists in Afghanistan, and request a hearing on this issue at the earliest possible date. As part of that hearing I believe it would be beneficial for the House Armed Services Committee to extend an invitation to the British government. At the hearing we can discuss with British officials the steps that they have taken to fight the sudden increase in heroin production and how the United States can best help them accomplish this necessary goal.

Already this year, farmers in Afghanistan have harvested a bumper crop of heroin producing poppies, the proceeds of which will undoubtedly be used to fund terrorist organizations. Media reports have chronicled that Afghan drug trade works roughly in this manner: The poppy sap is converted into mash cake in rudimentary field labs and sold on the black market, converted to opium, and sold to al Qaeda operators for resale who then use the proceeds to purchase weapons and fund their anti-American efforts.

Since 2003, our government estimates that approximately 61,000 hectares of poppy were cultivated, an increase from 30,750 in 2002. Current cultivation levels equate to potential production of 2,865 metric tons of opium, an increase of 1,587 metric tons over 2002 levels. This grim news supports a report by the United Nations issued in April that claimed that the heroin that originates in the fields of Afghanistan supports 2/3 of heroin abusers on nearly every continent. Something must be done to curb this threat and deprive these gangsters of what is becoming their chief form of revenue.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, thank you for the opportunity to work with you on this issue and I look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

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