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Afghan Narcotrafficking: Finding an Alternative to Alternative Development

EWI's Joint U.S.-Russia Working Group on Afghan Narcotrafficking Releases Fourth Report

NEW YORK, July 27, 2016 – The EastWest Institute (EWI) today announced the launch of its latest report, ***Afghan Narcotrafficking: Finding an Alternative to Alternative Development***. The fourth in a six-part series, this report shows that attempts to reframe the debate on and practice of conducting development in drug-crop-growing areas of Afghanistan have unfortunately, to date, faltered.

Produced by EWI's Joint U.S.-Russia Working Group on Afghan Narcotrafficking, the authors pinpoint the critical shortcomings of alternative development programs designed to encourage farmers in Afghanistan to switch from opium poppy cultivation, which has only proven effective in select areas and has failed to engage with the wider development policy debates and processes.

"Controlling illegal drugs has been and remains an excruciating problem in Afghanistan," said Ronald Neumann, President of the American Academy of Diplomacy and former United States Ambassador to Afghanistan (2005-2007). "The U.S. and other major donor nations have tried to deal with the problem in isolation and with short term fixes. These efforts have repeatedly failed. This EWI paper suggests how the donor community and in particular the United States and Russia should think about a long-term drug strategy. This is a significant contribution to understanding the realities of the drug situation in Afghanistan."

The report shares lessons learned from the last decade of assistance in Afghanistan, including deficiencies in program design, and issues associated with measurement, conditionality and engagement at the local level—all of which have contributed to poor results.

The authors conclude that "counternarcotics mainstreaming" is the optimal strategy going forward. This approach underlines the multi-layered role opium production plays in rural livelihoods in the context of rural development, while also recognizing that efforts in Afghanistan need to address the wider political economy (improvements in security, governance and diversification) integrated across national development policy. The authors also recommend efforts to reduce opium poppy cultivation be placed within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"This report offers practical recommendations for achieving the counternarcotics mainstreaming of conducting

development in a drugs environment,” added Ambassador Cameron Munter, CEO & President of the EastWest Institute. “An honest assessment of what works and what doesn’t in the donor community is a prudent exercise aimed at driving corrective action and yielding results. This report is a step in that direction.”

Afghan Narcotrafficking: Finding an Alternative to Alternative Development also calls on the United States and Russia to jointly and individually press the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to factor the drugs issue into national development planning, as well as advocacy efforts with international organizations, such as the UNDP and the World Bank, that can play an increasingly influential role.

EWI’s Joint U.S.-Russia Working Group on Afghan Narcotrafficking previously has released three reports: [Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment](#) in 2013; [Afghan Narcotrafficking: Post-2014 Scenarios](#) in 2015; and [Afghan Narcotrafficking: The State of Afghanistan's Borders](#) in 2015. Two more reports will follow, one focused on narco-financing and a final report presenting a compendium of all recommendations.

Please click here for the [full report](#).

About the EastWest Institute:

The EastWest Institute works to reduce international conflict, addressing seemingly intractable problems that threaten world security and stability. We forge new connections and build trust among global leaders and influencers, help create practical new ideas and take action. Independent, nonprofit since our founding in 1980, we have offices in New York, Brussels, Moscow, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. Learn more at www.eastwest.ngo.

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