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**(S//SI//REL) SIGINT Helps Hobble the Taleban by Cutting Off Their
Livelihood**

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 (U) Afghans prepare to
burn seized opium (AFP)

*(S//SI//REL) Editor's summary: SIGINT provides the
"dope" on the Taleban's reliance on the narcotics*


 (U) Afghans prepare to burn seized opium (AFP)

trade for money and support, prompting US and Coalition leaders to expand their efforts to shut it down... SIGINT supports a number of successes, including the largest single seizure of drugs in history, with the pace of counter-drug operations increasing rapidly.


(S//SI//REL) A recent UN report estimates that the narcotics "industry" in Afghanistan and Pakistan contributes \$300 million annually to the Taleban. To attack this narcotics - insurgency nexus, NSA Georgia's Southwest Asia Narcotics Division (SWAN - FGS2F) has worked closely with a number of colleagues,* focusing on narcotics trafficking networks that provide funding, weapons, and logistical support to Taleban elements in Afghanistan.

(S//SI//REL) ***The resulting SIGINT reporting, along with reporting from other Intelligence Community elements, made clear to national and theater leadership that the insurgency could not be defeated without disrupting the narcotics trade.*** Additionally, some narcotics traffickers have been identified as active insurgent commanders, directing their own fighters in attacks against the coalition, and procuring weapons and improvised explosive device (IED) materials.

(S//SI//REL) In May 2008, FGS2F began providing real-time support to counternarcotics operations targeting processing laboratories, traffickers' compounds, and the traffickers themselves as they were on the move. ***Among the operations supported in whole or in part by FGS2F was the largest single seizure of drugs in history,*** according to DEA -- 237 metric tons of hashish. In all, FGS2F and its colleagues at NSAW, FSU, and GCHQ has provided real-time intelligence to over 20 counternarcotics operations, netting thousands of kilograms of drugs, several detainees, and weapons.

 (U//FOUO) Detainee surrounded by opium seized by Coalition forces

(S//SI//REL) As 2009 approached, the narcotics trafficking - insurgency nexus gained prominence in ISAF's (International Security Assistance Force, i.e. NATO forces in Afghanistan) plan to defeat the Taleban. Narcotics traffickers were added to the Joint Prioritized Effects List (JPEL) for the first time, allowing them to be targeted for strikes. In October 2008, NATO Defense Ministers agreed that narcotics trafficking networks were legitimate targets for ISAF forces, due to the traffickers' ties to the insurgency.

 Taleban members bear weapons in snowy highlands of Afghanistan (Reuters)


(S//SI//REL) ...And in December 2008, the Deputy Commander for Security in ISAF's Regional Command - South declared narcotics trafficking as his #1 priority. Concurrent with these events, SIGINT replaced HUMINT as the primary driver of counternarcotics operations, thanks in large part to the efforts of an FGS2F analyst embedded with the Interagency Operations Coordination Center (IOCCC) in Kabul . By the end of 2008, NSA/CSS Representative Afghanistan

reported that **80% of all counternarcotics operations were now SIGINT-driven**. A year previously, HUMINT was the driver for almost every operation.

(S//SI//REL) Despite its relatively small size (18 personnel as of January 2009), FGS2F continues to be a prominent part of the fight against the narco-insurgency in Afghanistan, even as customer needs climb rapidly:

- As of late January 2009, FGS2F was supporting an average of one counternarcotics operation per week. By comparison, the last seven months of 2008 saw an average of just over one per month.
- Two counternarcotics operations supported by FGS2F in January 2009 netted over 6 metric tons (6,000 kilograms) of opium, worth millions of dollars -- described by one trafficker as "a big loss." In 2008, by contrast, total opium seizures measured only in the hundreds of kilograms.
- When one of FGS2F's primary targets, Mullah Multan, made a rare entry into Afghanistan from Pakistan, NSAW and NSAG combined to work with forward elements to have a strike conducted on Multan's convoy within hours of identifying his presence. Though Multan survived the strike, he was driven back to Pakistan and suffered the loss of over 3 tons of opium along with six of his cohorts -- a severe disruption to his narcotics network.

(S//SI//REL) SIGINT efforts to target the flow of narcotics trade funding to the Taleban are paying real dividends by disrupting financing and logistical support critical to the insurgency, saving lives and contributing to the Coalition's ability to establish security throughout Afghanistan.

 (U) A British ISAF soldier photographs the destruction of seized opium (Jane's)

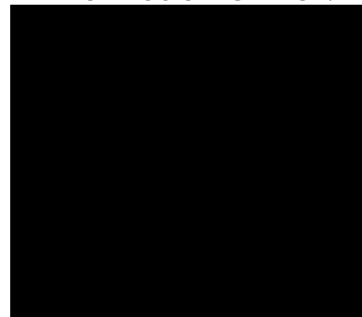
(U) Notes:

*(S//SI//REL) These colleagues were located at NSAW, [GCHQ](#), Field Station Utah (FSU), the Joint Narcotics Analysis Centre - London, and the Interagency Operations Coordination Center (IOCC) in Kabul.

(S//SI//REL) Editor's note: This article is reprinted from NSA Georgia's "Around NSAG" newsletter. See also a related *SIDtoday* article: "[Customers Boosting Presence in Afghanistan for 2009, and SIGINTers Are Doing the Same.](#)"

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