

By Hoag Levins

# THE KABUL CONNECTION

A by-product of America's undercover involvement in Afghanistan is the sudden spurt of heroin on the street in Philadelphia.

"At the beginning of my administration there were over a half million heroin addicts in the United States. Our continued emphasis on reducing the supply of heroin, as well as providing the treatments and rehabilitation of its victims, has reduced the addict population to 380,000, reduced the number of heroin related deaths by 80%, and reduced the number of heroin related injuries by 50%. However, drug abuse in many forms continues to detract from the quality of life and is of great concern to us and the people of all nations."

JIMMY CARTER, January 21st, 1980

This is about Jimmy Carter, the CIA, national security, Afghanistan and international intrigue stretching across 20 years and two hemispheres.

The story begins in a steak joint in West Philadelphia.

It is a seedy, but not uncomfortable steak joint near the intersection where the West Philadelphia ghetto, the University of Pennsylvania campus and the grounds of the Veterans Administration Hospital meet to look across at the loading docks of the city morgue.

Outside the steak joint, it is morning. Inside, it is smoky, noisy and humidly warm with the odors of frying bacon, fresh-sliced onion and last night's beer. At the door, pedestrians step in from the sidewalk to join the queue for scalding coffee and paper-plate breakfasts they will carry away on a tray.

At the last table—in the corner—an elderly man in a filthy coat is asleep; head rolled back over the bench top; mouth agape exposing tooth stumps and a sticky gray tongue. Nearby, two young women in braids and baggy denims gulp down eggs without bothering to remove the book-crammed knapsacks from their backs.

At another table, two stiffly perched men in white coats are quietly debating the merits of continuous versus interrupted suture techniques for closing midline incisions. Beyond them, four men—the tallest is wearing sunglasses despite the gloom—are talking in hyper-staccato voices about what the dude hangs out near Foo Foo's on the strip be saying last night. Dude saying, ohman, ohman, dude saying a LOAD is coming in. All 52nd Street be waiting.

No shit! Like, the dude was rapping that this be GOOD SHIT. Not that mud-brown Mexican shit where you got to do up two bundles just to get a buzz. No, man. The dude be rapping GOOD SHIT. Coming in. WHITE SHIT! Coming in the whole strip be waiting, ohman, ohman! Dig it!

Way over by the window is another group of men. Three men, all in their early 30s. One has wire-rim glasses and a bushy mustache. He is wearing a tired navy blue suit coat and a stained necktie loosened at the collar. The second man has a beard and a pencil behind his ear. He is wearing a faded flannel shirt and heavy boots. The third is a bone-lean man with a farmer's face and a left eyelid permanently drooped. He is wearing a silky shirt printed with palm trees, the tubular grille of a Rolls-Royce and a neon sign saying Casa-Blanca.

This third man—the eyelid—has just banged the table hard enough to overturn the salt and shouted loud enough to puncture the substantial din of the eatery, "Did you read that crap? I mean did you read that crap?!"

The other two men—the suit coat and the beard—look at each other sharply, momentarily afraid that the eyelid may be off on another of his tangents.

They know each other so well, these three, that two can always spot the third's foible rising, even before it breaks the surface of any given moment. Each has come to accept and accommodate the other two's weaknesses: the beard's flagrant egomania; the suit coat's fear of higher authority: the eyelid's unpredictable spurts of wild emotion. At times, they have celebrated each other's eccentricities with humorously barbed gifts: a bluefish wrapped in a front-page story for the beard; a tin 50-year pin for the suit coat; a child's inflatable punching dummy for the eyelid.

Such niggling is an integral part of the bond which, if they had to put a date on it, started 15 years ago when the three had been tattooed by the same needle in one of those grungy, hole-in-wall shops found outside every







U.S. military training base. Two of them had had American eagles, poised for attack, inscribed in the flesh of their right arms. The third had his biceps done with an upright bulldog with a spiked collar and a metal helmet and its monstrous, fanged jaw jutting forward as if to chomp steel.

These three men usually did not see each other for as long as a year or more, but then-as had happened this day in the steak joint-they would sit down at a table and pick up conversations as if they had ended only the day before. Sometimes they would wax poetic over the memory of such arcane joys as the structural perfection of Pratt & Whitney 14-cylinder radial engines; or the sheer genius of the zeus fastener with which airplane engine cowling is attached; or the way fresh-drained engine oil, still hot, mixes with jungle mud to create an oddly pleasant odor; or what it's like to take off just after dawn and stand in the open jump door for a God's-eye view of the far mountains hung somber in monsoon fog, and the close-up villages all soft-edged in the river's mist, with strutting roosters and glistening thatch and delicate plumes of smoke curling off the cook fires

These three men: the beard, who

Meo village leaders in Laos claimed their opium harvests were flown to Long Tieng on U.S. helicopters.

often irritates the others by taking notes in the midst of casual conversations; the suit coat, who sheepishly calls his office to assure them he's hard at work at some nonexistent conference; and the eyelid, whose quiet, vicious need often sets the location of their meetings, from which he must slip for that short walk to the Veterans Administration Hospital. There, he will hurry past the imposing wrought iron gates; past the black limousines at the front entrance; past the white-gloved guard and around the side past the loading docks; past the maintenance sheds; past the storage bins and the trash dumpsters; all the way back to the very rear of the compound, right next to the gate where the garbage trucks come and go each day; back to the red brick drug clinic which-15 years later—is still servicing the psychic debris of the Vietnam War. There, he will quietly join the crowd for his drink of orange juice and methadone, one of the 3 million such visits that will be made this year to the mental health clinics across America which administer the VA's 52 drug programs for addicts left over from the Vietnam Drug Era.

"I MEAN did you read it?" the eyelid asked again. This time he lowered his voice so as not to draw so much attention in the steak joint. He picked up the salt shaker.

The beard nodded. He had read it. The suit coat said no, he had not read the previous day's story about Afghanistan in the *Inquirer*.

"It was déjà vu, man. Pure déjà vu," the eyelid was saying to the suit coat. "This Inquirer guy goes to Afghanistan and he sneaks through the lines with a bunch of Afghans. He's got this photographer with him. So they're walking around the mountains somewhere in north Afghanistan—near the border with Pakistan and this Russian jeep comes tooling by and this whole pack of Afghans begins shooting the shit out of the jeep. There's two Russians in it. After all the shooting is done, one of the Russians is still alive. Not touched. Great shots, these Afghans. So, the



Russian is wandering around, you know, like in a daze. This guy is describing how the Afghans—like he's saying 'heroes' and 'crusaders.' 'Proud crusaders' and shit like that. I can't believe it as I'm reading! Shit, man. You know what those tribes do for a goddamned living.

"So they tie this Russian soldier up. Hands behind the back. And off they go up the mountain again. Only they're in a hurry. And they got this reporter and photographer slowing them down anyway. And now they got this Russian prisoner. So the Afghans lay the Russian down on the ground. It's a stream right there. One puts a muzzle to the back of his head. Wham! Back-of-thehead shot. You can see it man, as you're reading. Forehead, cheekbones, all splashed out on the rock and running away on the water.

"So the guy is writing all this and how he continued on with his 'proud crusader' buddies. That's what he keeps calling them. Russian had his hands tied. Back-of-the-head shot. My ass! Some fucking warrior ethic these 'proud crusaders' got, huh? Christ!

"I mean, nowhere is this guy telling

really are. Nowhere is he telling about what they do. He's calling them 'freedom fighters' and all I can see in my mind, man, is how the papers used to call Nguyen Cao Ky the 'flamboyant freedom fighter.' You remember that, man? I mean, goddamn! It's the same mountains isn't it? I mean, it's the same CIA isn't it? I mean, you've read about the CIA and the guns haven't you? So, why the fuck are the newspapers pretending it isn't happening? It's Star & Circle Inc., time again, man. Everybody's looking the other way again. Just like last time. Good ol' Star & Circle Inc. And that's what gets me pissed man, because no one is doing anything about it and its happening all over again.'

The beard sat quiet. The suit coat sat back against the bench. This was the first time he had given any serious thought to Afghanistan, and the whole picture the eyelid was talking about suddenly unrolled itself clearly in his brain. "Shit, man, you're right. I hadn't thought of that. It is the same mountains. I bet Star & Circle is running

overtime right now. Damn! Star & Circle rides again."

A DOZEN YEARS AGO, the sale of heroin in Saigon, Da Nang, Bien Hoa, Vung Tau, Nha Trang and the other major urban areas throughout American-occupied South Vietnam was an open affair. Technically illegal, it was done as openly as street corner sales of stolen crates of U.S. PX liquor, cartons of hair spray or Coca-Cola.

Unlike the United States, where a heroin user is confined to accepting whatever it is the man is selling as heroin on any given day, in Vietnam, one had a choice. There, a person had the consumer's normal privilege of test and comparison of different brands. And this did not involve the pale "cut" heroin of the sort familiar to the denizens of Philadelphia's 52nd Street, where a packet contains as little as 2% of the drug. No. This was uncut, "monster" Laotian-highland heroin. In shops-such as the venerable Mr. Loo's on the outskirts of Cholon near the U.S. airfield at Tan Son Nhut-a pro-



spective buyer could peruse a glass counter displaying various brands of heroin.

There was Dragon brand, Tiger brand, Lion & Globe brand and Star & Circle brand. These brand designs involved a bit of rudimentary marketing psychology. Their creators presumed that a would-be purchaser, familiar with the symbolisms of the brand, would subconsciously assume that the most powerful heroin was to be found beneath the most powerful symbolism. This led to a contest of sorts between competitors, each of which sought to come up with the symbolism that was the most universally recognized cultural metaphor for the ultimate power which could be stamped on a vial or a bag of heroin.

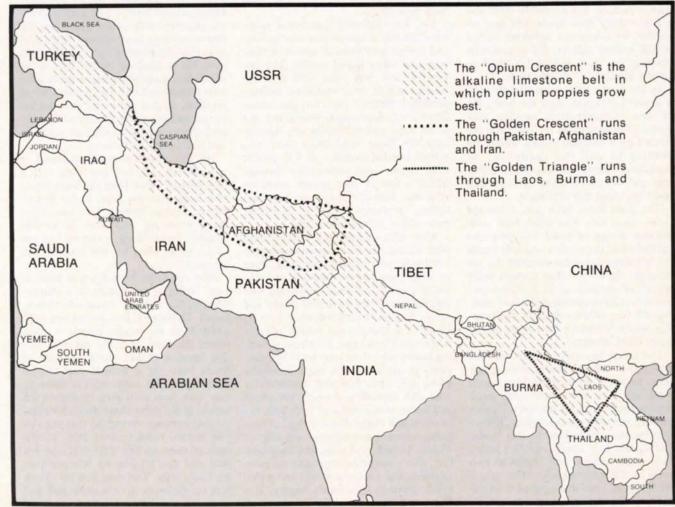
The dragon was the symbol of heaven's might. The tiger was the animal most associated with battle prowess and ferocity. The lion was a figure associated with celestial energy and the ability to devour demons. And the five-pointed star in a circle was the sign recognized by the northern mountain tribes of Laos as the symbol of the winged warriors who breathed thunder and spit fire and descended from the clouds to scoop up entire caravan loads of bundled opium before returning to the heavens.

By the late 60s, the bulk of the opium from which heroin is refined was collected from vast mountainside poppy fields in Southeast Asia and smuggled to Marseilles for processing.

These highlands-centered in the primevally rugged mountains of northern Laos, northern Thailand and northeastern Burma-became best known to the world as the "Golden Triangle," a region ruled by tribal war lords. By the late 1960s, those war lords commanded large, well-trained opium armies and had expanded their operation, to become a key source of the heroin flooding Europe and America. The bulk of the opium, from which heroin is refined, was collected from the vast mountainside poppy fields and then smuggled out of Southeast Asia to France where large laboratories in Marseilles processed it. But, at the same time, increasing amounts of the opium base were being processed in new laboratories established in the highlands in the 1960s that were turning out the heroin for what had become a lucrative local market: the American GIs throughout South Vietnam. That heroin, stamped with the brand of the underground organization distributing it, was transported down to such places as Mr. Loo's and thousands of similar outlets clustered wherever concentrations of American occupational troops were found.

MR. Loo was a bone-thin, bubbling raw-nerve of a man who never seemed to be able either to stand still or stop smiling. Chinese, he was one of the many Saigon-Cholon entrepreneurs who had found their fortune in servicing the Americans who had turned a sleepy jungle airport on the outskirts of an equally somnolent Oriental capital into the largest and most heavily trafficked airfield in the world.

Mr. Loo had bristle-short black hair and eyeglasses with a broken nose bridge mended with thick wraps of yellowed tape. He also had a squat, broadfaced wife who neither spoke in the presence of foreigners nor walked in front of her husband. Loo had originally erected a roadside stand selling beer to the construction crews traveling between their Saigon billets and the burgeoning airport they were building.



The Opium Crescent: The Golden Triangle supplied most of the Asian heroin consumed here less than a decade ago. The Golden Crescent seems likely to be the next big supplier of the drug to the U.S.

By the late 1960s, Loo's was just one of a solid cluster of establishments which had crowded every available inch of ground along the roadways to and from Tan Son Nhut. And by that time, Loo had become quite prosperous and had greatly expanded his original stand. His establishment now stretched back like a tunnel of two-byfours, plywood and corrugated metal roofing. It was of an architectural design which most Americans tend to associate with chicken coops and the temporary carnival stands erected on the parking lots of Catholic churches in the spring. However, in the context of Tan Son Nhut shantytown, Loo's was quite grand.

Among its steady patrons, this roadside way station gave rise to a new English term: "doloo," as in, "Hey, man, you gonna' doloo tonight?" or "I'm gonna' doloo, wanna' come?" Meaning that the individual intended to travel by taxi or xyclo to Mr. Loo's where he would get "done"—that is, he would get drunk, get laid or get high, as the fancy struck him.

In the front section of Mr. Loo's was the bar—its long counter built of packing crate planks; its raw-wood shelves lined with a handful of American-brand whiskey bottles. Beer was kept beneath the counter in Styrofoam tubs of the sort used by the air crews on the planes nearby. On a central shelf was a large, shiny Akai stereo and tape recorder, its enormous speakers lashed to the ceiling rafters and perpetually blasting out such period favorites as Jimmy Hendrix's "Purple Haze."

In the next room, separated by only a sheet of plywood, were the beds. Six of them. Crudely built wooden platforms with mattresses on top. Each encircled by a bamboo screen which did nothing to dull the cacophony of squishings, gigglings, cursings, gruntings and sloppy bubbling noises which filled the room day and night.

The third room back was a storage room. One side was piled high with wooden crates of dried fish, salt and bottled nuoc mam sauce, hoarded until the black market price reached the appropriate level. In other corners were stacks of cartons of U.S. C-rations, bundles of fresh two-by-fours and cardboard boxes of brass artillery shell casings which brought a high price on the metal black market.

The room beyond this one was the drug room. It had a heavy wood-plank door. Inside, a series of packing crates were set in a semicircle with each crate topped by an old jeweler's display case—some with cracked glass. Before opening the plank door to this room, smiling Mr. Loo always reached into a dark nook nearby and removed two items in the semidarkness. One was a small ring of keys that opened both the door and the display cases. The second

Inside the display cases were bottles of faded Darvon capsules, triangular red devils, slabs of hash, and 'rosary beads'—silver-foiled strings of amphetamines from U.S. flight-crew survival kits.

was an ancient Webley revolver which he stuffed unobtrusively into the top of his pants where it could be easily grabbed from beneath his shirt, if necessary.

Inside the display cases were bottles of faded Darvon capsules, plastic bags of triangular red devils, finger-long and pine-needle green slabs of hash, chewing gum-like wads of raw opium, rolls of "rosary beads"—the silver foiled strings of amphetamines removed from U.S. flight-crew survival kits—and the main display: the various plastic vials, packages and packets of different brands of heroin. There were also three old school desks with fancy wrought iron bottoms and battered tops etched with French graffiti, at which one could sit if necessary.

Mr. Loo patiently instructed interested parties in the proper way to form and mount tiny balls of opium in their pipe and other useful rituals. The last display case was filled with new syringes, still in their sterilized military packages. Nearby was a tiny gas burner fitted with a homemade wire stand that could hold a metal bottle cap directly over the flame. And there were also rubber-banded bundles of PX plastic soda straws-red and white-through which a line of pure heroin could be snorted. Usually, most of his customers preferred to use a 50 piaster note rolled tightly into a tube.

Most GIs began their relationship with heroin via snorting—a seemingly innocuous way to ingest the drug. Pure or near-pure heroin inhaled and absorbed-like cocaine-through the membranes of the nose and throat and lungs has an extraordinary effect. Imagine putting your rolled piaster down and lifting your head up and feeling like every cell in your body has suddenly lit up, like warm burst fireworks going off, both hot and wonderfully cool and spreading through the chest and limbs with a sense of both lush expansion and sharp thrust and all of you going outward and upward and ohgod, ohgod, so high and wide and deep and fast, like your brain is gorging on pure sunshine and you're suddenly too wideeyed shout-to-the-clouds happy, it's like you'll burst from the goodness of

it and it keeps coming, coming, ohman, ohman, higher and wider so that your skin feels inflated with pure-blast joy which might burst you open but it doesn't matter because it feels too good when it runs this deep, ohman, ohman.

It's the kind of thing that makes you wonder. Oh, how you get to wondering. If it is this good, this goddamned good, with a snort, ohgod, what must it be like with a pure vein pop. What must it be like to be better than this?

You toy with this idea. This idea that is scary. But a lot of things in Nam are scary. This idea of really pushing a shiny steel tube into a purple bulge of your arm vein. This idea that has become a pure-light temptation that thereafter gently, but firmly, cups the pleasure zones of your brain, stroking them in an ever-so delicate, ever so persistent manner. This temptation over which you have begun a conscious debate.

Until one afternoon—it was a muggy, just-after-the-rains, monsoon afternoon-you are cruising with a friend in a battered cream-and-blue Fiat taxi when you spot the last member of your triumvirate. He is about 200 yards up from the two-plank footbridge across the sewerage canal that runs in front of Mr. Loo's. He is wearing one of his usual outrageously gaudy off-duty shirts: a red Chinese silk shirt with silver phoenix birds woven into it and the sleeves custom-sewn shorter than usual to expose the bulldog tattoo on his right arm. He is standing by the side of the road; now limply holding a palm tree; now collapsing to his knees; now falling forward, so that out of his shirt pocket comes spilling a new syringe with a tiny cork skewered on its tip and a plastic vial of Star & Circle heroin.

His left eyelid, normally drooped, is now closed. His left arm runs with a tiny wisp of blood from the fresh puncture hole near the bend in his elbow. Vomit dribbles in watery strings off his slack lower lip and then, in violent spasms, forces itself in clotted jets out of his nose when his jaw muscles fail to open.

And you know he is dying in front of you. Dying in the middle of a shantytown within sight of a roadside whorehouse. Dying next to a pit running with soup-thick sewerage beside a road where the snarl of traffic takes no notice because bodies along the side of roads here are a normal part of the landscape. This man, who is more to you than your own arm. Dying as the heroin in his veins shuts down his muscle and nervous system so that even as you watch, bending over him, a softness is moving like a veil across his face and you lift him up. Corpse-like, his body sags. You drag him up. Yank him up viciously so his arms flail and

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cheesy spittle flings outward in the air like mucous netting. Load him into the back seat of the Fiat. Fight it! Ohgod, he's dying. Fight it! Punch him in the chest. Fight it! Hurt him so he doesn't lose consciousness. Fight it! The screaming is terrifying the taxi driver who has stopped but starts again when a pistol is unholstered. Fight it! Slapping him in the face. Pinching him in the face. Fight it! Whipping his shoulders back and forth in a rust-dusted back seat. Fight it, if you die I'll kill you, motherfucker, ohgod don't die. FASTER! Wads of money shoved in the taxi driver's face. FASTER! The field hospital. Other side of the airfield. FASTER!

And part of you is worrying about the medical records. How to keep this out of the record if he lives. What will that cost? And you are going through his pants pockets, removing a half-smoked bomber from one and a packet each of Star & Circle and Dragon from the other and heaving them out the window.

And out that window, suddenly, the scenery has changed from shantytown to coiled barbed wire and sand-bagged gun bunkers, all snortish with belt-fed .50 calibers. And the chain link fence encircling Tan Son Nhut is whizzing by and far out there every concrete surface is acrawl with roaring, zooming, booming, thundering machinery. Whale-bellied C-130s lowering for touchdown at the far end of the strip; enormous Starlifters, silent and still, their cargo ramps open to expose the just-loaded aluminum coffin boxes, stacked inside in tiers nine-wide and nine-high; the F-4 swept-wing fighter jets, hung with Sidewinder missiles and each plane in its own concrete and steel bomb pen, like eggs in a box; A-1 Skyraiders, their wings folded upward over the cockpits like bent elbows, exposing the racks of yellow-tipped 250-pound bombs; the F-8 Crusader jets, their single intake scoops opened wide, like a shark's mouth and their wings heavy with pods of Zuni rockets; the clusters of droop-rotored Chinooks and the ubiquitous Huey gunships bobbing up and down everywhere like metal gnats; the gooney-bird looking C-47 cargo carriers and the dome-nosed P2Vs and you are taking all this in a passing blur, but with every receptor of your mind adrenalined open and for the first time you see; you really see something your brain has never registered before. It is the symbol that is familiar to every peasant in every village in every part of this country; a symbol which is painted on every fuselage and beneath every wing surface of every one of these planes which have taken rule of the skies in this land; the bright, bold

symbol synonymous with everything that the United States of America stands for in Asia: a five-pointed star in a circle.

ORIGINALLY, The United States government became involved in the Southeast Asian heroin business because it seemed like a good way to fight communism.

This is how it started: in 1964, during the primary election season of a Presidential campaign in which charges of 'softness" on communism and lack of "leadership" played an important role in the mudslinging between Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater, Johnson took the final actions that catapulted America into its most disastrous and debilitating military adventure. This was the war in which the U.S. decided to begin the wholesale bombing of the cities, factories and villages of both ends of Vietnam rather than allow that country's people to work out their own form of national government in the wake of their overthrow of 100 years of colonial occupation by the French.

As later disclosed in the top secret documents of the Pentagon Papers, Johnson, shortly after he was Oswalded to power, authorized the CIA to begin an "elaborate program of covert military operations against the state of North Vietnam." At the same time. Johnson also readied the plans for a broad schedule of open bombing of North Vietnam's industrial regions that would begin as soon as an incident was created that would allow the White House to claim its ships had been attacked and, therefore, a state of war existed between the U.S. and Hanoi. Actually, even before such an incident was created, the war had already been started by the U.S., which had begun clandestine bombing and aerial attacks inside North Vietnam. Pentagon documents detail how the CIA trained Thailand operatives and equipped them with U.S. T-28 fighters which flew the CIA-directed bombing missions. The final drama that resulted in the "Gulf of Tonkin incident" went this way: the CIA was directing squads of South Vietnamese invasion units into offshore islands of North Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin at the same time it was waging its aerial attacks on North Vietnamese cities and industrial zones.

Finally, North Vietnamese PT boats, reacting to these repeated South Vietnamese invasions and attacks along its coastal region, fired on the support ships of these invasion squads—the vessels of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. President Johnson then declared that the United States had been attacked and would begin full-scale bombing of its new enemy. This occurred three

weeks before the Democratic convention was scheduled to meet in Atlantic City to choose a Presidential nominee, and where Johnson—now President of a country at war—would be nominated and begin his campaign.

The massive air war that went into effect against North Vietnam in August 1964, was different from air wars of the past. Battles between airplanes were no longer isolated engagements between two men and two machines. They were extremely complex electronic duels involving thousands of men and machines all electronically integrated between various ground, air and seaborne tracking stations where hundreds of computerized systems sensed and instantaneously reacted to situations occurring faster than the human mind or eye could follow. Battles were often over before the losing-read that "dead"-pilot even realized they had begun.

While North Vietnam was primitive in many aspects of its industrial development, it had one of the most sophisticated antiaircraft missile systems in the world. The lethal effectiveness of this electronic thicket of Soviet-supplied SA-2 or "SAM" surface-to-air guided missile sites would quickly become apparent to the Naval attack squadrons which would repeatedly return to their careers with large holes ripped from their formations.

The key to the Pentagon plans for massive aerial attacks in North Vietnam under these conditions were the strategically-sited radar, tracking and electronic surveillance stations which the CIA began building secretly in the highlands of northern Laos even before the "official" war started in 1964. Situated on foreboding mountain heights which allowed them to "look down" on North Vietnam, these CIA stations were to provide the crucial "anchor" in the integrated web of computer-controlled navigational, targeting, guidance, detection and evasion systems which formed the invisible electronic grid into which U.S. planes were locked-like blips in a video game-as they moved across North Vietnamese airspace on bombing, rescue and reconnaissance runs.

The mountain regions in which these stations were built and fortified comprise some of the earth's most rugged and inaccessible terrain. For thousands of years, they had served as a refuge for renegades, raiders, revolutionaries and other outcast or self-exiled groups from the surrounding lowland civilizations of Vietnam, Thailand, Burma and the Empire of China. These mist-shrouded valleys and limestone foothills at the eastern end of the Tibetan plateau were the home of dozens of

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### Drugs

tribal societies organized around warlords whose local armies routinely savaged each other to protect or enlarge their control on the single industry which provided the region with its primary wealth: opium production.

In the beginning, the CIA formed alliances with such groups because it needed a dependable method to supply the electronic posts it had established in the mountain reaches of Laos as well as through the Shan tribal regions along the borders of Burma and China. A 1972 Yale University study revealed that "Rather than sending helicopters far into unknown hostile territory to keep those bases supplied, the CIA relied on the Shan rebel opium caravans."

There were also the Hmong or Meo tribes and others through the area, such as the Wa-a tribe who, in the 1960s. was still actively engaged in the ancient tribal rite of head-taking in raids on rival villages and fields. The heads were prized as trophies of community pride and were often positioned as fertility totems near particularly valuable fields. Picture this: a valley on whose tangled slopes tigers roamed wild and on whose bottom lands and lower inclines stretched growing fields tilled in the most primitive, stone-age fashion. There is a tree stump at which a small shrine has been erected with bits of wood propped up to make a protective covering. Inside is a skull, its black hair tied back in a knot; its facial skin brittle crisp and insect-perforated; its eyes and lids sewn shut. It faces out toward the ground where tribesmen work among the chest-high flower stems. Each man quickly moving from stem to stem, cutting two razor incisions into the ripened poppy pods to start the raw opium sap oozing out to coagulate in the sun's heat.

It was among these groups that the CIA began actively recruiting large mercenary armies which it intended to use to protect the electronic stations as well as employ on large raids into the North Vietnamese supply routes through the territory—better known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The sort of men the CIA was seeking for this work were tribesmen who had an intimate knowledge of the terrain and who were psychologically attuned to the savage, no-quarter-given guerrilla warfare that would be a routine part of the operations.

Thousands of men with just such qualities, in fact, were already assembled into makeshift troops operating in northern Laos under the command of Laotian militia leader and local opium czar, "general" Vang Pao. If you read U.S. military records, Van Pao was just another freedom fighter hired to

command the CIA's secret anti-Communist army of crusading highland tribesmen. Equipped with the best American weapons, supplies and even air support and light artillery, this mercenary army was headquartered at Long Tieng, the site of the CIA's command post near the Plain of Jars.

However, if you read the records of the U.S. Department of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Interpol and other international investigatory, coordinating and law-enforcement groups, Long Tieng was also the site of the largest opium collection depot and heroinprocessing laboratory complex in Southeast Asia—owned and operated by Vang Pao in cooperation with the CIA.

In 1972, a survey team headed by Yale University Asian scholar Alfred W. McCoy, released the voluminous results of its study of the logistics of the drug trade throughout the U.S.-occupied war zones of Southeast Asia. Entitled, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, and published by Harper & Row, it explained:

"By 1965 the CIA had created a Meo army of 30,000 men that guarded radar installations vital to bombing North Vietnam . . . without air transport for their opium, [these tribesmen] faced economic ruin. There was simply no form of air transport available in northern Laos except the CIA's [planes]. And according to several sources, [these planes] began flying opium from the mountain villages and . . . [were] known to be flying Meo opium as late as 1971. Meo village leaders in this area west of the Plain of Jars, for example, claim that their 1970 and 1971 opium harvests were brought by Vang Pao's officers and flown to Long Tieng on [American military] UH-1H helicopters

"As thousands of GIs serving in Vietnam became addicted to Laotian heroin, the [U.S. Bureau of Narcotics] tried to adjust its priorities by sending a team of agents to Laos, but its investigations were blocked by the Laotian government, the U.S. State Department and the CIA."

To appreciate the extraordinary significance of this direct involvement of the CIA and U.S. military in the opium trade, picture how it used to be in the highlands: isolated territories ruled by feudal lords commanding small forces armed with single-shot Enfields and Mausers left over from the 1890s.

The tribal regions where the opium is grown and collected faced certain difficulties which imposed severe restrictions on the industry. Once an opium lord had his crop in, he was faced with the largest problem of the entire business: transporting the enormously

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bulky product to market.

The only way to do this was with resources available in his immediate domain: caravans of pack animals led and protected by a small army of warriors whose arduous—and often unsuccessful—trek often involved thousands of miles and months of time before it reached a point where it intersected with an appropriate tramp steamer or other vehicle which could then continue the journey to world markets.

But then, suddenly, from the sky, arrives the CIA and the U.S. military. Arriving in fleets of cargo planes which need answer to no customs officials; fleets of cargo planes immune to the border patrols they pass over; fleets of airplanes operated by men whose orders could not be questioned by the legions of able-bodied crewmen they commanded; fleets of airplanes running in a pell-mell web across a Southeast Asia in which all normal systems of legal accountability and routine inspection had evaporated in the chaos of a war zone ruled by military decree.

And so, along the same tangle of U.S. military cargo routes which were the essential conduits of a multifaceted black market and smuggling network stretching across the Southeast Asian landmass as well as the South Pacific basin; along the same routes on which traveled Christmas trees going from the forest above Dalat to the suites of line officers offshore in the Seventh Fleet; along which traveled the wooden crates marked "engine parts" containing bundles of various currencies making the lucrative round trip between the freemarket banking centers at Hong Kong and the artificially-controlled currency exchanges in South Vietnam; along which traveled ton after ton of aluminum sheeting and plywood and two-byfours and steel rods consigned to the construction materials black market; along which moved thousands of rolls of the best silk coming out of Tokyo to be unloaded at "Black Market Central," Tan Son Nhut Airfield at Saigon; along which rode pallets of Johnny Walker Red disguised to look like tarpaulined stacks of ammunition boxes; along which rode crates full of "liberated" antiques, art treasures and archaeological booty plucked from Hue and Angor Wat and the Cham ruins at Quang Nam; along this vibrantly busy, wildly profitable, rip-roaring web of sky-borne free enterprise criss-crossing through the smoke of the Vietnam War, the opium began to move as just another one of the many contraband commodities.

By 1970, investigators for the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics as well as such international law enforcement agencies as Interpol, indicated that 70% of the

ocean of heroin then washing across Europe and America was originating in the Burma-Thailand-Laos Golden Triangle region controlled by the CIA's mercenary opium armies. Moving out of Saigon and U.S.-controlled Bangkok, the multi-ton lots of opium base flowed out across the Indian Ocean and northern Africa and into Mediterranean sites at Sicily, Corsica and Marsellles. There, the next step of the processthe large-scale refining of opium into heroin-began under the aegis of Mafia syndicates. By the late 1960s Marseilles had become a world center of the heroin manufacturing industry; its infamous laboratories were often as large as major factories and run with

Then, suddenly, from the sky, arrives the CIA and the U.S. military—in fleets of cargo planes that need answer to no customs officials.

the tacit approval of a corruption-ridden local government in the port that, for centuries, was Europe's traditional smuggling capital.

From Marseilles, the Mafia syndicates sent the finished heroin to America in ships, planes, packed inside corpses, heavy machinery and the bodies of automobiles. This last leg of the Golden Triangle heroin trade was made famous in the true-story movie, The French Connection. However, very few Americans understand or appreciate the implications of the fact that The French Connection was not a flick about France or New York, but rather one of the most important stories ever told about the Vietnam War.

In the Late 1960s, at the same time the CIA continued to expand its secret war in the Golden Triangle, increase the size of its opium tribesmen armies and bar Western journalists and U.S. Bureau of Narcotics agents from its headquarters situated next to general Vang Pao's opium depots in Laos, the flow of Southeast Asian heroin entering distant America became a sudden, uncontrollable torrent.

These were the frenzied, drug-sodden psychedelic years when heroin lanced deeply into the body of middle America and virtually exploded throughout the ghettos from Los Angeles to Philadelphia, where the drug had previously enjoyed a pervasive, but relatively placid presence.

By 1970, heroin addiction was an epidemic which the White House pronounced to have "assumed the dimensions of a national emergency. President Nixon-at the peak of his pre-Watergate power-set in motion a series of moves aimed at mobilizing a multibillion-dollar government effort to choke off the tide of the heroin entering U.S. cities. The sheer magnitude of the problem was revealed in the size of the successful confiscations of heroin shipments in New York and elsewhere-as large as six tons of pure heroin a yearbut which still made no appreciable dent in the market. The Congress approved funds for a super-agency, the Drug Enforcement Administration-the DEA-while the White House-also busy with its secret war plans in Cambodia and Laos-mapped out a broad plan for an anti-drug task force. At the same time, the Veterans Administration quietly announced plans to open 27 new addiction-treatment centers across the country.

There are a number of methods available to detail the wrenching, multifaceted violence done to American life during this period. There were the stark body counts of the truckloads of corpses of overdosed victims wheeled in weekly to the morgues of America. There were the yearly FBI statistics showing the skyrocketing waves of crime directly related to ever-expanding and increasingly desperate needs of addicts for quick cash or cashables. There were the municipal and federal budgets in which multibillion-dollar items for the capture, treatment, incarceration, maintenance and detoxification of addicts became a regular burden for taxpayers.

In the mid 1970s, when the United States was defeated and withdrew the last of its military forces, advisers, logistical support systems, CIA agents and other operatives from all of Indochina except Thailand, the U.S. heroin epidemic began a steep decline as the supplies of Southeast Asian heroin dried up. This was alleviated only partially by an increase in the flow of heroin from Turkey and Mexico.

In Thailand—the only place where the U.S. was able to maintain a continuing military presence at the "invitation" of the "neutral" government to which America supplied enormous sums of foreign aid payments, DEA agents sent in to help the Thais create, train and equip with sophisticated weapons and helicopters a special "anti-drug army." This was part of the Congress and White House's continuing international effort to squash the tide of heroin.

To date the Thais are not doing well

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### Drugs

in their attempt to curb the opium trade. The primary producers and exporters of the raw opium base continue to be the Shan tribes of northern Thailand—the same tribes whose opium caravans were used by the CIA as the main vehicles for supplying remote U.S. electronic surveillance stations in the hills along the Chinese border.

Some of the problems being encountered by the Thais and their American advisers in this regard were pointed out in the April 19th issue of the prestigious international financial journal, the Economist of London. The journal's report on the Thailand opium trade indicated that it was booming once again, and that the American-funded and equipped "anti-drug" forces are not appreciably hindering the commerce because opium is now being ferried in bulk from the upland Shan growing regions to the smuggling ports in "army vehicles, VIP limousines and even narcotics police helicopters."

FOR THE LAST 20 years, for large segments of the population trapped in the crime-blitzed arc of desolation running in a broad swath across North and West Philadelphia, life's daily currents have not been controlled by City Hall or the 6 o'clock news as much as by events in the foothills of the Himalayan mountains south of Tibet.

Tibet is the high point: the centrally predominant geographical feature on the entire Asian continent. The Tibetan highlands erupt upward like some Texas-sized tabletop of rock flung up whole to hang as a cloud-bound island looking down in one direction on all of China and in the other on all of the coastal countries of the Persian Gulf. Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. To the east and west of this monolith run the Himalayan Mountains, like a snowcapped spine. From this spine, hanging south from left to right are the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam.

All of these lands are configured in a similar manner: beginning in the north with the same common rugged mountains. All are watered by the same vast web of rivers gorging in the highlands on Tibetan melt and cascading down to become the Yangzte running out through the east to China; the Mekong, running down through Laos and into Vietnam; and Indus, snaking south through India and the Amu Day'ya running to the west through Afghanistan.

These rivers cut through the same limestone foothill formations which stretch like a narrow belt curving across the entire expanse of the lower Himalayan underbelly of Asia, from the highlands of Laos and North Vietnam to the northern mountain passes of Af-

ghanistan, Iran and Turkey. Here, the soft, calcium-rich stone that was once a primordial seabottom is easily sculpted by the wind, the rain and the more than four dozen earthquakes which wrench the region each year. The results are those ethereal, otherworldly landscapes for which the Orient is famous: rock sometimes jabbed upward like a ragged, solitary spearpoint; sometimes eroded into sudden, gravel-carpeted gullies; sometimes cleft clean so that the cliffs rise sharp and straight as if fashioned in a single chop.

The stark quality of much of this area is enhanced by the lack of vegetation which grows so prolifically in the low-land end of the countries. This is because the limestone deposits and their high concentrations of alkaline salts literally suck the life out of most plants, even shriveling sprouts as they burst from a randomly scattered seed dampened by a quick rain. The plants which do grow naturally throughout the hills and valleys tend to be stunted, wind-lacerated trees; wire-like grasses and sparse thornbushes.

There is one lush and delicately flowered plant which, because of its peculiar internal chemistry, does grow well in this poisonous soil of the Asian highland limestone belt: the opium poppy. In fact, the poppy thrives here more than at any other spot on the entire planet: its seeds oblivious to the harsh extremes of temperature, the lashing winds or the infrequent rains; its roots thickening like leather tentacles stabbing deeply into the gritty, leaching gravel from which they draw their sustenance: its stems running up fat and viscous with the alkaloid salts that will concentrate in a white glut of sap in the ripened pod.

This sweeping arc of opium fields and potential opium fields intersects a dozen countries and at least 20 separate tribal regions and might be called the "Opium Crescent." One of its tips being anchored in the Golden Triangle and its other extreme end stretching across the Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran zone to a final tip anchored in the Anatolian highlands of central Turkey.

The needles which large numbers of Philadelphians have used to inject themselves to death connect directly—like steel thread—to this region, which has been the primary source of the opiates which have killed millions since the early 1800s when the British first began organized cultivation of the drug.

Then, the British turned northern India and Burma into sprawling opium plantations with the novel idea of creating a broad captive market of addiction throughout the expendable populations of the Orient as a means to provide the vast new revenues required

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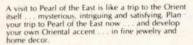
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### Drugs

to keep the British colonial conquest machine rolling at no cost to the taxpayers of London. It turned out to be an idea that wouldn't quit.

During the last two centuries, this Opium Crescent has been the primary source of the opiates supplying the world's ever-widening circle of addicts. The actual production sites within the long crescent have frequently shifted with the times and the political tides. The "center" of the opium production has alternatively flared up along the crescent now in India; now in Burma; suddenly in Laos; now again in Turkey.

In post-World War II times, the particular spot evolving as the "hot" production site largely depended on which area of the crescent the logistical network of the American military machine had been plugged into. You can think of this logistical system much like a gigantic vacuum cleaner hose in which two-way traffic is possible. Inside, the suction is created by the mad rush of planes, ships, men, money, communications equipment and technology which is suddenly concentrated in a small area beyond the normal scrutiny of the press and the public. In the 1960s this "hose" of American presence was plunged into Southeast Asia which suddenly exploded in opium production and exports.

When the "hose" was withdrawn in the mid 1970s, the opium market eased back to a relatively docile state of production and the epidemic of cheap, high-quality heroin in the cities of America also tapered off.

In the late 1970s, however, the "hose" of American involvement was inexorably moving up the crescent to position itself over what was to become the next monster source of opium production; the source that promises to send a veritable hurricane of heroin swirling once again through the streets of Europe and America: Afghanistan.

Here, in late 1979, the Soviets rolled their tanks into the opium provinces of the Pashtun and Baluchi peoples. Suddenly, the tribes which had spent the last decade maneuvering their heavily armed drug caravans past the increasingly troublesome patrols of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's agents, found themselves flung into the limelight as the new anti-Communist "crusaders." At the same time, these "freedom fighters" became the recipients of the same sort of high-powered CIA largess and logistical support of the sort provided to the Meo and the Shan tribes in the hills of the Golden Triangle in the 1960s. And as with those Meo and Shan, the concept of "freedom" in the tribal societies of Afghanistan is synonymous with the concept of the unfettered planting, harvesting and transportation to market of the tribal region's primary cash crop: opium.

AFGHANISTAN'S HISTORY as an opium producer is a long, as well as a proud, one. In 1955, as the United Nations was setting up its first international commission for the regulation of narcotic drugs, Afghanistan requested that it be admitted to the small group of countries recognized as legal exporters of opiates for the pharmaceutical trade. Afghanistan-even then one of the most notorious of the bootleg opium producers-argued that, because 90% of the population throughout the northern and eastern reaches of the country were involved in the production of opium, it had a right to be allowed to export the

The quality of Afghanistan opium is known to be, chemically, the second most potent in the world.

substance legally. The Afghan delegate, on the record, boasted that "Afghanistan has a long tradition as a producer of opium—opium of excellent quality, moreover, since its morphine content ranges from 18 to 20%."

The quality of Afghanistan opium today remains high and is known to be, chemically, the second most potent opium in the world—topped only by the poppies grown in specially selected soils in the highlands of Turkey.

Afghanistan also had a long-running history as a place where drug production, sale and use are carried out in the open, even in the midst of the capital city, without interference from authorities. During the late 1960s, this reputation was one which drew the attention of the psychedelic guru Timothy Leary, who fled to Afghanistan to seek asylum from a "friendly" government after he escaped a California prison in 1970 where he was serving a term for drug smuggling.

In 1972 in France, a Le Monde reporter and a University of Paris economist finished a comprehensive study of the structure and operational logistics of the international opium trade whose tentacles converged so resolutely toward the French city of Marseilles. Published in America by Pantheon as The International Connection: Opium from Growers to Pushers, the book included an overview of the operations of the Afghanistan opium tribes and the

prediction that, given the right market circumstances, these tribes could easily become a primary source of opium base for the heroin syndicates supplying the drug throughout Europe and America:

"The poppy is grown in Afghan Pakhtunistan along the whole length of the Pakistani border from Jalalabad in the north to the important southern town of Kandahar; also in the Nuristan Hills, north of Jalalabad, and in the province of Badakhsham on the Russian border.

"At the end of the '60s Kabul, like Nepal, became a focal point for [migrant drug users from around the world] . . . Hashish and opium are sold almost openly in the bazaar. Opium costs \$45 a kilo and good quality hash \$20. A [tab] of LSD costs \$1 and morphine is available at some chemists shops at \$2.50 a tablet.

"There are already at least two refineries transforming opium into morphine in Afghanistan, one at Herat and another at Kadahar. However, the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics realizes that it can bring little influence to bear on Afghanistan, whose government shows small inclination to cooperate."

In the 1972 World Opium Survey, compiled by the U.S. Presidential Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control, Afghanistan is listed as the center of the third largest illicit opium production complex in the world, with its tribes producing 100 tons of opium base a year.

And among the documents provided to United States government personnel traveling to Afghanistan on official duty is document DA PAM 550-65, which provides an overview of the cultural, political and economic situations and particular difficulties U.S. officials should be aware of.

The document notes that "A potential source of foreign affairs discord" in Afghanistan's relations with the United States is "the smuggling of opium."

THE UNITED STATES government first became involved with the opium tribes which ruled the hills of northern Iran and Afghanistan because it seemed like a good way to fight communism.

The relationship between the CIA and the tribes goes back at least to the mid 1970s when the U.S. began setting up a series of super-secret electronic surveillance stations in Iran that could "look down" into the Soviet Union to track and monitor the weapons testing, rocketry and other military activities.

The CIA's involvement throughout this region is known to have greatly intensified as a result of both the fall of the government of the Shah of Iran, the



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Drugs

taking of hostages at the American Embassy at Tehran and the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan. The New York Times and the Washington Post have revealed that in early January the Carter White House authorized the CIA to begin an operation smuggling weapons to the northern tribes of Afghanistan, ostensibly to use in the battle against the Soviet forces commanding the opium roads there. The Times reported that the "weapons are being shipped to the Afghan insurgents through Pakistan, which shares a long frontier with Afghanistan through rough and lightly populated terrain.

In the 1979 report issued in Vienna by the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board, it was reported that "Afghanistan remains one of the world's largest opium producers for the illicit market and, regrettably, illicit poppy cultivation continues to be very substantial. In addition to the production in Afghanistan, opium is being smuggled across the country from East toward West, thus adding to the westward flow of opiates and replacing, in western Europe, and notably in the Federal Republic of Germany, the opiates of Southeast Asian origin."

In late March, 8 Days, a Middle Eastern journal which covers the Islamic business world, reported that Southwest Asia is awash in "a new wave of [opium] trafficking on an unprecedented scale due to troubles in Iran... the political upheaval in Afghanistan, for many years a heroin center, and the totally unexpected record opium harvest in Pakistan. Virtually overnight, the 'Golden Triangle' [has been] superseded by the 'Golden Crescent' as the world's principal center for opium cultivation."

Speaking off the record, a high level law enforcement official in Washington explained:

You have the administration tiptoeing around this like it's a land mine. This issue of opium and heroin in Afghanistan is explosive. It's because of the campaign and all that. Check this out: in the State of the Union speech, the President mentioned drug abuse, but he was very careful to avoid mentioning Afghanistan, even though Afghanistan is where things are really happening right now. He said something like he was worried about 'drugs from Iran and Asia,' but he specifically avoided dropping Afghanistan in there because the White House is worried that that will cause the media to ask an obvious question: 'If these Afghanistan rebels are such opium-growing, drugsmuggling bastards, why are we wrecking our Olympic teams to support them?

"Why aren't we taking a more critical look at the arms we are now ship-

ping in to gangs of drug runners who are obviously going to use them to increase the efficiency of their drug smuggling operations?' Very nasty questions that they do not want raised.

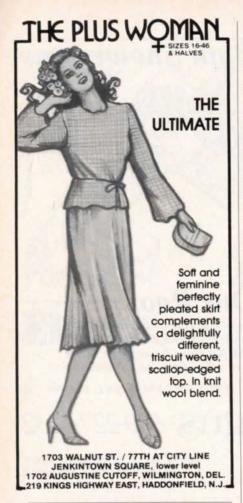
"You can check this out too: the Drug Enforcement Administration had been ordered to roll back their men from Afghanistan and Pakistan. They pulled them out and now they have no one close for on-site monitoring of drug activities: not to stop it, but just to keep a finger on the pulse of it. So now, the only personnel the United States has in position there are the CIA's people. And, quite frankly, all things considered, that raises some disturbing questions.

"I mean-I'm speaking as an individual now-after a while, you sit back and study the whole picture and you get to wondering if it wouldn't be better to let the Russian tanks stay right where they are. Maybe they can shut down the poppy fields we haven't been able to break. I know there are larger geopolitical aspects to the thing, and I'm not advocating the Russian position or that they be allowed to roll down into the oil fields, but goddamn it, you can't help wondering about just who is the real enemy posing a direct threat to American citizens in this situation.

"Do you realize the *price* we're going to pay in terms of addicted individuals, or deaths, or domestic crime, for winning whatever the hell it is we're sacrificing our Olympics for over there in Afghanistan? Don't take my word for it. Just look. There's another tidal wave of heroin worse than the last one out of Turkey or Vietnam about to break over the United States. Mark my words: we are about to enter another heroin hell."

For the record, that law enforcement official is correct in two things. The transcripts of the President's State of the Union message show that Carter spoke only of his concern about the "heroin originating in Iran and southwestern Asia," but never mentioned Afghanistan—the center for heroin and opium production in that region.

At the same time, R. David Hoover, a spokesman for Peter B. Besinger, administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, confirmed that "all our agents have been evacuated from that area. The closest [members of our staff] are now in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey"—or nearly 2,000 miles away from the Pakistani border posts which are the staging areas at which the CIA is conducting its expanding operations in conjunction with the opium smuggling caravans which are the primary coduit for cargoes of weapons into the strongholds of the





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opium tribes in northern Afghanistan.

Hoover was asked if the administration was not concerned that the West Asian opium region and its drug tribes were now being "worked" by the CIA; if the administration was not concerned that this could lead to the same sort of activity that occurred in Vietnam when the CIA and the local drug lords shared the same headquarters, airplanes and armies for the mutual benefit of both their crafts.

There was a long pause on the phone. Hoover then said, "All we can say about that is that the essential ingredients are all there. There's no question about that. We have no further information on that and no way to get it at this time."

However, the Drug Enforcement Administration has included some interesting information in its January

In Cherry Hill, the feds arrested Mafia associates planning to import 'Golden Crescent' heroin from Italy to Philadelphia.

1980 report on the findings of "Operation Cerberus"—an intelligence operation aimed at assessing the situation along the opium-growing and smuggling routes straddling the borders of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

The report notes that "A highly unstable political situation and the lack of central government control in the critical [opium] and transshipment areas have imposed severe obstacles to narcotics control at the source and, at the same time, have cleared the way for unrestrained production and movement of these opiates to conversion laboratories and international trafficking organizations.

"In the early 1970s [Golden Triangle] heroin was supplied to the American market primarily by a select group of Sicilians and Corsicans. Current information indicates the reactivation of these traditional mechanisms [has taken place]."

To UNDERSTAND what these "traditional mechanisms" mean one has to consider the following events which have occurred during the last few months:

■Arab publications in the Middle East have reported that the "Afghans are now conducting the heroin trade to finance their war effort" in opium-forarms deals aimed at obtaining the weapons with which to protect their poppy fields and opium refineries from Soviet takeover and destruction.

■The CIA has defeated attempts by Congress to create a charter under which the agency would operate and which would provide for much closer scrutiny of its covert field operations—such as the ones currently underway in cooperation with the opium tribes of Afghanistan.

The DEA and other international agencies have reported that the amount of opium now moving along the Golden Crescent smuggling routes that are the primary conduits for CIA arms shipments, have suddenly doubled in traffic—from 700 tons of opium to 1,600 tons during the last year.

■U.S. Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti has issued warnings to the governments and police departments of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Newark, Baltimore and Washington alerting them to the possibility of massive new flows of heroin which are expected to begin flooding those cities from the Golden Crescent.

■The Newark Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration has reported that the known quantities of Golden Crescent heroin on the streets have suddenly jumped by 600%.

■In Cherry Hill and other locations along the East Coast, federal drug agents arrested the cousins and other associates of the late "boss of bosses," Carlo Gambino, for their part in what officials described as a plot to transport 90 pounds of pure Golden Crescent heroin from Italy to the Philadelphia region.

■In South Philadelphia, mob boss Angelo Bruno—who previously was known to have shunned involvement in the narcotics business—was assassinated in a car outside his home. Law enforcement sources now indicate that they believe the killing involved gang rivalry and Bruno's recent decision finally to enter the narcotics business in a large way because "it was just going to be too big to ignore this time."

And in the crescent of desolation cutting a red brick arc around the core of Philadelphia, the situation has never been so bad. Can you dig it? B-A-A-D! Like the dudes be talking about only one THING, you know what I'm saying. The BAD THING. Like, the WHITE thing, my man. The thing be going at 8 to 10% pure now, can you DIG THAT, Jack? Fifty-second Street ain't seen 10% for ten years and things be cool EVERYWHERE. You dig it. EVERYWHERE. I'm talking about the best THING, Jack. The WHITE thing. A load, baby. A GOOD load. Ain't nothing else like it, ohman, ohman.

GOLD GOLD

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