

# Makran coast, a world drug depot

by Linda de Hoyos

On March 17, sixty tons of hashish were interdicted by Pakistani naval patrols in a fishing trawler off the Makran coast, reported the Pakistani daily the *Muslim*. The haul is new evidence that the desolate Makran coast—where Pakistan and Iran meet the Arabian Sea—has become a major depot for international drug trafficking, which operates with amazing ease across country boundaries and which has found little attention in the world's press.

The fishing trawler captured was one of three vessels, all registered in the United Arab Emirates state of Ajman, which left the Makran coast of Pakistan on March 10 with a total haul of 100 tons of hashish. The fishing boats were heading toward a European cargo vessel which was anchored in international waters. This mother ship was bound for Malaysia before heading for North America, the final destination for the hashish. The dope, reportedly of top quality, was packaged into brand names—Scorpion, STS, and Golden Nugget. It had been prepared in the Pakistani tribal belt of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Afghanistan.

## Heroin a major commodity

The Makran coast's role in dope trafficking first came into public view last October, when the Pakistani magazine *The Herald* reported that the Makran coast in Baluchistan had become a major route for drugs after the Benazir Bhutto government launched a crackdown against drug traffickers in the port city of Karachi, in Sind province. Heroin has become a major commodity in Baluchistan, a region which is otherwise completely devoid of the basic infrastructure which would permit real economic growth. And along the coast, heroin addiction has also skyrocketed. In one town, for example, 17% of the 7,000 people are addicted to heroin.

According to *The Herald*, heroin in particular was rerouted from Karachi to the Baluchistan cities of Ormara, Pasni, Gwadar, and Jiwani. In addition, drugs come from Waziristan and other Northwest Frontier Province areas. The dope is transported largely through trucks, across a forbidding route of deserts. But the region is pockmarked with caves and ridges, ideal hiding places for storing drugs and dropping off "pick-ups." Both refined heroin and hashish are brought in on trucks, with the dope hidden in bags of rice, flour, and other edibles.

From the coast, the dope is loaded onto the fishing vessels which are owned by families in Gwadar, Jiwani, and Pasni.

From there, it is transshipped onto larger vessels waiting in international waters, which traffic the dope to Africa and the Persian Gulf.

The financing and money laundering for dope transactions along the coast are carried out in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, two enclaves on the Persian Gulf with strong ties to Great Britain.

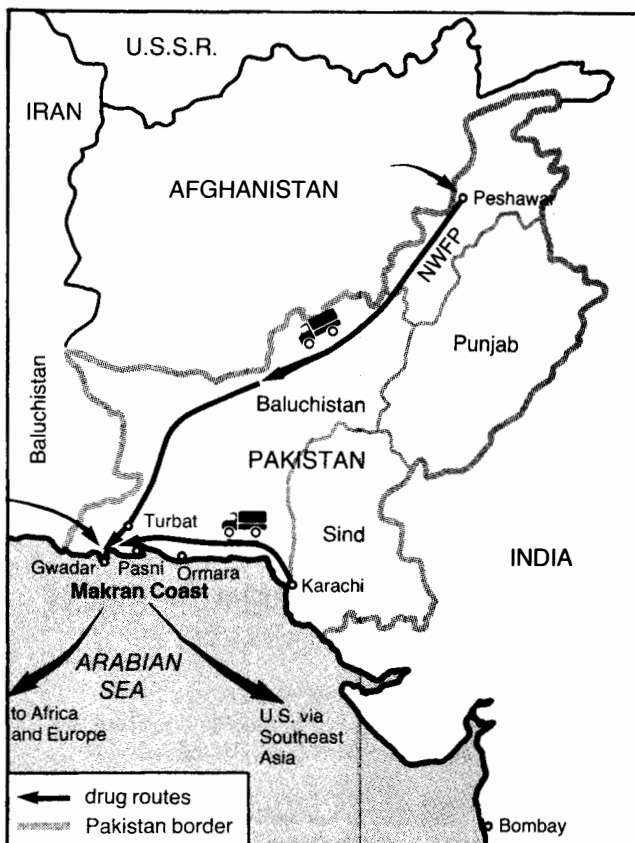
## The Iran connection

Even before the crackdown in Karachi moved dope dealers into the Makran coast area, Baluchistan had become increasingly involved in the dope trade since 1979, when two major events impinged on the area: the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In the latter event, opium and heroin became a major currency in the barter for guns among the Afghan mujahideen, leading to a drastic increase in the flow coming from Afghanistan and the Northwest Frontier Province, where millions of refugee Afghans settled.

In the case of Iran, according to *The Herald*, after the Khomeini revolution and the imposition of the death penalty for trafficking and addiction, "Iranian addicts in Chahbanhar,

Makran coast drug flows



Mand, and Pishin, formed a pipeline to Teheran chalking out a tortuous route from the NWFP. . . . The close ties and relations between the people of this area and those across the border in Iran, Afghanistan, and Oman, combined with inter-marriages between the all-Sunni population across the borders, also helped in boosting the trade.”

Despite the death penalty, heroin addiction remains high in Iran, where it was traditional to pass opium pipes crafted of solid gold. “In the past,” reported *The Herald*, “relatives of people living in Iranian Baluchistan often returned home to Pakistan with tales of deadly white powder that had plagued Iran.”

In addition, a sizable number of Iranian Sunni Muslims also migrated across the border to the Makran coast cities. “According to accounts by local fishermen, many of these people are fabulously rich and moved in to capture the already-thriving smuggling business in the area. VCRs, tape recorders, gold, whiskey, and motorcycles have long been smuggled from Iran and sold for nearly half the market price. What made things smoother was the fact that Iranian Baluchistan is known as one of the major heroin markets in the Gulf.”

Pakistani intelligence sources told *The Muslim* that the drug shipments captured March 17 would not have been possible without the assistance of alleged tribal drug baron Haji Ayub Afridi. Ayub Afridi’s close associate Anwar Khat-tak has been under detention in the Central Prison at Karachi for the last nine months. But Ayub Afridi is the only big fish in Pakistani drug trafficking under detention. The hunt is now on for one Mullah Khuda Bux, who allegedly arranged the captured shipment and whom police say has been involved in numerous hashish shipments in the past year, along with his sidekick Arif Baluch (a.k.a. Noora Teddy). Arif Baluch was arrested for heroin trafficking in Karachi last year but was acquitted. For some reason, the government did not appeal the acquittal.

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# Thornburgh Doctrine targets Thailand

by Linda de Hoyos

On March 15, the Bush administration made a splashy show on the war on drugs front, with the handing down of a 10-count indictment on charges of drug trafficking against Khun Sa, the famed druglord of the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia. The indictment appeared as the next step in the Bush administration’s carrying out of the “Thornburgh Doctrine,” the concept put forward by U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh by which U.S. courts and law enforcement agencies violate the sovereignty and laws of other nations in order to arrest and bring to trial foreign nationals believed to have violated U.S. domestic law.

A month later, it is clear that the highly publicized indictment against him has done nothing to damage Khun Sa’s thriving business. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Melvin Levitsky announced in Bangkok April 1 that the United States was not planning any military action against Khun Sa, who operates in the northeastern corner of Burma. Not only would military action involve invading a sovereign country (Burma), but even if Burmese authorities were willing to cooperate, Khun Sa maintains control over his own Shan state area, Levitsky said.

Then why the indictment? The most immediate answer is that by handing down an indictment against the world’s most famous druglord, Thornburgh and company hope to lend some veneer of credibility to the indictment of Gen. Manuel Noriega and the U.S. invasion of Panama in order to capture him. Since Khun Sa has been indicted and it is known that he is a drug pusher, then, by inference, Noriega must be too—goes the syllogistic logic expected by the public.

Second, the U.S. intelligence community has been unhappy with Khun Sa for the last two years, since he released the names of high-level U.S. officials that he claims he was involved with in Southeast Asian drug trafficking. Khun Sa called the CIA “his best business partners for 20 years,” and pointed to Richard Armitage, currently undersecretary of state, as his key partner.

Third, the Thornburgh Doctrine has become a convenient tool for the U.S. bullying of allied nations, in this case Thailand.

## **Propaganda barrage**

Following a congressional delegation visit to Thailand in February, led by Rep. Charles Rangel, Thailand has become a focal point for U.S. pressure on the flow of heroin and other