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### • ESTIMATED POPPY CULTIVATION IN AFGHANISTAN

(Washington, D.C.)—The annual U.S. Government estimate for opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is complete and shows that approximately 172,600 hectares of poppy were cultivated during the crop season in 2006—an increase of 61 percent over the 2005 (107,400) level, but below the record poppy crop of 2004.

The increase in poppy planting was primarily focused in two of Afghanistan's provinces, Helmand and Oruzgan, up 132 percent from last year's cultivation estimate. Cultivation in the remaining 31 provinces was up by 18 percent. Current cultivation levels equate to a potential production of 5,644 metric tons of opium, a 26 percent increase in potential opium production over 2005 estimates (4,475 metric tons). Favorable growing conditions contributed to the increase in potential production. These estimates are based on a scientific sample survey of Afghan agricultural regions conducted with specialized U.S. Government satellite imaging systems.

"While 2006 was a record year for poppy eradication, the news that net cultivation has increased is disappointing," said John Walters, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). "Increased emphasis and continued reductions are necessary to reduce Afghanistan's drug trade to a level where it does not pose a threat to that nation's internal stability," Walters said.

Anne Patterson, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs stated, "Stopping the cultivation and traffic of opium is paramount in establishing rule of law in Afghanistan. We will continue to work with the government of Afghanistan and our international partners to bring the opium industry under control and establish a viable state with a strong central government."

The United States is working closely with the United Kingdom, which is coordinating international counternarcotics assistance to the Afghan Government. The United States will do its part to help by giving Afghan farmers real economic alternatives, supporting the Afghan central government and governors to discourage cultivation and eradicate poppy fields, working side-by-side with the Afghans to strengthen their drug law enforcement, and helping them to establish interdiction programs. The United States Government is working with our Afghan counterparts to build civic institutions and raise public awareness about the serious harm drugs inflict. The United States and its Afghan counterparts also are carrying out

enforcement operations and investigations to target and dismantle the highest level drug organizations in Afghanistan and to prevent opium and heroin from entering world markets.

**Summary of Key Findings:** Poppy cultivation for 2006 was estimated at 172,600, compared with 107,400 hectares in 2005, 206,700 hectares in 2004, 61,000 in 2003; 30,750 in 2002; 1,685 in 2001; 64,510 in 2000; and 51,500 in 1999. Potential opium production for 2006 was estimated at 5,644 metric tons, the equivalent of approximately 664 metric tons of potential heroin production, if all were processed. Total poppy eradication in 2006 is estimated at 15,600 hectares.

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