



Narcotic Crop Control

In Thailand, there are two major narcotic crops jeopardizing Thai and whole world's societies; they are opium and marijuana³. Opium, the most vulnerable narcotic crop, has been cultivated by various hilltribe people and ethnic minority groups, in the northern region of Thailand along Myanmar and Lao PDR borders. In the mountainous heights of Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Tak, and Chiang Rai Province, there are opium high-density areas. Currently, opium cultivation is not only run by hilltribe people's will but are also encouraged and financed by drug syndicates' incentives. By non-sophisticated chemical processes, in a tent, in the jungle, opium is transformed to heroin, the world's most threatening drug. This has been then smuggled to Asia, Europe, America, and all across the world. Overwhelmingly, it is assumed that Thailand is a major heroin producing, trafficking, and trading country.

Opium Survey

The Northern Narcotics Control Office, ONCB, is responsible for the conducting of opium cultivation survey in the Northeastern province and 17 Northern provinces since 1979. There are 76 highland areas in those 18 targeting provinces, which have a high potential of illicit opium cultivation. Those targeting areas, normally located at the elevation of 800 meters above sea level, in the deep forests of hidden valleys. As a result, a helicopter for aerial survey is only the one means of reaching them. By the courtesy of the Royal Thai Police

Aviation Division and the Royal Thai Army Rotary Wing Division, helicopters have been provided for this mission as well as advanced survey techniques, i.e., Survey Database System, Geographic Information System, Geolink GPS, satellite image, from N.A.S. and the government of France.

For the past year, unseasoned rainstorms, from September 1999 - October 1999 and February 2000 - May 2000, presented the main difficulties in exploring these areas. According to 1999/2000 survey report, 1,087.39 hectares

³See more details in *Narcotics Law Enforcement section*.





(6,796.2 Rai) of opium cultivation area, which is 24.51% lower than last year, had been found. They are mostly found along Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son Province boundaries. Cultivation plots are scattered over 76 target areas. Some plots decreased and some increased. Most of them have been split into small beds, scattering over hill areas. In addition, multi-generation crop life, where crops

are replanted again and again, while others are young. Some almost proliferate, as well as mixing with legitimate crops, even in greenhouses which are more recent deceptions. These circumvented tactics have put more burdens and obstacles on the eradication operations in identifying and locating the cultivation area.



At the beginning of the growing season, raw opium price was relatively high. It was about 40,000 - 50,000 Baht/Joi (1 Joi \cong 1.6 kilograms). However, the opium cultivation was highly productive later in the season. The price dropped down to 15,000 - 30,000 Baht/Joi. Nonetheless, it had been presumed that the opium price would rise again in the beginning of the next season. This conventional cycle is the main motivation for hilltribes to keep growing opium from time to time.

Opium Eradication

Opium eradication has been conducted by the Royal Thai Army Region 3 and ONCB for 16 years since 1984, consecutively. Eradicating areas was allocated and assigned to these competent agencies as the following:

	(targets)
1. Royal Thai Army Region 3	28
2. Border Patrol Police Region 3	27
3. Provincial Police Region 5	7
4. Provincial/district authorities	14
Total targeting areas	<u>76</u>



The annual eradication has been planned by the Royal Thai Army Region 3 and the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). The 1999/2000 eradication was set to be conducted during November 1999 - June 2000. Its result was as follows:

1999/2000 Opium eradication area statistic

Authority	Cultivation Area (hectares)	Eradicated Area (hectares)
1. Royal Thai Army Region 3	797.80	537.70
2. Border Patrol Police Region 3	253.68	167.31
3. Provincial Police Region 5	18.82	34.78*
4. Provincial/district authorities	17.09	17.73*
Total	1087.39	757.52



Anticipated Trend in 2000/2001

The 2000/2001 opium cultivation trend is presumably high due to:

- There are still highly demands. Retail price is relatively high in many areas.
- Drug syndicates keep financing. They are expected to regain their

unfavorable business from the previous year by investing more funds to the cultivation activities.

- The cultivation in the Myanmar border was highly productive last year. The heroin refineries

* Including additional areas besides the assigned areas.



are doing good business. They still have surplus funds to buy more crops. Furthermore, the migration of minority-groups in Myanmar that moving closer to the Thai border next to Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai Province supplying more and more harvesting labourers for the opium fields.

- Legal cultivation product prices remain considerably low, while cultivation costs keep rising, due to the regional economics crisis.
- It is found that numbers of deforested plantations, where legitimate crops had been grown, i.e., rice, corn, ginger, during 1999-2000, are preparing to raise opium.
- The tactics of multi-generation crop life, that there will be some opium crops left, are carried out, even after the typical whipping eradication.

2000-2001 Opium Eradication Measures

In order to reduce opium cultivation areas, strengthen intelligence, and share public consents and concerns, members of the Royal Thai Government's Narcotic Crop Control Board have agreed on the following measures:

1. During August 2000 - May 2001, interagency opium eradication teams will concentrate more on the high-density cultivation areas in Mae Chaem and Om Koi District in Chiang Mai Province.
2. Enhance regular patrols by applying door to door public propaganda; knowledge of drug detriment as well as punishment terms and conditions of the drug convictions will be explained to local villagers and hilltribes.
3. Enforcing the law by arresting opium growers and financiers.
4. Apply more positive alternatives for the local hilltribes, such as, cash crops replacement and job placement.
5. Enhance more advanced systems and devices in drug control intelligence.