

Big opium harvest set for Afghanistan

by UPI

NEW YORK - The United Nations predicts Afghanistan will harvest a near-record opium poppy crop this year along with an increasing amount of cannabis. The annual U.N. winter survey of poppy planting patterns serves as a warning to Europe and the rest of the world to brace for an influx of heroin, The New York Times reported Wednesday. Released by the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, the report says there is some evidence sharp increases in cultivation are leveling off yet the "total amount of opium being harvested remains shockingly high." In the preface to the report, the executive director of drug and crime office points to a link between Afghanistan's opium harvest and the Taliban insurgency. "This is a windfall for anti-government forces," Antonio Maria Costa said. The U.N. report said Afghanistan currently supplies 90 percent of the world's opium. In addition, the report said the country has become one of the biggest suppliers of cannabis, the plant that yields marijuana and hashish.

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