

Holbrooke: Poppy eradication 'wasteful'

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Attempting to eradicate poppy fields in Afghanistan is counterproductive, the United States' top envoy to the country says.

Even though U.S. President Barack Obama's new strategy for Afghanistan calls for continued efforts to destroy the flowers used in the production of opium, Richard Holbrooke, the administration's coordinator of Afghanistan policy, called the practice "wasteful and ineffective" at a Brussels forum this month, USA Today reported Tuesday.

Moves to eradicate poppies have been "pushing farmers into the Taliban's hands" because it destroys their livelihoods, Holbrooke reportedly said.

He later told the newspaper via e-mail that although Obama's strategy calls for poppy eradication, emphasis will also be placed on creating new agricultural jobs.

"In the time available we could not design an all new program but there was unanimity that there was significant flaws in the current program," he said. "Now that the Strategic Review is done, we will turn our attention toward agriculture sector job creation and alternative livelihoods while at the same time the government has to go after the drug lords."

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