

New U.S. push to kill Afghan poppies

by UPI

KABUL, Afghanistan -- Critics said spraying U.S.-made chemicals over opium fields in Afghanistan could be a boon to Taliban propagandists if food crops are also destroyed. This year marked the biggest opium harvest in Afghanistan's history and U.S. officials have renewed efforts to persuade the Afghan government to eradicate the fields, The New York Times reported Monday. Afghan President Hamid Karzai walks a fine line because his hold on power is weak and the subject of eradication has polarized the Afghan government, the Times reported. The opium and heroin produced from the poppies give the Taliban a major source of revenue. Destroying the poppies, however, could create a backlash if herbicides kill food crops farmers often plant alongside poppies, critics of the plan told the Times. Afghanistan produces 93 percent of the world's opiates and Afghanistan's drug revenues have increased dramatically since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

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