

AS OBAMA PREPARES TO NOT WITHDRAW FROM AFGHANISTAN, TREASURY DECLARES THE WAR ON DRUGS THERE

Jim had a perceptive post this morning talking about how, now that Obama has won re-election promising an Afghan withdrawal plan, his Administration has started negotiating a Status of Forces Agreement that will allow forces to stay past 2014. There were several other hints today that we'll be in Afghanistan past that promised date, starting with General Joseph Dunford's confirmation hearing to take over the Afghan Command from General John Allen (which Jim will hit in detail tomorrow).

Then there's this. For the first time ever, Treasury has designated a key Taliban member—Mullah Naim Barich—not a terrorist, but a drug kingpin.

The Treasury Department has previously sanctioned Taliban leaders and affiliates for their support of terrorism, as well as money-exchange houses supporting the Taliban, but Thursday's designation marks the first time the department has designated a senior Taliban official for narcotics trafficking.

Treasury said Thursday that Mullah Naim Barich, the "shadow governor" of Afghanistan's largest opium-producing province, is a narcotics kingpin.

"Today's action exposes the direct involvement of senior Taliban leadership in the production, manufacturing, and trafficking of narcotics in Afghanistan

and underlines the Taliban's reliance on the drug trade to finance their acts of terror and violence," David S. Cohen, under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said in a news release. "Treasury will continue exposing links between the international narcotics trade and terrorist networks, in Afghanistan, and wherever else they exist."

Now, the Taliban and other Afghans have been neck deep in the opium trade forever. Indeed, WikiLeaks just released a 2007 Stratfor document claiming that DEA had been ordered to back off Hamid Karzai's now-deceased brother Ahmed Wali Karzai's drug involvement.

Yet, as WSJ notes, Treasury has always gone after the Taliban via terrorism designations, not drug ones.

Terrorism designations will be more difficult to sustain if we "pull out" in 2014 declaring victory in Afganistan.

Worry not! We've got the Global War on Drugs in Afghanistan now.