RAMPARTS MAGAZINE MISREPRESENTS ROLE OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY IN FIGHTING AGAINST IMPORTATION OF DANGEROUS DRUGS

HON. CHARLES S. GUBSER
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, June 2, 1971

Mr. GUBSER. Mr. Speaker, recently Ramparts magazine published an article which, like so many other articles which appear in new left publications, attempted to discredit established agencies of the Government, including the Central Intelligence Agency. Unfortunately, the Stanford Daily, the newspaper published by students at Stanford University, saw fit to lend credibility to this article by reprinting it.

A tear sheet from the Stanford Daily was sent to me by a constituent and I submitted it to the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs with a request for comment. Under date of May 27 I received a reply from Mr. John E. Ingersoll, director of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. His letter should be brought to the attention of all responsible Members of Congress and the press since it certainly contradicts the implications contained in the Ramparts magazine article. Mr. Ingersoll's response follows:

Dear Congressman Gubser: This is in response to your letter of May 21, 1971, which enclosed a tear sheet from the "Standard Daily" (a publication of Stanford Univer-

...and the United States may also be increasing suggest that Southeast Asia is growing in importance as a producer of heroin. The situation is further complicated by the fact that production in Southeast Asia has been rising sharply in recent years. This region accounts for about 700 tons of heroin annually or about one-half of the world's total illicit output. A substantial proportion of this production is consumed within the region. Burma, by far the largest producer of heroin in this region, accounts for about 400 tons annually.

BACKGROUND

2. The Burma, Laos, Thailand border area, known also as the "Golden Triangle," is considered one of the world's largest opium producing areas. This region accounts for about 700 tons of heroin annually or about one-half of the world's total illicit output. A substantial proportion of this production is consumed within the region. Burma, by far the largest producer of heroin in this region, accounts for about 400 tons annually.

3. Production in Burma is concentrated in the Eastern and Northern parts of Shan State and in the Northwestern part of Kachin State. Poppy fields cover the rugged slopes in Eastern Shan State around Keng Tung and in Northern Shan State from Lashio east and south to the China border. The latter territory, comprised of the former Wa and Keng Tung states, is now a center of insurgency directed against the Burmese government, with much of the area under insurgent control.

4. The growing season varies with the altitude, but the planting season generally falls during the months of August and September, with the harvest some seven months later during February and March. At harvest time the women of the hill tribes cut the poppy heads and carry them on their backs. The opium plants themselves are ground into a compound for "smoking." In Northern Burma, uncut opium is sold by the growers and traded to itinerant Chinese merchants who transport it to major collection points, particularly around Lashio and Keng Tung. Agents of the major entrepreneurs circulate through the hill country shortly after harvest time arranging for payment and pickup. Payment is often in the form of weapons and ammunition, although gold and silver ruppes are also used.

5. The opium-growing areas in Shan State and Kokang areas is picked up by caravans that are put together by the major insurgents. These areas, which can include up to 600 horses and donkeys and 300 to 400 men, take the opium on the overland route to the border areas of Laos and Thailand. It is estimated that in excess of 10 metric tons have been reported.

THAILAND

6. Opium-growing areas in Northern Thailand are located in the upland tracts occupied by various tribal groups. The provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Nan, which have the largest concentration of Kho and produce most Thai opium, illicit opium production in Thailand is estimated at 200 tons.

LAOS

7. Another illicit opium-producing area is along the 2,500 to 4,500 foot high mountains of Northwest Laos. The opium cultivated by the tribesmen is of a relatively lower grade and thus less suitable for refinement into morphine base or heroin. In these areas where the tribesmen have been encouraged to grow poppies are planted among the corn. When the corn is cut, the poppies continue to grow until they too can be harvested.

8. Major producing areas include Phong Baai Province in the North, Hua Phan (Thien) Province, and the Plain de Jarase area of Xiang Khouang Province in the East-central part of the...
The trade in Southwest Laos is less well structured and organized for significant commerce. This is in part due to the nature of the finished drug products and the logistics of purchasing agents or pick-up caravans. The herded opium and the poppy plants which are grown up for spraying with the help of government soldiers, who have the most mobilized and organized forces. The most important transshipment point in the area was the Tachilek harbor of Burma, 45 tons of refined narcotics were processed here in the first two months of 1971. This increase may also reflect a slight supply situation in the area because of a shortage of chemicals used in the processing of heroin. Rising prices for opium and its derivatives can also be seen in other areas of Southeast Asia.

10. The KNRT Irregulars’ activities and the Chinese Border Defense Forces (KMY) are the most important trafficking syndicates in Northern Southeast Asia. The KNRT Irregulars are members of the Chinese Nationalist forces which retreated across the Chinese border in 1940—now compose large proportions of the local population. With an estimated strength of 1,400 to 1,500, in the Fifth Army, the second largest with a troop strength of between 1,200 and 1,500 is the Third Army. The headquarters of both armies are in remote part of Northern Thailand between Pang and Mae Sai. It is estimated that these two KNRT Irregular forces control over 80 percent of the opium trade from the Shan State.

11. The KKY have been major competitors of the KNRT Irregulars in the opium trade. The KKY are comprised of former Shan State insurgents and bandits who have allied themselves with the Burmese government against both the KNRT and Chinese Communist-backed insurgents. In return the government of Burma allowed them to pursue their opium trafficking activities.

12. The Shan States Army, an insurgent group which is also heavily involved in the opium business. It maintains several camps in Northern Thailand where opium is marketed for weapons and military supplies.

13. About 140 tons of raw opium is normally transported annually out of Northeast Burma to foreign markets. Most of this opium is stored or processed in the Meikong River tri-border area before being transhipped to Thailand or Laos. Tachilek, Burma, is probably the most important transshipment point in the border area. In 1970, out of a total of 123 tons reportedly shipped out of Northeast Burma, 45 tons was received in the Tachilek area. In the first two months of 1971, 50 out of a total of 67 tons were shipped to Chiang Mai.

14. Other important transshipment points appear to be located in the vicinity of Dan Hout Sal, Laos, and Mae Salong, Thailand.

15. The typical refinery is a small tributary of the Meikong River in an isolated area with a military defense perimeter guard. It is located in the Shan States. The refinery is protected by fortifications and remote location. It is estimated that these refineries are able to produce 50 to 100 kilograms of heroin per day. The 14 refineries have a combined strength of between 4,000 and 6,000 well-armed men. The largest refinery is located in the Shan States. It is estimated that these refineries control over 80 percent of the opium trade from the Shan State.

16. Most of the narcotics buyers in the tri-border area are ethnic Chinese. While many of these buyers pool their purchases, no large syndicates appear to be involved. The opium, morphine base, and heroin purchased in this area eventually finds its way into Bangkok, Vientiane, and Luang Prabang, where additional refinement takes place before delivery to Saigon, Hong Kong, and other international markets.

17. Much of the opium and its derivatives transiting Thailand from Burma moves out of such Northern Thai towns as Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Lompong, or Tak by various modes of ground and water transport. The narcotics, along with those produced in Thailand, are smuggled into Bangkok for further refinement into morphine base or heroin. A considerable quantity of the raw opium and morphine base is sent by fishing trawler from Bangkok to Hong Kong during a period in about 1 January to 1 May. During this period, approximately one fishing trawler a day—carrying one to three tons of opium and/or quantities of morphine base—leaves Bangkok for Hong Kong. The boats proceed to the vicinity of the Chinese Communist-controlled Lamma Islands, 15 miles south of Hong Kong, where the goods are loaded into Hong Kong fishing trawlers.

18. Opium and its derivatives which move through Laos are transferred from the Meikong River refineries by river craft and from the Dan Hout Sal, 45 km downstream on the Mekong in Laos, from where it is transhipped on Royal Lao Air Force (RLAF) aircraft to Luang Prabang or Vientiane. From Vientiane, narcotics are usually sent via RLAF aircraft, as well as Air Laos, to other cities in Laos or Savannakhet or Pakse or to international markets. A considerable portion of the Laos produced narcotics is smuggled into Saigon on military and commercial airlifts, particularly on Royal Lao Air Force and Air Vietnam. Although collusion between crew members and air line agents on one hand and individual narcotics smugglers on the other has been reported, poor handling of commercial cargo and the lack of Laos customs control in Vientiane and other sur-repitoires loading of narcotics aboard commercial flights.

19. There are tentative indications that larger quantities of raw opium may now be moving into the tri-border area for refining and that larger quantities of this raw opium are now being refined into morphine base and heroin in this area. As suggested in paragraph 15 above, data on the first two months of 1971 indicate that the Tachilek transshipment and refining area may be receiving smaller amounts of raw opium than was the case in 1970. As for changes in the type of refined narcotics produced, the present plants at Mae Sai in Thailand and Howard Tap-in Laos now appear to be converting most of their opium into No. 4 or 55 percent pure heroin. Previously, these refineries tended to produce refined opium, morphine base and No. 3 heroin, which is small and relatively affluent market in South Vietnam. A recent report pertaining to the production of morphine base in the Northern Shan States would indicate a possible trend toward a more lucrative market—producing areas establishing their own refineries—in the production of narcotics. Such a development would significantly facilitate transportation and increase the production of refined narcotics to the market place.