

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. 14

Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 26 May 2008:

In terms of the size and quantity of seizures, what amount of heroin has come into Australia from Burma over the last few years?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

Thailand has been opium free for a considerable time. Vietnam is also generally opium-free. Laos has cut opium production by 94% in less than a decade (down to 1,500 hectares). Myanmar's share of the world opium market has collapsed from 30% in 1998 to under 6% in 2007. A decade long process of drug control is clearly paying off.¹

However, it is too early to declare the drug problem in Southeast Asia as over. In 2007, opium cultivation in Myanmar rose by 29% while production was up 46%, due to higher yields. These increases are dwarfed by the opium boom in Afghanistan that produces 20 times more drugs than Myanmar. However, they indicate a warning sign that Myanmar is still, by far, the world's second largest opium producer (at 460 tonnes). The increase this year follows seven straight years of decline.²

In 2007, area under opium cultivation in Myanmar rose from 21,500 hectares to 27,700 hectares. This increase along with increased yields resulted in the potential opium production increasing from 337 metric tonnes to 472 metric tonnes³.

Aggressive crop eradication in South-East Asia along with increased opium cultivation in Afghanistan has seen Myanmar responsible for less than 6% of global opium production in 2007.

Heroin seizures at the Australian border in recent years are as follows:

- In 2006-07 47.1 kilograms of heroin was seized in 158 seizures.
- In 2005-06 37 kilograms of heroin was seized in 179 seizures.
- In 2004-05 183 kilograms of heroin was seized in 246 seizures.

Not every seizure of drugs at the Australian border is chemically analysed to determine its point of origin so an exact figure of the amount of heroin being seized from Burma is not possible. Despite this, the AFP's Australian Illicit Drug Intelligence Program has conducted analysis on a proportion of these seizures which may be indicative of the amount of heroin emanating from Burma.

Year	% from SEA	% from SWA	% Unclassified
2007	47.9	50.6	1.5
2006	70.1	27.4	2.7
2005	78.9	18.0	3.1

¹ http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/icmp/south_east_asia_report_2007_web.pdf

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*