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Monsanto Terminator Seeds and RoundUp Herbicide in Afghanistan: The Destruction of Agriculture

By Ulson Gunnar

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A recent TIME Magazine article featured the “US NGO” Roots for Peace, which it portrayed as a victim of a regrouping Taliban bent on subjugating a newly “democratized” Afghanistan. This organization, funded by the US State Department and USAID, claims to be turning “battlefields into bountiful orchards.” But a lack of transparency makes it unclear as to just how they are doing this. With USAID using “aid” to usher in the corporate colonization of Afghanistan through other “NGOs,” its involvement with Roots for Peace raises warranted suspicions.



Already, the War in Afghanistan has given agricultural monopolies like Monsanto a multi-million dollar foothold in the landlocked Central Asian country. As part of efforts to eradicate poppy cultivation across the country, the United States insisted that Kabul sidestep health studies and sign off on an unpopular plan to spray millions of dollars worth of Monsanto's "RoundUp" glyphosate herbicide across Afghanistan's countryside. It should be noted that before NATO's intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, poppy cultivation was nearly eradicated under the Taliban.

In addition to fears that the mass spraying of Afghanistan's countryside could negatively impact the health of the Afghan people, there were also fears that licit crops could also be destroyed, leaving farmers with failed harvests, anger, and a willingness to further align themselves with armed tribesmen, including the Taliban.

For America's overarching plan, the eradication of licit crops alongside poppy was ideal. That is because while Monsanto RoundUp herbicide was to be sprayed indiscriminately over the heads of Afghans, its genetically modified, RoundUp Ready terminator seeds were to be sown beneath their feet. The Nutrition and Education International (NEI), a front set up by Western agricultural monopolies, set out to replace Afghanistan's traditional crops with both Monsanto's genetically engineered RoundUp Ready soybeans, as well as copious amounts of RoundUp ready herbicide.

The NEI boasts nearly a decade of "accomplishments" having reached every province while establishing a "soy seed market" in Afghanistan, a market that will be dominated by foreign corporations holding the intellectual property rights to a crop the NEI and its corporate sponsors, with the help of USAID, have intentionally made the Afghan people dependent on.

Roots for Peace hasn't been the only USAID "NGO" attacked in Afghanistan. Also helping in the agricultural reordering of Afghanistan was Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI).

NPR reported in "Attack On USAID Compound In Afghanistan Kills 4," that, "Multiple suicide bombers stormed a USAID compound in northern Afghanistan before dawn Friday, killing at least four people and wounding several others, officials said. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the assault on a compound in Kunduz province used by Development Alternatives, a Washington, D.C.-based contractor working for the U.S. Agency for International Development."

DAI's efforts to use "poppy eradication" and "economic development" to invite in foreign corporate monopolies are backed *substantially by a large list of "clients" including Cargill and Monsanto, two giants of big-agriculture.*

These corporations and their "NGO" fronts, along with the US government through agencies like USAID, are attempting to use "the eradication of poppies" and "malnutrition" to force upon the Afghan people an agricultural monopoly controlled by foreign corporations who will retain the "intellectual property" rights on each and every plant growing in Afghanistan, as well as the production, control, distribution, and sale of the chemicals required to sustain them.

Food being one of the most basic necessities of human survival, controlled entirely by foreign corporations, is not only dangerous, it is exploitative and usurps both the dignity and freedom of those found under this form of “corporate colonization.”

It will take years and careful observation to tell whether or not Afghanistan will succumb to this modern form of corporate subjugation. As NATO troops leave the country and its pro-Western government in Kabul faces what appears to be inevitable extinction, the efforts made by the West’s big-agricultural giants, while profitable in the short-term, may not last. Afghanistan’s status as a “client state” of Western interests will be judged in part by Kabul’s efforts to either rollback or push forward big-ag’s agenda in the Central Asian country.

Globally, the success of corporations in places like Iraq and Afghanistan will validate both the effectiveness of modern Western imperialism, as well as the strength and vitality of the empire it seeks to build.