



Narcotics, Organized Crime & Security in Eurasia

Weekly Digest: October 11-17 2004

The following are summaries of articles related to narcotics and security in the Central Asian 5 and Afghanistan. Where possible, web addresses for the entire article are provided...

Quote of the week: "This makes your presence here legal, stable and long-term" - Russian President Vladimir Putin to his troops in Tajikistan during a ceremony to upgrade their status to a military base, Russian Channel One TV, 17/10/04.

Happy birthday...

Russian border guards have now been on the Tajik-Afghan border for a dozen years and to celebrate the anniversary their chief summarized their achievements during the week. Since 1992, the border guards have seized more than 29 tons of drugs, including 14 tons of heroin. In the same period, border posts have prevented 1,528 armed incursions into Tajikistan and have been fired upon 1,378 times. In the first nine months of this year alone, 2.3 tons of high-quality heroin were seized.

ITAR-TASS, <http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=1350882&PageNum=1>, 15/10/04

...and an upgrade

The 201st Mechanised Infantry Division was transformed into Russia's largest foreign military base on Saturday, when the Russian flag was formally raised at the group's headquarters in the presence of Vladimir Putin. This was the result of a 1999 treaty on the status of the Division, which also grants Russia's military ownership of the land for the Okno (window) espionage facility of its Space Forces in Nurek. Previously, the land had been rented at a symbolic rate.

The Press Trust of India (via factiva.com), 17/10/04

The Pamir border

Next year Russian border guards will begin their withdrawal from the Pamir section of the Tajik-Afghan border. The area is expected to be under sole Tajik responsibility by 2006.

Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (via factiva.com), 16/10/04

50% strike rate

At a meeting of Tajikistan's State Border Protection Committee on Wednesday, a report was tabled detailing the work of the Tajik border guards. In the first nine months of the year, 80 trespassers have been detained, of which half were drug couriers. From them, 400kg of narcotics were seized, more than two-thirds of which was heroin.

ITAR-TASS, <http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=1344187&PageNum=3>, 13/10/04

Kyrgyz Democracy

At a speech to Harvard University, Kyrgyz President Akaev gave a classic defense of cultural exceptionalism while defending his country's democratic development. Western countries expecting a speedy transfer to democracy had forgotten their own histories, he argued. His government has committed itself to holding free elections next year, but local observers doubt the probabilities of such an

eventuality. A key concern is whether Akaev will bid for re-election, which on current interpretations of the constitution, would be illegal. He also repeated his desire to pursue a foreign policy balanced between Russia and the United States.

www.eurasianet.org, "Akayev: We do Democracy the Kyrgyz Way", 15/10/04

Afghanistan's election continues

43 formal complaints have been received by a special commission set up to review the problems of Afghanistan's presidential election. The commission also said that ballot counting would not begin until October 14 at the earliest. However, many government officials suggested that these complaints have obscured a far more important victory in the election, namely the lack of violence.

www.eurasianet.org, "Afghan Election Indicates Popular Support for Islamic Insurgency is Fading", 18/10/04

One Abdul Latif Hakimi, claiming to speak on behalf of 'neo-Taliban' militants in Afghanistan, said that they had not carried out attacks during the election in order to spare innocent Muslims. He argued that his group is growing in popularity and that their victory was likely. The Governor of Kandahar, Mohammad Yusof Pashtun, however, predicted that the successful election will demoralize the remaining Islamic insurgents.

www.eurasianet.org, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/afghanistan/hypermail/news/0017.shtml>, 14/10/04

After a post-election lull, violence returned to Afghanistan over the weekend, with two US soldiers, a policeman and three children killed in two separate incidents. The latter were killed by curiosity – they stood watching a burning truck and were victim to a remote control bomb detonated when police arrived to investigate.

Reuters via www.afghannews.net, 16/10/04

The mines will stay, for a while

Arguing that Uzbekistan's borders cannot be secured on the Kyrgyz side, a spokesman for the Uzbek Defense Ministry said that his country has decided to stop de-mining along their shared borders. "The international community has not reacted with any offer of help" with Uzbekistan's efforts, he added.

www.eurasianet.org, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kyrgyzstan/hypermail/news/0012.shtml>, 14/10/04

CACO go

With Russia at the table for the first time, the Central Asian Cooperation Organization summit begins in Dushanbe this week. Also present will be Afghanistan's vice-president Hedayat Amin Arsala, hopeful of obtaining observer status.

ITAR-TASS, <http://www.itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=1358175&PageNum=0>, 17/10/04

An accelerating trend

Where the first two cases of HIV in Tajikistan in 1991, 180 cases were reported in the first nine months of this year alone. Intravenous drug users comprise 60-65% of the current registered cases of 305. HIV infections have now been recorded in 31 districts.

Vecherniy Dushanbe via BBC Monitoring Central Asia, 14/10/04

Soldiers and policemen

Apparently there is substantial resistance in the Pentagon to pressures for soldiers in Afghanistan to become more involved in suppressing the drug trade. "We don't have enough resources now to kill the bad guys," said one military source, arguing that law enforcement was not an army concern.

The Washington Times, "Military resists Afghan drug war", 14/10/04

Seizures and Arrests

A busy day

On Friday, the Tajik Drug Control Agency reported that it had seized close to 50kg of heroin in the previous 24 hours. Russian guards on the Afghan border seized 29kg in the morning and in a separate incident, Tajik police found 20kg hidden in the specialized compartment of a Tajik citizen's car in Dushanbe.

Tajik Asia-Plus News via BBC Monitoring Central Asia, 15/10/04

Saving for retirement?

21kg of opium and 10kg of high-quality heroin were "withdrawn" from a 53-year old resident of Saryagashskij district of Kazakhstan

www.cry.ru, <http://www.cry.ru/text.shtml?200410/20041014103212.inc>, 14/10/04

On the Kazakh-Uzbek border, Kazakhstan's 'Ontystik' border group stopped a taxi carrying two citizens of Azerbaijan traveling to Shymkent. A search of the vehicle revealed 1 kg of heroin.

www.cry.ru, <http://www.cry.ru/text.shtml?200410/20041013121017.inc>, 13/10/04

In the culmination of a three-month operation, Tajik Drug Control Agency officers arrested a man driving the Dushanbe-Khujand highway, carrying 12 kg of heroin.

Asia-Plus (via factiva.com), 14/10/04