



Narcotics, Organized Crime & Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: September 13-19 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: “Not a single nation in history has had such privileges” - President Niyazov on Turkmenistan’s greatness, ITAR-TASS 11/09/04.

The First Line of Defense

For most of the opiates in Central Asia and Russia, the Tajik-Afghan border is the first step. Given that the border is 1,200km long, there are plenty of locations to take it and producers are becoming increasingly brazen in their activities – for the past three years bags of heroin in Dushanbe have appeared complete with a brand name and map of the processing laboratory in Afghanistan. Tajikistan is moving towards replacing the current contingent of Russian border guards – themselves mostly Tajik citizens – with conscripts, and many fear that this will result in less effective along trafficking routes at precisely the wrong moment, given trends in Afghanistan. The DCA, however, seems to be performing quite well. “The street value of opium seized in Tajikistan was approximately \$1.5 billion. You can compare the input and the output”, said one DCA official, referring to the \$9 million his agency has received from various donors.

“Tajikistan: Stemming the heroin tide”, www.irinnews.org, 17/09/04

Equal Before the Law

From custody, the former head of the Tajik Drug Control Agency, Ghaffor Mirzoyev, expressed his confidence in Tajikistan’s justice system. “Everyone is equal before the law, and if I have committed any crime I must be held properly accountable”, his lawyer quoted him, confirming that his client is quite happy with the conditions in which he is being kept.

Asia-Plus News Agency 13/09/04, via BBC Monitoring Central Asia

A pension supplement

Kyrgyz officials have expressed their concern that the government is unwilling to enforce and prosecute people involved in the production, apparently because many of them are elderly pensioners. Similarly, the employment of young teenagers as dealers wards off prosecution. “Minors face nothing more than a telling-off by their parents and a record at the local police station,” said a senior criminal investigation officer. “And no one will punish a pensioner as harshly as they would a young adult.” The majority of this seems to occur in villages around the Issyykul region – according to the Drug Control Agency, 2,000ha are grown in the Tyup and Aksui areas and 1,500ha in Jetyoguz. Residents of the area explain that they are far away from any other means of making a living.

Institute for War & Peace Reporting, “Old and young drawn into Kyrgyz drug trade”,
http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca2/rca2_314_2_eng.txt

Restraining Hizb ut-Tahrir

Kazakh police, citing concerns over increased recruitment activity by Hizb ut-Tahrir, have arrested five members of the organization in the south of the country on unspecified charges this year. The organization is not a registered entity in Kazakhstan but it is not expressly illegal.

eurasianet.org, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kazakhstan/hypermail/news/0029.shtml>

Then, on September 15th, twelve members of Hizb ut-Tahrir were detained by officers of Kazakhstan's National Security Committee. Apparently, they had been under surveillance for a year in Aqmola, northern Kazakhstan. Two of the twelve have been charged.

eurasianet.org, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kazakhstan/hypermail/news/0028.shtml>

Karimov's Plea

Uzbekistan's President has urged his Central Asian neighbors to better address their security, particularly their border protection. He singled out Hizb ut-Tahrir for recent violence in Uzbekistan and pleaded with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to do more to stamp out the group. He saw little hope of Uzbekistan succeeding when Hizb ut-Tahrir members "are freely able to go to neighbouring territories, train, live and operate freely, conduct their activities and the next day they commit their wild acts". In response, the organization denies the alleged violent acts and links with the drug trade.

"Tashkent Calls on Neighbours to Boost Border Security", www.rferl.org, 14/09/04

An Opium 'Strategy' Outlined

In Nangarhar, a gathering of deputy governors of the eastern provinces heads of the *ulema* councils heard from Lt-Gen. Mohammad Zahir Aghbar, chief of Afghanistan's Counter-Narcotics Directorate, who described a 'new' strategy to combat opium cultivation. After condemnation in Islamic principles, Mohammad Zaher Aghbar asked the representatives to request farmers to refrain from planting poppies next season and warn them that the government will destroy all opium fields. Assurances were provided by the eastern province officials. A few days prior, Mohammad Zaher Aghbar visited Wardag province, to thank farmers for eradicating their poppy fields last year and encourage them to continue their cultivation abstinence.

From Radio Afghanistan, Kabul, 15/09/04 and 12/09/04, via BBC South Asia

Bringing law to the opium economy

In the next few months, a "judicial task force" will begin operations in Afghanistan. Consisting of specially-appointed judges, prosecutors and police officers, it will be charged with selecting significant drug-related crimes to identify and bring to trial. Whilst it is not expected to make high-profile cases before the presidential election, a senior official involved listed several significant people he hoped would be charged in the course of the force's operation.

e-Ariana.com, "Crackdown on Afghanistan's cash crop looms", 18/09/04

Smuggle, Any Way You Can

In a broadcast by Kelid station of Kabul, eyewitnesses claimed to have seen traffickers constructing small aeroplanes powered by motorcycle engines, for (very) short-haul flights into Tajikistan.

Kelid, Kabul, 14/09/04, via BBC South Asia Monitoring

Seizures and Arrests

The Siberian Connection

In the fourth narcotics seizure on the Dushanbe-Krasnoyarsk flight this month, officers of the Tajik Drug Control Agency arrested two couriers with over 700g of heroin in their stomachs. Seven arrests have taken place on the route in the past three weeks.

ITAR-TASS World Service 12/09/04

The other Rahmonov, and other Tajik seizures

44 year-old Toshmurod Rahmonov was arrested on September 16th in Dushanbe, found with 3kg of heroin in his car.

Asia-Plus News Agency, 16/09/04, via BBC Monitoring Central Asia

10kg of heroin were seized on September 14th in the town of Panjakent, Dushanbe, from a local. A search of his car yielded a further 994g of opium.

Asia-Plus News Agency, 17/09/04, via BBC Central Asia Monitoring

4.9kg of heroin were found in five polyethylene bags in Khatlon Region's Shuroobod District on September 14th, after a patrol by Tajik border guards.

Asia-Plus News Agency, 15/09/04, via BBC Central Asia Monitoring

Two couriers – both from southern Afghanistan – were arrested at Dushanbe airport carrying 900g of high-quality heroin, attempting to board a flight Krasnoyarsk, Russia.

ryan.ru, http://www.rian.ru/rian/intro.cfm?nws_id=681745

And in Uzbekistan...

4 women were stopped before boarding the Angijan-Tyumen flight, each of them wearing shoes with half a kilogram of heroin in them. Similarly, 3 women were arrested on boarding the Tashkent-Tyumen flight with 2.5kg of heroin.

CRY.ru, <http://www.cry.ru/text.shtml?200409/20040917181644.inc>

Purity in Kazakhstan

Two citizens of Tajikistan were stopped on the Bishkek-Yekaterinburg passenger train and 800g of heroin found in a pair of shoes they were carrying. It is the fourth time this year a search of the train has resulted in a seizure, although this time the heroin was of very pure – homogenous and without a scent.

CRY.ru <http://www.cry.ru/text.shtml?200409/20040914094552.inc>

An Ambitious Smoker

In the Almaty Region of Kazakhstan, police seized 500kg of marijuana in seventeen bags, apparently being prepared for transportation. The arrested, Boris, claimed it was not for dealing but for his personal use. Police said, however, that “even the most hardened drug addicts is not able to smoke half a tonne of marijuana; he will just die”.

Komsomolskaya Pravda Kazakhstan, Almaty, 16/09/04, via BBC Monitoring Central Asia