



Narcotics, Organized Crime & Security in Eurasia

Weekly Digest: October 18-24 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: "I have a complaint addressed to our brothers in Pakistan - and I mean the Pakistani colonels and muftis who prepare our brothers, the Taliban, and give them support to make chaos in Afghanistan... Above all, I call on my Taliban brothers not to create disorder in our country with their support. We have a country like they do and the people here want to live like they do" - Mulla Abdul Salam, self-described former Taliban military commander, eurasianet.org, 23/10/04.

Leading, but leading everyone?

As of Thursday, Hamid Karzai had received 56% of the ballots counted in Afghanistan's presidential election. His nearest competitor was Yunus Qanooni, who had 17%. Karzai's seemingly certain victory shows that he is the only candidate with any kind of appeal beyond his own ethnic base. It seems he received most of the Pashtun vote from the south and west of Afghanistan, as well as that of urban voters of any ethnicity. By contrast, his three closest competitors were all confined to their ethnic bases, in which Karzai failed to make many inroads. The danger is that his failure to garner support amongst Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras will continue to hamper any efforts to reduce the autonomy of local leaders in those communities and so prolong Afghanistan's fragmentation.

eurasianet.org, "Afghan election: ethnic divisions evident", <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav102104.shtml>

A bombing in Kabul

A spokesman for the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a busy shopping street in Kabul on Saturday. An American woman and an Afghan girl died later from their wounds – three Icelandic soldiers were also among the wounded – and witnesses said that the bomber was disguised as a beggar. Until now, ISAF had felt it had secured the capital well and reduced Taliban resistance to inaccurate rocket attacks and roadside bombs in rural areas.

Reuters, <http://www.afghannews.net/index.php?action=show&type=news&id=1112>, 24/10/04

Do something, please

Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister Nikolai Tanaev met with Britain's Ambassador James sharp last Monday and lamented Western inaction on destroying drug laboratories in Afghanistan. Tanaev claimed that not a single laboratory had been shut down since British forces arrived there three years ago.

RFE/RL, "Kyrgyz Premier asks for British help against Afghan drug labs", 19/10/04

The ladder of Transparency

Results are in for Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. The scores and rankings in Central Asia are: Uzbekistan 2.3 (114), Kazakhstan 2.2 (122), Kyrgyzstan 2.2 (122), Tajikistan 2.0 (133), Turkmenistan 2.0 (133).

Transparency International, http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases_archive/2004/2004.10.20.cpi.en.html

Turkmenistan's Partnership for Peace

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer met with Turkmenistan's President Niyazov on Thursday, where he was assured that Turkmenistan appreciated NATO's role in averting conflicts in Central Asia. Niyazov also expressed

praise for NATO's role in combating drug trafficking and said "our country, proceeding from its neutral status and based on equality, is ready to expand relations".

Turkmen TV First Channel, via BBC monitoring Central Asia, 21/10/04

Dushanbe's toxic clouds

Close to 350 kg of narcotics were burned in Dushanbe on Thursday, 280 kg of which was heroin. The head of the Interior Ministry's department for combating drugs Fayzullo Gadoyev, said that 250 Tajik nationals have been convicted and 234 criminal proceedings have been made in relation to the incinerated drugs.

Avesta via BBC Monitoring Central Asia, 21/10/04

Organizing against organized crime

The interior ministries of Kyrgyzstan and Russia signed a protocol on their cooperation against organized crime on Tuesday. They agreed on modes of interaction on drug trafficking, illegal migration and terrorist and extremist crimes.

Kabar, "Russia, Kyrgyzstan signed protocol on interaction in fighting against organized crime", 20/10/04

A doctrinal shift, perhaps

Current standing orders to US troops in Afghanistan are to destroy drugs only when they are found in military operations and not to use their own initiative against warehouses or laboratories. The Pentagon is considering changes to these as it has become increasingly obvious that the drug trade is more of a threat to Afghanistan's future than the Taliban or al-Qaeda. In gross terms, drug money is the principal source of funds for reconstruction, far larger than international aid transfers. Succeeding at the change from anti-terrorist operations to anti-drug lord will be difficult, however, illustrated best in Jalalabad, where America paid former commander Hazrat Ali to fight al-Qaeda, but who they now routinely cite as a key drug trafficker. What is his day job now? He's the chief of police.

The Boston Globe, "US weighs role in heroin war in Afghanistan", 20/10/04

A threat of cultivation

According to an Iranian radio station, a group of farmers in Nangarhar in Afghanistan have pleaded for more assistance and warned the government that they will return to opium cultivation if it is not forthcoming. They said that opium might be their only option due to a recent lack of rain. In a previous news conference, the province's governor had told the central government and the international community that they would need to present their plans for assistance at least three months before the growing season and that farmers would not follow orders once the harvest season had begun.

Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran via BBC Monitoring South Asia, 24/10/04

Let them fly

During NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's visit to Tajikistan, President Rakhmonov signed a bilateral transit agreement in support of the ISAF force in Afghanistan. Referring to Russia's establishment of a military base in Tajikistan, de Hoop Scheffer commented: "We are not in competition with Russia in this area."

eurasianet.org, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/tajikistan/hypermail/news/0016.shtml>, 21/10/04

Turks to the front

Following a decision from NATO's Military Committee, Turkey will take control of the ISAF force in Afghanistan in February 2005, for a six- to eight-month stint that will include, to begin with, responsibility for Kabul airport.

eurasisanet.org, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/afghanistan/hypermail/news/0034.shtml>, 21/10/04

Seizures and Arrests

Close to the source

Five traffickers were arrested by officers of the Directory of Security of Highways in the Ghandwalgah area of Mazar-e Sharif. The men were armed with Kalashnikovs and carrying 34kg of opium.

Hewad, "Drug traffickers arrested in Mazar-e Sharif", 20/10/04

In Nangarhar, officers of the Counter-Narcotics Directorate seized 17 kg of heroin from a house 30 km west of Jalalabad on Saturday. They also found 10 kg of precursor chemicals, but no one has yet been arrested.

Afghan Islamic Press news agency via BBC Monitoring South Asia, 24/10/04

Around 647 kg of opium have been moved from Afghanistan's Zabul province to Kabul, according to the Interior Ministry's Counter-Narcotics Department, all of it seized from smugglers in joint operations in the last few months.

Radio Afghanistan via BBC Monitoring South Asia, 23/10/04

An official bust?

Kyrgyz police arrested a man in the Batken Oblast last Monday for attempting to sell 90 kg of opium, claiming he was an official with the Tajik Justice Ministry. Tajikistan, however, said that he had not worked for the ministry since September.

eurasianet.org, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kyrgyzstan/hypermail/news/index.shtml>, 20/10/04 & 21/10/04

Officers from Tajikistan's Interior Ministry arrested two people were arrested Dushanbe yesterday and seized 19.2 kg of heroin from the car they were driving.

Crime Info via BBC Monitoring Central Asia, 24/10/04