



Narcotics, Organized Crime & Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: November 22 – 28, 2004

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

Quote of the week: "We are not able to support our families unless we grow opium, [t]he government wants to prevent its cultivation, but doesn't help [farmers]," said Tela Mohammad, from Mer Mandab district, Helmand province. He said he would keep growing opium, "even if it costs me my head."
http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/arr/arr_200411_147_3_eng.txt , 29/11/03

Government determined to eliminate drug traffic

Led by President Hamid Karzai, the Cabinet emphasized the government's determination to eliminate drugs and poppy cultivation in the country. In the meeting, Karzai said poppy cultivation and drug trafficking have brought much harm to the nation. He said this business harms "our people is and also against the teachings of Islam". The Cabinet condemned a New York Times report which claimed that some of members of the government are involved in drug trafficking.

Hewad is a government daily mostly in Pashto language, 23/11/04

Commander object to DDR

Two commanders in Badakhshan told the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) authorities they will not hand over their weapons. The two claimed they cannot surrender their weapons because there is fear the Taliban will attack the province from across the border with Pakistan. The commanders said Taliban fighters may enter Afghanistan from Chitral in Pakistan and harm people in the province.

Iraada is an independent daily run by Afghan Media Resource Center, 23/11/04

First time since 2002, Turkmenbashi goes abroad. To Uzbekistan for a gift!

Islam Karimov invited Saparmurat Niyazov, aka Turkmenbashi, for a *rendez-vous* in Bukhara. According to a planned scenario, Niyazov would personally drive across the border in his Mercedes, and Karimov would hail the car and join him and thus they would both drive into Bukhara. Unfortunately it did not work out and they preferred more mundane mode, airport. Knowing about Turkmenbashi passion for cars, Karimov presented him with Daewoo Lacetti made in Uzbekistan. As for the official part, they talked about joint exploitation of Amudarya river, the possible development of the Kokdumalak oilfield, and of course about the eternal friendship between two countries. Unofficially, it appears Uzbekistan promised that: it will not allow Turkmen dissidents on its territory; it will keep an eye on Turkmen citizens trying to enter Uzbekistan through land and air; it would inform Turkmenistan on 'suspicious' persons.

Elena Glumskova, "Turkmenbashi otkryl dlya sebya Turkmeno-Uzbekskuyu granitsu", *Kommersant*, 22/11/04

Prosecutor of Uzbekistan: Terrorists were Kazakh

Uzbek chief prosecutor, Svetlana Artykova stated that the terrorist-suicide bombers who carried out attacks against the American and Israeli Embassies in Tashkent on July 30, 2004 were all three citizens of Kazakhstan. (Judging by the names, they were ethnic Uzbeks, but Kazakh citizens.)

"Terroristy, vzorvavshiyesya v Tashkente, okazalis' grazhdanami Kazakhstana", *Gazeta.ru*, 23/11/04

Farewell to Pamir

Russian border guards left Ishkashim on November 20, 2004. The women from Khorog and Shugnan asked border guards to stay in Gorno-Badakhshan, arguing that the flow of drugs will otherwise increase in the region. Most of the Pamiris realize that with the departure of border guards their main sources of income will be gone. Namely, people were working to supply military men with food. This also means that gasoline supplies would dwindle, and there would no longer be security against the possible intrusion of bandits.

Viktor Letov, "Proshai Pamir", <http://www.centrasia.ru/news.php4?st=1101206040>

Fighting hunger and heroine on the Afghan-Tajik Border

To tackle the booming opiate trade along the Afghan-Tajik border, international organizations should strive to address the issue of hunger. According to UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), nearly one-third of respondents in the UNODC's 2003-2004 Afghanistan Farmers' Intentions Survey cited poverty as their motivation for involvement in the narcotics trade. Local economists argue that one way to reduce drug trafficking is to stimulate legal trade between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Boosting trade, though, requires a far-reaching effort to improve the transport infrastructure.

Daniel Gerstle, Eurasianet, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav111104.shtml>, 11/11/04

Drug abuse rising warns CND

The Afghan Counter Narcotics Directorate (CND) warned on Sunday at a donor conference in the Afghan capital, Kabul that drug abuse is on the rise with little being done in the area of demand reduction. While there are tens of thousands of drug-addicts in Afghanistan, there is only one rehabilitation centre for the entire country, reported Alamuddin Atheer, CND's deputy director. Latest figures for Kabul in 2003 from the UNODC put the number of addicts in the city at more than 60,000. As the director of Nejat Tareq Sulaiman stressed "There is a huge lack of awareness among the people. Many Afghans still think drug abuse is a foreign problem."

"Drug abuse rising warns CND" <http://www.afgha.com/?af=article&sid=47033>, 23/11/04

Astana suggests setting up checkpoints to block drug traffic

Astana has proposed setting up special international checkpoints to block known drug trafficking routes from Afghanistan in the CIS. Such outposts should be "international and mobile". The same posts could be set up in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia," said deputy chief of the Kazakh Interior Ministry's drug control committee, Galym Mustafin, at a conference in Astana on Thursday. According to him, Kazakhstan is in favour of consolidating the international community's efforts in combating drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

<http://www.interfax.com/com?item=Kaz&pg=0&id=5773104&req=>, 25/11/04

Drug mafia's money may be involved in Kyrgyz parliamentary elections

Money originating from the illicit drug business may be used for financing Kyrgyz upcoming parliamentary elections next year, said Kyrgyz drug control chief Kurbanbek Kuvatbekov. The country lacks the legal instruments and infrastructure to tackle the problem. However, according to Kuvatbekov, a bill on fighting money-laundering has been submitted to the parliament. The anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan has not helped curb illicit drug trade. In the first ten months of 2004, Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies have seized two times more Afghan-made heroin and opium than last year. These figures indicate that drug transit through Kyrgyzstan is increasing.

<http://www.interfax.com/com?item=Kyrg&pg=0&id=5773472&req=>, 26/11/04

Seizures and Arrests

Student of Law is arrested with a bag of heroin

On 24 November, Kazakh law enforcers (Zhambyl region) apprehended a drug trafficker from Tajikistan carrying heroin. He initially entered Talas city in Kyrgyzstan, and later headed to Taraz in Kazakhstan by taxi. After questioning the trafficker, a second year law student, gave the 'classical' excuse, stating that he needed to feed his extensive family.

Galina Vybornova, "Geroicheskiy voyazh", *Express-K*, 24/11/04

Kanal-2004 (14-20 September and 16-22 November)

As a result of an annual Collective Security Treaty Organization's (CSTO) operation, known as "Kanal", 4063 drug related crimes were investigated. Two hundred and three (203) crimes were committed by organized crime groups, 2047 cases were connected with an attempt to sell drugs and 310 cases were related to drug trafficking. The main purpose of this operation is to define the drug trafficking routes into territories of CSTO members. During the operation more than 4,855.9 kg of drugs were seized, including 220.8 kg of heroin and 469 firearms.

Kanal 2004, Kabar at <http://www.kabar.kg/>, 27/11/04

Over 620 kg of drugs seized in Tajikistan for a week

Dushanbe, more than 620 kilograms of drugs was seized during an international anti-drug traffic operation in Tajikistan on November 16-22, the head of the Tajik Drug Control Agency, Avaz Yuldashev, said on Wednesday. Yuldashev told *Interfax* that 6,776 kilograms of drugs, including 4,460 kilograms of heroin, had been confiscated in Tajikistan since the start of 2004.

<http://www.interfax.com/com?item=Tajik&pg=0&id=5773065&req>, 25/11/04

Troops smash heroin production centre

Six laboratories for the production of heroin have been destroyed in the Kesham district of Badakhshan province by special troops against narcotics production, cultivation and smuggling. In these operations, which took place in the Kandam Qool and Jawaki regions of Kesham, two people were arrested, while nine tons of opium and one ton of chemical materials used to produce drugs were seized. Badakhshan is a region where poppies are cultivated in great quantity. Several laboratories producing heroin have been destroyed earlier this year as well. Smugglers transport heroin from the frontier of this province to central Asian countries where they are exported on to European markets.

Iraada is an independent daily run by Afghan Media Resource Centre, 29/11/04

Poppy farms destroyed in Helmand

Some 4,000 acres of poppy farms have been destroyed by security forces in Helmand Province. The Helmland governor's spokesman Mohammad Wali said many conferences had been held in connection with the harm of narcotics to the farmers of the province. After these conferences, the poppy farms were destroyed in many areas in the province and farmers were encouraged to grow grains instead.

Anees is a governmental daily mostly in Dari Language, 29/11/04

Brother of Karzai is alleged to be involved in drug trafficking

New York Times published several names of high level officials in Afghanistan, based on intelligence information from American special services, allegedly involved in drug trafficking. Among them Minister on Tribal Affairs, Mohammad Arif Nurzai, Governor on Hilmand province, Sher Mohammad Akhund and head of the election campaign of Hamid Karzai, his brother Akhmed Wali Karzai.

Farsi.ru, 25/11/2004