



Narcotics, Organized Crime & Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: November 29 - December 05 2004

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

More poppy destroyed

Sixty acres of poppy farms have been destroyed in the Behsood district of Nangarhar province. District Police Chief General Abdul Wahab said farmers have promised not to grow any more opium poppies following the destruction of their farms. He also said local farmers have demanded that the government and the international community assist them in growing other crops to replace the poppy.

Anees is a governmental daily mostly in Dari Language, 30/11/04

Supreme Court calls New York Times accusations 'baseless', right...

The Grand Council of the Supreme Court led by Justice Mawlana Fazel Hadi Shinwaray denied claims by the New York Times that some government authorities were involved with drug trafficking. He said that justice looks for proof and if the writer of the NYT article has any proof that shows authorities being involved in drug trafficking, he should submit it to the Supreme Court. Shinwaray added that the Court cannot bring people to trial only for accusations launched by the media.

Hewad is a governmental daily mostly in Pashto Language, 30/11/04

Tajik Aids threat grows

Tajikistan is being forced to face up to a growing Aids crisis sparked by drug abuse and lack of basic awareness about the disease. But despite tentative government efforts to tackle the issue, experts warn the situation is deteriorating dramatically with an estimated 4,000-5,000 Tajiks currently infected with HIV. Official statistics mask the scale of the problem, and health campaigners accuse Tajiks of "absolute ignorance" about how the disease is spread and ways of preventing it. New infections are particularly high among injecting drug users.

Gulnora Amirshoeva, "Tajik AIDS threat grows", <http://www.iwpr.net>, 30/11/04

Karzai grills British officials over 'illegal' poppy crop spraying

British officials in Kabul have been questioned by President Hamid Karzai after fields were reportedly sprayed with chemicals from the air two weeks ago, leaving farmers sick. The Kabul government is keen to find out who could have carried out the alleged spraying, which it considers illegal, despite a stated desire by the US and United Nations to wipe out the opium crop. The Afghans set up an inquiry into claims by villagers near the eastern city of Jalalabad that mystery aircraft had sprayed crops. The British ambassador was called in for questioning and a protest was lodged with the US after Afghan officials concluded that fields had been crop-dusted despite Mr Karzai being opposed to spraying.

Nick Meo, "Karzai grills British officials over 'illegal poppy crop spraying'", *The Independent* (UK), 01/12/04

Drug trafficking through Kyrgyzstan will be on rise

Kurmanbek Kuvatbekov, Director of Drug Control Agency of Kyrgyzstan stated that "in the nearest future we can predict unabated increase in trafficking of Afghan opiates given production rates in that country". Earlier (on May 25, 2004), Antonio Maria Costa, Head of UNODC, stated that 25% of Afghan opiates are sourced out through Central Asia and reach Europe. Thus about 30-35 tonnes per year transit through Kyrgyzstan, and it intercepts at its best 10%.

Naryn Ayip, *Kyrgyz Weekly*, 01/12/04

Russian border guards left Pamir

On December 1, the last Russian border guards left Khorog the administrative center of Gorno-Badakhshan region. The Khorog border part (212 km) is now given under control of Tajik border guards. Russians already left Kalaikhum and Ishkashim borders (900 km). In 2005 they will pull out of Moskovskiy and Pyandzh. (comment by Maral: at present all major drug hauls took place in Moskovskiy and Pyandzh, and Tajik army is not ready yet to guard borders properly).

Aleksandr Mikhailov, "Nashi spustilis' s Pamira", *Russkiy Kur'er*, 02/12/04

Fired *hyakim* of Dashoguz in Turkmenistan returned 'stolen' \$400,000

Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmenbashi) Dashoguz region on December 2 in order to publicly denounce actions of a local *hyakim* (district governor), Ishanguly Gulmuradov. He was accused of appropriating 75 tonnes of cotton and taking bribes altogether \$400,000. Turkmenbashi asked "why did you take bribes, wasn't your salary enough?" (!??). Gulmuradov 'confessed' to the great leader and even returned (!) in one day \$400,000. (I assume his salary was more than enough?)

Reuters, 02/12/04

Seizures and Arrests

Iranian police slice open six camels in drugs haul

Iranian police seized 18 kg of opium after cutting open the stomachs of six camels, which are being increasingly used to carry narcotics. Iran boasts 25 % of opium seizures worldwide. Networks of forts and ramparts across Iran's eastern borders have forced drug dealers back to more traditional methods, carrying narcotics through narrow mountain passes in rucksacks and camels' saddle-bags.

"Iranian police slice open six camels in drug haul", *Reuters*, 30 November 2004.

Norwegian police seize 800 kg of hashish

The police in Oslo seized 450 kilograms of hashish. The seizure follows the confiscation of 360 kilograms which were found on 29 November. More than 800 kilograms of the narcotic substance have therefore been seized in two days. If the hashish had been sold on the street it would have had a value of more than 80m kroner [about \$13mill.]. The narcotics were found in cars in Oestfold [southeastern Norway] yesterday evening and on the border crossing to **Sweden** at Svinesund two days ago.

BBC Monitoring European, 01/12/04