

## Narcotics, Organized Crime & Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: September 6-12 2004

### **Addiction and Prostitution in the City of Love**

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It is estimated that 7 out of 10 young prostitutes working in Ashgabat are addicted to heroin. Observers suggest that bartering drugs for sex is popular among visiting Afghans and Iranians. The political and cultural barriers to acknowledging the problem are formidable, however, making it difficult to gauge the prevalence of drug abuse and HIV infection. On condition of anonymity, one health official explained that "sexual exploitation of a 14-year-old minor is not regarded as a crime if there is no violence involved".

"Turkmenistan: poverty drives addiction and prostitution", [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net)

### **Afghan Presidential Campaign Begins**

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18 candidates (17 men and 1 woman) officially launched their campaigns this week with a focus on three issues: enhancing security, reducing poverty, and speeding reconstruction. Hamid Karzai is considered the frontrunner but is unlikely receive the majority of votes required for a first-round victory against such an array of candidates representing different ethnicities and factional interests. First-round voting occurs on October 9 and a second round, if required, will take place in mid-November. Significant challengers to Karzai include: Mohammad Yunos Qanuni, interior minister in the first interim administration and ex-education minister in the current cabinet; General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek military commander based in Mazar-e-Sharif; and Mohammad Mahaqeq, leader of the Hazara minority.

Ron Synovitz 9/08/04 "Afghanistan: Security, Poverty, Reconstruction emerge as key issues as election campaign begins", [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)

The election will be logistically demanding: not only will there be 25,000 polling stations across Afghanistan, 800,000 refugees in Iran (where there will be 1,000 polling stations) and 1.5 million in Pakistan are expected to vote. Over 10.5 million people are registered to vote, 43% of whom are women. But the UN reports that 12 people have died violently during the 9-month registration effort and security fears are high in anticipation of the election proper.

Soutik Biswas, "Afghanistan's election challenge", [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

### **Kubis in Central Asia**

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Tajik President Rakhmonov met with OSCE Secretary-General Jan Kubis on Monday in discussions focused on cooperation between the two and on the situation in Afghanistan. The issue of press freedom was raised by Kubis, who was informed that a newspaper and a printing press have been having 'tax problems'.

"Tajik president meets with OSCE Secretary-General" [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)

The following day, Kubis met with Uzbek Foreign Minister Sadyk Safaev, for talks that included preparations for parliamentary elections in December. Coincidentally, reports on state-run television discussed how some OSCE members allow extremists on their territory and argued that "certain international organizations still fail to grasp that by carrying out their work under the slogan of protecting human rights, they are in effect supporting terrorism."

"Uzbek minister meets with OSCE Secretary-General" [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)

### **Eradication in Afghanistan**

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Although the central government has begun eradication programs in some parts of the country, provincial leaders believe it could be counter-productive in the absence of alternatives for farmers. Haji Din Mohammad, governor of Nangarhar province, suggests that the announcement of eradication programs causes prices to rise and encourages production in other areas. Reacting to accusations from the interior minister that provincial officials are involved in

the opium trade, the governor agreed that the trade leads high up but countered that “there is so much money at stake here and we, even high profile government officials, are very, very poor”.

“Interview with the governor of Nangarhar province on poppy cultivation”, [www.afgha.com](http://www.afgha.com)

### **What to blame for drugs in Russia?**

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Drugs are a threat to Russian national security, particularly the trafficking of heroin from Central Asia. Among other factors, the increase in trafficking is ascribed to ‘ethnic groups’ and migration from Central Asia and China. Turkmenistan plays a significant role in narcotics importation. The role of Turkmenistan in drug-trafficking is analysed, where a link is suggested to the clan of the mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov.

[www.gundogar.org](http://www.gundogar.org)

### **Drug abuse in Kabul**

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The outlook is grim for drug use and addiction in Kabul and the rest of Afghanistan. High-quality heroin is more widely available and the UNODC estimated a minimum of 63,000 drug users in 2003 in Kabul alone. Of these, the Counter-Narcotics Directorate estimates that at least 30,000 are addicted to opium. As injecting becomes more popular, expect HIV/AIDS to take off, as in Afghanistan’s neighbours.

“Drug abuse in Kabul City and beyond”, [www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org)

## **Seizures and Arrests**

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### **Cannabis in Kazakhstan**

During customs searches on the border in Karaganda, Kazakh police uncovered 17 Chinese plastic bags of marijuana hidden in a truck carrying onions. The total weight seized was 498 kg.

[www.cry.ru](http://www.cry.ru)

In another cannabis seizure, border police in Jezkent in eastern Kazakhstan arrested a Kazakh citizen and a Russian citizen who were driving a car carrying 150kg. of marijuana.

[www.cry.ru](http://www.cry.ru)

### **Heroin sachets for 1,000 afghanis**

Security forces in Tarin Kot, the capital of Uruzghan in south-west Afghanistan, arrested two people with 170 sachets of heroin, apparently attempting to sell them at a bazaar for 1,000 afghanis each.

Afghan Islamic Press, via [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)

### **Kyrgyz-Kazakh crossing targeted**

Border police in northern Kyrgyzstan carried out 3 arrests of smugglers using a well-worn route over the Chui river into Kazakhstan, as part of ongoing operations to shut down the crossing as a trafficking route.

[www.vb.kg](http://www.vb.kg)

### **Opiates in Kyrgyzstan**

In a brief statement, the Kyrgyz authorities said that they had arrested a Tajik citizen in possession of 70 kg. of opium, their largest seizure for some time.

[www.fergana.org](http://www.fergana.org)

An Uzbek citizen and a Kyrgyz citizen were arrested in a sting operation in Osh for dealing in 2 kg. of heroin.

[www.vb.kg](http://www.vb.kg)