



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 25 July – 1 August 2005

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

US hands Tajikistan vehicles to help control Afghan drug trade

The US embassy in Tajikistan donated 15 vehicles to Tajikistan to help combat trafficking of drugs from neighbouring Afghanistan, the embassy said Monday. "The vehicles are part of the continuing support from the US department of state bureau of narcotics and law enforcement and support Tajikistan's strong record as the leader in counter-narcotics efforts in Central Asia," a statement said.

AFP, 25/07/05

Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan reaffirm support for US bases

Tajikistan reaffirmed its commitment to support US and other international forces operating in Afghanistan, telling visiting US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld the troops could continue to use its airspace and facilities. Rumsfeld met with President Emomali Rakhmonov after arriving here from Bishkek, where he received similar assurances from the newly elected leaders of Kyrgyzstan. Noting that Tajikistan had extended overflight and refuelling privileges to US and French forces, Foreign Minister Talbak Nazarov said: "Tajikistan has been and will continue to observe all these international commitments." Rumsfeld said the two sides had also discussed counter-narcotics, counter-proliferation and regional economic growth. He mentioned a bridge linking Tajikistan and Afghanistan that is being built with US aid, as well as US help in training Tajik border guards to curb the flow of opium and heroin from Afghanistan to Russia and Western Europe.

AFX Asia, 26/07/05 2005

UK troops spearhead Afghanistan force

The 3000 Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade will spearhead Britain's increased commitment to operations in Afghanistan next year. The British-led force is due to replace US troops based around Kandahar in the south. The troops will deploy along with at least one of the SAS's three sabre squadrons as Britain takes charge of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps in the country in May. Elements of the new Ranger battalion formed from the parachute regiment will also be committed in support of special forces in the hunt for Osama bin Laden and fugitives from the ousted Taliban regime. About 50 US soldiers have been killed by insurgents in the sector this year. Air Marshal Glen Torpy, chief of operations at the UK's Permanent Joint Headquarters, said difficulties in the flashpoint areas should not be underestimated. "We are going to have to be fairly robust. We know that the southern areas are where most of the poppy-growing goes on and inevitably, an increased Nato presence is likely to generate friction." Part of the UK contingent's remit is expected to be the eradication of the opium crop. Major-General Andrew Leslie, the Canadian officer who led allied troops in Afghanistan until February this year, has warned that international forces should expect to stay in the country for "10 to 20 years" to guarantee stability.

The Herald, 26/07/05

GUAM Virtual Center Launched In Baku

Launching of national analytic-information center on struggle with organized crime against terrorism, organized crime,

dissemination of narcotics and illegal migration was launched in Baku on Monday. The news agency Trend informs that the members of GUAM working group attended launching ceremony. Center's director Hasan Garayev noted that by means of Virtual Center, equipped with modern technique, the exchange of information between GUAM member states (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) would be implemented. He also noted that employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Prosecutor General office, Ministry of National Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and State Department of Border Defense would be involved in the Center.

Prime-News (Georgia), 26/07/05

President Putin urges creation of anti-drug "security belts" along CIS borders

Russian President Vladimir Putin said stable and effective anti-drug "security belts" must be established along Russian borders and along the borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). "It is necessary to launch a resolute attack on the drug trade," Putin said. "The growing number of drug addicts in the country, particularly among youth, is a direct threat to the future of the Russian nation." The president said narcotics officers have taken a number of drastic measures to crack down on drug-traffickers, destroy their economic base, and expose drug-trafficking routes. However, Putin said, "Work needs to be intensified down these lines." "It must be made clear that the drug business is not only a segment of the 'shadow economy' but also a financial base for terrorist, extremist, and other kinds of criminal activity aiming to undermine civil, social, and religious harmony in Russia," Putin said. "The task of countering the terrorist threat imposes new requirements on the Federal Security Service bodies," he said.

RIA Novosti, 27/07/05

Illegal drug trade yields 10-15bn dollars yearly in Russia

The illegal drugs trade in Russia yields annually 10-15bn dollars, the head of the department of interdepartmental and information activity in the Russian drugs control agency, Aleksandr Mikhaylov, said today at a press conference. Mikhaylov noted that migration control must also be tightened to prevent large batches of drugs from coming into Russia. According to Mikhaylov, this concerns, in particular, people coming from countries neighbouring on Tajikistan, through which the main heroin traffic goes from Afghanistan.

ITAR-TASS, 27/07/05

German diplomat: Afghan police training needs more time and money

The training of Afghan police forces will take two years longer than expected and will cost at least an extra \$600 million to meet program goals. Originally, program officials had hoped to train 62,000 officers by the end of this year. But because of the country's security situation, officials have pushed that date to the end of 2007, Ortwin Hennig said. Hennig is the senior German Ministry of Foreign Affairs official responsible for the training of Afghan and Iraqi police forces. To date, between 50,000 and 55,000 officers have been trained, he said. Germany is the lead nation in rebuilding Afghanistan's police force. Germany is planning a donors' conference at the beginning of next year to raise more funds for Afghan police training, especially to improve regional security cooperation. At a similar conference in Doha, Qatar, in May 2004, countries pledged \$350 million.

Inside the Pentagon, Vol. 21, No. 30, 28/07/05

Some 20 Tajik citizens still held hostage in Afghanistan for debts to Afghan drug dealers

Dozens of Tajiks have been kidnapped by Afghan drug dealers, taken from border villages and held hostage until their families pay ransom to clear debts. General Nuralisho Nazarov speaking to journalists on July 27 noted that at present some 20 Tajiks have been held hostage in Afghanistan. The majority of them are relatives of Tajik drug dealers who have owed big money to Afghan drug lords for heroin supplied from Afghanistan. Last year, 44 Tajiks were in such captivity in Afghanistan. Tajik authorities are trying to free those Tajiks who have been captured by accident in raids, or taken across the border river because of debts their relatives owe.

ASIA-Plus, 28/07/05

UK sees drop in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan

British Ambassador to Kabul Dr Rosalind Marsden acknowledged a considerable drop in poppy cultivation in

Afghanistan this year. She reckoned completely cleansing the country of the drug menace would take a decade, a long-term process that could not be wrapped up in an ambitious sweep. The timeline given by the ambassador conforms to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's plan. Marsden hinted at an early launch of project of giving growers money and free crop seeds with a view to discouraging poppy cultivation. She added her country - third biggest donor to Afghanistan behind the US and Japan - had spent 50 million pounds on the combat against drugs in Afghanistan in one year.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Text of report by Afghan Pajhwok news agency website), 28/07/05

A quarter of narcotics manufactured in Afghanistan goes to Russia

A quarter of narcotics manufactured in Afghanistan goes to Russia for distribution on the local market and transport to other countries, Deputy Director of the Federal Anti-Drug Service (FADS), Colonel General Alexei Sedov told a news conference in Nizhny Novgorod, during a meeting with heads of the Federal Anti-Drug Service branches in the Volga region. "The transportation of Afghan drugs through Russia has been increasing lately," he said. Criminals "In the first half of this year, all law enforcement bodies of the Volga federal district solved 14,016 crimes related to illicit drug trade," the general said. Federal Anti-Drug Service operatives seized about 450 kilograms of narcotics, including more than 119 kilograms of heroin, 151.4 kilograms of marijuana, and 21 kilograms of opium poppy. The FADS was formed only two years ago. "Despite its young age, the agency accounted for 87% of all drugs seized in Russia this year," the general said.

RIA Novosti, 29/07/05

Afghan minister gives details of court to deal with drug dealers

A number of Afghan ministers discussed fighting narcotics during a meeting with elders and representatives of Kandahar and Urozgan Provinces at the Intercontinental Hotel today. Minister of Counter-Narcotics Habibollah Qaderi said there had been a lot of problems in eradicating poppy fields in Kandahar, Balkh and Farah Province last year. The provincial authorities were accused of failing to implement President Hamed Karzai's decree regarding the prevention of poppy cultivation. Mr Qaderi said a special court would be established to try drug dealers. [Qaderi in Pashto] A special court for drug dealers will be established. To date, 36 interrogators, who will ask questions and talk with the accused, 33 prosecutors and 15 judges have been trained to run this special court for drug dealers.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source: Tolu TV, Kabul), 31/07/05

Afghan farmers in south promised 42m dollars to stop drug cultivation

The Afghan government, in collaboration with the USAID will spend 42m dollars to provide an alternative source of living to poppy growers in Kandahar and Urozgan. An announcement to this effect was made following a meeting between Afghan and US officials with local authorities and representatives of the two southern provinces. Gen Daud, the deputy interior minister of the counter-narcotics wing of the ministry, said the Rural Development and Rehabilitation Ministry would contribute 10m dollars to each province, while the rest of the 22m dollars had been promised by USAID. Of the USAID package, Kandahar will get 13m dollars, while Urozgan will be given 9m dollars, making a total of 23 and 19m dollars for the two provinces respectively. Speaking at a press conference, Gen Daud hoped the effort would prove successful in eliminating the illegal cultivation. "Fortunately, 95 per cent of people in the area are backing the government's determination to root out poppy growing," he added. When contacted, some local elders expressed dismay over the government's claims regarding financial assistance in exchange for halting poppy cultivation. "This is not the first time they have pledged monetary support," said Hayatullah Aloko, an elder from Kandahar's Arghandab District. "Officials often build castles in the air but never carry out their promises to the farmers, who have no alternative source of income," he added.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Excerpt from report by Afghan Pajhwok news agency), 01/08/05

Seizures and Arrests

Over 8.5m dollars worth of Afghan heroin seized in Moscow Region

Over 240 kg of heroin has been seized by the Federal Service for Control over the Trafficking of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances during an operation to stop the Tajik organized crime group's activities in Moscow Region, the head of the service's information department, [Lt-Gen] Aleksandr Mikhaylov, said. On 23-24 July, drug police officers launched a special operation against the Tajik criminal group which supplied heroin of Afghan origin to Russia, he added. During the operation 61 kg of high-grade heroin was seized in Shchelkovskiy District, Moscow Region. Yesterday [26 July] the operation was completed and 180 kg of heroin was seized in Solnechnogorskiy District of Moscow Region. The street value of the seized drugs is estimated at over 8.5m dollars.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union (Text of report by Russian Ekho Moskvyy radio), 27/07/05

Tajik police seize 9.5 kg of heroin near capital Dushanbe

The Tajik Interior Ministry's directorate for combating drug trafficking found nearly 9.5 kg of heroin last Monday [25 July]. A 24-year-old inhabitant of the village of Pakhtakor in Rudaki District [near Dushanbe] of Tajikistan, Ghulomjon Olimjonov, had been arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Text of report by Tajik news agency Asia-Plus), 27/07/05

Police net 5 kg of drugs in Tajik north

Some 5 kg of drugs have been seized from a local resident of Isfara District of Soghd Region in [northern] Tajikistan. The source said that police officers had detained a resident of Isfara, Furqat Rustamov. They seized 2 kg of heroin and 3 kg of cannabis from him when he was body searched. Criminal proceedings have been launched and an investigation is under way.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Text of report by Avesta), 27/07/05

Russian involved in heroin trafficking from Tajikistan to Kazakh south

In Shymkent 8 kg of heroin has been seized from a Russian citizen and a resident of Astana. The Russian citizen from the Chechen Republic and the mother of many children from Astana were carrying out joint commerce activities in Shymkent. While on a trip to discuss flour sales in Tajikistan, the woman agreed with a local entrepreneur to sell him a Nissan car. The entrepreneur offered to pay with 3 kg of heroin at a price of 2,500 dollars a kilo. He also asked if he could use her flat in Shymkent to hand over 5 kg of heroin to other people. The entrepreneur and the woman struck the deal. Two couriers brought 8 kg of heroin to Shymkent from Tajikistan to its destination on 24 July. Some time later, the man and the woman were detained by staff from the national security department while they were unpacking packages of heroin.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Text of report by Kazakhstan Today news agency), 27/07/05

Turkish police seize 103 kg heroin in Istanbul

Turkish police seized 103 kg of heroin in two separate operations in Istanbul, semi-official Anatolia News Agency reported Thursday. The report quoted Istanbul Deputy Police Chief Sammaz Demirtas as saying that police staged an operation in a house in Bayrampasa district in Istanbul on July 25, impounding 75.1 kg of heroin. In a separate operation, police seized 27.9 kg of heroin in a house in Kucukcekmece district, Demirtas noted. Six people were detained for illicit drug trafficking.

Xinhua News Agency, 28/07/05

23 Afghan Drug dealers arrested at Tajik-Afghan border this year so far

23 Afghan drug dealers have been arrested this year so far when they were illegally crossing the Tajik-Afghan border. First Deputy Chairman of Tajikistan's Border Protection Committee (BPC), Major-General Nuralisho Nazarov, remarked this yesterday speaking to journalists on the results of work carried out by the committee in January-June 2005. "Among them are notorious drug dealers such as Mullo Nasriddin, Shali Amin and others," Mr. Nazarov said

adding that 10 various caches containing drugs and weapons have been discovered on the Afghan border over the same six-month period. 172 kilograms of drugs and 23 sub-machine-guns "Kalashnikov" have been extracted from these hides. Besides, Tajik border troops have seized 43 units of different firearms, 12,000 ammunition and 400 kilograms of drugs, including 75 kilograms of heroin. Tajik border troops intercepted contraband goods totaling nearly US\$75,000, Mr. Nazarov noted. Over this period, 37 crimes have been committed by servicemen of the Border Protection Committee. Four officers of the Border Protection Committee have faced charges of drug trafficking and been sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. At the same time, Nazarov noted that last year, Russian border troops seized 950 kilograms of drugs at the Tajik-Afghan border.

ASIA-Plus, 28/07/05

Security forces impound 25.6 kg of heroin in Bodrum

Turkish security forces impounded 25.6 kg of heroin, and detained three people in a raid in prominent holiday resort. The police launched an operation codenamed "Gordion Knot" that involved search of an automobile where 25.6 kg of heroin was stashed. The drugs were valued at 1.5 million USD.

Anadolu Agency, 28/07/05

Bulgarian Customs Officers Detain 9 Kilos of Heroin in Van from Bosnia and Herzegovina

Vidin, on the Danube, customs inspectors intercepted 9.120 kg of heroin, estimated at 1.5 million leva, hidden in a van from Bosnia and Herzegovina on Thursday night. The inspectors also found 19,500 undeclared euros on the driver, a 23-year-old Bosnian identified as M.H. The drug was found in a customs check of a van with a trailer with Bosnia and Herzegovina number plates going out of Bulgaria through the Vrusha Chouka border checkpoint. The vehicle passed through Bulgaria coming from Turkey via the Kapitan Andreevo border checkpoint.

Bulgarian News Agency BTA, 29/07/05

Growth in Iraqi drug trade noted; "large number" of Iranians arrested

The Iraqi National Anti-Narcotics Committee has said that it detected a large number of Iranian visitors carrying drugs in their pockets for doping. A source at the committee said that the main Iraqi cities - where narcotics are currently widespread and which are being brought to the country by Iranian visitors who enter Iraq - are Karbala governorate and the capital, Baghdad. The source added that most of the narcotics deals are particularly struck with Iran; and Syria and Jordan come in the second place. The source pointed to that Iraq was previously used only as a passage for narcotics. However, Iraq has currently become one of the most noticeable consumer countries. Before the US invasion, Iraq was one of the cleanest countries in terms of the consumption of and trading in narcotics. However, the open borders facilitated to a great extent in turning Iraq into an important passage for the activities of drug traffickers.

BBC Monitoring Middle East (Source: Al-Sharqiyah, Baghdad), 30/07/05

Afghan police seize 32 kg of heroin in eastern district

Some 32 kg of heroin were seized in Ghanikhel District of Nangarhar Province yesterday. Addressing a news conference in Jalalabad today, Col Abrarollah, the deputy commander of Nangarhar border forces, said: "The border police seized 32 kg of heroin from a Datsun pick-up in Ghanikhel District yesterday."

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Excerpt from report by Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency), 31/07/05

Turkish police seize 70 kg of heroin at border gate

Turkish State Minister Kursad Tuzmen said on Monday [1 August] that 70.370 kg heroin was confiscated in a car in Ipsala [northwestern Turkey] border area. Tuzmen said in a written statement that the market value of the heroin was 8.820 million YTL.

BBC Monitoring Newsfile (Text of report by Turkish news agency Anatolia), 01/08/05

Tajik drug trafficker arrested in Kyrgyz south

The Osh border detachment, in a joint operation with the National Security Service and the Interior Ministry, arrested a Tajik national yesterday. Eight bundles of drugs, which looked like heroin, were seized from him. Their total weight is over seven kilograms. The press service of the Border Troops under the Kyrgyz National Security Service reported that the Tajik national had been arrested in the village of Karamyk in Chon-Alay District [in southern Osh Region near the Tajik border].

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Text of report by Kyrgyz TV, First Channel), 01/08/05