



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia

Weekly Digest: 03– 10 July 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.

Seven Iran police die in gun battle with traffickers

Bandits killed seven Iranian policemen and wounded nine in a gun battle on the country's lawless southeastern borders, the official IRNA news agency reported on Sunday. Haydarali Nouraei, governor of the southeastern city of Zahedan, told IRNA the policemen were ambushed as they headed to arrest Derasheh Bakhsh, a prominent bandit leader who remains on the run.

Reuters, 03/07/05

Four million drug addicts in Iran

According to an Iranian leading newspaper, *Iran*, the Head of Iran's anti-narcotics office Ali Hashemi said Iran had four million drug addicts, dismissing police statistics putting the figure at two million.

Reuters, 04/07/05

Afghan Minister frowns on UN's World Drug Report

The Afghan counter-narcotics minister on Sunday frowned on the United Nations' world drug report for the current year, arguing the figures contained in it are stale. Habibullah Qaderi pointed out the UN report, released on Wednesday last, carried 2004 statistics, rather than for the current year, thus showing an increase in the area under poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. However, the latest official assessment published earlier this year and conducted jointly by the UN's Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Afghan Counter-Narcotics Ministry said the area under poppy cultivation in Afghanistan had generally decreased. The February 2005 assessment, whose results were published by UN in March, indicated the area of Afghan land used for poppy cultivation had shrunk from the record 131,000 hectares in 2004. The February's Rapid Assessment Survey revealed the land cultivated with poppies in 2004 had decreased in Afghanistan's all 34 provinces, except five, most of them major opium-producers.

Asia Pulse, 04/07/05

Afghan commanders are involved in drug trafficking

After the seizure of 250 kg of opium in a two-day raid conducted last week, security officials in the southern province of Ghor accused local commanders of having connections to drug traffickers. Chief of Ghor police headquarters Faizullah Salihi said, "The presence of local militia commanders has caused an increase in drug trafficking in our province. Our police force is not strong enough to fight drug traffickers." They were trying to take the opium to Herat, from where they could smuggle it abroad.

IWPR's Afghan Monitor, No. 104, 06/07/05

Afghanistan predicts 40 percent drop in opium poppies this year

"Based on a survey made so far this year, we expect a 40 percent decrease in poppy cultivation," deputy interior

minister General Mohammed Daud told reporters in Kabul. He singled out the eastern province of Laghman for praise, saying it had seen a 90 percent decline in poppy production. Gen Daud added that some 135 tonnes of drugs were seized last years and 70 tonnes during the current year. Gen Daud said there were 54 cases of drug-trafficking and several people have been referred to courts, where they were sentenced and punished. The poppy cultivation had increased in the provinces of Farah, Kandahar and Balkh. However, he said that the poppy cultivation have dropped by 40 per cent in most of the other provinces.

AFP, 06/07/05

Extra troops for Afghan border

Pakistan says it is deploying an additional 4,000 soldiers on its border with Afghanistan to prevent militants from moving across the frontier. A Pakistani spokesman says the move comes ahead of Afghan parliamentary elections due in September. The Afghan government has been critical of Pakistan in the past, saying it has failed to do enough to prevent militants from entering Afghanistan. Pakistan already has some 70,000 troops deployed along its rugged border with Afghanistan.

BBCNews, 07/07/05

Laghman takes lead in war on opium

The British ambassador to Afghanistan has held up the eastern province of Laghman as an example for the rest of the country in eradicating opium poppies. Ambassador Rosalind Marsden said she appreciated the population's voluntary participation in the destruction of poppy fields. According to a survey of the UNODC, over 3,000 hectares of poppy fields were voluntarily destroyed last year in Laghman.

IWPR's Afghan Press Monitor, No. 105, 07/05/05

War on drugs in Afghanistan comes at a price

Local merchants say the economy is crippled when poppy crops are eradicated. While western government leaders and officials in Kabul may argue about how effective Afghanistan's efforts to eliminate the drug trade have been, people living in the southeastern city of Jalalabad say the campaign to stamp out opium poppy cultivation has already been too successful - and that they're paying the price. "Since the government has been destroying opium crops, people can no longer afford to have weddings". Esmael Pacha, a resident of Achin district, had to abandon plans to take his wife for medical treatment in Peshawar in nearby Pakistan after the government destroyed his poppy fields.

IWPR's Afghan recovery report, No 177, 09/07/05

Human trafficking to the West

The UK is cited by many as the main destination and more than half of the women come from Lithuania. Lithuania joined the EU last year. Since then, the trafficking of young women into Western European brothels has increased dramatically. Trafficking young women is as profitable as drugs and arms sales but without the same risks. The police seem confused about the distinction between trafficking and prostitution. Catching the traffickers is one way of tackling it. But reducing demand is another.

BBCNews, 09/07/05

Seizures and Arrests

Afghan drug transit via Kyrgyzstan drops due to instability

The transit of Afghan drugs has significantly decreased in Kyrgyzstan since the change of the country's leadership on 24 March, a high-ranking official at the republic's Drug Control Agency [DCA] told the Interfax news agency. In his view, "the local and transnational drug business 'has retreated into the shadows', taking into account the political instability in the country, since it cannot guarantee the safety of its freight". He said that "antidrug squads in Kyrgyzstan did not stop their work for a single day after the change of power in the country". "The lower ranks of the Kyrgyz law-enforcement bodies carried out their work 100 per cent while there was confusion for a short time in the leadership of the regional

interior directorates," the source said. In the meantime he said that a group of drug couriers had recently been detained in Bishkek during an operation. "It [the group] was comprised of Tajik, Uzbek and Kyrgyz citizens - altogether about 10 people," the source said. "Two of the detained Tajik citizens turned out to be officers of the antidrug structures and one of them had even graduated from the Russian Interior Ministry Academy in St Petersburg," he said. The source added that 43,000 dollars and 22 kg of Afghan opium were seized from this group. "Most of the drugs were bound for Russia. This is the largest haul of Afghan drugs seized in Kyrgyzstan since 24 March," the source said. According to data from the DCA, on average over 500 kg of Afghan heroin are seized annually in Kyrgyzstan.

Interfax, 04/07/05

Afghanistan seized 70 tonnes of narcotics this year - official

Gen Mohammad Daud, the deputy interior minister on combating narcotics, briefed a news conference on Wednesday [6 July] about the activities of the law-enforcement police force and stated that Afghanistan was committed to fight poppy cultivation and to put drug-traffickers on trial. Gen Daud added that a number of drug-traffickers had been prosecuted. He also said that some 135 tonnes of drugs were seized last years and 70 tonnes during the current year. According to Daud, there were 54 cases of drug-trafficking and several people have been referred to courts, where they were sentenced and punished.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (reported by Afghan news agency Hindokosh), 06/07/05

Precursors seized in Afghanistan

According to a report from Nangarhar province, 76 kilograms of precursor chemicals, used in processing raw opium into of heroin, have been seized. Police have detained those involved in smuggling the chemicals.

IWPR's Afghan Monitor, No. 105, 07/07/05

Russian drug police seizes 250 kg heroin on Kazakh border

250 kg of high-grade heroin were seized by drug police on Russia-Kazakhstan border in a vehicle heading for Omsk, the spokesman for the Federal Service for Controlling the Circulation of Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Lt-Gen Aleksandr Mikhaylov claimed. He added that in the course of the special operation, seven members of an international drug ring were detained. Among them were Uzbek and Tajik citizens. Mikhaylov said this was the third largest haul of narcotics in the past month. On 18 June, drug police seized over than 106 kg of high-grade heroin in Yekaterinburg. The narcotic was also smuggled into Russia by a group of Uzbeks and Tajiks. Last year alone, Russian drug police reported 2,440 substantial confiscations of narcotics, under UN classification for any amount over 100 g of heroin in each particular case.

ITAR-TASS, 07/07/05

More than 100 drug rings wiped out in Urals in 2005 - Russian authorities

As many as 108 organized groups of drug dealers have been arrested in the Urals Federal District since the beginning of 2005, the Urals directorate of the Federal Drug Control Service has said in a press release. During this period, the Urals anti-drug officers have completed investigation into 360 drug-related crimes, out of which 22 were committed by mafia gangs and 68 by organized groups, the press release reads. Foreigners make less than 9 per cent of the total number of defendants in cases that have been passed to courts, but "the biggest batches of narcotics are being confiscated from foreign citizens". The press release quotes the directorate head Vladimir Yakovlev as saying that "the production and deliveries of heroin from Afghanistan have not decreased since the anti-terrorist coalition forces came to the country".

Interfax, 11/07/05