



## Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 14 – 20 March 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.

### **Idea of legalizing poppy to produce medicine is "an interesting suggestion"**

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The Afghan President Hamid Karzai has called the suggestion of legalizing poppy cultivation in Afghanistan for the purposes of producing medicine, as suggested by a French NGO, Senlis Council last week, "an interesting suggestion", at a joint press conference with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Thursday 17th of March in Kabul. Earlier addressing a news conference, the Afghan minister of interior Ali Ahmad had called the suggestion unachievable. He said the arguments for and against the impact of legalizing poppy cultivation and its use in producing medicines was not clear yet, but warned of the problems if not handled correctly.

*Pajhwok Afghan News, 20/03/05*

### **US officials defend Afghan counter-narcotics strategy**

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Officials testifying before Congress have defended U.S. and Afghan government strategies to fight opium production and the narcotics trade. Lawmakers continue to complain the U.S. military is still not making the fight against narcotics there a priority. Counternarcotics, described one such operation. "Just two days ago, on Tuesday March 15, U.S. military forces inserted, provided security, and extracted six drug enforcement agents and 36 Afghan narcotics agents into a successful operation targeting three opium labs in Nangahar province one of the primary sources of opium". That was the first time lawmakers have heard testimony about an actual operation, and Mary Beth Long told the committee she is aware of growing calls for more aggressive action by the U.S. military. Michael Braun, of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), says special DEA foreign-deployed agents may begin work at the end of March, supplementing an existing regional effort. "Operation Containment is a DEA-led multinational cooperative program initiated in 2002 in an effort to place a security belt around Afghanistan that would prevent processing chemicals from entering the country and opium and heroin from leaving," he explained.

*Afghan News Network, 18/03/05*

### **Askar Akaev signed the law on the status of the anti-terrorist center of CIS**

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On 15<sup>th</sup> of March, Askar Akaev ratified an agreement between government of Kyrgyzstan and CIS Anti-terrorist center (ATC) on conditions outlining presence of its branch on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. ATC was created in 2000. Its main tasks include exchange of operational information and joint large-scale trainings.

*Kabar, 17/03/05*

### **Tajik border guards prepare to take over Afghan-Tajik border**

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Russian border-guard spokesman Aleksandr Kondratev announced on 15 March that Tajik border guards will assume control of a strategic 200-kilometer section of the Afghan-Tajik border within one month. Tajik State Border Protection Committee head General Saidamir Zuhurov stated that although the Tajik border forces "are inferior to the Russian border troops" and "have no air support," the international community is providing \$25 million in assistance to bolster counternarcotics enforcement along the border area. The transfer will be the fourth sector to be ceded to Tajik control and stems from a bilateral agreement reached during the October 2004 visit to Tajikistan by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

*RFE/RL, 17/03/05*

## **Afghan farmers resist destruction of poppy fields**

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Farmers in two villages of Achin district of the eastern province of Nangarhar clashed with the police, resisting officials' attempts to destroy their poppy fields, resulting in injuries to two policemen and two villagers. The villagers started firing on the police who were attempting to destroy the fields and the police opened retaliatory fire. A witness said that there were two helicopters of security forces flying overhead to help the police.

*Pajhwok Afghan News, 16/03/05*

## **U.N. calls Uzbek drug situation "satisfactory" right...**

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James Callahan, the Central Asia representative for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime told a news conference on 10 March that the UN is generally satisfied with the drug situation in Uzbekistan. According to Kamol Dusmetov, the head of Uzbekistan's Drug Control Center, Uzbek police seized 1,633 kilograms of drugs in 2004. The total included 384 kilograms of opium and 543 kilograms of heroin. Official data on the number of drug users in Uzbekistan showed a slight increase in 2004, rising 2.4 percent to 22,419, of whom 12,000 of them are heroin users.

*RFE/RL, 14/03/05*

## **Seizures and Arrests**

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### **Drugs recovered in Pakistan**

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Anti Narcotics Force recovered huge amount of narcotics from the custody of four smugglers including the President of Muslim Youth Wing Fateh Jang, Almas Khan. ANF stopped the Toyota car, STD-36 near Ajoowala link road and recovered 1 kg of heroin, 2.5 kg of opium, 10 kg of Chars and 30 Boar pistol from the hidden parts of the car.

*Pakistan Press International Information Services, 13/03/05*

### **Russian police seize heroin at regional airport**

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A big heroin consignment has been seized at Koltsovo airport in Yekaterinburg. "Police detained an unemployed citizen, from whom more than 1.5 kg of heroin was confiscated," Interfax news agency was told by a source in the local internal affairs department. According to the Internal Affairs Ministry, there have been 17 big narcotics seizures in Russia's regions over the past 24 hours. According to the Federal Drugs Control Service, most of the drugs, of which more than 90 per cent is heroin, came into Russia from Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics.

*Interfax, 15/03/05*

### **Iranian media reports of drug seizures, arrests 2 -16 March 2005**

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The deputy commander of the anti-drugs police said on 13 March that 270 tonnes of drugs had been seized throughout Iran in the past year (since 20 March 2004). This was a 49 per cent increase over the previous year. The secretary-general of the Drug Control HQ, Ali Hashemi, said that over 100,000 bn rials - three-quarters of Iran's national oil income - had been spent on the campaign against drugs in the 2004-5 Iranian year. About 40 per cent of this was spent on preventing the transit of drugs through Iran. Hashemi said that according to UN figures, Iran was confiscating about 70 per cent of the narcotics produced in Afghanistan. For a full list of seizures see the link below.

*BBC Monitoring research in English, 16/03/05*

### **Siberian police arrest drug courier from Azerbaijan**

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Staff of the organized crime directorate arrested a drug courier, a native of Naxcivan in Azerbaijan, in Krasnoyarsk who had been transporting 5.5 kg of heroin by car. While inspecting his car traffic police found heroin worth 4 million roubles.

*BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union, 18/03/05*