



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 18 – 24 April 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.

There are estimated 90,000 HIV cases in Central Asia

Lev Khodakevich, regional director of the Capacity project, announced at the official opening of the project in Almaty on 19 April that specialists believe that Central Asia is home to 90,000 HIV-positive cases. Khodakevich said that the spread of the disease is worrisome, with officially registered HIV cases in the region rising from 500 in 2000 to 12,000 in 2004. The bulk of the afflicted are intravenous drug. Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, Capacity is a \$13 million, five-year project that aims to coordinate efforts to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS in Central Asia.

<http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kazakhstan/hypermail/news/0016.shtml>, 19/04/05

War on opium falters in southern Afghanistan Taliban stronghold

The abrupt end last week to a poppy eradication drive by Afghanistan's fledgling counter-narcotics brigade in a former Taliban stronghold highlights the challenges of the country's war on drugs. But confrontation flared Tuesday on the first day the force began its work in Maiwand district, 45 kilometers (28 miles) outside Kandahar city, as 2,000 peasants blocked the road to demonstrate against the destruction of their crops. Within the counter-narcotics force not everyone was so optimistic, with one member of General Aghbar's team saying the meeting was needed to untangle substantial problems. "There are two issues: the tribal problem and the problem of traffickers and corruption in local authorities".

AFP, 17/04/05

Turkmenbashi promised to resign in 2009

Dmitry Rupel, chairman of the OSCE, stated that Turkmenbashi promised him to resign in 2009. Tentatively the elections will take place in 2009, and Turkmenbashi will not run for it.

Lenta.ru, 20/04/05

Mahmadruzi Iskandarov disappeared

The chairman of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Mr. Iskandarov was released on April 4 from the detention center in Moscow and on April 16 he disappeared. It was obvious that Rakhmonov was upset about his release and asked the Russian MoI to re-arrest him. And there are rumors that group of Tajik law enforcement agents arrived Moscow to find him well before his disappearance.

Vremya novostei, 20/04/05

Head of the Ministry of Interior of CIS met in Belarus

Two-day conference gathered heads of the ministries of interior of CIS countries. The main issues included: combating international terrorism and transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking.

Kabar.kg, 21/04/05

Mol of Kazakhstan opens chain of rehabilitation centers for drug addicts

According to the national anti-narcotics program the committee to combat drug business (KBN) under the ministry of interior began to establish rehabilitation centers for drug users. The first center was open in Akmolinskiy region with a capacity for 50 persons.

Gazeta.kz, 21/04/05

Turkmenistan scraps marriage tax

Turkmenistan has abandoned a requirement for foreigners to pay \$50,000 (£26,000) to marry one of its nationals. The latest update to the family code means the only restriction for foreign spouses is that they should have lived in the country for at least a year. The \$50,000 requirement had been in force since 2001. No reasons have been given for the decision to drop it. The change came to light when the country's main newspaper, Neutral Turkmenistan, printed the new family code, which made no mention of the marriage fee for foreigners. On Friday the office of President Saparmyrat Niyazov confirmed that it had been scrapped.

BBC News, 22/04/05

U.S. Embassy provides technical assistance to Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic

On April 22, the bureau to combat international drug trafficking under the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan provided the chemical equipment and reagents to the laboratories of the MoI worth at \$282,000.

AKIPress, 22/04/05

Seizures and Arrests

Two American pilots charged with smuggling ecstasy pills on a military jet

A captain and a master sergeant in the Air National Guard were arrested on charges that they imported 290,000 Ecstasy pills to New York hidden on a military cargo plane. Federal agents said that their arrests broke up a smuggling ring that, using military aircraft, had made at least three earlier flights and moved drugs worth \$10 million or more. On April 8, they made a flight from Stewart Air National Guard base in Newburgh, N.Y., through Germany to the Republic of Georgia to deliver supplies for a training mission there. On the way back, their plane stopped at a United States military base in Germany. The two went to a hotel room near the base and picked up packages containing thousands of tablets of MDMA (Ecstasy). The shipment was worth as much as \$11.6 million on the street in New York, where single tablets of high-quality Ecstasy sell for up to \$40 each in clubs.

The New York Times, by Julia Preston, 14/04/05

Police seize over 40 kilos of drugs in Moscow Region this year

Drug control police seized over 40 kilos of drugs in the Moscow Region since the start of the current year. The seized drugs include over 14 kilos of heroin, 24 kilos of marijuana and a small quantity of hashish. Besides, police officers captured 17 kilos of precursors – substances out of which drugs are made. “Special attention was given to control over legal turnover of narcotics,” the branch noted. The most characteristic “shortcomings” of officials, responsible for this, include violation of rules of storing drugs, turnover of psychotropic substances without appropriate licenses, absence of officially filled-out permits for people, working with drugs and rigging-up of permissible norms in storing drug-containing substances.

ITAR-TASS, 18/04/05

Tatar police seize five kilos of heroin from Tajik drug dealers

According to a source at Tatarstan police, four citizens of Tajikistan who tried to sell the drug, were apprehended in the Tatarstan capital Kazan in a joint operation by criminal police and officers of the local branch of the Federal Security Service. “While searching the Tajiks, policemen found five kilos of heroin on them,” the source noted.

ITAR-TASS, 18/04/05

64 kg of heroin were intercepted in Kazakhstan

64 kg of heroin were intercepted in a single haul in the southern Kazakhstan (UKO) as a result of the joint operation between MoI of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The heroin was of a high quality and destined for the Western European market. Three citizens of Kazakhstan were arrested.

Gazeta.kz, 21/04/05

Albanian arrested for arms trafficking

An Albanian man wanted by Interpol for alleged weapons trafficking has been arrested, said the interior ministry. Police arrested Besnik Braka, 32, who had been named by an alleged collaborator in Greece after illegal weapons were found on a Greek-registered truck two years ago. They also seized five kilograms of heroin in a search of his house.

AFP, 22/04/05

German, EU drugs officers seize record Afghan heroin haul (600 kg!!!)

German narcotics investigators and their European colleagues have chalked up a spectacular success: investigating authorities together with narcotics experts from 12 countries confiscated the unbelievable amount of 600 kg of heroin in Bavaria in a coup against an international ring of drug dealers. This was also the case in the spectacular coup made by the Joint Narcotics Investigation Group (GER) of the police and the customs authority in Munich. A ZKA liaison officer (the Customs Criminal Police Department) working in Istanbul found the decisive lead. All in all, the perpetrators were shown to have smuggled more than 2 tonnes of narcotics into Western Europe. The preparatory work was huge. For over a year, 9,000 taped telephone conversations had to be analyzed.

BBC Monitoring European, 22/04/05

21 kilos of heroin seized in Russian-Tajik police operation

The Russian and Tajik interior ministries have blocked a channel of drug shipments to the Moscow region said Russian Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev. "The operation held on April 6-10 resulted in the confiscation of 21 kilograms of heroin". Nurgaliyev referred to a six-month anti-drug operation Zaslou-2, which was initiated by the U.S. DEA and the Uzbek Interior Ministry. "Five hundred and twenty-eight large shipments of narcotic drugs to the CIS territory were prevented thanks to that effort," he said. The sides also "formed a database, collected samples of Afghan heroin packing and marking, and drew a map of drug delivery routes from Afghan," he added.

ITAR-TASS, by Svetlana Alikina, 22/04/05