



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 25 April – 1 May 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.

Winning a battle in Afghanistan's war on drugs?

The Afghan government's efforts to contain the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics registered perhaps its biggest success to date when members of an elite unit confiscated 479 kilograms of heroin and arrested seven suspected smugglers, authorities announced April 23. The recent drug seizure operation took place near the Iranian border. While a success, the raid barely makes a dent in the burgeoning problem of narcotics trafficking. Not all anti-trafficking operations have gone well. An anti-drug campaign in Kandahar Province -- one of the country's largest poppy cultivation centers met fierce resistance in mid-April.

David Trilling, Eurasianet.org, 25/04/05

Pakistan committed to eradicate poppy

NWFP Governor Khalilur Rehman said that the government was coming very hard on the poppy growers in tribal areas and had directed the political administration to destroy poppy crops at all cost. He said Pakistan had been severely hit by drug menace and presently there were four million drug addicts in the country out of which 43% were between the 16 years and 20 years of age. Regarding operation in North Waziristan Agency, he said that no operation had been planned so far and the statement of the American general in this connection was misquoted. If situation in a particular area demands army operation then we will carry it out but presently the situation was normal in North Waziristan, he said.

Pakistan Press International Information Services, 25/04/05

Uzbek capital's centre blocked

The authorities in Uzbekistan have begun a major restructuring programme in Tashkent, removing several main roads and blocking off the city centre. Officials have given no public explanation for the changes, which are proving extremely unpopular. But it is widely believed that the move has been designed to prevent any kind of assault on government buildings. Tashkent is being transformed at astonishing speed. Several major roads in the centre have simply disappeared, replaced by instant parks in just a few hours. The main artery that runs past Government House has been blocked off, and tramlines have been ripped out. Forced out of the centre, traffic has been jammed into the side roads, with frantic policemen waving cars away from routes that no longer exist.

BBC News, 26/04/05

The biggest Afghan drug lord was arrested in New York

Bashir Noorzai was the first Afghan drugs lord to be seized. His arrest in the US casts the spotlight on the connection between the criminal drugs business and Islamic extremism in Afghanistan. According to US officials, Bashir sits - or used to sit - right at the centre of that trade. Last year he was named as Afghanistan's biggest trafficker, and one of the world's most wanted traffickers, under the American Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. Noorzai and another alleged Afghan drugs lord, Juma Khan, were identified as linkmen between the men's own drugs interests and extremist organisations still operating in Afghanistan. They include the Taleban, al-Qaeda and the Hisb-e-Islami party of the renegade warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Long time ago, both men were detained but subsequently released by US forces hunting Bin Laden and fighting Taleban insurgents. That incident has exposed the US to heavy criticism.

BBC News, 26/04/05

Taleban deny link with accused Bashir Noorzai

Afghanistan's ousted Taleban have denied that an Afghan arrested in the United States and accused of being a top heroin trafficker ever supported them, as a US prosecutor has said. A Taleban spokesman denied that Noorzai had ever helped them and said the accusation against him was a smokescreen to obscure the involvement of others in drugs.

Reuters (Kabul), 27/04/05

Tajikistan and Afghanistan signed an agreement on friendship and cooperation in Kabul

Emomali Rakhmonov and Hamid Karzai signed an agreement on friendship and cooperation. In addition, they signed intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in education, culture, science, production and energetics.

Kazakhstan Today, 28/04/05

20 border guards – cynologists from Central Asia received certificates from the EU

20 specialists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan participated in the program on how to work with sniffing dogs and train them how to find drugs. The program took place in Kazakhstan.

Kabar.kg, 29/04/05

Seizures and Arrests

Turkish security forces seize 10.5 kg of heroin in Silopi

Turkish security forces have confiscated 10.5 kg of heroin and 5.5 kg of hashish in an operation in Sirnak's Silopi town. The drugs were found when a truck was stopped for a traffic check-up. Abudulsalam I, Ibrahim I, Hayrettin I, Riza I, and Hasan A. have been arrested. A full scale investigation is underway.

Anadolu Agency, 26/04/05

Germans getting tough? German police arrest suspected leaders of Arab-Kurdish drugs gang

In a large-scale investigative action by the Berlin public prosecutor's office against an internationally operating gang of drug dealers and smugglers, officers of the mobile task force and the special operations squad on Tuesday [26 April] arrested five gang's suspected leaders and members. Among the persons arrested, there is 39-year-old Mahmud al-Z. from Berlin-Kreuzberg, who is known nationwide as the so-called president of the Arab scene of organized crime. Despite the disclosure of his true Turkish identity under the name Mahmut U., the criminal, who has several previous convictions, could not be expelled to Turkey to date, because, in 2002, Turkey had expatriated him for alleged refusal to serve in the army. The police further reported that another gang member, 36-year-old Heitham M. from Schoeneberg, who also belongs to the extended family of Arabs and Kurds, could be arrested.

BBC Monitoring European, 27/04/05

Iranian media reports on opiate seizures, arrests 14-27 April 05

The police commander in North Khorasan province said on 14 April that over 26.4 kg of morphine had been seized from a car in Bojnurd. Two people were arrested. A police spokesman in Mashhad said that 1,346 kg of opium, 115 kg of hashish, 34 kg of morphine and 15 kg of heroin had been seized throughout the province since the beginning of the Iranian new year on 21 March. Nine gangs had been broken up and 2,618 people arrested. Some of the drugs were hidden in a truck heading from Afghanistan to Iran. Police in the border city of Taibad announced on 14 April that five traffickers were killed while trying to enter Iranian territory in the mountainous district of Tapeh Sefid (White Hill) near Taibad. 230 kilos of opium and 3 of "crystal" were seized from the traffickers as well as a hand grenade, two motorcycles and a cellphone. Part of the haul - 140 kg of opium - was found in vehicles travelling on local roads. The rest - 2,150 kg of heroin - was taken from a vehicle in Birjand, South Khorasan province.

BBC Monitoring Middle East, 27/04/05

1.5 kg of heroin were seized in Kant, Kyrgyzstan

The agents of the department to combat drugs (OBN) caught a man with 1.5 kg of heroin (\$6000) who had ID of the customs officer of the Jalal-Abad region. The OBN is trying to trace the whole chain and to identify on whether ID is authentic.

Vecherniy Bishkek, 29/04/05

16 kg of opium were seized in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

The agents of the Kyrgyz DCA arrested two natives of Batken region with 16 kg and 641 gr of opium packed in 17 plastic bags in one of the cafes in Bishkek.

AKIpress, 29/04/05

56 kg of heroin were seized in Moscow from citizens of Tajikistan

Four citizens of Tajikistan were apprehended in Moscow with 56 kg of heroin. The operation was carried out by the Federal Service for Narcotics Control (FSKN).

NEWSru.com, 01/05/05

Anti Narcotic Force (ANF) seizes large quantity of heroin

ANF (Punjab), during process of checking at Allama Iqbal International Airport, has seized 290 grams of heroin from Mrs Yeboah Yaaof, citizen of Ghana. Similarly, 118 heroin filled capsules weighing 1,620 grams were seized from a South African national, Baranard Denis Sydney, 55 capsules weighing 755 gram white heroin from a Nigerian Uchenna Bende and 116 capsules of 900 grams quantity were seized from another South African national, Howell Denis. The spokesman said that cases have been registered against the accused and the ANF Punjab has extended the scope of investigations to unveil this international network of smuggles.

Business Recorder, 01/05/05