



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 30 May – 05 June 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.

Concerns over Turkmen health care

Life expectancy in Turkmenistan is just 62 - lower than in any other country in Europe and Central Asia and the health care system in Turkmenistan is poor, even by Central Asian standards, a British study has found. Niyazov's decisions have had a major impact: closing all hospitals outside the capital, abolishing free health care and firing 15,000 health care workers in just one day and replacing them with army conscripts. "Rates of TB are high, and HIV, too," said Bernd Rechel from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, one of the authors of the report. "The country is claiming there are currently no cases, but unofficial sources report there are perhaps thousands of infected people," he added. The report states the government is ignoring the increasing number of young people taking hard drugs, which is fuelling suicide rates and prostitution.

BBC News, 03/06/05

Drugs market destroyed in Helmand

The Interior Ministry's Counter-Narcotics Force tore down a drug market in Garamser district of southern Helmand province. Narcotics were being smuggled to neighboring countries Pakistan and Iran from the bustling bazaar. 2.5 mt of opium, 250 kg of heroin and 3.5 mt of chemicals used in manufacturing heroin were set aflame during the operation.

IWPR, Afghan press monitor, No. 83, 01/06/05

Seizures and Arrests

About 2 kg of heroin confiscated in Khatanga airport, Russia

About 2 kg of heroin were confiscated from a 22-year-old female drug courier in the airport of Khatanga, the Taimyr Autonomous Area in Russia. According to a representative of the law enforcement bodies, the drug courier flew to the settlement by the flight "Yekaterinburg-Norisk." Criminalists defined, the substance weighing about 2 kg was heroin of rather high quality.

Itar-Tass, 30/05/05

Nearly 1.8 ton of drugs seized in southern Iran

Iranian anti-drug police seized nearly 1.8 ton of illicit drugs in the southern province of Fars during the past week. Mohammad-Ali Tabatabaei, a provincial police officer, was quoted as saying that the haul included 1,433 kg of opium, 353 kg of hashish and 1 kg of heroin. The country also accounts for 80 percent of the opium and 90 percent of the morphine intercepted worldwide, according to the International Narcotics Control Board. The Islamic Republic spends 5 billion US dollars annually on anti-drug programs, and over 3,100 police have lost their lives in conflicts with drug smugglers during the past two decades.

Xinhua News Agency, 02/06/05

Police seize 33 kg heroin in Penza Region, Russia

Police have seized at least 33 kg of heroin in the Perm Region. According to the source, the heroin, reportedly from Central Asia, was found in a vehicle belonging to a transportation firm owned by a Tajik national.

Itar-Tass, 02/06/05

Russian drug agents net 30 kg of heroin in Urals region

A vehicle in which criminals were carrying over 30 kg of heroin from Central Asia has been detained in Perm. A consignment like this has a street value of dozens of millions of roubles. Detectives had long been tracking the gang, which included several natives of Tajikistan. One of them even organized a transport firm to make it more convenient to smuggle drugs into Russia.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union, 03/06/05

3 international smugglers with drugs held in Pakistan

Three international drug smugglers were rounded up along with big cache of narcotics in an operation near Spin Boldak. Brigadier Abdul Razzaq of Spin Boldak cantonment told Correspondents that Afghan authorities accompanied by American troops conducted an operation in a drug market just 2 Km from Pak-Afghan border at Afghan territory. Brig Razzaq said that three international drug smugglers were caught along with large quantity of narcotics. These included 380 Kg heroin, 1000 Kg opium and 800 Kg charas.

Pakistan Press International Information Services, 03/06/05

Georgian police detained 7 narco barons in Ponichala District

The Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia Vano Merabishvili stated at the briefing on Wednesday that the employees of the Police detained 7 narco barons after special operation in Ponichala district on Tuesday night. As a result of the operation they seized \$100,000, narcotics, some thousands of mobile phones, televisions and other technique. According to him, Ponichala had become the center of trading with narcotics, where people exchange stolen things for narcotics. About 150 fighters of special detachment and other detachments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were carrying out the operation during whole last night.

Prime-News (Georgia), 01/06/05

Chinese call on more scrutiny on AIDS spread among drug users

In a notice issued Friday, the Ministry of Health ordered local health departments to gradually make AIDS testing among drug users a routine work in order to understand how the deadly disease spreads among the highly vulnerable group. The notice urged all community clinics to take part in a campaign on building a "drug-free neighborhood" and regions where AIDS prevention and control pilot program is implemented to continue to take preventive measures such as free needle exchange and methadone maintenance therapy.

Xinhua News Agency, 04/06/05

Chinese police seizes 42 kg of "ice" in single case

Chinese police cracked a major transnational "ice" production and smuggling case, arresting 12 suspects and capturing 42 kg of methamphetamine (ice) along with some other kinds of narcotics and chemicals, the Ministry of Public Security announced.

Xinhua News Agency, 07/06/05