



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest:14-21 February 2006

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.

Four US soldiers killed in Uruzgan

(Outlook) A bomb hit a US military vehicle on February 13 in the Dehrawood district of the southern province of Uruzgan, killing four American soldiers, the US military said. Shortly after the blast, militants fired at the troops with guns and rocket-propelled grenades. The military responded, calling in attack helicopters and fighter planes, the military said in a statement (...). The attack brings the US military death toll to 214 in and around Afghanistan since the Taliban regime was toppled in 2001.

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IWPR'S AFGHAN PRESS MONITOR, No. 244, 14/2/2006

Interior Minister Discusses Cooperation against Drug Trafficking in Washington

Interior Minister Roumen Petkov, who is on a visit here, believes it would be realistic to have a representative of the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Sofia. Petkov discussed this possibility with Chief of Operations Michael A. Braun and Deputy Administrator Michele Leonhart.

Bulgarian News Agency, 14/2/2006

Afghanistan: NATO, EU Won't Take Direct Role Against Drug Trade

(By *Ahto Lobjakas, Kabul*) Both NATO and the European Union agree that the illegal narcotics trade is one of the biggest threats to the recovery of Afghanistan in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, both refuse to lead a hands-on role in fighting the problem. Instead, the onus of battling Afghanistan's drug lords is on the Afghan authorities. Senior EU and NATO officials in Afghanistan tell RFE/RL that the country will need a lot of time and assistance before it begins to bring the problem under control.

(...) Officials in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) estimate that the production and trafficking of illegal narcotics accounts for up to two-thirds of the Afghan economy. One ISAF official summarized the situation by saying that Afghanistan's economy is comprised of Western aid and the illegal drug trade. Hikmet Cetin, NATO's civilian representative in Afghanistan, estimates the value of the drug industry at nearly \$3 billion a year. Cetin says Afghanistan's economic dependence on narcotics rules out any quick remedies. "It is an illegal reality in this country -- drugs," Cetin says. "Whether you like it or not, between 50 and 60 percent of gross domestic product [is] originating from drugs. And what will happen, without creating an alternative, if you just -- in one year or one day -- get rid of 55 percent of your GDP? In any country, everything will collapse." Cetin says an effective counternarcotics policy is needed or there will never be "a stable, secure, and peaceful Afghanistan."

Only 'Support' Role

Yet NATO rejects an active leadership in a counternarcotics role. ISAF's mandate from the UN Security Council allows the NATO-led force only to "support" counternarcotics efforts undertaken by the Afghan central government. A recent U.S. request for a tougher NATO role in counternarcotics was vetoed by France. ISAF officials in Afghanistan also say their joint civilian-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) also are in a difficult situation. Pursuing drug traffickers means antagonizing regional warlords or drug barons who profit from the illicit trade. Often, these regional power brokers have strong influence over local public opinion. The PRTs, in turn, have more difficulties when they do

not have the support of the local population. Officials say that to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a narco-state, officials in Kabul must achieve three closely linked tasks: establish the rule of law, reform the economy, and provide alternative sources of income to Afghan farmers who grow the poppy flowers from which heroin and other opiates are produced. Establishing the rule of law means creating a functioning police force, judiciary, and penal system -- as well as rooting out corruption. That may prove to be the hardest task to achieve. Cetin says about \$800 million in drug proceeds go to Afghan poppy farmers each year. He estimates the rest, more than \$2 billion, is taken by drug traffickers and warlords who control export routes from Afghanistan. Profits from the drug trade help some warlords pay the salaries of illegal regional militia forces. Drug funds also are used for terrorism.

Part Of The Problem, Not The Solution

Western officials say Afghan authorities must bear the brunt of the fight against organized criminal drug traffickers. But they concede that Afghan police are unprepared for the battle.

Cetin says 60 percent of Afghan police officers are illiterate. Police salaries are relatively minuscule -- even compared to the Afghan National Army -- increasing opportunities for criminals to bribe police officers. Salaries remain an issue, despite some \$900 million contributed to Kabul by the United States for police reforms and pay raises. Francesc Vendrell, the EU's special representative for Afghanistan, tells RFE/RL that the Afghan police are "part of the problem" rather than the solution. "We still have a major problem with the police in terms that they are not properly trained," he says. "They are often a source of insecurity in this country rather than a source of security." Vendrell says NATO and the EU can help indirectly by helping to build up an effective Afghan police force. He says ISAF should be doing more than its German-run police-training program. He suggests that ISAF could match the U.S. investment.

Vendrell says Afghan authorities need to carry out a radical overhaul of law enforcement in order to weed out corruption. "You need a police [force] that will not be corrupted by narcotics," he says. "And you need to get rid of any authority -- any senior person in authority be it governor, chief of police, or head of a district -- who is linked to drug production and trade. Now, that last part is the one thing that I think we can do faster."

Alternative Livelihood Needed

Reform of the Afghan judiciary will take years. But establishing the rule of law is just the beginning. Vendrell notes that Afghanistan currently has nothing to replace drugs as its main export. And helping Afghan farmers develop alternative livelihoods also will take years. NATO's Cetin says Afghanistan may not have so much time. As an example, he cites the recent experience of farmers in the eastern province of Nangarhar who heeded a call by Afghan President Hamid Karzai in 2004 to give up poppy cultivation. Cetin says those farmers "got nothing" in return and are now starting to grow poppies again. Cetin says the \$10.5 billion in aid pledged at the recent London Conference for Afghanistan may relieve the situation somewhat. Vendrell suggests that what will be decisive in the end is whether the Afghan public thinks that justice is being served in their country. He says a counternarcotics policy cannot succeed if it targets poor rural farmers but leaves the "big men in the capital" untouched. Vendrell insists that President Karzai must take tougher action against high-ranking government officials or parliamentarians who are implicated in drug trafficking. "We also need to take some tough measures. I think the best way to do it is for the president to remove from office a few notorious people linked to the drug trade," he says. "Then the message will go to all the other authorities that this is no longer going to be tolerated." NATO's Cetin was unwilling to comment on reports about alleged links between Karzai and some people implicated in the drug trade. He says the Afghan president remains committed to the fight against illegal drug trafficking. Cetin also notes that Kabul has full control over all provincial governors -- as well as provincial police chiefs. Vendrell says that with the correct political will there is no reason why Afghanistan cannot emulate Thailand or Pakistan -- both of which eliminated much of the illegal poppy cultivation on their territory within 10 to 15 years.

(<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/2/441E894B-CEA5-45E1-8367-0C4F5D57383C.html>)

RFE/RL, 14/2/2006

Karzai in Pakistan terror talks

Afghan President Hamid Karzai and his Pakistani counterpart Pervez Musharraf have discussed boosting cross-border security during talks in Islamabad. (...) Kabul wants Islamabad to crack down on Taleban rebels who launch attacks in Afghanistan. Pakistan denies claims it is lax on militants in border areas. Meanwhile, authorities in the western Afghan province of Farah say the partially decapitated bodies of two intelligence agents have been recovered and handed over to their families. The men were abducted by unknown assailants on Monday. The provincial governor said the men had been engaged in gathering intelligence on the Taleban and other militants. (...) Before the meeting Mr Karzai's spokesman, Khaleeq Ahmed, said the president would be urging Pakistan to show the same commitment to defeating Taleban rebels as it did in combating al-Qaeda. Back in Kabul, Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Yousuf Stanezai told the Associated Press the security forces had arrested "a large number" of Pakistanis who were linked to a series of recent suicide bombings. He said many of those detained had admitted being trained at bases on the Pakistani side of the

border. "The terrorists who come here for suicide attacks are attending training bases in Pakistan and are getting all their equipment there," said Mr Stanezai. Ahead of the two-day visit, Pakistan freed 562 Afghans as a gesture of goodwill. They had been arrested in Karachi during a crackdown on illegal immigration. (...) (http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/4715056.stm)

BBC NEWS, 15/02/2006

Australia increases Afghan force

Australia says it will send another 200 troops to Afghanistan, to work on reconstruction projects in the south. The group will be a "mixed security and reconstruction task force", announced Prime Minister John Howard. The Australian Defence Force troops will be sent in late July for a two-year mission and form part of a Dutch-led team. The deployment will almost double the Australian military presence in Afghanistan to nearly 500 soldiers. In January, Australia announced a new deployment of 110 troops to Afghanistan to fight "terrorism". Two Chinook transport helicopters were also to join the country's 190 special services soldiers who were already deployed in Afghanistan. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/4734694.stm)

BBC NEWS, 21/02/2006

Seizures and Arrests

Northwest Turkish district seizes 104.8 kg of heroin in 2005

Governor Nusret Miroglu of the northwestern city of Edirne said on Tuesday [14 February] that security forces impounded 104.8 kilograms of heroin in the city in 2005. Miroglu told the A.A [Anatolia news agency] that security forces also seized 22.3 kg of hashish, 182 ecstasy pills, 43.8 kg of drug pills and 936 thousand Indian hemsps.

BBC Monitoring European, (Source: Turkish news agency Anatolia) 14/2/2006

Tajik police nets over 11 kg heroin in north

The law-enforcement agencies have seized over 11 kg of drugs in northern Tajikistan. The head of the Tajik Interior Ministry's press service, Khudoynazar Asoyev, told Avesta that 11.7 kg of drugs had been discovered during a search of an Opel car detained at the Khujand airport. A laboratory report confirmed the drug was heroin.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Tajik Avesta website) 14/2/2006.

Serbian customs seize 111 kg of heroin, detain Turkish truck driver

[Announcer] Serbian customs officials have seized 111 kilograms of heroin from a truck with Turkish plates at the Gradina border crossing with Bulgaria. The head of the Serbian Customs Administration directorate for combating trafficking of narcotics, Dejan Filipovic, said the heroin had been hidden in rolls of textiles sent from Turkey to Novi Pazar. The driver was detained; his identity was not revealed due to the ongoing investigation.

BBC Monitoring European (Source: Belgrade-based Radio B92) 14/2/2006.

Police finds 115 kg heroin in northern Afghan province

Police on Tuesday [14 February] seized 115 kg of heroin and 20 kg of chemicals used in drugs from a house in northern Konduz Province, security officials said.

BBC Monitoring South Asia, (Source: Pajhwok news agency website) 14/2/2006.

Tajik drugs dealer jailed for 25 years

A Tajik drugs dealer has been jailed for 25 years, the first time a trafficker has been given the maximum term, a court in the central Asian country said Tuesday. The dealer, 33-year-old Faruk Gulmadov was arrested in August 2004 while he was attempting to cross the Tajik-Afghan border with 133 kilograms (292 pounds) of heroin.

Agence France Presse, 14/2/2006

Uzbek police detain about 8 kg of drugs in Tashkent, Surkhandaryo

Uzbek police seized about 8 kg of drugs in various parts of Uzbekistan, an Uzbek TV reported on 14 February. The report said Darban road patrol post in Surkhandaryo region stopped a Mercedes bus for checking on 3 February and found five round-shaped cellophane packages containing 3.85 kg of opium in a bag belonging to a resident of Sariosiyo district, Narqol Oltiyeva. During an operation carried out in Sirgali district of Tashkent city on 4 February this year, officers of the Interior Ministry's department for fighting drug trafficking detained residents of Syrdaryo region, Mansur Mahmudov and Nizomjon Olimov, as they tried to sell about two kg of heroin for US\$7,500. The report added in another operation carried out by in Tashkent's Hamza district, residents of Tashkent region's Bekobod district, Murod Qahhorov and Saidjon Alijonov, and a resident of Khorazm region's Qoshkopir, Narimon Mahmudov, were detained.

UzReport.com, 15/2/2006

Some 250 kg heroin seized in Afghan Zabol Province

Security officials Wednesday [15 February] seized 250 kg of heroin from an oil tanker in the restive southern province of Zabol.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source: Pajhwok news agency website) 15/2/2006

Afghan police recover arms from arrested Iranian nationals - agency

Police in the western Herat Province said they had arrested eight Iranian nationals with arms in the border district of Golran on Tuesday [14 February]. Border Police Chief Colonel Mohammad Ayub Safi said the arrested people were residents of Iran's Khorasan Province. They entered the district last night and took refuge in a house in the Chashma Aspha area, said the police officer. "We discovered on Ak-47 assault rifle and a pistol from the detainees, who had admitted during initial investigations that they had entered to purchase and smuggle opium," Safi added. This was the first time Iranian nationals were arrested with arms in Herat, informed the officer. Earlier, three Iranians were captured in the province some two months back.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source: Pajhwok news agency website) , 15/2/2006

Seven arrested with opium in eastern Afghan town

Police in the eastern Nangarhar province said they had arrested seven people with 27 kg of opium in the Achin District of the province.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source: Pajhwok news agency website) 16/2/2006

Suspected of keeping heroin detained

Employees of the chief department of Adjarian Internal Ministry have detained person suspected of keeping narcotics in large amount. The Prime-news was told at the Interior Ministry of Georgia that resident of Batumi M. Gogichaishvili was confiscated 162, 45 grams of heroin.

Prime-News (Georgia), 16/2/2006

Turkish police seize 26.2 kg heroin at border crossing

Turkish police seized 26.2 kilograms of heroin at the Ipsala border crossing in northwestern city of Edirne, governor's office said on Thursday [16 February]. Releasing a statement, the Governor's Office indicated that the heroin was confiscated in a minivan destined for the Netherlands.

BBC Monitoring European (Source: Turkish news agency Anatolia) 16/2/2006.

Police seize 10.7 kg of heroin in Uzbek south

Staff of the Qashqadaryo Regional Interior Affairs Directorate jointly with the traffic police have thwarted an attempt to traffic in drugs. When inspecting a car with license plate 19I 9792 on the Termiz-Tashkent highway, the officers found 11.7 kg of heroin. A sniffer dog helped to uncover the drug. The owner of the car has been identified. He is a native of Denov District in Surxondaryo Region, Shavkat Akramov.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Uzbek TV) 16/2/2006

Uzbek police seize 4 kg of heroin

During an operation conducted by officers of the Sirdaryo district interior directorate, A. Komil, born in 1981, and his four accomplices were caught in the act of selling 2 kg of heroin to O. Ihtiyor for 8.6m soms [some 8,000 dollars]. Another 2 kg of heroin was found during a search of Komil's house.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Uzbek newspaper Xalq Sozi) 17/2/2006.

Russia illegal drug trade worth \$15 billion a year

Russia's illegal drugs trade has topped \$15 billion a year as criminal groups flood the country with heroin from Afghanistan, a senior official from the national drugs control agency said on Thursday.

Reuters News, 16/2/2006.

About 60 kilos of heroin seized on Tajik-Afghan border

Tajikistan's Interior Ministry and border guards have shut down a drug trafficking route across the Tajik-Afghan border. An Afghan drug runner was detained at the border stretch in charge of the Moscow Border Detachment last night with 70 kilograms of drugs on him, a spokesman at the regional interior Ministry told Itar-Tass on Friday. About 60 kilograms of the drugs were heroin. Police Major-General Faizullo Gadosva told Itar-Tass on Friday that another drug trafficker from Afghanistan was captured with 32 kilograms of opium on Thursday. Criminal cases have been opened.

According to Tajik experts, some 25 facilities turning out 25 kilograms of heroin a day operate in Afghanistan's provinces bordering Tajikistan. Afghanistan can produce up to 420 tonnes of heroin from this year's crop of opium poppy.

Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (Source: Itar-Tass), 17/2/2006.

Kyrgyz police net over 2 kg of heroin in capital

Police officers in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, seized over 2 kg of heroin on 16 February, the AKIpress news agency said on 18th. The report quoted the press service of the Bishkek city interior department as saying that the drug was found in a Ford-Sierra car late on 16 February. "A cellophane bag containing powder with specific signs of heroin was found during a search of the car. The seized substance weighed 2.67 kg," the report said.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: AKIpress news agency website) 18/2/2006

30 kilos of heroin seized in southern Turkey

Turkish Police seized 30.44 kilograms heroin in southern city of Mersin, it was reported on Saturday [18 February].

BBC Monitoring European (Source: Turkish news agency Anatolia) 18/2/2006.

Afghan police arrest "senior" official on drugs smuggling charges

Police in Kandahar have arrested a senior government official on charges of smuggling narcotics.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source: Afghan independent Tolo TV) 18/2/2006.

ANF to launch anti poppy cultivation for campaign 2006, warns growers of tough action

Commander Anti Narcotics Force Quetta Brigadier Anwar ul Haq has said that ANF has started anti narcotics and anti poppy cultivation campaign for 2006. Addressing a press conference here Saturday, he said that ANF seized about 17361.585 kg of narcotics and arrested 44 offenders in different raids in 2005. He said that the seizure included 343.895 kg of heroin, 6748.390 kg of hashish, 6649 kg of morphine, 3261.300 kg of opium and 395 kg of poppy.

The Baluchistan Times, 18/2/2006

Drug trafficker arrested in Moscow with 1.5 kg of heroin

Police in Moscow have arrested a drug trafficker from Tajikistan attempting to smuggle a large batch of heroin into Russia, the Interior Ministry of Russia said Sunday. During a search on the Dushanbe-Moscow train at the Kazansky railway station in Moscow, the police seized almost 1.5 kilograms of heroin from a Tajik woman.

RIA Novosti, 19/2/2006

Police seize 20 kg heroin in southeastern Turkey

Police confiscated 20 kilograms of heroin in a passenger bus in southeastern city of Kilis today.

BBC Monitoring European (Source: Turkish news agency Anatolia) 19/2/2006

Kyrgyz police net 30 kg of opium in south

Officers of the southern anti-drug squad of the Kyrgyz Interior Ministry have seized 30 kg of opium, Kyrgyz TV said on 20 February. "Officers of the southern anti-drug squad of the Kyrgyz Interior Ministry have seized a large batch of drugs. The contraband weighing 30 kg was found in a hidden compartment in a Mercedes car," the report said. The TV said the opium, which was seized in southern Osh Region's Uzgen District, was being smuggled from Tajikistan's Sughd Region and was bound for Russia.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia, 20/2/2006.

Tajik national detained in Russia with 7 kg of heroin

Seven kilograms of heroin were seized from a Tajik citizen in Surgut (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area), RIA-Novosti was told on Monday [20 February] at the press service of the town's police.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union, (Source: RIA Novosti) 20/2/2006