



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 27 March- 3 April 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.

CSTO member states to discuss issues of fighting drug smuggling

The Coordinating Council of the heads of services for combating drug trafficking of member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) will hold a regular meeting in the Armenian capital on Wednesday. Representatives of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will analyse the results of the Kanal (Channel) 2005 preventive operation and coordinate further actions to counteract the drug threat emanating from Afghanistan. The Council meeting participants intend to discuss the concept of the establishment of a united databank of narcotic and psychotropic substances circulation. Operation Kanal that is conducted with the aim of counteracting drug business on the "Northern route" of drug supply from Afghanistan to Europe is an example of efficient counteraction of the CSTO member states. In the course of two stages of the operation conducted in December last year the authorised bodies of CSTO member states and countries that joined the organisation as observers (Azerbaijan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, China and Ukraine) confiscated from illegal circulation over 11 tonnes of narcotics, including some 550 kilogrammes of heroin, over one tonne of hashish, as well as 1,000 pieces of firearms and 38,000 rounds of ammunition. Over 7,500 criminal cases were opened. The Coordinating Council for combating drug trafficking was established in May 2004 on a decision of the heads of the corresponding services of the CSTO member states.

ITAR-TASS World Service, 29.3.2006

Pakistani admits drugs-for-missiles plot to aid terrorists

A Pakistani man on Thursday admitted his role in a plot to obtain and sell Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to the Taliban and al-Qaida. Syed Mustajab Shah pleaded guilty in federal court to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists and one count of conspiracy to distribute heroin and hashish. Two other men pleaded guilty to the same charges in March 2004. Ilyas Ali of St. Paul, Minn., a naturalized U.S. citizen born in India, and Muhamed Abid Afridi of Pakistan are scheduled to be sentenced Monday. U.S. District Judge M. James Lorenz scheduled sentencing for Shah on June 19. Shah admitted that he tried to sell five tons of hashish and a half-ton of heroin in exchange for cash and four shoulder-fired Stinger missiles, which he and the other defendants intended to sell to members of the Taliban. Such missiles could be used to shoot down airplanes, including commercial jets, flying at low altitudes. Shah knew at the time that the Taliban was the same as al-Qaida, prosecutors said. Shah, Ali and Afridi were arrested on Sept. 20, 2002, by police in Hong Kong who received a tip from the FBI. The three were secretly videotaped in meetings days earlier with undercover FBI agents at a Hong Kong hotel. Ali also met in April 2002 with an undercover agent in San Diego. "Our efforts to combat terrorism extend not only to the terrorists themselves, but also to those who provided them with weapons and other forms of support," said U.S. Attorney Carol Lam. Andrew Nietor, an attorney for Shah, declined to comment.

Associated Press, 31.3.2006

Russia to post drugs police abroad

Russia's counternarcotics agency is to send 50 of its staff abroad to work out of Russian embassies, with the first

representatives going to the Russian embassy in Kabul. Later, staff of the Federal Service for Control over the Trafficking of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances will be sent to Armenia and Belarus, and to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, countries which the service says are now staging posts on the drug-trafficking route from Afghanistan northwards.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union, 2.4.2006

Afghan police launch "massive" drugs operation in Helmand

The special counter-narcotics police Monday launched a massive operation against drug traffickers in southern Helmand Province. The largest-ever operation in the area of Bahram Shah, abutting neighbouring Pakistan, is aimed at rooting out drug-manufacturing labs, stores and dens of mafia established in the area. The police force are trying to flush out or arrest the drug traffickers and destroy their headquarters, said a press release issued here on Monday. "The drug traffickers were shocked as the elite force crashed into the town early this morning," added the release.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source: Pajhwok news agency website) 3.4.2006

Seizures and Arrests

10-year-old girl detained in Siberia for dealing heroin

A 10-year-old girl has been detained in Novosibirsk on suspicion of selling heroin, a spokesman for the Federal Drug Control Service said Tuesday. "The drug dealer, a 10-year old girl, failed to get rid of the evidence before she was detained," the spokesman said. "About 30 heroin doses ... were found in her apron during a search. The girl was hiding her money in a yogurt tub and on that day her earnings were about 2,000 rubles (\$72)."

RIA Novosti, 28.3.2006

Tajik border chief says Afghan drug trafficking on rise

The year of 2006 has seen an increase in drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Tajikistan, Colonel General Saidamir Zuhurov, chairman of the Tajik State Border Protection Committee, told Interfax-Military News Agency on Tuesday [28 March]. "Just within the first three months of 2006 alone, border guards have confiscated almost 450 kg of drugs, with 414 of them found on Afghan citizens, which proves the increase in the number of Afghan drug traffickers," Zuhurov said. He noted that heroin accounted for 263 kg of drugs confiscated, cannabis for about 140 kg, and poppy for almost 20 kg. He described the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border as tense. Within the three months of 2006, a total of 24 border violations have been reported, 33 trespassers, 72 border regime violators, and 13 drug traffickers have been arrested, and two firefights have erupted. Zuhurov emphasized that a total of 11 special operations had been conducted in borderline areas jointly with the Tajik Drug Control Agency, the Tajik Interior Ministry, and the Ministry of State Revenues and Tax Collection.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Interfax-AVN website) 28.3.2006

Afghan officials say 2,750 acres cleared of poppy in west

Officials claimed to have eradicated 2,750 acres of poppy crops during a three-day anti-poppy campaign in western Farah Province.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source: Pajhwok news agency website) 28.3.2006

Criminal group arrested for heroin trafficking in central Russia

Officers of the Russian Security Service directorate for Nizhniy Novgorod Region have arrested a criminal group as its members were attempting to smuggle 1.405 kg of heroin to the city, the directorate told RIA today. Three people were detained: a drug mule and the organizers of the crime, a source in the directorate said. "It should be noted that a close relative of the organizers was arrested by the directorate in August 2005 with 1 kg of heroin on her and sentenced to five years in prison in the early 2006," the source added. The drug was hidden in the mule's car.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union (Source: RIA) 29.3.2006

Kazakh security officers seize over 90 kg of opium

About 92 kg of opium was found in the car of a man who was detained in Almaty. In the course of the search operation, officers of the Almaty department of the National Security Committee (NSC) "detained a Toyota Land Cruiser car driven by a citizen R. A total of 92 polythene briquettes with drugs - about 92 kg of opium - were found in the car's equipped cache," a press release circulated by the department's press service today says.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Interfax-Kazakhstan) 29.3.2006

Kazakh security officers net 443 kg of drugs over last 15 months

Officers of the Almaty [city] department of the National Security Committee (DNSC) seized around 443 kg of drugs, including over 133 kg of heroin and over 309 kg of opium, as a result of special operations in 2005 and in the first quarter of 2006, a senior investigator for special cases of the Almaty [city] DNSC, Rizabek Ozharov, has said. Officers of the DNSC destroyed four international and three domestic drug trafficking channels over this period, Ozharov said at a news conference in Almaty on Wednesday [29 March]. In particular, two channels for the trafficking of psychotropic substances from Germany to Kazakhstan were uncovered and destroyed. Kazakhstan was a transit country for the trafficking of these substances further to China, Ozharov said. Criminal cases were launched against 26 people who had been involved in international drug trafficking in 2005 and in the first quarter of 2006, he said.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency) 29.3.2006

Tajik authorities seize nearly 50 kg of drugs in separate raids

Nearly 50 kg of drugs have been seized in Tajikistan in separate operations conducted by border guards and police officers, Asia-Plus reported on 30 March. It said that a 30-year-old Tajik national was detained in the northeastern town of Panjakent near the Uzbek border with 6.5 kg of heroin. Tajik Drug Control Agency [DCA] investigators believe "the drug dealer was looking for a buyer from Uzbekistan's Samarqand," the report said, quoting DCA spokesman Avaz Yuldoshev as saying. In a separate development, Tajik border guards foiled an attempt to smuggle over 40 kg of drugs from Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan to Tajikistan's Darvoz District, Asia-Plus said.

<passage omitted>Another attempt to smuggle drugs across the Tajik-Afghan border was foiled by a Tajik border detail in the southwestern Tajik district of Shughnon, Avesta reported. The border guards discovered a sack containing 5 kg of hashish and 2 kg of heroin and opium each at the scene of the incident after a man allegedly carrying the drugs fled back to Afghanistan, the report added.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Asia-Plus news agency) 30.3.2006

Uzbek police seize over 21 kg of opium from Tajik citizen

Officers of the Uzbek National Security Service (NSS) have foiled the activities of an international interregional group of drug dealers. Over 21 kg of raw opium has been seized, a Regnum correspondent was told on 30 March at the press-centre of the Uzbek NSS.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Russian news agency Regnum) 31.3.2006

Kazakh border guards net over 3 kg of heroin

Kazakh border guards have detained a Kyrgyz citizen carrying over 3.1 kg of heroin. A 32-year-old citizen of Kyrgyzstan was detained on Thursday [30 March] at the Merke railway border checkpoint (in Zhambyl Region, southern Kazakhstan) during the search of a Bishkek-Moscow train No 17, a report circulated by the border service of the Kazakh National Security Committee on Friday [31 March] said.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency) 31.3.2006

Kazakh border guards seize over 1.8 kg of heroin from Kyrgyz woman

Kazakh border guards have detained a female Kyrgyz citizen carrying over 1.8 kg of heroin. The female citizen of Kyrgyzstan was detained on Wednesday [29 March] at the Korday border checkpoint (in Zhambyl Region, southern Kazakhstan) when she was trying to enter Kazakhstan, a report circulated by the border service of the Kazakh National Security Committee (NSC) said on Thursday [30 March]. The heroin, packed into two polyethylene packages, was hidden in the woman's body.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency) 31.3.2006

Police seize 2.5 kilograms (5.5 pounds) of opium at Romanian border

Police seized 2.5 kilograms (5.5 pounds) of opium Saturday hidden in a truck, authorities said. The opium was disguised to look like halva, a sesame-based sweet, border police said in Constanta. The operation was coordinated between border police and anti-drug police based in Bucharest. The truck which was traveling from Istanbul entered Romania through Bulgaria early Saturday before being stopped by Romanian authorities. One person has been detained.

Associated Press Newswires, 1.4.2006

Large party of drugs was detained

A stable international drug-trafficking channel, whose transit lay through the territory of Kazakhstan, has been eliminated in Almaty. The National Security Committee, with the assistance of Russian and Kyrgyz special services, have detained a car carrying a large quantity of drugs amounting to 92 kilograms of opium. The substance was found in the car's chassis. The National Security Committee officials stated that a citizen of Kazakhstan, who was a member of the international drug-gang, has been arrested in this operation. The trafficking route ran from Tajikistan through Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to the Russian Federation.

Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies, 3.4.2006

Tajik airport customs detain heroin suspects

Another drug smuggling attempt was thwarted at Khujand airport [northern Tajikistan] today. Asia-Plus learnt at the Tajik Interior Ministry's internal affairs transport directorate that three young men had been detained on suspicion of drug smuggling during the check-in for the Khujand-Bishkek flight. "Two Tajik citizens, inhabitants of Khujand and Dushanbe Aminjon Tursunov and Ayos Shirinbekov, as well as Kyrgyz national Zokir Kozukulov [all names transliterated] intended to smuggle 8 kg of heroin to the neighbouring country [Kyrgyzstan]," the source said.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source: Asia-Plus website) 3.4.2006