



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 10 - 17 October 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.

Former Taleban official killed in Pakistan

(Arman-e-Milli) – Armed men have killed a senior Taleban official in Peshawar, Pakistan. Mullah Yasin, a resident of the northern province of Kunduz who served as an intelligence director in Kabul when the Taleban was in power, was killed by as yet unidentified men. He is the third senior official from the Taleban regime to be killed in Peshawar recently; the two others were Mullah Osman and Mullah Nur Mohammad.

Arman-e-Milli is an independent daily run by a group of journalists.

IWPR'S AFGHAN PRESS MONITOR, No. 171, 9-10/11/05

Afghanistan provides aid for Pakistan quake victims

(Islah) – Afghanistan has given Pakistan 500,000 US dollars to help survivors of the devastating earthquake which killed thousands of people on October 10, a presidential spokesman said the following day. Four helicopters and a cargo plane for carrying medicines and doctors are ready to leave for Pakistan. The Afghan Red Crescent Society will also send 20 tonnes of dried fruit as food aid.

Islah is a state-run daily mostly in Dari.

IWPR'S AFGHAN PRESS MONITOR, No. 172, 11/10/05

Karzai replaces US bodyguards with Afghans

(Cheragh) – Afghan president Hamed Karzai has replaced his US bodyguards with local ones, in a move which may reduce some of the criticism that he relies too much on American support. President Karzai requested American bodyguards in 2002 after Vice-President Haji Abdul Qadir was assassinated in Kabul. Officials said that the contract of the present force, for which the US State Department engaged the DynCorp security firm, expired on September 27, and Karzai is now protected by about 600 Afghan guards trained by their predecessors.

Cheragh is an independent daily run by the Development and Democracy Association.

IWPR'S AFGHAN PRESS MONITOR, No. 173, 12/10/05

Viktor Cherkosov: The drug abuse situation is a threat to national security (Summary of interview)

(Victor Cherkosov is Director of Federal Narcotics Control Service of Russia)

In the interview for Rossiiskaya Gazeta (12 Oct. 2005), Cherkosov claimed that the grow of drug use in Russia has been checked in last two years. He also commented on the geographical spread of drug use: “The regions most heavily contaminated with drugs are located along the transit routes for Afghan opiates. The situation is serious in Western Siberia, in the regions bordering Kazakhstan, the Trans-Volga area, the Yamalo-Nenetsk and Khanty-Mansiisk autonomous districts, and our largest cities - Moscow and St. Petersburg. In general, drugs are sold wherever there is money and demand. In economically depressed regions, where living standards are low, the drug trade is almost absent. In some areas, local traditions act to discourage drug use - Kalmykia, for example. But even that region isn't entirely an

exception. Unfortunately, Kalmykia is a transit territory for drug trafficking from the Trans-Caucasus and Central Asia.”

WPS, 13/10/2005

Editorial: Afghanistan- The Next Iraq?

(Cheragh, October 14, 2005) – Where is Afghanistan heading? Democracy, insurgency or anarchy? That the situation is as yet nowhere as bad as it is in Iraq can give little comfort. The level of insurgency in Afghanistan has been rising. It suggests that the hopes raised after the country got rid of the Pakistan-backed Taleban towards the end of 2001 are in danger of being shattered. The goal of a peaceful, prosperous and above all democratic Afghanistan after the fall of the fanatical Taleban regime looks at least as distant a prospect today as it was three years ago. (...) Fears that Afghanistan and its capital will be subjected to a spate of Iraqi-style suicide attacks cannot be dismissed lightly. Just a few days before the Kabul attack which killed nine Afghan army soldiers, a Taleban commander said to have trained in Iraq for several months told the US magazine Newsweek, “I want to copy in Afghanistan the tactics and spirit of the glorious Iraqi resistance.”

Editorial: Attacks on the rise again

(Hewad, October 12, 2005) – At first, it was thought that terrorist attacks would increase before the landmark parliamentary elections, but would then decrease in frequency afterwards. Yet now we see that armed attacks by destructive terrorist forces have increased even more than before the ballot. There are attacks in Helmand, Zabul, Kandahar, Paktia, Kunar and other provinces every day. The saddest incident took place in Helmand this week, leaving 18 policemen dead. There have also been two suicide attacks in Kandahar province in the past few days. Two US soldiers have been killed in Zabul's Shinkay district and one of their helicopters downed in Kunar. All these killings and attacks show that the insurgents have intensified their attack in most provinces since the elections were held. They also demonstrate the continuing resistance of enemy forces to the Afghan government and the US-led Coalition forces. Those opposed to peace and stability are not only continuing their attempts to disrupt security, but have intensified them in the wake of the elections.

Hewad is a state-run daily mostly in Pashto.

IWPR'S AFGHAN PRESS MONITOR, No. 175, 14/10/05

Soul-searching after Kabardino-Balkaria violence

The revelation that many of those involved in the Nalchik attacks were local men raises questions about what drove them to attack their own capital.

(By Valery Khatazhukov in Nalchik)

Some are voicing concern that excessively heavy-handed government in Kabardino-Balkaria may have contributed to the desperation that spurred the rebels. The final death toll still differs according to the various official sources. Kabardino-Balkaria's interior minister, Khachim Shogenov, has said that 91 militants were killed, a figure close to the 92 now being cited by Russian television. Russian deputy interior minister Andrei Novikov had earlier given a figure of 72 militants killed and 31 arrested. Most officials are still saying the total number of attackers involved was around 100. Official figures for the number of police and civilians killed are more consistent, at 24 and 12 respectively. At least 100 people are in hospital. As the violence unfolded on the morning of October 13, it was virtually impossible for journalists to get any facts out of officials. Many official press offices said they had no information to give. (...) The authorities have characterised the multiple attacks as a coordinated, pre-planned operation. But a law-enforcement source told IWPR on condition of anonymity that this description exaggerated the true military capacity of the rebels. For example, although they attacked buildings belonging to security forces across the city, they did not really attempt to storm them. IWPR's source says the level of coordination between the various groups was "very poor". "This action was more like a show [of strength], an attention-seeking exercise," he concluded. (Some) are asking whether repressive policies in Kabardino-Balkaria - which has the status of a republic within the Russian Federation - might have contributed to the outbreak of violence. Last month, the republic's president Valery Kokov stepped down after 15 years in office. He had been a tough leader, but his control seemed to falter as rumours of his illness circulated over the past two years. He dealt with the growing signs of instability with heavy-handed measures that his critics warned could prove counter-productive. This year, police in Nalchik stormed buildings occupied by Islamic radicals, and unknown attackers have attacked police and military patrols. Human rights activists say police have rounded up and maltreated people they suspect of Islamic extremism. "Of course I blame the people who carried out this attack. But above all, it is the law-enforcement agencies who are to blame," said dentist Muhamed Kushkhov, whose views appeared to be shared by

many of those interviewed by IWPR. "It's the police who, through their completely unjustified repression of some Muslims, have driven them underground. (...) (There is also a strong suspicion that) the gunmen may have been able to bribe their way into the city. "The police force is corrupt through and through - how else can you explain the fact that such numbers of gunmen were able to get into Nalchik and mount what came close to being a military operation?" he said.

(Valery Khatazhukov is director of the Human Rights Centre in Nalchik, and an independent journalist.)

IWPR'S CAUCASUS REPORTING SERVICE, No. 309, 14/10/05

Analysis: Rice Attempts to Secure U.S. Influence in Central Asia

(Drafted By: Erich Marquardt, Adam Wolfe) U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's October 10-13 tour through Central Asia marked Washington's attempts to secure its ties with the former Soviet republics. The Bush administration finds these ties especially important now that it is being evicted from its military base in Uzbekistan. Rice called Uzbekistan "out of step with what is happening in [Central Asia] as a whole." Her comments close the recent chapter of U.S.-Uzbek relations. With the loss of the U.S. military base in Uzbekistan, the United States has moved quickly to prevent a further loss of influence in Central Asia. With the recent announcement by Kyrgyzstan that the U.S. could keep its airbase at Manas airport, Washington appears to be partly successful in this aim. However, if conditions in Afghanistan stabilize, calls for a U.S. withdrawal from Central Asia are expected to increase. (...) The loss of Uzbekistan had the potential to pose a problem for U.S. operational capability in Afghanistan and in the region. However, it appears that Washington has secured itself from any further loss of influence by receiving a guarantee from Kyrgyzstan's new government that the United States can keep its airbase at Manas airport. The new government of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in Bishkek signed a joint statement on October 11, 2005 with Rice, stating, "We support the presence of coalition forces in the Kyrgyz Republic until the mission of fighting terrorism in Afghanistan is completed."(...)

When meeting with Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov, Rice assured him, "We have no intentions of having a military base in Tajikistan. We are not trying to increase our military presence anywhere. On the contrary, we are reducing our military bases throughout the world." Rice's statements should come as relief for Tajikistan, which doesn't want to be in a position to choose between the U.S. and Russia. Russia still garrisons the 201st Motorized Rifle Division in the country, and helps patrol Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan. Additionally, on October 7, Russia announced that it would build a new airbase outside Tajikistan's capital. (...)

While in the region, Rice also visited Kazakhstan. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has ruled Kazakhstan since before the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Nevertheless, despite his long rule, Rice called him a reformer. She said, "The Nazarbayev government has a chance to be a real leader in Central Asia on both economic and political reform." Her comments stem not so much from the personal track record of Kazakhstan's leaders, but from the carefully cultivated relationships pursued by the country since the early 1990s. (...) Nazarbayev's track record with respect to the treatment of ethnic minorities is one of the best in the former Soviet Union, although not without its own occasional blemishes. (...) While Astana enjoys a fruitful and growing relationship with Moscow, Kazakhstan has been able to relatively successfully diversify its international relations portfolio, most notably in the energy sector. While Kazakh oil and gas flow through the Russian pipeline system, the country has been able to ship its energy out to foreign partners that do not rely on Moscow for energy transportation. Kazakhstan recently came on board of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project, and several major American and Western energy companies are extracting oil and gas in partnership with local companies.

(...) Rice's visit to Central Asia comes on the heels of Washington's loss of influence in Uzbekistan. The United States needs to secure access to Central Asia in order to continue its ongoing operations in Afghanistan, and to monitor developments in the energy-rich Caspian Sea region; for this, continued use of the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan is especially important. Additionally, in order to calm fears that the U.S. is a destabilizing force due to its criticism of authoritarian regimes, Rice assured the region's leaders that it recognized their rule as legitimate. While she continued to speak of the need for democracy and free elections, she did not overly reference opposition leaders and movements, and took a very mild stance toward democracy in general.(...)

Therefore, while Rice's visit will work to calm the nerves of Central Asia's authoritarian leaders, it will not result in any new inroads for the United States. Washington's assurances offered to Moscow that the United States is not planning to build new military bases in the region, and that its base in Kyrgyzstan will only remain until operations in Afghanistan are completed, will be welcomed by Russia. However, Russia will likely continue its attempts to strengthen the S.C.O. in order to create a power bloc that will be able to reject any new U.S. or European attempts at wooing the former Soviet republics.

Power and Interest News Report (PINR), www.pinr.com, 17/10/05

Seizures and Arrests

Afghan paper implicates local police's involvement in drug trafficking in north

The Balkh Highway Police has accused officials of the Balkh District police of having a hand in drug trafficking. As said by the highway police, the security commander of Balkh District has helped vehicle with 100kgs of opium to get away. Sayd Zia, the commander of the Mazar-e Sharif highway battalion, who has the responsibility of checking vehicles at the gates of Mazar-e Sharif - 20 km west of the city - says that while they wanted to stop a vehicle proceeding very fast, the security commander of Balkh District helped the car to escape. According to the highway police, the car came from Charbolak District to go to Mazar-e Sharif. A spokesman for the security commander of Balkh Province confirmed the news and said that a commission had been sent to Balkh District to investigate the issue.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source of report: Sahar), 11/10/05

Heroin meant for Russia seized in Tajikistan

Tajik law-enforcement agencies have seized over 26 kg of heroin meant for dispatching to Russia. A drug dealer was arrested in Dushanbe yesterday [10 October]. Over 19 kg of heroin of Afghan origin was seized from his home. Officers from the Tajik Drug Control Agency arrested a drug trafficker and his female accomplice in the town of Panjakent in northern Tajikistan on the same day. Seven and a half kilograms of heroin were seized from them.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Text of report: ITAR-TASS), 11/10/05

Les douanes russes dénoncent une expansion du trafic de drogue en Russie [Russian Custom Officers claim expansion of drug traffic in Russia]

Les douanes russes ont dénoncé mercredi une hausse des livraisons d'héroïne en Russie et une expansion générale du trafic de drogue. "L'héroïne évince peu à peu les autres drogues et cette tendance va se poursuivre", a déclaré un responsable du département de lutte contre le trafic de drogue, Viktor Mareev. En outre, "une expansion de la contrebande a été constatée pratiquement à toutes les frontières de Russie", a-t-il ajouté, soulignant que la drogue arrivait des pays baltes, d'Ukraine, du Bélarus, du Kazakhstan, de Chine et de Mongolie, aussi bien que du Tadjikistan, frontalier de l'Afghanistan. Les frontières les plus dangereuses en la matière sont selon lui le Kazakhstan et l'Ukraine. Sur les neuf premiers mois de l'année, 730 kg d'héroïne ont été saisis en Russie, a relevé le responsable, cité par l'agence Ria-Novosti, sans préciser de chiffres pour les années précédentes. Au total, sur janvier-septembre, les douaniers ont confisqué 4.425 kg de drogues de toutes sortes, soit 50 kg de plus que sur la même période de l'année précédente.

English summary: According to Russian Custom Officers, there is a general expansion of drug trafficking in Russia along all her borders. The share of heroin in the total contraband raises; in the first nine months of 2005, 730 kg of heroin have been seized, of total 4,425 kg of drugs. The drugs come from the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, China, and Mongolia. The borders of Kazakhstan and Ukraine, respectively, are considered the greatest threats.

Agence France Presse, 12/10/05

Turkish police confiscate 80.2 kg heroin

Turkish police confiscated 80.2 kg heroin in three separate operations in Istanbul, it was reported on Wednesday. Narcotics Department issued a statement that narcotics teams, on October 1st, 2005, stopped a car in Kucukcekmece district upon suspicions that owner of the car was involved in international drug smuggling. The statement said 42 kg heroin was impounded in 80 packages hidden in sacks. In a separate operation in Gaziosmanpasa district on October 10th, a person who was planning to send drugs abroad was detained. 37.8 kg heroin was found in the car belonging to this person. Meanwhile, in another operation in Gungoren and Bagcilar districts on October 8th, 2005, six people were arrested as they were planning to sell the heroin they brought from abroad. 1.2 kg cocaine, 472 grams of heroin, and 9 grams of hashish were seized with those people.

Anadolu, 12/10/05

Police seize 10 kg of heroin in Tajik capital

A drug smuggling attempt has been foiled in the Tajik capital, when a 29-year-old Dushanbe resident was detained this morning and a total of 10 kg of heroin was seized from him.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source of report: Tajik Avesta), 13/10/05

“Poppy 2005” operation results in destruction of over 2,5 bushes of drug-containing plants

On October 10, a meeting of the Tajik Drug Control Agency (DCA) was held to sum up the results of work carried out by the Agency over the past nine months. During the meeting it was noted that the “Poppy 2005” Operation carried out by the Tajik law enforcement agencies had led to destruction of more than 2,500 bushes of drug-containing plants. Besides, the DCA officer officers have intercepted more than 704 kilograms of drugs over the same nine-month period, which is 126 kilograms more compared to last year, according to the source. The totaled included 407 kilograms of heroin (199 kilograms more compared to 2004). 102 criminal proceedings have been instituted for drug trafficking over the mentioned period; of them, 68 proceedings against 80 persons have already moved to courts. According to the source, 35 joint operations carried out in cooperation with the law enforcement agencies of the republic and foreign countries have led to seizure of more than 985 kilograms of drugs.

Asia-Plus, 13/10/05

Turkey seizes 122.5 kg of heroin in southeast

Turkish police seized 122.5 kilograms of heroin in southeastern city of Sirnak. Police, acting on a tip-off, stopped a car coming from eastern city of Van to Sirnak, and confiscated 122.5 kilograms of heroin hidden in the car.

BBC Monitoring Newsfile (Text of report: Anatolia), 14/10/05

Police confiscate 41 kg of heroin – three people arrested

Narcotics teams impounded 41.05 kg heroin in Kadikoy, it was reported on Saturday. The teams, acting on a tip off, stopped a car and found the heroin hidden in sacks. Three people were arrested in connection with the incident.

Anadolu, 15/10/05

Large batch of heroin seized at Russian-Kazakh border

Customs officers have seized about 370 kg of drugs at the Russian-Kazakh border in Orenburg Region, the main directorate for combating contraband of the Russian Federal Customs Service said. The seized batch includes 362 kg of heroin, 4.4 kg of hashish, 3 kg of opium and a small amount of marijuana.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union (Source of report: ITAR-TASS), 17/10/05

Drug seizures rise but so do addict numbers in Russian Far East

Drugs squad officers in Maritime Territory have destroyed about 9,000 tonnes of hemp and poppy since the beginning of the year, which is 16 times more than last year. A total of 1.6 tonnes of various narcotics have been taken out of circulation, mostly marijuana and imported opium, a conference at the Maritime Territory Narcotics Control Directorate to survey the first nine months of the year has heard. It was noted at the conference that the narcotics control agencies are having a much greater impact on the situation in the Territory. The number of offences identified by policemen has nearly doubled compared to the same time last year, to over 1,200, and the number of serious and especially serious offences uncovered is up 2.2 times. Nonetheless, the number of addicts has increased sharply in a number of districts, the conference was told. It was decided to focus on distribution and smuggling channels and step up the fight against legalization of proceeds by identifying the methods used.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union (Source of report: ITAR-TASS), 17/10/05