



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 3 - 9 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.

Bin Laden still in border area, says official

(Cheragh) – Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is alive and hiding out along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, a top Afghan official said. “I don’t know exactly where he is, but what is clear is that bin Laden is alive and he is in the region,” said Zalmay Rasoul, national security advisor to President Hamed Karzai. Rasoul said, however, there is “no al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan”. “They are coming from outside, and when they come under pressure from Afghan or Coalition forces, they cross back over the border to the other side,” he said.

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

IWPR's Afghan Press Monitor, No. 167, 3/10/05

Pakistan 'nets Taliban spokesman'

The authorities in Pakistan say they have arrested leading Taliban spokesman Latifullah Hakimi [who used to head the Taliban’s information and culture department in Herat province]. "Our security forces captured him today, and he is in our custody," said Interior Minister Aftab Khan Sherpao. Mr Hakimi has spoken regularly on behalf of the Taliban, who US-led forces drove from power in Afghanistan after the 11 September, 2001 attacks. Pakistan Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said he was detained in Balochistan province. The BBC's Barbara Plett in Islamabad says Mr Hakimi's arrest is being seen as a message that Islamabad is doing whatever it can. She says analysts see this as a bigger blow to the Taliban than the capture of many of its military commanders, because Latifullah Hakimi was regarded as the voice of the group.

BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4308962.stm, 4/10/05

Afghan initial poll winners named: Warlords set for Afghan poll gain

Afghan poll officials have announced initial results from September's parliamentary elections and excluded 300 polling stations for fraud. Ballots had been excluded from Kabul's Paghman district and Paktika province because of fraud such as the stuffing of ballot boxes, an official said. However, officials said there was "no systematic fraud" and no evidence against any candidate so far. Women's rights activist Malalai Joya was one of the first winners named. She rose to prominence for denouncing warlords at a constitutional forum two years ago. Ms Joya will take her place in the 249-seat National Assembly, or Wolesi Jirga, following initial results in the western provinces of Nimroz and Farah. Full results from the other 32 provinces are expected by the end of October. A quarter of the seats are reserved for women. The country's Joint Electoral Management Body said on Thursday fraud had been detected at 299 polling stations so far - but that was only about one percent of the total nationwide. Chief election officer, Peter Erben, told reporters there had been "serious localised fraud" in the elections. This included votes from 62 polling stations in Paghman, a key support base of Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a warlord and an ally of President Hamid Karzai. But Mr Erben said the authorities had not found firm evidence to disqualify any candidate from the contest so far. A number of warlords look set to win seats in parliament. One controversial candidate is Hazrat Ali, who has been linked to militia groups. He is the leading candidate in the eastern province of Nangahar.

BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/4310864.stm, 6/10/05

NATO details Afghan troops rise

(By Paul Anderson) The number of troops deployed by Nato in Afghanistan will be increased to up to 15,000, Nato's secretary general, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, has stated. He said he was confident remaining differences within Nato over next year's deployment could be resolved. Nato currently has about 10,000 International Security Assistance Force peace-keeping troops in Afghanistan. But member countries are divided on deploying them in a more robust role in the dangerous south. The Isaf troops have so far had a peace and stability-building role quite distinct from the American-led operation to hunt Taleban and al-Qaeda fighters. Isaf is now expanding into both the reasonably peaceful provinces in the north and west and into the south where the Taleban and other insurgents have been operating. Britain, the lead nation in the southern deployment, has promised a much more robust presence. But that has led to questions over whether Isaf's role and the American-led Operation Enduring Freedom are merging and, if so, how close they should be. Some nations with a presence in Afghanistan, like Germany and Spain, are vehemently opposed to uniting the two security arms. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who is in Afghanistan for talks on Isaf expansion, insists that is premature. Both may soon fall under a single senior command structure, but they will run as parallel operations, with no need to change Isaf's mandate in Afghanistan. What will change, however, are the rules of engagement for some nations in the Isaf force. And that, along with the nature of cooperation between the two security arms in the southern region, will be discussed by Nato chiefs in the coming months. Mr de Hoop Scheffer says he is confident all alliance members can reach a consensus.

BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/south_asia/4315686.stm, 6/10/05

Seizures and Arrests

Tajik agency seizes Russia-bound heroin

Drug Control Agency detained "a golden swallow" at the capital's airport last night. The DCA said that a 39-year old resident of the Roshtqala District in Mountainous Badakhshon had been detained on suspicion of involvement in smuggling drugs to Russia when he was checking-in for a Dushanbe-Krasnoyarsk flight. "The suspect was immediately taken to the agency, where 101 containers with over a kilo of heroin were seized from his stomach in a natural way," the source said. It also added that the DCA had obtained information on the recipient of the seized drugs and had immediately contacted an operational group of the [Russian] state drug control agency in Krasnoyarsk on that.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Text of report: Asia-Plus), 3/10/2005

Troops seize and burn 116 kg of opium in east Afghanistan

A total of 116 kg of opium were seized in Khogiani District in Nangarhar Province [east Afghanistan] last night. The seized opium was burnt today. The head of Nangarhar Province's Khogiani District, Haji Mohammad Naim Shinwari, giving some details of the incident, told Afghan Islamic Press: "Afghan National Army troops stopped a pick-up carrying empty oil cans. They discovered 116 kg of opium placed in these cans and seized it. Afghan troops set it on fire today in the presence of police and foreign forces." He said that the driver of the vehicle managed to escape.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Text of report: Afghan Islamic Press), 3/10/2005

Ten drugs labs destroyed, quantities of drugs seized in Afghan provinces

The Interior Ministry's National Interdiction Unit (NIU) destroyed at least 10 heroin labs and seized a huge quantity of heroin and opium in Nangarhar [east] and Badakhshan [north] provinces, security officials said Monday [3 October]. A statement issued here by the Interior Ministry said the operation led to the seizure of 30 kg of heroin, 60 kg of opium and the destruction of five heroin-manufacturing factories. Using helicopters to reach the labs, the statement said, NIU

forces successfully launched the operation in Abdulkhel area of Achin district in the eastern Nangarhar province. Working under the counter-narcotics police of Afghanistan (CNP-A), the NIU was imparted training by US interdiction and security mentors including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Meanwhile, 400 special counter-narcotics police officials completed a one-year course on Monday. They will be tasked with cracking down on drugs in 25 provinces. Head of the poppy and drugs elimination unit at the interior ministry Gen Abdul Razzaq Ameri said the special force - trained by foreign experts - would jointly conduct operations with local police.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Text of report: Pajhwok Afghan News), 3/10/2005

More than 147 kilograms of drugs seized on Tajik-Afghan border last week

Six operations carried out by the Tajik border troops in cooperation with local law enforcement officers on the Tajik-Afghan border have led to seizure of large amount of drugs over the past week. According to information from the Tajik Border Committee (BPC), more than 147 kilograms of drugs were seized on the Afghan border last week. It included 47 kilograms of heroin, nearly 75 kilograms of cannabis, and 19 kilograms of raw opium and more than six kilograms of Afghan chars.

Asia-Plus, 3/10/2005

Members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir detained in Moscow

Members of a radical Islamist political party that has been banned in Russia have been detained in the Moscow region on charges of drug-trafficking, a Federal Anti-Drug Service (FADS) official said Tuesday. "Friday night FADS and FSB operatives detained two Tajik citizens, who have been involved in illicit heroin trade in Russia," said Vasily Rogozin, deputy head of the FADS investigation department. The suspects have been identified as members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, he said. "During the search at the apartment where one of the detainees lived, operatives seized about 500 grams of high-grade heroine, pamphlets and extremist literature in Russian and Arabic," the officials said. He said the detainees have been ordered to organize a drug-trafficking ring in Russia to finance Hizb-ut-Tahrir activities.

Ria Novosti, 4/10/2005

Drug traffic from Afghanistan increases

The drug traffic from Afghanistan has significantly increased after Russian borders guards were withdrawn from the mission of guarding the Tajik-Afghan border, said Vladimir Zubrin, the chief of the investigation department the Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS). He told a news conference on Tuesday that law enforcement agencies and security services of the Central Asian countries had been seizing substantial amounts of drugs on a so-called Northern, or Russia-bound smuggling route. "After the setting up of the Federal service in 2003, 194 kilograms of heroin have been seized; last year drug policemen seized more than a tonne of this poison, and the amount of drugs seized in the country this years has been more than 100 tonnes," Zubrin said. Such massive volumes of drugs are a major indicator of the threat coming from the Central Asian direction to borders of Russia and adjacent states, he said.

Organization of Asia-Pacific news Agencies (Text of report: Itar-Tass), 4/10/2005

Three Nigerian heroin smugglers captured in Kabul airport

Three Nigerian nationals have been arrested on charge of smuggling heroin at the airport of Afghan capital Kabul, the police commander of the airport said Tuesday. "We captured one Nigerian with 6.5 kg heroin yesterday. He put the heroin in CD boxes and tomato cans, and also used the tinfoil to escape from being checked out by the machine in the airport. But we have got the report about these smugglers and captured them successfully," General Aminullah said at a press conference in the airport. "Today two Nigerians were also captured with 3.5 kg heroin in their two luggage boxes. They were heading for Dubai and intended to sell the heroin from there to European countries and even the United States," he added.

Xinhua News Agency, 4/10/2005

Turkish police seized 42 kg heroin in Istanbul

Turkish police seized 42 kilograms of heroin in an operation in Istanbul, narcotics department said on Tuesday [4 October]. Acting on a tip-off, narcotics teams staged an operation and seized 42 kilograms of heroin hidden in secret compartments of a truck in Kucukcekmece district. Five people were arrested in connection with the haul.

BBC Monitoring Newsfile (Source of report: Anatolia News), 4/10/2005

Kazakh border guards seize 14 kg of heroin

Kazakh border guards have prevented an attempt to smuggle over 14 kg of heroin. The drugs were seized in East Kazakhstan Region. The press service of the National Security Committee said that 15 packages with heroin had been found in a spare fuel tank of a bus en-route from Ust-Kamenogorsk to Irkutsk when it was searched at the Shimanaykha-Auto [as heard] checkpoint.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia, 5/10/2005

Over 100 kg of heroin seized in Northern Tajikistan

Officers from the Tajik Interior Ministry's transport directorate seized more than 100 kg of heroin in the north of the country this morning, the country's Interior Ministry has told Avesta. The source said the directorate's officers stopped a car driven by Hamroh Boboyev in Khujand [the northern Soghd Region's administrative centre]. A total of 104 packages containing narcotics were found in the car during a search. According to the preliminary investigation, a large batch of drugs was transported to the country's north on a Kamaz lorry. Then the drugs were loaded onto a car in order to take them out of Tajikistan.

BBC Monitoring Newsfile (Text of report: Avesta), 6/10/2005

More than 900 kilograms of drugs seized by Tajik DCA this year so far

In the past nine months of this year, Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency (DCA) and its directorates in the provinces have seized more than 700 kilograms of drugs, with more than 400 kilograms of them being heroin, the DCA press service reported. 35 joint operations carried out by the DCA in cooperation with special services of the republic, the CIS states and Afghanistan over the mentioned period have led to seizure of more than 985 kilograms of drugs. The totaled included 380.50 kilograms of heroin, more than 467 kilograms of raw opium and 137 kilograms of cannabis. 177,932 bushes of wild Indian hemp have been destroyed in January-September of this year.

Asia-Plus, 6/10/2005

Two hundred kilograms of heroin seized in Tajikistan

Tajik law enforcement agencies have averted an attempt to traffic a large quantity of heroin through the northern region of Tajikistan. According to the Tajik Interior Ministry's department for the fight against drug trafficking, a leader of a drug-smuggling group, which had smuggled drugs into Russia, was detained in the Sogdiya region on Friday during a special operation. Two hundred kilograms of heroin were found and confiscated in the course of the operation.

Interfax, 7/10/2005

The reports about the recent major seizures in Northern Tajikistan are contradictory in numbers and other details. On October 8, Tajik Avesta provided a summary, which stated:

The operation to prevent the smuggling of the drugs started in the middle of last week. The first batch of 102 kg was discovered in a Nexia car driven by Hamroh Boboyev. The organizer of the delivery of 200 kg heroin to Soghd Region was detained upon his arrival at Khujand [the region's administrative centre] airport. Officers from the Tajik Interior

Ministry's transport department seized the remaining batch of heroin on Friday [7 October] evening [after an earlier seizure of some], the head of the department, Jurakhon Zoirov, has told Avesta. He said 100 kg of heroin had been found in Ghonchi District in Soghd Region [northern Tajikistan]. Zoirov also said that another batch of drugs was seized in Varzob District [some 20 km north of Dushanbe] on Friday evening. "Transport police officers stopped a Kamaz lorry driven by a resident of Farkhor District [southern Tajikistan], Abdunazar Beknazarov. Forty kilogrammes of heroin was found and seized during a search. The heroin was also intended for transportation to Soghd Region in order to take it out of the country," the source said. He added that there was no connection between the two incidents. "The deliveries were organized by two different groups," he said. Similar total numbers were provided also by Itar-Tass.

Avesta and Itar-Tass, 8/10/2005

Huge quantity of narcotics seized in Zabul

Afghan police Sunday seized 152 kilograms of opium and 692 kilograms of hashish in Qalat, capital of the restive Zabul province. A press release issued here said the police stopped a Kandahar-bound truck near Qalat. The contraband was recovered hidden in its fuel tank. Driver of the vehicle managed to escape, said the release. Spokesman for the interior ministry Mohammad Yousaf Stanizai said the truck had been taken into custody.

Pajhwok Afghan News, 9/10/2005