



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 31 October – 7 November 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.

Tehran's envoy notes possibility of SCO membership

In an interview with Avesta on 24 October, Nasser Sarmadi-Parsa, Iran's ambassador to Tajikistan, said that Iran is considering full-fledged membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO members are China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan). Calling the SCO an organization with "its own definite fundamental goals proceeding from the interests of member states," Sarmadi-Parsa stated: "Iran has a positive and strong view with regard to joining the SCO as a full-fledged member." India, Iran, and Pakistan gained observer status in the organization at a July SCO summit in Kazakhstan. (Daniel Kimmage)

Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline talks continue in Teheran

Deputy Petroleum Minister Hadi Nejad-Husseinian said on 25 October in Tehran that officials from New Delhi want to finalize the deal on the Iran-Pakistan-India natural-gas pipeline as soon as possible, state television reported. He was speaking at the end of the second meeting of the pipeline working group. Nejad-Husseinian said the Indians at the meeting reported on the progress of their negotiations with Islamabad, and they mentioned a new agreement on gas prices. Resolution of transit fees remains outstanding, he said. The next working-group meeting is scheduled for early December, he said. (Bill Samii)

RFE/RL Iran Report, Vol. 8, No. 43, 3/11/2005

(RFE/RL's Week at a glance (24-30 OCTOBER): Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan)

Tensions over the death of lawmaker Tynychbek Akmatbaev, killed on 20 October during a visit to a prison, continued to simmer in Kyrgyzstan. The slain deputy's brother, rumored criminal kingpin Ryspek Akmatbaev, led demonstrators in Bishkek calling for the removal of Prime Minister Feliks Kulov, whom Ryspek blamed for his brother's death. But parliament refused to consider the issue, and the demonstrators ended their protest after President Kurmanbek Bakiy met with a group of Tynychbek Akmatbaev's relatives and supporters. Ryspek, who did not meet with the president, saw his trial on triple murder charges postponed until 9 November. And a number of civil-society groups ended the week with a demonstration in Bishkek to protest threats to national unity and the dangers of criminal involvement in politics.

Jailed Uzbek opposition leader Sanjar Umarov smuggled a note out to supporters, dismissing embezzlement charges against him as "ridiculous." Umarov's lawyer later said that when he visited his client in jail, he found him to be "out of his senses." Rights activist Elena Urlaeva was released from a psychiatric hospital after protests from Human Rights Watch and the U.S. State Department on reports that Urlaeva had been subjected to forcible psychiatric treatment. Daniel Fried, U.S. assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia, told a congressional committee that the United States is still considering sanctions against Uzbekistan. Citing continued harassment by Uzbek authorities, the BBC shuttered its Tashkent bureau for six months. And Uzbek prosecutors asked for prison terms ranging from 15 to 20 years for 15 men accused of organizing violence in Andijon on 12-13 May.

RFE/RL Central Asia Report, Vol. 5, No. 42, 3/11/2005

Azerbaijan: International Observers Criticize Parliamentary Elections

(By Robert Parsons)

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have sharply criticized the way in which yesterday's parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan were conducted. Both have operated observation missions in Azerbaijan in the months before and during the election itself. While they said that voting had been generally calm, the election process had been marred by significant deficiencies in the count. (...) OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Alcee Hastings delivered a damning indictment of the election process. "Yesterday's elections did not meet a number of OSCE commitments and Council of Europe standards of democratic elections," Hastings said. The applause his statement received spoke volumes about the all-pervasive sense of frustration that Azerbaijan has missed an opportunity to raise its electoral standards. Hastings, a U.S. congressman from Florida, said that while it had been a competitive election in most places and that there had been greater voter choice than in the past, interference from governing bodies and media bias favoring incumbents had prevented the creation of equal conditions for all candidates during the campaign period. "While voting was generally calm, the election-day process deteriorated progressively during the counting," Hastings said. "It pains me and my colleagues that the progress heralded was undermined by significant deficiencies in the count." Leo Platvoet, head of the delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), put it even more strongly, saying: "In the assessment of our observers, 43 percent of the ballot-counting process was bad or very bad." Ambassador Geert Ahrens, who is head of the OSCE observer mission, said its final report would be issued six weeks after the completion of the electoral process. Its preliminary findings, however, are sure to be an embarrassment to the Azerbaijani government. According to its preliminary figures, the ruling Yeni Azarbaycan party won 63 seats with 96 percent of the vote counted, while the main opposition bloc, Azadliq (Freedom), had won just six. These appeared seriously at odds with results coming in from three different exit polls -- and wildly at odds with the claims of the opposition. Azadliq called a press conference today to say that it had detailed massive falsification of the vote in 100 of Azerbaijan's 125 constituencies and was calling for the vote to be declared invalid. Isa Qambar, leader of the Musavat Party, which forms part of the Azadliq bloc, said this week would witness one of the largest demonstrations ever seen in the post-Soviet space. He announced that Azadliq would start its rally on 9 November, and claimed that the government of Azerbaijan refused to sanction the rally that was initially scheduled for tomorrow. The next few days could be critical for Azerbaijan. The opposition says it intends to protest peacefully, but the government's record of violently breaking up any unsanctioned rallies raises the prospect of dangerous clashes. Much may depend on how many people the opposition persuades to take to the streets. Only a massive turnout is likely to intimidate a government that in the past has shown no hesitation to use force.

RFE/RL (<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/11/59FD899F-1033-4F4F-9DD5-150C89AC3A39.html>), 7/11/05

Taleban leader calls for intensified attacks o foreign troops

(Cheragh) – Taleban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar has called on his followers to intensify their attacks on foreign troops. In a message broadcast on Ariana television on November 5, Omar called on loyalists to speed up their offensive on foreign and Afghan troops. Taleban spokesman Abdul Hai Mutmaen distributed the message to the media. The Taleban have increased their attacks in the south and southeast of the country over the past two months. (Cheragh is an independent daily run by the Development and Democracy Association)

Australia considering more troops for Afghanistan

(Erada) – The Australian government will decide in few weeks whether to send more troops to Afghanistan, the country's defence ministry says. Australian defence minister Robert Hill said he had spoken with Afghan cabinet members about sending another 200 troops to help reconstruct roads, power networks, hospitals and schools. Hill told an Australian television network that Australia had talked with Canada, Britain and Netherlands about becoming part of the NATO-led mission in the southern provinces of Afghanistan.

(Erada is an independent daily run by the Afghan Media Resource Centre)

Official HIV/AIDS figures may be an underestimate

(Hewad) – To date, 46 cases of HIV/AIDS have been registered in Afghanistan so far, but there may in reality be 400 to 800 cases across the country. Dr Abdullah Fahim, an adviser to the public health ministry, said the official figure of 46 cases is the precise number of those registered by the ministry, while the higher statistic is an estimate. Fahim said the spread of infection was caused in part by people returning from neighbouring countries, and also by shared needle use inside Afghanistan.

(Hewad is a state run daily mostly in Pashto)

Seizures and Arrests

Tajik drug agency destroys over 140 kg of heroin

More than 150 kg of drugs was incinerated in a furnace of the Tajik Drug Control Agency today. The drug agency said that about 144 kg of heroin, over 12.5 kg of opium and other drugs had been burnt in the presence of a commission made up of representatives from law-enforcement and court agencies. The drugs were material evidence in the criminal cases on which court verdicts have come into force.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source of the report: Avesta), 1/11/2005

Two heroin laboratories torched in Badakhshan

Intelligence officials had set ablaze a heroin laboratory, drugs and some chemicals used in heroin in the northeastern Badakhshan province. The officials found the laboratory located inside a house in Shah Wazir village of the Argo district. Fazl Rahman, deputy intelligence chief of Badakhshan province, said on Tuesday that 350 kilograms of heroin, dozens of bottles, acids and other hard chemicals used in drugs were recovered from the house. In a separate raid, in Kela Dara village of the same district, the intelligence officials had seized 140 kilograms of contraband from another laboratory. Owners of the labs have managed to escape before the raids in both the incidents. Officials had also destroyed two heroin labs last month in Dariam and Baharak districts of Badakhshan.

Pajhwok Afghan News, 1/11/2005

Turkish police seize over 150 kilos of heroin

Turkish police confiscated 152.6 kilograms of heroin in three separate operations in Istanbul and Izmit, narcotics department said. Releasing a statement, narcotics department said that the operations against illicit drug trafficking were staged on 28, 30 and 31 October. Police followed a group of people who were preparing to smuggle heroin abroad, and seized 53 kilograms of heroin in Aksaray district. Moreover, 46.6 kilograms of heroin were seized in Avclar neighbourhood which was also destined for foreign countries, while 53 kilograms of heroin were confiscated in northwestern city of Izmit.

BBC Monitoring European (Source of the report: Avesta), 2/11/2005

Police seizes 14 kg opium in Nangarhar

Police has recovered 14 kg opium from a car in the Ghani Kheil district of the eastern Nangarhar province. Press officer of the provincial police headquarters Abdul Ghafur said that the driver in a bid to escape speeded fast his car but stopped shortly, as police opened fire on the vehicle. He added that the police arrested Qand Agha, resident of Laghman province, who was allegedly trying to smuggle contraband to the Pakistan border. Counter-narcotics officials said they had received secret information that the car carrying opium would cross the area late evening. Earlier, the peacekeeping forces had captured 49 kg opium, two pistols, in the same district. Press office of the Interior Ministry said that smugglers had managed to escape.

Pajhwok Afghan News, 1/11/2005

Heroin smuggling attempt foiled on Afghan-Tajik border

An attempt to smuggle a large amount of narcotics through a route across the border of Afghanistan and Tajikistan has been foiled. It was reported that today a group of smugglers was intercepted by border guards. After a shooting that ensued, three bandits escaped to the Afghan territory and one was detained. He was found carrying 40 kg of heroin. This cargo was designated for further transportation to Russia.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union, 3/11/2005

Turkish police arrest seven in joint anti-drug operation with Germany

Seven people were detained in the Turkish leg of an operation which was launched after seizure of 15 kg heroin in Germany. As a result of the intelligence work, Germany asked for support from Turkey for capture of the members of a network who were involved in drug trafficking. Under an agreement reached between Turkey and Germany, and in line with the cooperation of many European countries, a decision was made to transport heroin from Turkey to Germany through "controlled delivery". With the directives of Ankara Public Prosecutor's Office, the haul was sent abroad with the car of a Turkish citizen living in Germany. Simultaneous operations were launched after the heroin reached Germany. Seven people were detained in the operation in Turkey in connection with the heroin. Four people were detained in Germany within the scope of the same operation.

BBC Monitoring European (Source of the report: Avesta), 4/11/2005

Over 10 kg of heroin seized in northern Tajikistan

Law-enforcement agencies have thwarted an attempt to smuggle 10.2 kg of heroin in northern Tajikistan, Ministry of Internal Affairs said on 4 November. The heroin batch was found in a car in the town of Konibodom in Sughd Region on 2 November and was designated for further transportation abroad, the report said.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source of the report: Avesta), 4/11/2005

CIS security body joint operation net about 100 kg of heroin in Tajikistan

The first phase of the Kanal-2005 operation has seen seizure of 129.4 kg of drugs in Tajikistan, the head of the Tajik Drug Control Agency press service Avaz Yuldoshev said. Yuldoshev said that heroin accounted for 99.4 kg of the total amount of the drugs seized. "The operation was held in accordance with a decision by the heads of the Collective Security Treaty Organization member states. The first stage of the collective preventive operation was conducted on the territories of the CSTO countries from 25 to 31 October," Yuldoshev said. The purpose of the operation was to reveal and close off the drug smuggling routes to the territory of the CSTO member states - Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus and Armenia. The efforts of the participants in the operation were focused on blocking drug transportation via the Northern Route - Afghanistan-Central Asia-Russia-Eastern and Western Europe. The second stage of the collective operation is scheduled for the spring of 2006, Yuldoshev added.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source of the report: Avesta), 4/11/2005

Britain isolated over role in Afghanistan: Allies reluctant to get involved in war on terror: Tribal feuds and opium trade hinder peacekeeping

Britain is locked in an intense dispute with its European allies in Nato over a plan, fraught with political and security problems, to take control of peacekeeping in Afghanistan. British military involvement in the country is to be stepped up early next year when it assumes command of the Kabul-based International Security Assistance Force (Isaf), and sends troops to a hostile southern province known for opium cultivation. This will include a taskforce of 3,000 soldiers, including the 3rd battalion the Parachute Regiment and a squadron of Apache attack helicopters - their first deployment by British forces - to Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, a hostile area of tribal feuds and poppy growing. These troops face the prospect of fighting terrorists, insurgents, and warlords involved in the narcotics trade. Officials are lobbying for support from European allies. But with the exception of the Netherlands, none is willing to take on any role that might involve fighting insurgents, terrorists and warlords involved in narcotics. France, Germany and Spain in particular are reluctant to get involved in fighting the Bush administration's "war on terror".

The Guardian, 4/11/2005

Police conduct operations against drugs trafficking in southern Turkey

Turkish police seized 386.3 kilograms of heroin in operation, staged in southern city of Mersin, in the first nine months of 2005. According to information received from Police Department, 150.8 kilograms of hashish, 3.2 kilograms of cocaine, 6,826 illicit pills, and 1,881 roots of Indian hemp in operation staged between 1 January and 30 September 2005. 124 people were arrested in connection with the haul.

BBC Monitoring European (Source of the report: Anatolia), 6/11/2005

