



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 7-14 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.

Rabbani rules out coalition with Qanuni

(Cheragh) – The leader of the Jamiat-e-Islami party, former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani has rejected the possibility of forming an alliance with Younus Qanuni, the head of the National Understanding Front. Specifically, Rabbani said he had not discussed the post of speaker in the new national assembly with Qanuni.

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

ECO to meet in Kabul

(Hewad) – The third conference on commerce and investment of the Economic Cooperation Organisation, ECO, will be held on November 9-10 in Kabul. The last ECO session was held in Kabul last year, when Afghanistan was given the office of interim secretariat of the regional body. Shekib Noori, a senior official with the Afghan Investment Support Agency, says 30 delegates from ECO member states will take part in the session, which will focus mainly on the growth of the private sector in Afghanistan as well as regional economic development. The ECO was formed in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey and now has 10 members.

(Hewad is a state run daily mostly in Pashto.)

IWPR's Afghan Press Monitor, No. 189, 08/11/05

Hekmatyar says foreign troops must go

(Cheragh) – Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the Hizb-e-Islami faction [aligned with the Taliban], has called on US-led foreign troops to withdraw from Afghanistan. In a message published in a Pakistani weekly on the eve of the Eid al-Fitr holiday, Hekmatyar said the foreign troop presence was the main reason for continued conflict and instability in the country. He called on Afghans to unite and to increase the pressure on foreign troops to force them to leave. In his message, Hekmatyar, who at one point in the Nineties was prime minister, said the recent Afghan elections were a ploy by the US to legitimise its presence.

IWPR's Afghan Press Monitor, No. 190, 09/11/05

Kyrgyzstan tells US to pay up for air base

(By Cholpon Orozobekova)

The United States needs Kyrgyzstan more than ever, but authorities in Bishkek are telling the Americans to show them the money. A US Defence Department delegation arrived in the capital Bishkek late last week, led by Rear Admiral Robert Moeller, US Central Command director of department for plans and policy. His group came hot on the heels of the commander of Central Command, General John Abizaid. They followed a month after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice held talks with President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, cementing an agreement to allow US forces to remain on Kyrgyz soil for the foreseeable future. Discussion centres on the Gansi military base just outside the capital at Manas Airport, which the Americans began using for Afghan operations in 2001. (...)The Kyrgyz are demanding more rent and tax for the facility, and unresolved allegations linger around massive misappropriation of base revenues by the previous government. Furthermore, the US military stands accused of causing environmental damage and domestic

suspicions are surfacing that Bakiev is selling out the country's long-standing alliance with Russia. Rice secured a joint declaration that both sides wanted to see US-led Coalition forces stay in Kyrgyzstan until "the mission to fight terrorism in Afghanistan is complete". The Kyrgyz government agreed, despite calls at the July meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (...) that US Central Asian bases should be phased out. But Bakiev, who swept to power in the so-called "tulip revolution" in March, has made it clear that a continued American presence will cost them. He told a news conference on November 2 that a new draft agreement was being prepared on the Gansi airport, which "requires major expenditure from the Americans. The US will have to pay for each metre of land used at world prices. Inflation and other circumstances should be taken into account". (...) The Kyrgyz foreign ministry said on November 8 that the latest talks had yielded an agreement on changing the terms of the lease of the base, including an increase in payments of rent and taxes. (...) But a US embassy spokesman in Bishkek played down the meeting, saying the defence department visit was aimed at "sharing information" and not at striking a new deal on the base. "There's a mismatch of perspectives here," he said. "The US is used to inflated expectations in the hope that they will give in and pay more." (...) Kyrgyz defence minister Ismail Isakov rejected the notion that his government was simply exploiting Washington's strategic requirements to make more money. (...) As yet unresolved, however, are allegations that the greater benefit from the base has largely been reaped by family members of former president Askar Akaev, who fled to Russia after crowds of demonstrators stormed government buildings in March. In June, the general prosecutor's office announced results of an investigation into a company run by Akaev's son-in-law, Adil Toigonbaev, who had supplied fuel to US planes at the base. According to prosecutors, Toigonbaev's company Aalam Service along with an offshore firm, Merlisside LLS, had siphoned off some 16.5 million US dollars from the fuel contract, funds that should have gone to the state treasury. The Kyrgyz have hired a US lawyer, Edward Lieberman, to track down Askar Akaev's assets, but has yet to determine whether the alleged fuel scam accounts for any discrepancy in what the US says it has paid and what the Kyrgyzstan authorities say they have received in revenue from the base. (...) Bakiev has been keen to demonstrate to his partners in the SCO, particularly Russia, that his revolution did not represent a strategic tilt towards the West. Russian forces maintain a standing presence at the Kant base, also near Bishkek, which opened in 2003. (...) But many Kyrgyz politicians still believe that the country is now being used by the US as a tool for regional domination, despite assurances by Rice that Washington is not trying to lure Bishkek away from Moscow. (...) (Cholpon Orozobekova is a correspondent for Radio Azattyk, the Kyrgyz service of RFE/RL)

IWPR's Reporting Central Asia, No. 419 Part 1, 10/11/05

French troops withdraw from Kyrgyz base

French troops stationed in Kyrgyzstan have been pulled from the country. The press service for the Ganci air base at Manas Airport, located near the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek, has said that the 60 troops were pulled out yesterday after completing their mission. The Ganci air base is used by U.S. and international forces for conducting security and humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. Yesterday, six French warplanes and two tanker planes left neighboring Tajikistan. Frederic Peroni, the military attache at the French Embassy in the Tajik capital Dushanbe, said the French troops in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were stationed in those countries three months ago to provide security in Afghanistan during the 18 September parliamentary elections.

<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/11/BF33DAD5-7794-4D1A-ABA4-F9A764B3F9BE.html>

RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service/Aki Press/Asia-Plus, 10/11/05

Editorial: Insurgents use tactics borrowed from Iraq

(Cheragh, November 7, 2005) – Afghanistan's Islamic militants are using new tactics and demonstrating greater vigour in attacking Afghan government and US military targets. Political analysts are alarmed by evidence that suggests the insurgents are using tactics employed by militants in Iraq, including suicide bombs. The most recent such attack occurred on November 7, when an explosives-laden car blew up near the office of the governor of the southern province of Helmand. The governor escaped injury, while the driver of the car died later in hospital. The last few months have seen a rise in Taleban attacks in the southern and eastern provinces, including Helmand, Khost and Kunar. Suicide bombings, which are becoming increasingly common, are a source of major concern to political and military analysts. Cheragh is an independent daily run by the Development and Democracy Association.

IWPR's Afghan Press Monitor, No. 192, 11/11/05

Suspected Nalchik Raiders Arrested In Eastern Siberia

Authorities in Russia's Far East say they have arrested two men suspected of taking part in an armed raid last month in the North Caucasus. The two were apprehended overnight in the eastern Siberian city of Krasnokamensk. Russia's RIA-Novosti news agency quotes investigators as saying the two suspects are from Russia's Caucasus republic of Kabardino-Balkariya. On 13 October, dozens of armed militants raided police buildings in Nalchik, the republic's capital. Russian authorities said more than 140 people died in the raids and fighting that followed, including 95 militants. Chechen separatist military leader Shamil Basayev has said he helped plan the attack. Rights groups and some Russian officials have said most of the raiders were young Muslim dissidents from Kabardino-Balkariya.

<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/11/FB8E5507-D6FF-4B39-BFB4-C7105E2DBC8C.html>

RFE/RL, 11/11/05

Final Afghan election results out

The process of counting and checking results from the parliamentary and provincial elections in Afghanistan in September has finally been completed. An election official told the BBC that the election commission had certified results from Kandahar, the final province to be completed. President Hamid Karzai's brother, Abdul Qayyum Karzai, has been elected to the lower house of parliament. Results from the September election had already been published from 33 other provinces, but the results from Kandahar were delayed while officials checked fraud allegations. The joint Afghan and United Nations election commission has now also certified results for the Kuchi - or nomad - population. (...) In Kandahar, election officials say at least one candidate lost his place because of the discovery of widespread ballot-rigging. However, the candidate's backers have complained of a vendetta against him, including from supporters of President Hamid Karzai, the BBC's Andrew North reports. Kandahar is President Karzai's home province and two of his brothers stood for election there. One, Abdul Qayoom Karzai, won the most number of votes in the province for a parliamentary seat. The other, Ahmed Wali Karzai, came top of the list for the provincial council. Most candidates running in the elections stood as independents. This means that it is hard to develop a picture of the overall political complexion of the new parliament. But, political analyst Ali Amiri told Associated Press news agency: "The government [of Hamid Karzai] has the support of more than 50% in the parliament." Meanwhile in an electoral process that began on Saturday, most of the provincial councils elected in September are choosing representatives for the upper house of parliament. Each body has to vote for two people to sit in the 102-member upper house, or Meshrano Jirga. This is the next stage Afghanistan's fledgling democracy, nearly three years after the fall of the Taleban. Kandahar will vote for its representatives at a later stage. Helmand province is not voting at this time either. Newly-elected provincial officials have to choose two-thirds of the members in the upper house of the new parliament from among their number.

The others will be appointed by President Karzai.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/4431090.stm

BBC News, 12/11/05

Cannabis next target in war on drugs

(By Sayed Yaqub Ibrahimi).
 Farmers in the north are up in arms over a government programme to stamp out marijuana. Marijuana-growing is an old and venerable occupation in the northern province of Balkh. The province is famous for "shirak", a high-quality hashish made by experts and marketed inside Afghanistan. Friday nights are traditional shirak-party nights, where relaxing with a pipe or a bong and some local is a normal pastime. The drug is illegal, but its use is so widespread that the authorities have traditionally turned a blind eye. Now all of that is changing, in the face of a determined government effort to stamp out narcotics. (...) To combat drug production, the international community has been generously funding major eradication programmes. (...) The campaign has so far yielded modest results. While a great deal of land has been taken out of poppy cultivation in some provinces, higher yields in other regions have kept production fairly steady, according to international studies. One of the provinces where production has risen is Balkh. Officials estimate that poppy production here has tripled in recent years, and the regional administration is under pressure to show some results. That has led to the all-out war against all illicit drugs, including the cannabis plant. "We are taking action as a sign to farmers that we have started our campaign, and that in future the cultivation of poppies and marijuana will be prohibited in this province," said Shair Jan Durrani, spokesman for the police headquarters in Balkh. Responsibility for the eradication campaign, he said, has been given to the local police force. (...) Marijuana is an easy target for officials determined to show their commitment to drug eradication. Since poppies are not now in season, zealous counter-narcotics forces can expend their energy on cannabis, which is harvested from October to December. Farmers say cultivating cannabis has several advantages over opium poppies. It is easier to grow and store than the poppy plant, which is labour intensive and requires a trained workforce. Cannabis has a shorter growing season, and compressed hashish is quite compact and can be easily shipped. Cannabis also uses less irrigation water, an important consideration in Afghanistan's drought-plagued

climate. (...) Although they earn only one-quarter of what they would make growing poppies, some farmers have until now preferred to cultivate cannabis not only because of lower labour costs, but also because they believed they ran less risk of being prosecuted. (...) General Mohammad Daoud, the deputy interior minister who is the senior police officer in charge of counter-narcotics work, said the government will not tolerate the cultivation of any narcotic plants. Daoud took a trip to Balkh in mid-October, presumably to signal the government's renewed commitment to drug eradication in the province. "The government is determined to prohibit the sowing of seeds for poppy or marijuana plants as a first step," he said. "If anyone does cultivate these plants, his fields will be destroyed." (...) According to Counter-Narcotics Minister Habibullah Qaderi, Balkh follows close behind Kandahar and Helmand for poppy cultivation, so the government in Kabul is going to bring increased pressure to bear on local officials. "Due to the increased poppy cultivation in Balkh, the government is going to send a team to talk to the provincial governor so as to draw a plant to put a stop to it," he said. But Qaderi insisted that the government is also sensitive to the plight of farmers, "This team has financial and technical resources, and in addition to eradication they will take note of the needs of farmers and will act to solve their problems."

(Sayed Yaqub Ibrahim is an IWPR reporter in Mazar-e-Sharif)

IWPR's Afghan Recovery Report, No. 194, 13/11/05

Andijan suspects given jail terms

An Uzbek court has found 15 men guilty of trying to overthrow the government and set up an Islamic state, in a case which drew international criticism. The 15, who pleaded guilty at the start of the trial, were sentenced to between 14 and 20 years in jail. The defendants were accused of leading a May uprising in the eastern town of Andijan, which Uzbek security forces ended by using massive force. Critics have denounced the court's proceedings as a show trial. Judge Bakhtyor Jamolov was quoted by the Russian RIA agency as saying the men - 12 from Uzbekistan and three from neighbouring Kyrgyzstan - were guilty of "terrorism, attempts to overthrow the constitutional order, aggravated murder and the seizure of hostages". Five of the men received a 20-year sentence. The Uzbek government says 187 people, mostly "terrorist organisers", died during the Andijan unrest. But human rights groups say 500 or more civilians may have been killed, shot by Uzbek security forces. (...) "Under the guise of social protection, the Islamic extremists staged anti-people actions that resulted in the death of peaceful civilians, government workers and law enforcement agents," Deputy Prosecutor General Anvar Nabiyev said. During the trial, all of the witnesses joined defendants in backing the government's account of events, with the exception of one woman. Makhbuba Zakirova told the court that she saw soldiers shooting at people waving a white flag. "There were people in helmets everywhere. I twice saw soldiers shooting from military vehicles. The shooting was intense," she said at the time. The UN commission on human rights has said in a statement that there have been serious inadequacies in the conduct of the trial, including inadequate definition of the crimes the 15 men were accused of, and the fact that the defendants were not cross-examined by independent lawyers. The fact that the defendants all confessed their guilt on the first day raised concerns that the confessions might have been obtained by torture. A former Uzbek interior ministry employee has told the BBC that beatings or psychotropic drugs are often used to force confessions from suspects - an allegation denied by the Uzbek government.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/4435054.stm>

BBC News, 14/11/05

Seizures and Arrests

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.

BBC Monitoring European (Source of the report: Anatolia), 06/11/2005

Police seize heroin on coach in Siberia

The police have seized 1,367 grams of heroin from two Tajik nationals in the Khanty-Mansiisk autonomous district, a

source in law enforcement told Interfax on Monday. The coach was said to be driving from Khujand, Tajikistan, to Nefteyugansk. Heroin was to be found on two passengers, both unemployed Tajiks.

Interfax, 07/11/2005

Pakistan: Over 96 tonnes of narcotics seized in 10 months

Data provided by Ministry of Narcotics Control officials revealed that 96,266kgs of heroin, hashish and opium were recovered. The officials said that the seizure was due to the efforts of Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), Pakistan Customs, Pakistan Coast Guards, police, rangers, excise police, and other law enforcement agencies. Giving details they said these agencies managed to seize over 67 tons of hashish, 22 tonnes of heroin and 5.6 tonnes of opium. The ANF, which is primarily responsible for anti-drug activities in Pakistan, has a substantial share in the seizure, as it seized 33 tonnes of drugs. This includes 22 tonnes of hashish, over seven tonnes of heroin and 3.3 tonnes of opium.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source of the report: The News), 08/11/2005

More Afghan heroin reaching Russia since border control passed to Tajiks

The withdrawal of Russian border guards from the Tajik-Afghan border has worsened the drug situation in Central Asia, head of the Russian Federal Service for Control over the Trafficking of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Viktor Cherkesov has said. At a news conference in Moscow today, he noted that since the protection of the Afghan border was entrusted to Tajik border guards, police in Siberia and in the Volga region have been seizing large hauls of heroin increasingly often. "These are not normal batches, there are hundreds of kilograms of heroin," Cherkesov said. "This is one of the signs that the withdrawal of Russian border guards has negatively affected the drug situation in the region, including the situation in Tajikistan itself." Cherkesov also told the news conference that several batches of heroin from Afghanistan containing the hepatitis C virus have been intercepted this year. He also said that in the first 10 months of this year, 129 tonnes of narcotics, psychotropic substances and other powerful stimulants have been confiscated by Russian drug control officers.

BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union (Text of report: Interfax, ITAR-TASS), 08/11/2005

Cherkesov: Afghanistan a drug-dealing nation

The production of heroin in Afghanistan is not declining, head of the Russian Federal Drug Control Service Gen. Viktor Cherkesov has said. He added that this year opium poppy plantations in Afghanistan had contracted 21% but their harvest soared from 31% to 39%. The member-states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization are intensifying efforts to resist Afghan drug trafficking. However, the Russian drug control authorities find Turkmenistan's efforts to stop trafficking insufficient. "We don't regard Turkmenistan as a partner. It is impossible to believe that Turkmenistan is free from trafficking," Cherkesov said.

Interfax Central Asia News, 08/11/2005

Russia drug police seize 9 tons of drugs in Channel-2005 operation

Nine tons of drugs and psychotropic substances, including 255 kilos of heroin, over 800 kilos of hashish and more than 32 tons of precursors were seized by Russian drug policemen in the course of a security sweep codenamed Channel-2005, Head of the Russian drug control watchdog (FSKN) Viktor Cherkesov told a news conference. He said the operation had been carried out by the FSKN together with police forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) countries. All in all 66,000 policemen were engaged. Cherkesov said real steps to create an anti-drug security belt around Afghanistan had been taken in the course of the operation. The main efforts "were directed at exposing and blocking channels of illegal trafficking of drugs and their precursors along the 'Northern Route' and part of the 'Balkan Route,'" the FSKN chief said. In addition, he said new drug traffics from Afghanistan to Great Britain and via United Arab Emirates to Africa had been uncovered during the operation. He added that during the operation drug policemen had exposed some 4,500 drug-related crimes including 300 crimes committed by organised criminal groups.

ITAR-TASS, 08/11/2005

Kazakh security officers net nearly 16 kg of heroin in north

Kazakh National Security Committee officers have seized nearly 16 kg of heroin in North Kazakhstan Region, the Kazakhstan today news agency reported. "A group of seven people - Kazakh and Russian citizens - were detained near the village of Kellerovka in North Kazakhstan Region's Tayynsha District," it was added.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source of the report: Kazakhstan Today), 09/11/2005

Four kilos of heroin seized from Kazakh town police chief

Officers from the [Kazakh] National Security Committee have detained the chief of the [southern] Turkistan town interior department. According to their data, the police officer has long headed a gang that was involved in the sale of particularly large amounts of drugs. Almost 3 kg of heroin and an unregistered TT pistol were seized from him after he was detained. One more kilogram of this drug was uncovered in the colonel's home.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia (Source of the report: Khabar Television), 09/11/2005

Macedonian police seize 4 kilos of heroin at border with Bulgaria

Police seized four kilos of heroin on 9 November in an Alpar bus operating on Istanbul to Struga line at Deve Bair border crossing to Bulgaria.

BBC Monitoring Europe (Source of the report: MIA), 10/11/2005

Opium seized in west Afghanistan

Police said they arrested one man and seized 150 kg of opium from him in Herat Province, west Afghanistan, last night. Col Abdol Rauf Ahmadi, press officer at the provincial police headquarters, told Pajhwok Afghan News the contraband was packed in a bag and was destined for the fifth district of the city.

BBC Monitoring South Asia (Source of the report: Pajhwok Afghan News), 10/11/2005

Over 120 kg of heroin destroyed in Tajikistan

A total of 147 kg of drugs seized by officers from the Tajik Interior Ministry were incinerated at the Tojiktekstilmash plant in Dushanbe today. The drugs destroyed included 128 kg of heroin, 9 kg of raw opium, 9 kg of cannabis and 87 hemp plants. Officers from the Tajik Interior Ministry and other law-enforcement agencies have foiled 778 cases of drug trafficking and seized 1,722 kg of drugs, 966 kg of which was heroin, over the past nine months of 2005.

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