



Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia Weekly Digest: 26 September- 2nd 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.

US to continue air strikes

(Cheragh) – A senior US army commander in Afghanistan, General Jason Kamiya, has said using airpower to eliminate militants continued to be an essential component of military operations. His comment came just days after President Hamed Karzai said he saw no more need for air strikes to be used in the “war on terror”. Karzai also called for a halt to searches of Afghan houses by Coalition troops and urged the US military not to enter homes without authorisation from the Afghan government.

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

IWPR's Afghan Press Monitor no. 162, 25-26/09/05

Catch Bin Laden 'somewhere else'

President Pervez Musharraf has said he would prefer Osama Bin Laden captured outside Pakistan - and by someone else. He told Time magazine he did not know where the al-Qaeda leader was, but thought the "safest" hiding place for him was on the Pakistan-Afghan border. Gen Musharraf did not say why he wanted Bin Laden caught outside Pakistan. But many observers expect a backlash from Pakistanis opposed to the US-led "war on terror" if the world's most wanted man is arrested in Pakistan. As to the whereabouts of the world's most wanted man - "We don't know anything at the moment," President Musharraf said. "The reality is that about a year ago, we had some identification of a rough area where he was, through technical means, but then we lost him. That is how intelligence works." He said he thought the "safest" place for Bin Laden to hide was on the border with Afghanistan. "This line we are not including in each other's areas, so therefore you can easily switch sides."

BBC News South Asia, (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4282506.stm), 26/09/05

Pakistan-based militants remain a threat- US official

(Cheragh) – Stephen Hadley, the National Security Advisor for US President George Bush, speaking in the Afghan capital said “men on the other side of the border” threatened the security of both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Addressing a press conference on September 26, he said the United States would continue its “war on terror”, and added that to eliminate the menace in the region, cooperation and information-sharing between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States was needed.

IWPR's Afghan Press Monitor no. 163, 27/09/05

Senior Taliban man arrested in Pakistan

(Erada) – Pakistani intelligence officers arrested a senior Taliban member, named as Mullah Hamidullah, in the Banu area of Pakistan on September 26. Hamidullah, a resident of Paktia province, went to Pakistan after the fall of the Taliban regime. According to Munir Hussain, a freelance journalist in Banu, Hamidullah was picked up during an operation by Pakistani intelligence. Haji Jalil, an intelligence officer, confirmed the arrest.

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

IWPR's Afghan Press Monitor no. 163, 27/09/05

Afghan minister quits over opium trade

(...) Mr Jalali's three years in office earned him a reputation as the key anti-drugs, anti-warlords and anti-corruption minister in the Afghan government. (...) Mr Jalali, in his early 60s, has publicly accused senior government officials of involvement in the drugs trade. He also said the government was in possession of a list of those involved in drugs trading and threatened to publish the list. (...) Mr Jalali is not the first Afghan minister to "return to academia". The president excluded Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai - who was the government's key strategist - from his cabinet in 2004. Mr Ahmadzai went off to head Kabul university after losing his post of finance minister. This was seen as a major blow to US-led efforts to encourage the formation of a modern technocratic government in Afghanistan. President Karzai's decisions over his 2004 cabinet were driven by several factors. One was the need to appease the various Islamic factions - a consideration that did not help Mr Karzai form a strong cabinet. It has very few members who can effectively work with the international community to foster their cooperation in the reconstruction of the country.

BBC News South Asia, (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4285998.stm), 27/09/05

(...) Mr Jalali, regarded as one of the most respected members of the cabinet, said on Wednesday there was no disagreement with the president. "I have known Mr Karzai for 25 years. I know him as a person committed to the goodwill of Afghanistan." However, Mr Jalali, 63, said the drugs trade had to be tackled more effectively. "This is something that we want, the interior minister wants, the president wants and the whole government wants: to clean the government, clean the administration," Mr Jalali said. "Without that, we will not be able to bring about a healthy, committed administration that will only serve the people, will deliver to the people what it is supposed to deliver." Mr Jalali returned to Afghanistan in 2002 after years in exile in the United States. He served as a police officer before moving to the US after Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979. He later worked as a journalist and writer, eventually heading Voice of America's Persian and Pashto services.

BBC News South Asia, (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4291510.stm), 28/09/05

In a blow to efforts to rebuild Afghanistan, the Interior Minister announced his resignation yesterday, amid reports he had quit because of the involvement of senior government officials in the illegal drug trade. Ali Ahmad Jalali has been one of the most powerful figures in President Hamid Karzai's government to speak out against the drug trade and the influence of warlords in Afghanistan. Mr Jalali said there were 'various reasons' for his decision to resign, and that he wanted to return to academia. But he has been outspoken recently over the involvement of officials in the drug trade and is believed to have had differences with President Karzai over the appointment of provincial officials.

The Independent, 28/09/05

Andijan massacre linked to local power-struggle: source

A local power struggle dating back to 2004, and not an alleged Islamic radical conspiracy, sparked the chain of events that culminated in the Andijan massacre in Uzbekistan, a source with detailed knowledge of events tells EurasiaNet. The Uzbek government is engaged in an expansive effort to convince domestic and international opinion that Islamic militants were responsible for the violence that engulfed Andijan on May 13. (...) Extensively documented reports prepared by AI and HRW contend that a trial of 23 Andijan businessmen served as the catalyst for the May 13 events. The businessmen were accused of being members of Akromiya, and of engaging in activities aimed at undermining the government. The entrepreneurs, who were arrested in during the summer of 2004, adamantly denied any affiliation with a radical Islamic group. They admitted to being devout in their religious practices, while contending that they were being prosecuted because local authorities felt threatened by the entrepreneurs' popularity within the local community. A source, who spoke to EurasiaNet on condition of anonymity due to fear of government retribution, said the trial of the 23 businessmen was directly linked to a May 2004 shuffle of the provincial governor, or hokim. At that time, the Andijan's regional legislature impeached Andijan's long-time hokim, Kobiljon Obidov, and replaced him with Saydullo Begaliyev. The reshuffle was widely believed to be engineered by Karimov. The 23 entrepreneurs had close personal ties to Obidov, according to the source. (...) In recent years, however, a series of scandals and protests removed the luster from Obidov's star. (...) The new hokim, Begaliyev, had close political ties to the central government. Prior to coming to Andijan, Begaliyev had served as minister of agriculture and water. In late 2004, Karimov appointed Begaliyev's successor as agriculture and water minister, Ikromkhon Nazhmiddinov, as the governor of Ferghana Province. The moves suggest that Karimov was intent during the last half of 2004 on boosting his political influence over the restive Ferghana Valley. (...) Once installed in Andijan, Begaliyev wasted little time in launching a purge of all Obidov allies. "Criminal proceedings were started against many of his [Obidov's] administration members," the source said. "The new hokim also decided to re-divide the businesses in the province; he cracked down on the entrepreneurs who had been supported by Obidov. They were told to sell their businesses for a pittance either to him [Begaliyev] or his people, or face legal proceedings." When the 23 businessmen tried to resist, the hokim ordered their arrest, the source said. They were officially charged with being members of Akromiya, and engaging in extremist activities. (...)

The 23 entrepreneurs had a reputation for being fair employers, offering comparatively high wages to those working in their businesses. They were also active in a variety of charitable endeavors, providing assistance to the poor. This gained them a large body of supporters, including employees and their families (...).

EurasiaNet, (<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav092905.shtml>), 29/09/05

UK troops for Afghanistan

Thousands of British troops are likely to be deployed to fight terrorists and drug barons in the volatile south of Afghanistan next year, Defence Secretary John Reid said yesterday on a whirlwind tour to the country. Mr Reid, pictured, outlined hopes to send a "sizeable" number of soldiers into the Helmand region to bolster efforts to seek out al Qaida-linked fighters and take on powerful warlords behind the world's largest heroin market.

The Journal, 1/10/05

Afghan minister says chemicals for heroin production imported from Pakistan

Deputy Interior Minister, responsible for narcotic affairs, Gen Mohammad Daud told a news conference in Tajikistan that smugglers from Pakistan are importing chemicals for heroin production in Afghanistan. Gen Daud has travelled to Tajikistan to assess the border security of the Afghan-Tajik border and ways of fighting poppy cultivation in the border areas. The deputy minister said that the government of Afghanistan is ready to cooperate with all the neighbouring countries in banning drug trafficking and the imports of chemicals from Pakistan for heroin production. He added that the Afghan Interior Ministry has signed a memorandum of understanding with Tajik officials on the reinforcement of security at the border.

BBC Monitoring South Asia [Source: Television Afghanistan], 1/10/05

Russian expert: main threats to Russia's security come from Central Asia

The main threats to Russia's security now come from the Central Asia region, first of all Afghanistan, a Russian military expert said Sunday. The Defense Ministry is concerned over the drug trafficking problem, over heroin coming in big amounts from Afghanistan somehow bypassing international forces, the expert said. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said earlier Afghan drug cartels would have produced over 500 metric tons of heroin in 2005, and its total turnover would be worth more than \$30 billion, part of which would be used to finance terrorism. Ivanov proposed that NATO cooperate with antiterrorist Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) members which also include Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Ria Novosti, 2/10/05

Afghan farmers sell daughters to pay debts to traffickers

Afghan farmers prevented from growing poppies under a British-led eradication programme have been forced to hand over their daughters to drug traffickers to settle their debts, according to reports from Afghanistan. The latest claims come from Nangahar province, which has been held up by the British, put in charge of the fight against opium in Afghanistan, as their biggest success. Opium cultivation fell by 96 per cent there this year, part of a 21 per cent fall nationwide. But farmers are now coming forward to say that the forced loss of their poppy crop has left them unable to repay debts to drug traffickers who lent them money to buy the seeds. In desperation, they have had to turn to a traditional Afghan practice in which a family can pay off its debt by handing over a daughter to a relative of the creditor.

The Independent, 3/10/05

Seizures and Arrests

Almost half a ton of heroin seized in southern Afghan province

Counter-narcotics force in the southern Helmand Province on Sunday seized 450 kg of opium during an operation. Provincial police chief, Col Abdur Rahman Sabir, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the cache was recovered from houses in Tortaink, Safian, Karatalagan and Bushran villages. The officer added that the opium was torched on the spot. No one has been arrested. It is pertinent to recall that security officials had seized 470 kg of opium in the Baramchi area of the province some time back.

BBC Monitoring South Asia [Source: Pajhwok Afghan News], 26/09/05

Major opium haul in southern Afghan province

Security officials said they had recovered 650 kg of opium from a house in the Nozad District of southern Helmand. Haji Mohiuddin, secretary to the governor, told Pajhwok Afghan News on Wednesday, that police raided the house of Abdol Hakim Khan in Gini village and recovered the opium. He said the owner of the house managed to escape [and] the seized narcotics had been send to Lashkargah.

BBC Monitoring South Asia [Source: Pajhwok Afghan News], 28/09/05

Heroin seized after Tajik-Afghan border clash

Law-enforcement officers and servicemen of the State Border Protection Committee of Tajikistan have foiled an attempt to cross the Tajik-Afghan border. The Tajik Interior Ministry has told Avesta that three unidentified people tried to cross the state border in a section guarded by the Khorugh border detachment [in southeastern Tajikistan]. As a result of an armed clash, one border violator was killed and two others escaped to the neighbouring territory. A Kalashnikov assault rifle with 28 bullets and a sack containing over 2 kg of heroin, over 6 kg of hashish and 0.5 kg of cannabis were found at the scene of the incident during the search.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia [Text of report: Avesta], 29/09/2005

Illicit drug operations at border gates of Kapikule and Ipsala

Customs officials seized 400 kilograms of heroin, 292,000 Captagon and 293,000 Ecstasy pills at northwestern Kapikule and Ipsala border gates in the first nine months of 2005. The officials seized the heroin and the pills in the X-ray searches and also with the help of sniffer dogs in the vehicles passing through Kapikule and Ipsala border gates.

Anadolu Agency, 29/09/05

La police de l'Altai et de l'Extrême-Orient Russe a demantelé une filière de trafic de drogue en provenance du Kazakhstan

Les employés des antennes du Service antidrogue fédéral pour les territoires de l'Altai et de l'Extrême-Orient russe ont procédé à une opération conjointe mettant un terme aux activités d'une filière internationale de trafiquants de drogue qui se spécialisait dans les transports clandestins d'opium dans le territoire du Primori en provenance du Kazakhstan. Un lot de stupéfiants particulièrement gros, de 120 kg, a été saisi.

ITAR-TASS French Language Service, 29/09/05

Tajik guards seize over 30 kg of heroin on Afghan border

About 60 kg of drugs were seized on the Tajik-Afghan border last night, the Tajik Interior Ministry has told Asia-Plus. The ministry said several people had tried to illegally cross the state border from Afghanistan not far from the Hasanov community in Farkhor [southern Tajikistan]. According to the statement, the smugglers managed to escape to the neighbouring territory [Afghanistan], leaving at the scene of the incident about 60 kg of drugs, over 30 kg of which was heroin.

BBC Monitoring Central Asia [Source: Asia-Plus], 30/09/05