



COUNTRY FACTSHEETS, EURASIAN NARCOTICS:

ARMENIA 2004

General Information

Population: 3,2 million
 UNDP Human Development Ranking: 82 out of 177 countries
 TI Corruption Indicator Ranking: 3,1 (0 highly corrupt, 10 highly clean)

Armenia is used as a transit point for illicit drugs, mainly opium and cannabis. It has the potential of becoming a secondary drug transit route with the opening of borders to Azerbaijan and Turkey in the event of a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Hemp and opium grow wild in small areas in the northern part of the country and is used for domestic consumption. However during recent years, domestic consumption of opiates has increased, suggesting an increasing availability of Afghan opiates, which may lead to an increase in HIV and AIDS and drug-related crimes in the country. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Armenian economy was one of those hardest hit.



Smuggling of Drugs

Infrastructure is weak, but with improved transportation routes, and the potential opening of borders, which were closed during the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia has due to its strategic location the potential to become one of main drug transit routes in the Caucasus. Armenia is currently occupying 20% of Azerbaijani territory, including the secessionist enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and parts of Azerbaijan's southern borders with Iran, which is an important route for trafficking heroin into Europe. Seizures are small and similarly to many post-Soviet societies, corruption is rampant; the ministry of interior and other law enforcement bodies are allegedly heavily involved in drug smuggling, which led to the decrease in reporting drug offences in the last few years. Hence if for example 453 cases were reported in 2002, only 368 cases were reported in 2003. Most cases were reported in Yerevan, Shirak marz, Syunik marz and Lori marz. Cases revealed close links between the law enforcement bodies and criminal networks. Drugs enter Armenia through three transit routes. The two most important routes pass through Iran (opiates), and Russia and Georgia (opium, heroin and cannabis). Armenia's borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are closed, and thus heroin is trafficked to Turkey mainly via Georgia.

Health and Economic Aspects

Corruption: During the 1990s, corruption in Armenia was endemic. Civil servants and law enforcement agencies largely enjoyed impunity. Corruption within the law enforcement agencies was rampant. Armenia had not ratified the Council of Europe's Criminal and Civil Law Conventions on Corruption as well as the UN Convention against corruption. The activities of criminal gangs were tolerated by local police, border guards, and customs officers through the acceptance of bribes. Poverty and disillusionment with corruption within state authorities prevails in Armenian society. Criminal groups in Armenia have strong ties with Russia and to the Armenian communities abroad.

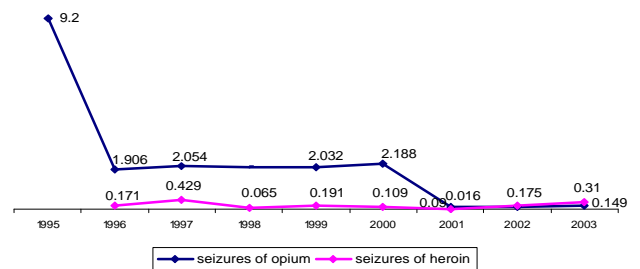
Money laundering: As in many parts of the former Soviet Union, the economy is largely cash-based, making it difficult to trace financial transactions, with approximately 40-70 percent of Armenia's GDP is in shadow economy. The largest part comes from tax evasion and laundering of money.

Drug abuse and HIV: Though information on HIV incidence is partial, there is clearly an alarming trend. The first HIV case was registered in 1988, and the first HIV infection among IDUs was registered in 1990. However, until 1999, sexual transmission was the most common way of contracting HIV and AIDS. This has reversed in the last few years and now, more than 50% of all new HIV/AIDS cases are related to intravenous drug use. 272 cases of HIV had been recorded in total during the period of 1988-2003. Based on a national HIV prevalence survey made in 2002, prevalence among drug users is 15%, whilst the rate amongst commercial sex workers is 3%.

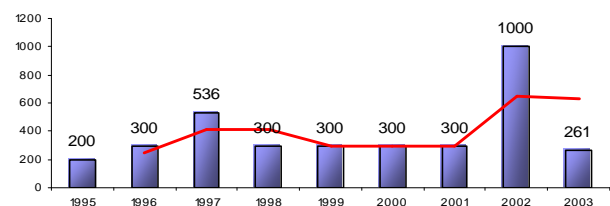
Political and Societal Aspects

Armenian officials point out that problem of organized crime in the country is far less developed in general and cannot in any way be compared to other parts of the CIS. Scarce financial and human resources limit the Police Service's ability to combat drug trafficking in the country. Although the Government has taken some measured steps to develop an anticorruption program, political will and concrete steps towards the implementation have been weak. Moreover, there is a potential threat that the problem of organized criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking could grow substantially in the future.

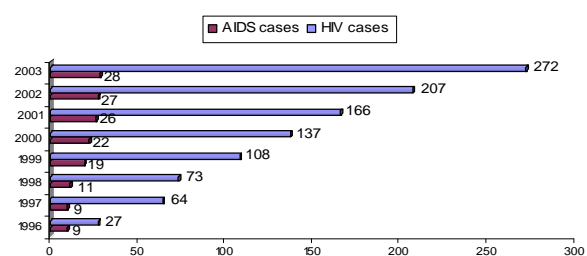
Opiate seizures (in kg)



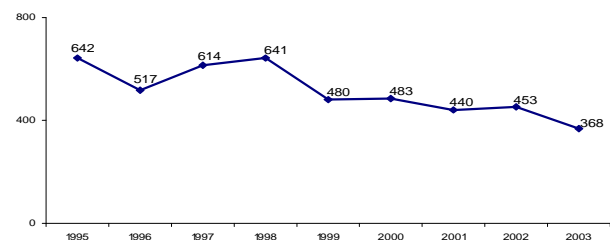
Registered drug users



Registered HIV/AIDS cases



Drug related crimes



Counter-Narcotics Efforts

State

In 2003, Armenia adopted an anti-corruption strategy and action program. This program is coordinated by an Anti-Corruption Council reporting to the president. It is yet early to judge about the outcome. There is a draft law on "Legislation to Combat Criminal Proceeds and Terrorism-Related Finances" which deals with anti-money laundering and should be seen as a major improvement in the legislative framework. Political will to achieve concrete results of these formal steps remain low. Armenia ratified the U.N. Protocols on International Crime and Trafficking in Persons in 2003.

In April 2002, Armenia adopted the "HIV/AIDS prevention programme" and established the National Inter-Ministerial Council on HIV/AIDS Prevention. In support of this effort, the government of Armenia has been granted US\$ 7.2 million from UNAIDS for the period 2002-2007.

Armenia has signed the 1988 UN Drug convention as well as other UN conventions. A law on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances closely follows the tracks of the UN conventions. It was signed by the president in February 2003. Armenian officials informed the mission that the country is planning to sign the UN Convention against Corruption during 2004.

Civil Society

As in other transitional societies the role of civil society groups in any such monitoring body is crucial. However there are some indicators stressed by UNODC on existence of disagreements between such groups as to the role they should play.

The health and care programs implemented by the national society include the campaign against intestinal parasites, campaigns against HIV/AIDS, TB and diarrhea, and the anti-pediculosis program. In 2002, two NGOs started working on counter-narcotics programs and continue to be very active in this area. Their assessment of the number of drug addicts in Armenia is much higher than official estimates.

Regional Cooperation

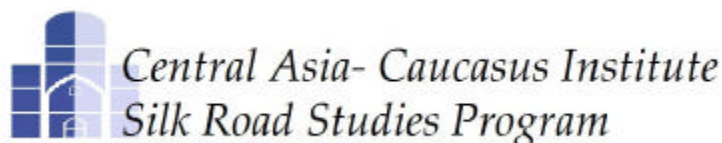
Armenia is a member of EU- and UN-sponsored regional cooperation network "South Caucasus Anti-Drug program" (SCAD). The South Caucasus Anti-Drug programme is a joint EU and UNDP programme implemented in the three South Caucasus countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) in an effort to support their efforts for combating drug trafficking and encouraging regional cooperation. The programme consists of legal assistance, border control, intelligence as well as demand and harm reduction through trainings and education. The budget for Armenia is approximately 950,000 Euros. The third phase of SCAD was launched in March 2003.

International

Armenia is a signatory to most of the major conventions related to drug control including the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotics, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1989 UN Convention on Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Compared with the other countries in the South Caucasus, Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenia has not been a principal route for drug smugglers. Although being a party to the 1998 UN Drug Convention and all other major drug treaties, the political will in the country to implement these remains weak.

In Armenia, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe together with the UNODC has conducted trainings and workshops in 2003 in efforts to reform the Armenian police force and combat money-laundering and organized crime.

Armenia participates in the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (BSEC) and is a signatory to the Agreement among the Governments of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation) BSEC) Participating States on Combating Crime, in particular in its organized forms. In 2003 Armenia was upgraded from a "Tier 3" country to a "Tier 2" country by the US State Department due to efforts to combat drug trafficking, resulting in the arrest of four persons in the United Arab Emirates associated with trafficking networks.



Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center

The Project on Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia

The Project on Narcotics, Organized Crime and Security in Eurasia is conducted by the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program. The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program form a Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center affiliated with the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC; and the Departments of East European Studies and Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Sweden.

Latest publications:

Niklas L.P. Swanström, "Multilateralism and Narcotics control in Central Asia", *CEF Quarterly*, the journal of the China-Eurasia Forum, February 2005.

Niklas L. P. Swanström and Maral Madi, "International Cooperation Against Drug Trafficking, in Central Asia," *United Nations: Multilateralism and International Security*, in C. Uday Bhaskar et. al., eds, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses & SHIPRA Publications, 2005.

Svante E. Cornell, "Stemming the Contagion: Regional Efforts to Curb Afghan Heroin's Impact", *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 6 no. 1, Winter/Spring 2005.

Kairat Osmonaliev, *Developing Counter-Narcotics Policy in Central Asia: Legal and Political Dimensions*, Silk Road Paper, January 2005.

Svante E. Cornell, *Narcotics, Radicalism and Security in Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*, East European Studies Working Paper no. 84, December, 2004.

Maral Madi, "Drug Trade in Kyrgyzstan: Structure, Implications and Countermeasures", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 23, No 3-4, December, 2004.

Database:

The current version of the database contains information on illegal drugs and related issues in Central Eurasia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), Russia and the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan). These countries are the primary focus at Silk Road Studies. The database can be accessed at www.silkroadstudies.org/drugsdatabase.htm

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