



COUNTRY FACTSHEETS, EURASIAN NARCOTICS

KAZAKHSTAN 2004

General Information

Population: 15,403,000 (UN)
 UNDP Human development index ranking: 78 (out of 177 states)
 TI Corruption indicator: 2.2 (0 highly corrupted, and 10 highly clean)

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan became a major transit country for illicit drug trafficking originating from Afghanistan heading to Russian and European consumption markets. In addition to this role, the country has also become a growing consumer of heroin, as well as a significant source of cannabis cultivation for CIS markets. According to UNODC, in 1998 an estimated minimum of 1,517 tons of cannabis was harvested. Judging from the seizures of opiates in Kazakhstan, heroin trafficking is on the rise. The number of drug users is also on an upward trend. Despite the government's efforts against drug trafficking, widespread corruption continues to be a major obstacle to effective counter-narcotics activities.

Smuggling of Drugs

Kazakhstan is attractive to traffickers because it sits between the major heroin-producing regions of Southwest Asia and major markets in the former Soviet Union and Europe. Heading from Afghanistan, traffickers traditionally follow a route through Turkmenistan into Kazakhstan reaching the Aktau port on the Caspian Sea. However, new smuggling routes have also been identified from Afghanistan and Tajikistan passing through Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan into Russia. This traffic is especially viable due to the customs union of Kazakhstan with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Transportation of sealed goods across the borders of these four countries is not subject to any serious inspection as they are treated as domestic cargo. In the last few years, there has been a substantial rise in the amount of heroin smuggled through Kazakhstan, relative to opium. In 2001 Kazakh authorities seized 137 kg of heroin versus 36 kg of opium. The 1,320 cases of drug trafficking and seizures of 18 metric tons of narcotics – an amount reported to be only a small fraction of the volume of narcotics transiting Kazakhstan – hint at the efforts being made by major international drug trafficking groups to accelerate drug smuggling through Kazakhstan.

Health and Economic Aspects

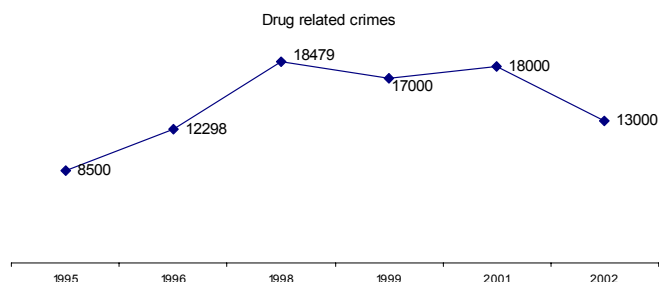
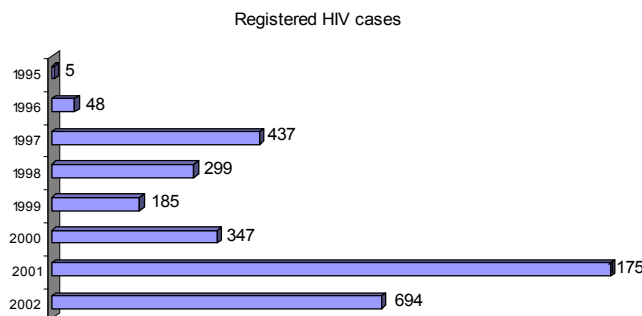
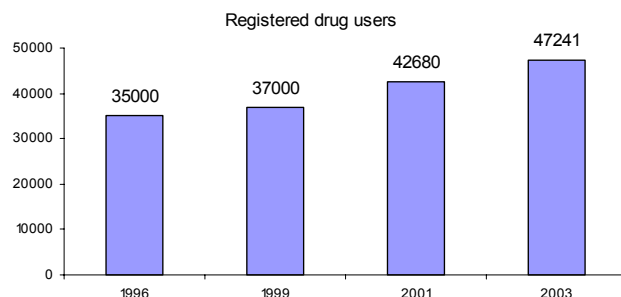
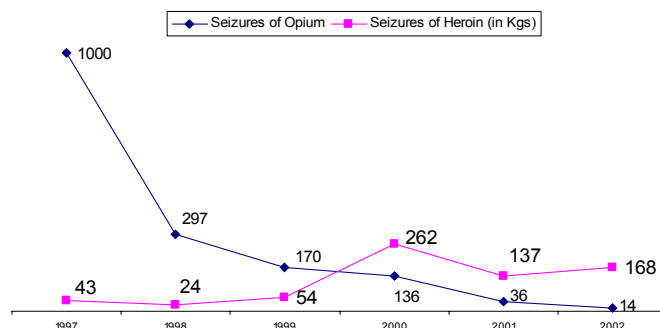
Corruption: Corruption has become an acute problem in Kazakhstan. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for the country worsened in 2004, falling from 2.4 to 2.2. Despite an increase in corruption-related arrests in 2003, the issue continues to be a serious problem both within the government and in the law enforcement community. Most importantly, high levels of corruption in the customs service greatly undermine efforts to counter drug trafficking. In December 2003, a special unit was established under the Ministry of Interior to deal with this problem.

Money laundering: In 1993 Kazakhstan began implementing a comprehensive structural reform program aimed at moving towards a market economy. At the moment the country has a relatively well-developed banking system compared to the other countries in the region, and this increases its vulnerability to money laundering and related corruption. In October 2004 the IMF released a damning report on Kazakhstan's progress in bringing its anti-money laundering legislation into line with its obligations.

Drug abuse and HIV epidemics: In parallel with the rising levels of trafficking, drug use continues to increase, particularly among women. By 2002 the number of drug users registered in rehabilitation services numbered over 45,000. However, according to official estimates, 3% of the Kazakh population injects drugs. This has alarming implications for the spread of HIV/AIDS. Kazakhstan has a reported HIV/AIDS prevalence (0,14%) that is higher than its four neighbouring countries. The first case was reported in 1987. By 2003 the number of reported HIV infections reached 3511, although some 23000 people are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. 84% of all infected are injecting drug users. There is a high level of misinformation and stigma concerning HIV and suicide is a significant cause of mortality among infected people.

Political and Societal Aspects

Increasing drug trafficking contributes to a rise in drug-related crimes. In the last decade, the share of drug-related crimes as a proportion of total crime increased from 3% to 12%. Between 1991 and 1999 the total number of the drug related crimes increased by a factor of 4.3. Despite a registered decline in 2002, the U.S. International Narcotics Control Strategy Report noted a 15% increase in drug related crimes in 2003. There has also been an increase in organized white collar crime, notably the laundering of drug money. Women have started playing a more important role in the drug trafficking business and since 1996 their involvement has increased from 3 percent to 12.2%.



Counter-Narcotics Efforts

State

Kazakhstan is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. The government passed the Law on Medical and Social Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts in 1998, establishing drug rehabilitation centers and counter narcotics programs in prisons and public schools. In 2000, President Nazarbayev approved a three-stage counter-narcotics strategy covering the period 2001-2005. This strategy sets three major objectives: strengthening preventive, diagnosis and treatment systems for drug addiction and establishing rehabilitation systems for addicts; strengthening counteraction mechanisms against drug trafficking; and developing international cooperation. In 2001 the Majlis (lower house of Parliament) approved amendments to the penal code that increased the terms for narcotics offenses from 5-12 years to 7-15 years of imprisonment. The new code also allows the confiscation of property for possession of large quantities of drugs. The government also placed controls over a wide range of equipment that might be used for the production of illegal narcotics and precursors. The government plans to open twenty-five new border posts, fifteen for searching trucks and ten for searching trains. In 2003 the Programme on "Medical Treatment and Prevention of Drug Addiction" and the Law on Medical and Social Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts were approved.

In 2001 the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Medical and Social Problems of Drug Addiction was opened in Pavlodar city to serve as the country's main medical, clinical and scientific center specializing in drug abuse. Additionally, in 2002 a Commission on Counteracting Drug Addiction and Drug Trafficking was established, bringing together representatives from 13 disparate counter-narcotics agencies at the national, regional and local level. The government of Kazakhstan reports that a dog-training center has been established within the customs office and a similar center within the Ministry of Interior is being strengthened.

Civil Society

Since 2001 the large increase in the number of drug users and related HIV infections has been most notable in the 15-19 age group. This has prompted authorities to work with teachers and schools in order to educate children about the dangers of drugs. NGOs and government agencies work to explain the dangers of drug abuse, but it would seem that these efforts have been largely ineffective. Drug treatment centers have also initiated formal follow-up programs for those completing drug rehabilitation, to prevent recidivism. The course

"Preventive measures against the use of harmful substances" has become a part of the academic curriculum in all higher educational institutions and lectures and seminars on the dangers of smoking, alcoholism and drug addiction are regularly conducted.

Regional cooperation

Kazakhstan has entered into several regional cooperative agreements related to issues of border control, fighting drug trafficking and regulating controlled deliveries. In 1998 the government signed two agreements with Russia regarding border controls and drug trafficking. In 2003 Kazakhstan participated with other CIS states (Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan) in a joint operation that netted 116 kilos of heroin and 168 kilos of opium. Kazakhstan participates in the EU Border Management Programme for Central Asia (BOMCA), implemented by the UNDP. The country is also participating in the establishment of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC), which is planned to serve as a regional center for communication, analysis and exchange of operational information related to cross-border crime and for coordination of joint operations.

International

Kazakhstan is a party to numerous regionally-based drug control agreements initiated by the Economic Cooperation Organization, United Nations Development Programme and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Kazakhstan has also participated in "Operation Containment", a regional effort launched in 2002 and led by the United States' Drug Enforcement Agency to intercept drugs flowing out of Afghanistan. In 2001 the program "Prophylactics of HIV in Central Asia" was initiated in Kazakhstan through the joint efforts of the Open Society Institute and USAID, incorporating the Soros Foundation of Kazakhstan and the national Soros Foundations of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, as well as the UNDP representative in Turkmenistan. In March 2003 President Nazarbayev approved the Narcotic Assistance Program Letter of Agreement, signed with the US in December 2002. The US will be working with the National Forensics Laboratory, the Ministry of the Interior and the Border Guards to provide equipment and training related to counter-narcotics. In 2004 a conference was organized in Almaty on "Strategic planning of association of organizations working with questions of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse".

Related publications by the Silk Road Studies Program and the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute

Database of the Narcotics, Organized Crime, and Security in Eurasia Project:

The current version of the database contains statistics and information on illicit drugs and related issues in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) Russia, the and Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan).
<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/drugtrade.htm>

Publications: (View these and more online at <http://www.silkroadstudies.org> and <http://www.cacianalyst.org>.)

- "Stemming the Afghan Heroin Industry in Central and Southwest Asia", by Svante Cornell, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2004.
Stability and Security in Tajikistan: Drug Trafficking as a Threat to National Security, Silk Road Paper by Johan Engvall, December 2004.
Counter-Narcotics Policies and their Challenges in Central Asia, Silk Road Paper by Kairat Osmonaliev, November 2004.
U.S. Afghanistan Policy: It's Working, CACI Occasional Paper by S. Frederick Starr, October 2004.
"Transnational Crime: the Neglected Threat", by Svante Cornell, *Axess*, September 2004.
Niklas Swanström and Svante Cornell, "Is Afghanistan's Opium Boom Reversible?", *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst*, 14 July 2004.

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SILK ROAD STUDIES
<http://www.silkroadstudies.org>

Gamla Torget 3, Box 514,
SE-75120 Uppsala, Sweden,
Tel. +46-18-471-6334; Fax. +46-18-695102;
mmadi@silkroadstudies.org

**CENTRAL ASIA-
CAUCASUS INSTITUTE**
1619 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel. 1-202-663-5922, Fax 1-202-663-7785
caci2@jhudig.admin.jhu.edu

