

## REGIONAL SECURITY

**AFGHANISTAN:  
DRUG TRAFFICKING AND  
REGIONAL SECURITY**

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It has been almost four years since the Taliban regime was overthrown in Afghanistan (an interim government was formed in June 2002) and the country began building a new state with direct assistance from the international anti-terrorist coalition. This gave the world community reason to hope that the new authorities, albeit not immediately, would be able to stem the flow of heroin pouring out of the country. After all, in the 1990s it became the leading opium drug producer in the world. Later, when the Taliban came to power, the situation took a dramatic turn for the worse. As follows from a report by the Vienna branch of the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime—UNODC<sup>1</sup>—published in 2003, between 1996 and 1999, the manufacture

of drugs in this country increased twofold. And these indices are more than 15-fold higher than during the time a limited contingent of Soviet troops was stationed in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, this state accounted for 70% of the world's opium production, while Myanmar's "contribution" amounted to 23%, Laos' to 4%, and Columbia's to 2%.

When the new forces came to power in the country, the situation in this business did not change. Getting the population of a country which had been cultivating opium poppy for more than 25 years to switch gears overnight and start growing agricultural crops proved a rather difficult task. For example, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime report published in December 2004 on the

<sup>1</sup> Before October 2002, it was called the U.N. Office on Drug Control and Crime Prevention.

<sup>2</sup> See: *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. An International Problem*, U.N., New York, 2003.

results of a survey of the drug situation in Afghanistan noted that this year the area on which opium is grown in the country has increased by two thirds, reaching an unprecedented 131,000 hectares (in 2003, it amounted to 80,000 hectares).<sup>3</sup> Precursors for processing opium into heroin and morphine are imported mainly from Pakistan, Thailand, Hong Kong, and India.

According to U.N. specialists, in 2004, at least 4,200 tons of raw opium were gathered in Afghanistan, although this index could have been much higher had not bad weather conditions interfered. According to the estimates, 420 tons of heroin would have been obtained from this poison,<sup>4</sup> that is, 87% of its world production, 11% more than in 2003.<sup>5</sup> But according to the U.S. State Department International Narcotics Control Strategy Report published in March 2005, opium poppy was planted on 206,700 hectares of land in Afghanistan and under favorable conditions its harvest could reach 4,950 tons.<sup>6</sup> From this same report it follows that the data Washington obtained as a result of a scientifically substantiated random survey of the agricultural regions of Afghanistan (with the use of American satellites) are much higher than those presented by the U.N.

The Central Asian republics are the countries which bear the main brunt of the influx of Afghan drugs. According to the region's experts, the situation will only get worse. For example, representatives of the Drug Control Agency under the Tajikistan President believe that due to the increase in planting areas in the northern provinces of Afghanistan, the expanded capacities of mini factories, and the creation of additional laboratories in which heroin is made, the production of drugs in this country in the next two years will increase by 20%. According to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, in 2003, the planting areas of

opium poppy in the Afghan province of Badakhshan alone, which borders on Tajikistan, increased by 55%.

This gives every reason to believe that the country is very quickly overcoming the consequences of the anti-opium policy conducted by the Taliban during the last years of its rule. In order to improve its image in the eyes of the world community, in 1999, Taliban leader mullah Omar banned the cultivation of poppy and the production of opium (but not its trade), as a result of which laboratories for manufacturing heroin were eliminated and plantations of the poison in its main cultivation areas were destroyed. In 2001, as a result of the punitive measures, 96% of the harvest of raw opium in the territory controlled by the Taliban was destroyed, leaving the miserly amount of 185 tons, which led to the world market shrinking by two thirds (traffickers were even forced to resort to the extreme measure of thinning down the commodity).

But the very year after the Taliban regime was overthrown, poppy plantations were found in 24 provinces (in 1999, they were found in 18). At present, a record increase has been noted in opium poppy plantations even in those territories where it did not used to be cultivated—now all 34 provinces in the country are engaged in this business (in 2003 there were 28).<sup>7</sup> But by and large opium poppy is cultivated in the southern (37%), eastern (28%), and northeastern regions (13%), and the contribution of three provinces—Nangarhar, Helmand, and Badakhshan—amounts to 56% of the drugs produced in the country.

According to U.N. data, in 2004, the income of local dealers from the export of drugs (opium, morphine, and heroin) was equal to 2.8 billion dollars (60% of Afghanistan's GDP).<sup>8</sup> Despite the growing risk of delivering the commodity generated by the anti-drug campaign in Afghanistan itself and the efficient measures undertaken by neighboring countries to intercept transit of the poison through their territory, an increase in the profit of drug couriers has been noted from

<sup>3</sup> See: *Afghanistan. Opium Survey 2004*, UNODC, November 2004, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> 10-15 kg of raw opium is required to produce 1 kg of heroin in underground laboratories and at mini factories.

<sup>5</sup> See: *Afghanistan. Opium Survey 2004*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> See: *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State, March 2005.

<sup>7</sup> See: *Afghanistan. Opium Survey 2004*, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> See: *World Drug Report 2005*, UNODC, Vol. 2, p. 181.

1.3 billion dollars in 2003 to 2.2 billion dollars in 2004. The income of the actual manufacturers, however, was no higher than 0.6 billion dollars. (For sake of comparison, in 1994-2000, the gross income from the sale of opium was equal to 150 million dollars a year.)

According to the UNODC Commission on Narcotic Drugs Report, which presented the results of field studies, an increasing number of peasants (despite the anti-drug policy conducted by the government) intend to grow this high-income plant. For example, such a survey conducted in October 2003 in the poppy-growing regions showed that more than 70% of the peasants plan to increase the planting areas in 2004 and only 4% were inclined to reduce them.<sup>9</sup>

The reasons for Afghanistan's transformation into an opium state are the following: the ongoing political instability, the absence of efficient state power, the degradation of agriculture and the economic infrastructure during the decade of hostilities, and the black market. The country's economy is undergoing collapse, irrigation and road systems have been destroyed, and the output of ordinary agricultural produce is being curbed due to the absence of granaries, markets, and a transportation network. The cultivation of opium does not encounter these difficulties, it is easy to store and transport (the only hindrance of course is the fight against drug trafficking).

Over the long years of opium poppy cultivation, the system for processing it has also been streamlined. There are currently more than 400 laboratories for manufacturing heroin in the country.<sup>10</sup> Until the mid-1990s, about 100 of them were situated in the border regions of Pakistan. The Taliban's victory made it possible to relocate these factories to Afghanistan, and drug dealers have created a superbly streamlined logistics system which makes it possible to provide the laboratories located even in the most inaccessible mountainous regions with a continuous supply of raw material.

<sup>9</sup> See: *World Drug Report 2005*, UNODC, Vol. 2, p. 206.

<sup>10</sup> See: McDonald M. "As Heroin Flourishes, So Could Terror," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 May, 2004.

Most of the poison is sold beyond the country, which is not hindered, but even helped by the weak central authorities and the transparency of the borders (see diagram). From the commercial viewpoint, the success of illegal Afghan opiates as a global commodity is impressive, which currently satisfies 100% of the demand of neighboring countries (primarily those which belong to the Economic Cooperation Organization—ECO), and 80-90% of the countries of Europe, Arabia, Africa, and South Asia (mainly India and Sri Lanka).

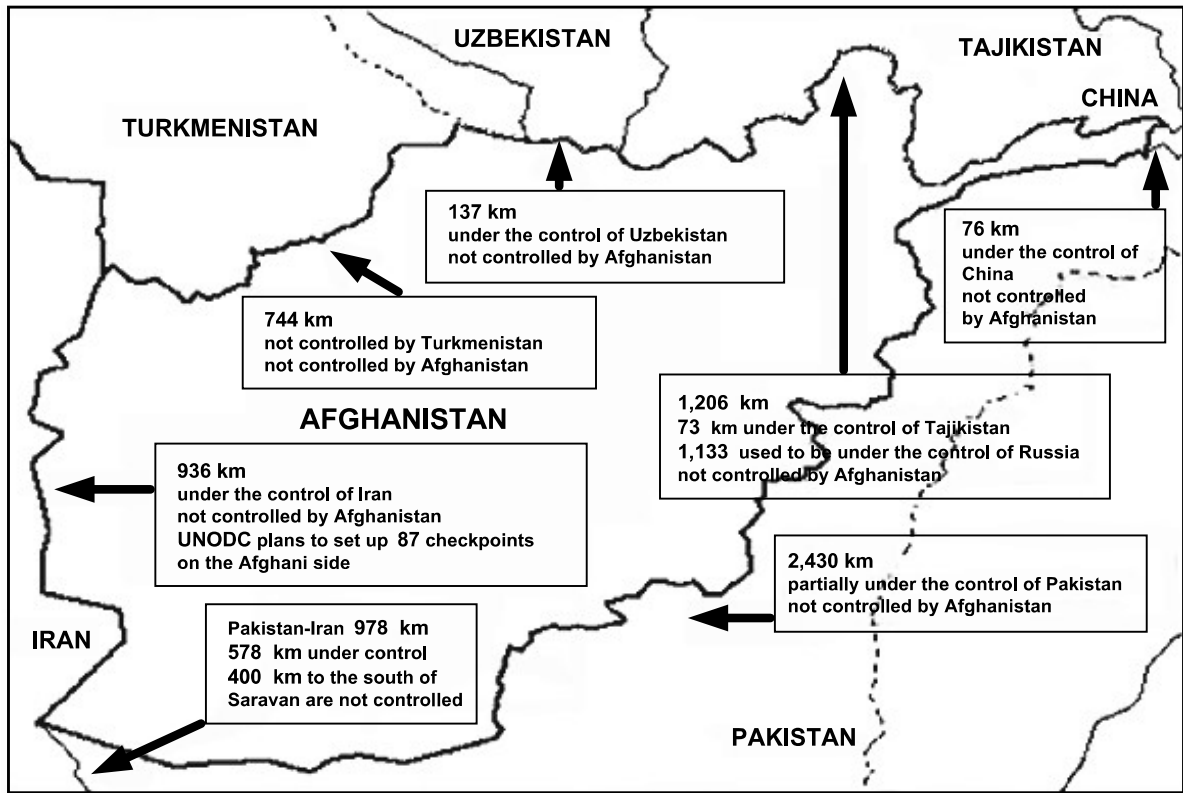
Drugs are exported in three main directions: via the northern route (through Central Asia and Russia), via the Balkan route (through Iran, Turkey, and the Balkans), and via the Pakistani route.<sup>11</sup> In so doing, a large portion "settles" in the transit states. As a result, the number of drug addicts has dramatically risen in the countries contiguous to Afghanistan. For example, in Pakistan, their numbers have reached 4 million people, and in Iran there are 1.25 million drug addicts. According to different estimates, over the past ten years, the number of drug addicts in the Central Asian republics has increased between 3- and 7-fold.<sup>12</sup>

Iran is waging an active war against drug trafficking, since around 40% of Afghan drugs pass through its territory (to Turkey, then on to Europe). During the past few years, huge concrete barricades have been erected, pits dug, and large army units and subdivisions of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps set up along the Iranian-Afghan border (which is more than 900 km in length). Nevertheless, numerous armed groups of Afghani and Iranian smugglers get into the country, and clashes on the border (with the use of firearms) have become chronic. According to official data, 3,200 Iranian policemen, border guards, and servicemen have been killed during these clashes over the past twenty years. But there is no hope of fully closing off drug traffic.

<sup>11</sup> See: Iu. Spirin. "Afganski geroin pod amerikanskim flagom," *Izvestia*, 11 March, 2005, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> See: V.P. Voitenko, "Ugroza narkotrafika iz Afganistana dlja evropeiskogo soobshchestva," *Pravo i bezopasnost*, No. 1 (10), March 2004.

### Protection of the Afghanistan Border



In 2004, around 200 tons of drugs were confiscated in Iran.<sup>13</sup>

The second largest flow of drugs (36%) goes through Pakistan (the transit point is the port of Karachi) mainly to the UAE and Europe. In Pakistan itself, the number of drug addicts is increasing yearly by 7% (0.5 million of them are occasional heroin users). In the 1970s-1980s, this country was one of the largest producers and suppliers of heroin: at the end of the 1970s, about 800 tons of drugs were manufactured there annually. But during the second half of the 1980s, the Zia ul Hak government carried out stringent measures to destroy this production, for which it even used aviation. And in 2000, the UNODC stated that as the result of implementing a 15-year program in the country, the manufacture of opium had essentially ceased and all the drugs had been destroyed. Pakistan was recognized by the U.N. as a state "free from the cultivation of opium poppy." But opium, morphine, and heroin are still coming into the country. Head of the Pakistan Interior Ministry Moinuddin Haider stated that over the past five years, 347 drug dealers have been executed and 167 were given life prison sentences. The police confiscated drugs amounting to 84 million dollars.<sup>14</sup> The swelling drug flow from Afghanistan in recent years led to the revival of heroin production in Pakistan. A significant role in the process is played by its Chitral Region. According to General Director of the Drug Control Foundation Nadim Akhmed, in 2003-2004, poppy plantations covered 6,694 hectares, on 78% of which the harvest was destroyed. In 2004, a special division of the Pakistani police confiscated 7,783 kg of heroin, 679 kg of raw opium, and 57,111 kg of hashish, and during approximately the first six weeks of 2005, 1,359 kg of opium, 1,654 kg of heroin, and 3,719 kg of hashish were intercepted.<sup>15</sup>

The northern route of Afghan drugs (24% of the entire circulation) passes through Afghan-

istan's border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

The largest confiscations from illicit circulation were noted on the Tajik-Afghan border. As drug production in Afghanistan rose so did the amount confiscated. Heroin was first confiscated in 1995, and since 1997, its confiscation has dramatically increased. In 2004, according to the Drug Control Agency under the Tajikistan President, more than 8 tons of drugs were removed from illegal circulation, 5.1 tons of them heroin and more than 2,315 kg of raw opium.<sup>16</sup> In 1998-2003 alone, 30 tons of drugs were confiscated in the republic, including more than 16 tons of heroin. Corresponding international structures highly evaluated the model of trilateral cooperation which has developed on this section of the border (among the Tajik authorities, Russian border guards, and the UNODC) for combating drug transit.

Keeping in mind the overall high level of corruption among Tajikistan's officials, many influential figures of whom are also involved in this business, a number of experts maintained that the withdrawal of Russian border guards from the republic would make its state borders essentially transparent. And now that this is an accomplished fact, up to 90% of Afghan heroin which crosses the Tajik-Afghan border will go to Russia. What is more, there is no reason to believe that its flow will dissipate in the near future. On the contrary, taking into account the trans-nationalization of the drug business which has begun in the region, we can forecast an abrupt increase in the illegal export of narcotics from Afghanistan.

In this way, it is obvious that the military presence of the antiterrorist coalition troops headed by the U.S. in the region has in no way broken down the structure of illegal production and transit of drugs streamlined by the Afghan drug mafia. Although specialists believe that the situation could be dramatically improved if this military contingent were used for its direct purpose, for example, to establish strict control over all the internal Afghan transportation corridors, that is,

<sup>13</sup> See: K. Kazeev, "Borba s narkotorgovlei," ITAR-TASS, 10 March, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> [<http://www.radiomayak.ru/archive/text?stream=abroad&item=10076>].

<sup>15</sup> See: "Afghan Drugs Trade Matter of Concern: Shaukat," *Pakistan Link*, 18 February, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> ITAR-TASS, 3 March, 2005.

to create checkpoints equipped with vehicle inspection devices on the roads. But as practice shows, the financial aid allotted by the international community for controlling drugs essentially does not reach the population living directly in the transit territory, for example, on both sides of the Tajik-Afghan border. Targeted distribution of these funds could help to intercept drug traffic.

In the meantime, Russia and the countries neighboring on Afghanistan are anxiously waiting to see what the 2005 opium poppy harvest will yield, which, according to preliminary estimates,

produced a record amount of 5,000 tons. Last winter there was a large amount of precipitation, which favored the abundant growth of this plant. Russia is particularly worried that the areas where poppy is grown are spreading more and more into the northeast provinces bordering on Tajikistan, primarily the Badakhshan Province, leading to an increase in drug traffic volume in Russia's direction. The situation, which is aggravated anyway, is being made even worse by the above-mentioned withdrawal from Tajikistan of the Russian military subdivisions engaged in defense of this border.

## Government Policy in the Struggle against Illicit Drug Circulation

The country's new administration undertook several measures called on to assist the fight against this national catastrophe. As early as January 2002, a decree was issued on banning the cultivation of opium poppy, in February, the National Drug Control Agency was created, and in April of the same year, a decree was issued on monetary compensation to peasants (500 dollars for every acre—0.4 hectares) who expressed their intention to destroy their poppy plantations.

But Hamid Karzai soon realized that it was a mistake to pay compensation for destroying the harvest, since most of this money did not go to the peasants, but went into the pockets of state officials. And on the contrary, after receiving the money, some opium producers continued to grow it. Compensation of the losses incurred from destroying their harvests frequently prompted peasants to increase the size of their poppy-growing areas. Attempts to reorient rural residents toward growing grain, for example, did not meet with an enthusiastic response, since the revenue from growing poppy is several times higher.

Then Kabul announced it was launching a campaign to eliminate poppy plantations. But this decree came out after the fields had already been sown. What is more, the dealers' high prices had already taken their toll, as a result of which Afghanistan retrieved its title of the world's main opium manufacturer. In several provinces—Nangarhar, Helmand, Uruzgan, and others, armed clashes were noted between the peasants growing opium poppy and the police squadrons coming to destroy their fields. In Jalalabad (the administrative center of the Nangarhar Province), an attempt to put pressure on drug manufacturers almost cost Defense Minister General M.K. Fakhim his life, on whom an assassination attempt was made on 8 April, 2002. A significant decrease in areas planted with poppy (by 63%) was noted only in the Vardak Province (data for 2004).<sup>17</sup>

Thus the new authorities encountered resistance from the peasants when trying to oppose the cultivation of opium poppy. Although a different reaction was hardly to be expected. First, due to the hostilities which have been going on for such a long time, there are essentially no jobs in the country. Second, conditions have not been created which might encourage the peasants to give up planting this crop. Third, the Karzai government acknowledges that if it begins a large-scale campaign against drug

<sup>17</sup> *Afghanistan. Opium Survey 2004.*

manufacturers and drug dealers, Afghanistan could find itself embroiled in yet another internecine armed conflict, which, of course, is absolutely unacceptable. Since the end of the civil war, during which farm land was abandoned or turned into waste ground, and due to long years of severe drought, opium poppy has become the only means of survival for the impoverished peasants. There are also several other reasons encouraging peasants to grow it.

- Extensive areas are not needed to cultivate it, in 2000, they amounted to only 0.9% of the country's plough land. Even in villages which are fully orientated toward growing poppy no more than 8% of this land is used.
- Opium does not require as large investments of labor and capital as the planting of wheat, rice and other crops.
- Poppy is best suited to Afghanistan's dry climate. It does not have to be grown on irrigated fields, although of course irrigation yields larger amounts. It is a simple crop which does not require special care and produces a stable harvest (on average 45 kg per hectare, compare—
- Poppy brings in much more revenue than other crops—4,600 dollars per hectare, whereas wheat generates only 390 dollars. In 2003, this difference was much higher (12,700 and 470 dollars, respectively). Whereas a peasant receives between 600 and 1,000 dollars for 1 kg of opium, he gets only 1 dollar for 1 kg of rice.

The problem of Afghan drugs is multifaceted in nature. Executive Director of UNODC Antonio Maria Costa noted: "The entire economy, the entire social fabric of Afghan society is imbued with the drug problem. Just as people can be drawn to drugs, so the governments are drawn to the drug economy." The drug business is pushing out the legal spheres of economic activity: before the beginning of the civil war, peasant farms produced more than 80% of the foodstuffs consumed in the country, now they only produce up to 60%.<sup>18</sup> Drugs are also having a significant influence on the military-political situation. An impressive stratum of drug barons has formed in the country, among whom warlords dominate. Money from the drug business is used to finance their armed detachments and to swell their personal coffers. Many warlords have ties not only with representatives of the local administration, but also with certain officials in the central state structures, which is giving rise to unprecedented corruption. The Taliban leaders, as well as Osama bin Laden, also have a certain share in the drug business and also use these funds to finance their own armed detachments. It is highly likely that the Afghan drug dealers are closely associated with the international drug mafia network.

Alexander Baranov, former commander of the Russian border group in Tajikistan, believes that the armed formations of the Afghanistan government and foreign subdivisions are only controlling the situation in the country on a pro forma basis. At present, an armed opposition has essentially formed there, which is putting up resistance to the government and international forces, particularly in the southern and southeastern provinces. These forces are striving to create support bases which will make it possible to engage in large-scale partisan action in the northern border provinces too—Kunduz, Takhar, and Badakhshan, from where attempts to illegally send drugs over the border are unceasing. It can be presumed that the opposition forces are being financed by means of opium and heroin trade.

The increase in the number of drug addicts (0.5% of adults use opium and 0.1% heroin)<sup>19</sup> is also becoming a problem for Afghanistan, although it is not as significant as in its neighboring countries.

<sup>18</sup> See: V. Korgun, "Afganskije narkotiki—glavnaia ugroza Rossii i Tsentralnoi Azii" [<http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1113768840>].

<sup>19</sup> See: P.-A. Chouvy, M. Koutouzis, A. Labrousse, *Afghanistan and Narcotraffic, Paper for Ministerial Conference on the Drug Routes from Central Asia to Europe*, Paris, 21-22 May, 2003.

But intensive marginalization of the population might rapidly lead to the use of heroin becoming a mass phenomenon, particularly in the northern provinces.

In October 2004, Afghanistan's re-elected president Hamid Karzai said that drugs threaten the country's political and economic security more than the Taliban and al-Qa'eda, and the fight against them will become a priority of his government's policy. And in December, the post of deputy minister responsible for drug control was instituted in the Interior Ministry, and a Ministry for Drug Control Issues (to replace the former Agency) was also created. What is more, the destruction of opium poppy plantations was to be assisted by armed units and the police.

At the beginning of 2005, the government approved the Drug Business Combat Plan, which envisaged developing alternative forms of agriculture, creating special anti-drug force structures and judicial bodies, destroying poppy plantations, reducing the demand for opium, treating drug addicts, and encouraging regional cooperation. The timeframe for implementing this program was 10 years, but by 2008, the production of drugs was to be decreased by 75%.<sup>20</sup> Deputy Interior Minister General Mohammad Daud was to be responsible for implementing this Plan. Incidentally, the work already carried out in this sphere is quite impressive: in 2004, special drug control forces confiscated 80 tons of opium, destroyed 75 laboratories, and closed several drug markets, including two large ones near Kandahar and Jalalabad.<sup>21</sup>

In an interview with the Integration Regional Information Networks Agency, head of the Afghanistan anti-drug department Habibulla Kaderi noted that poppy-growing areas had shrunk by 30-50%.<sup>22</sup> Admittedly, this contradicts the data of Deputy Interior Minister General Daud, whose anti-drug squadrons destroyed 14,800 hectares of plantations between December 2004 and March 2005, and declared 2005 the year for eliminating all opium plantations. According to the official statistics, during the first few months of 2005, 70% of the opium plantations in Nangarhar were destroyed, 50% of those in Helmand, and 60% in Badakhshan,<sup>23</sup> which, however, is extremely doubtful.

The U.S. State Department presents a more realistic evaluation of the situation. Its experts believe that if the areas in Afghanistan where poppy is planted decrease by at least 15,000 hectares in 2005, this will be a good result.<sup>24</sup>

## International Aid

Immediately after the Taliban regime was overturned, the world community began rendering Afghanistan extensive aid, the goal of which was to restore its economy and fight the drug business. The principles and amounts of aid in these spheres were discussed at numerous international conferences. For example, at the meeting of representatives of sponsor countries (Berlin, March 2004), a decision was made to allot official Kabul 8 billion dollars over the next three years. The U.S. assumed responsibility for building the state apparatus and armed forces, Germany for creating a police service, and Great Britain for fighting drug trafficking.

In so doing, London singled out two areas, training the local security officials in how to fight the illicit circulation of drugs and developing alternative forms of agriculture, but both tasks ended in a fiasco. After pondering on how to involve the local customs and police officers in fighting the drug

<sup>20</sup> See: "Afghanistan Launches Poppy Eradication Force," *Kabul, AFP*, 2 February, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> See: "The Fight against Narcotics Is On and Will Continue Unabated Until a Narcotics-Free Afghanistan," *Presidential Palace Press-Release*, 2 March, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> The Integrated Regional Information Networks Agency (IRIN) covers the humanitarian activity of various U.N. organizations and charity missions in the countries of Asia, Africa, and Iraq.

<sup>23</sup> See: "Afghanistan Seeks World Support to Fight Drug," *Kabul, Xinhua*, 5 September, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> See: *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, p. 52.



business, the British organized two-week training courses for them. But their students proved to be either destitute peasants, or ... petty militants hoping to legalize themselves under the new regime. It stands to reason that it was essentially impossible to reliably check the latter for their involvement in drug trafficking. After attending the short courses on how to detect the poison and identify drug dealers, they not only obtained weapons, they were also essentially no longer under the patronage of the British. The plans to transfer Afghanistan to alternative forms of agriculture did not materialize either. London hoped that the local peasants would switch from growing opium poppy to planting wheat, corn, apricots, and grapes with international aid. But due to the vast difference in profitability between this illegal plant and the legal crops, the production of opium, to put it mildly, is not declining. Nor did the money loans for developing peasant farms change the situation. Not only did no one intend to return them, some of these funds, as Russian observers working in Afghanistan believe, went to develop ... drug manufacture. According to the RF Foreign Intelligence Service, many representatives of the Afghan official elite, governors, and even members of the government have direct ties with the drug business, since it is they who are in charge of distributing all the financial aid sent to the country by the world community. The lion's share of these funds fell into the hands of dummy dealers. Then this money nevertheless went to the peasants in the form of loans, but what did they do with it ... purchased opium poppy seeds.

Acknowledging their own mistakes, the British decided to reduce the funds going to the alternative economy project, whereby even in cases when peasants really did begin growing wheat, corn, and other legal crops. But due to the infrastructure destroyed by the war and the lack of transportation vehicles and roads, the peasants are simply unable to transport these goods further than the next village and sell them for decent prices. As a solution to the problem, the British initiated the adoption of a special program to develop Afghanistan's transportation system.

According to British Minister of International Development Hilary Benn, the total amount of aid granted to official Kabul for 2002-2007 will amount to 500 million pounds Sterling. It is envisaged that this money will mainly go to strengthening the country's security (on its southern and eastern borders) and to fight drug trafficking. But it is obvious that Great Britain is not coping with the task it has taken on.

Nor did the Afghan government repeated requests for assistance to the U.S. bring the desired results. Each time, the Americans said that drug control was not one of their functions, the United States' main task was to fight the Taliban and al-Qa'eda, and drugs were the responsibility of Great Britain. What is more, Washington decided to ignore the activity of the warlords related to the drug business, since it wanted to use them in its fight against the terrorists. For example, during almost all of his trips to Afghanistan, U.S. Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld met with the most influential warlords, many of whom are well known as drug mafia godfathers. The point of these meetings was clear: you help us fight the Taliban, and no one will interfere in your business. In this way, the White House, which had been watching the rapid increase of poppy plantations for several years, essentially rendered no help in intercepting the growing manufacture of drugs. The Russian special services tried repeatedly to establish cooperation with the Americans in this area, in particular, they provided them with up-to-date information on the whereabouts of large drug laboratories, heroin storehouses, and even the Afghan drug barons themselves. But these data were not used.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, the situation which developed in 2004 could not but help arouse Washington's concern, since Afghan heroin began threatening not only European countries, but also the U.S. itself. For example, whereas in 1999, 6% of the heroin consumed by Americans was of Afghan origin, in 2003, this index was already as high as 15%.<sup>26</sup> The United States was forced to become more involved

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<sup>25</sup> See: *Izvestia*, 28 August, 2003.

<sup>26</sup> See: *News International—Pakistan*, 31 August, 2003.

in the international efforts to fight Afghan drugs. Pentagon representative Peter Rodman said that drug trafficking corrupts all the Afghanistan government structures and without its most energetic destruction, it will be impossible to ensure security in this country. "We know that profits from the production of illegal narcotics flow into the coffers of warlord militias, corrupt government officials, and extremist forces," noted Rodman. And on another visit to Kabul in August 2004, U.S. Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld finally said that Washington was ready to make drug control one of the priority areas of its policy. Although not long before his visit, he told journalists that the Pentagon was still working on the "general plan" of its drug control operation in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> But the document, called the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, did not come out until March 2005.

American aid to Afghanistan has also increased. Whereas in 2004, Washington allotted 127 million dollars for this purpose, in 2005, U.S. Congress approved a decision to grant 780 million dollars. Implementation of a corresponding plan (along Columbian lines) was calculated for three years. One hundred and twenty million dollars of this amount are to be used to develop alternative forms of agriculture (the cultivation of grains, vegetables, and fruits). What is more, the money will be used to restore the irrigation system, repair roads, create a small loan system, and distribute the seeds of improved types of traditional crops and fertilizers among farmers.<sup>28</sup>

The first phase of this project began in Nangarhar, one of the largest opium-producing provinces. For example, there are plans to involve 50,000 local workers in restoring its irrigation channels and other economic infrastructure facilities. As a symbolic gesture, the U.S. government has already delivered the local peasants 500 tons of wheat seeds and 500 tons of fertilizer, which, admittedly, is only enough for 5-10% of the farmsteads.<sup>29</sup> The rest of the money will go to destroying opium poppy plantations and training security structures specializing in fighting the drug business. Whereby many American congressmen are also in favor of making more active use of the Pentagon's contingents deployed in Afghanistan to combat drug trafficking.

At the same time, official Kabul is also diversifying its search for means and methods to fight the drug business. For example, in August 2004, the peasants of several districts in the Nangarhar and Badakhshan provinces complained to the government that their fields were being sprayed with pesticides from the air, which was causing irreparable damage not so much to the opium plantations, as to people, domestic animals, and traditional agricultural crops. The suspicion fell on the Americans and British, who hurried to refute it. But it is unlikely that, since the Americans have complete air control, anyone else could have organized such undertakings. The matter became so serious that in December 2004, 32 international and Afghan organizations asked U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to take corresponding measures and stop the fields from being sprayed with pesticides.<sup>30</sup> Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai also came out against this practice.

As of the present, with U.S. and British assistance, a special drug control group of 1,000 people has been formed in Afghanistan. Six hundred of them are responsible for destroying opium poppy fields. By the end of 2005, according to preliminary data, their numbers increased to 2,300 people. But, according to the estimates of experts, the country needs at least 4,000 specialists to monitor and destroy opium poppy plantations and another 5,000 to guard the border.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, as paradoxical as it may seem, the Karzai government is against rapid elimination of the drug business, since a significant percentage of income from it goes into the country's econo-

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<sup>27</sup> See: K. Entekhabi-Fard, "The U.S. is Still Working on the General Plan of Afghan Drug Control," *Eurasianet.org*, 16 August, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> See: "Afghan Anti-drug Czar Says Opium Fight Needs Farm Subsidies. South Asia," *AFP*, 19 January, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> See: "Afghans Report Decline of Poppy Crop," *The Washington Post*, 2 August, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> See: P.R. Newberg, *A Drug-Free Afghanistan Not So Easy*, Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, 3 August, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> See: H. Kazem, "Crop Spraying Draws Controversy in Afghan Drug Fight," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 January, 2005.

my. “We should not rush to eliminate all the opium fields in one year,” said Narcotics Minister Habibulla Kaderi. “Otherwise we will lose 2.8 billion dollars, which we cannot allow, since this money goes into the economy.”<sup>32</sup> This illegal branch has so penetrated the country’s economic activity that if all international programs to eliminate drugs were implemented at the same time, the Afghan economy would go into a recession. What is more, accelerated elimination of opium poppy plantations which is not accompanied by providing the peasants who tend them with alternative sources of existence could lead to a dramatic increase in unemployment, starvation, and consequently overall discontent and destabilization of the situation. But at the same time, these measures will help to raise the price of the poison, which drug dealers and drug barons, who have accumulated large supplies of it at their warehouses, will profit from.

International experts have a very pessimistic view of the situation: in the next few years, there will be no changes in the fight against growing opium poppy, since the economic measures being undertaken by the Afghan government on this front are not promoting an improvement in the situation in agriculture. So according to their forecasts, peasants can be convinced not to grow poppy, but not for another 10-15 years. Well-known French drug specialist Alen Labrousse said in an interview right after the Taliban was overthrown that neutralization of drug traffic from Afghanistan would take a lot of time: “Until a sufficiently authoritative central government is established in Kabul, it will be impossible to control the situation involving drug manufacture.”<sup>33</sup> A recently published U.S. State Department report on the problem of drug control also talked about deterioration of the situation in this area.<sup>34</sup>

One thing is clear, the efforts of all the sides concerned—Russia, the Central Asian countries, Iran, Pakistan, European states, as well as the U.S., China, and India—must be joined to effectively combat Afghan drug trafficking. Drug trafficking is a world problem in the same ilk as global terrorism and poses a threat to all the countries of our planet.

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<sup>32</sup> A. Lobjakas, “Afghanistan: Anti-drug Minister Vows Action But Says Farmers Need Aid, Alternative Incomes,” *RFE/RL*, Brussels, 21 January, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> *Izvestia*, 12 October, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> See: *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*.