

**CENTRAL ASIA:
DRUGS AND CONFLICT**

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CENTRAL ASIA: DRUGS AND CONFLICT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problems associated with drugs in Afghanistan and Central Asia have steadily worsened over the past two decades. Opiates have fuelled conflict throughout the region and are likely to have been a significant source of financial support for terrorist organisations with a global reach. Afghanistan's neighbours – Iran, Pakistan and the Central Asian nations – all face serious security and social problems from trafficking and a vast expansion of drug use that represent serious impediments to peace and development.

Afghanistan is generally regarded as the world's largest exporter of heroin. In its fragmented and unstable environment, there are direct links between the drug business, arms purchases for the country's civil war and the activities of terrorists. Efforts to combat drug production, trafficking and use will have to be a major part of efforts to stabilise that country and the wider Central Asia region.

Limited attempts have been made to combat the problem over the past decade, mainly focusing on eradicating poppy fields and interdicting drugs before they leave Central Asia. There have been some successes, but Afghanistan continues to supply the world market, and drug use around the region itself is soaring.

Though opium had been grown in Afghanistan for many years, the scale of cultivation increased considerably during the Soviet-Afghan war. After the Soviet withdrawal and the cessation of military aid from the U.S. to the mujahedeen in 1991, there was a further dramatic increase in poppy cultivation. By the middle of the decade all the former Soviet Central Asian republics, as

well as Iran and Pakistan, were seeing steep increases in the amount of narcotics confiscated along their borders.

With a cheap and plentiful supply of opiates on their doorstep, Iran and Pakistan now have the largest proportion of drug users in the world. However, Central Asia is catching up. Across the region the drug trade has produced both a health epidemic and a weakening of political and legal institutions that is an additional obstacle to vital economic and political reforms.

Expanded interdiction efforts have resulted in low intensity conflict with drug traffickers that have deepened human rights and legal abuses. Tighter border controls have hindered trade and weakened already fragile economies.

The impact has been felt farther afield: directly in that Russia's new drug problem and Europe's older one are now substantially fed from Afghanistan; indirectly in that Afghan instability, the global implications of which have become clearer since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States, owes much to the country's drug problem.

Responses have mostly been limited in scope, funding and imagination. The U.S. has paid relatively little attention because it believes that Afghan drugs play only a small part in its own narcotics problem. The European Union and its member states have funded expanded interdiction programs through the United Nations but otherwise have done little to work with the countries of the region.

The concentration on interdiction has failed to stem the flow of drugs and may have worsened social

problems in a region already fraught with ethnic and religious tensions, border problems and severe poverty.

Interdiction also has had unanticipated side effects. Greater police and judicial powers create new opportunities for corruption and pack jails with those too poor to buy their way out. Border controls divide communities and stifle economic opportunities.

Reduction in supply often forces addicts to choose injecting over more expensive methods of taking drugs and thus fuels HIV infection from dirty needles.

There has also been little coordination of anti-drug efforts. Central Asian states, in particular Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, have often been unwilling even to seek regional solutions. Official complicity in the drugs trade is an additional complication.

Donor efforts have likewise suffered from a lack of coordination and a short-term mentality. Donors have tended to view drugs almost entirely as a policing issue with little consideration of broader development and security angles. Considerations of human rights and the role of women in production and trafficking have generally been brushed aside.

Drug activity in Taliban areas of Afghanistan is heavily criticised, with cause, but the same criticism can be made, and rarely is, of the Northern Alliance. However it is clear that the drug problem will not disappear with the Taliban. Tackling drugs must be a vital part of efforts to stabilise Afghanistan and its neighbours.

Not only is it necessary to remove a major source of funds that fuel the civil conflict and terrorism but it is essential to get neighbouring countries to feel more secure about a new government in Kabul. Simply strengthening police forces and border guards risks enhancing the repressive capabilities and corruption of unaccountable regimes.

The drug problem throughout Central Asia can only be overcome with a comprehensive development plan that includes poppy eradication, crop substitution and assistance to rural areas, especially of Afghanistan. But that

development plan must be complemented by improved interdiction, security, judicial reform and cooperation, as well as greater efforts to tackle the poverty that fuels drug use. Otherwise, drugs will remain a grave source of instability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO CENTRAL ASIAN GOVERNMENTS:

1. Consolidate agencies dealing with drugs to ensure consistent policies and develop a wider range of anti-drug strategies, including harm reduction and anti-poverty programs.
2. Empower and instruct law enforcement agencies to cooperate with their counterparts in neighbouring states.
3. Cease treating drug users and HIV-infected individuals as criminals, pass anti-discrimination laws, and carry out public education programs to change attitudes.
4. Make harm reduction measures such as needle exchanges and methadone therapy a top priority to reduce the threat of HIV.

TO DONOR NATIONS:

5. Develop, as an essential component of efforts to stabilise Afghanistan and the region, a comprehensive, long-term, well-funded program that moves beyond interdiction to tackle all problems associated with drug production and trafficking including both the general problems of poverty and conflict and the more specific ones of crop substitution, corruption, and HIV/AIDS.
6. Provide longer-term funding for United Nations drug control bodies and strengthen their efforts to expand regional cooperation.
7. Encourage Pakistan, Iran and the Central Asian nations to step up regional cooperation by making it clear that combating drugs is an essential component of the fight against terrorism and a vital part of efforts to stabilise the region.
8. Consider, when designing anti-drugs programs, the impact on human rights, the

repressive capacity of regimes, the impact on women and the poor and the risks to minorities.

intra-EU guidelines that emphasise harm reduction.

Osh/Brussels, 26 November 2001

TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

9. Increase funding for fighting drugs in the region and in allocating priorities follow



CENTRAL ASIA: DRUGS AND CONFLICT

I. INTRODUCTION

Heroin addiction and AIDS were almost unknown in the Central Asian republics during the Soviet era. Opium had been grown in Kyrgyzstan until the 1970s, and there was a small illicit trade in the drug, but the problem was on such a limited scale that it never merited much attention. Soviet veterans of the Afghan war were often known to use drugs, but they were a small, isolated group.

A number of factors combined in the 1990s to alter that situation. First, with the break-up of the USSR and the withdrawal of Soviet/Russian border guards from those republics, the newly independent states were left with limited resources to guard their frontiers. Once secure borders soon became porous.

Secondly, participants in the ongoing Afghan civil war had to find new means of support to replace the subsidies once plentiful from Moscow or Washington. In the mid-1990s opium cultivation became an increasingly important source of revenue for all sides, as well as for village farmers who saw poppies as one of the most lucrative cash crops in a poor country.

By the end of the decade Afghanistan was a major opium producer, with 30 to 50 per cent of its population believed to be involved in some aspect of cultivation, production or trafficking. The wider Central Asia region was experiencing a sharp rise in drug addiction. HIV, which had been virtually unknown, made its appearance, largely in the intravenous drug user community. By 2001 the number of HIV infected persons had jumped several fold from the middle of the

previous decade, and in the Karaganda area of Kazakhstan was near epidemic proportions.

These countries were slow to admit they faced a serious danger. Partly this was due to a political culture in which it was not considered acceptable to advertise a drug problem. Partly it was because the states had no resources, or obvious incentive, in the immediate post-Soviet period to set up agencies that could track the problem.

Drug users themselves kept a low profile, so the problem had already taken root by the time it became apparent there were large numbers. Above all, the economic and political clout of the drug trade made it difficult for the state to crack down. By the time serious efforts were made to combat the trade, the problem had grown to the point where countries beyond the region were affected.

II. BACKGROUND

The traditional poppy growing areas in Central Asia were Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, along with parts of Kazakhstan. Cannabis also grows in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, but as its effects are less dangerous, it has not attracted as much international attention or impacted as negatively on the area as opium and its processed derivative, heroin.

Until the early 1970s Kyrgyzstan produced some 16 per cent of the world's legal opium. When the Soviet Union banned opium production in 1974, legal cultivation was ended in its Kyrgyzstan republic.¹ Neither the mountainous terrain of Tajikistan nor Uzbekistan's arid climate provides a hospitable environment for opium or cannabis cultivation, and neither country has ever been a major producer.

While other countries in Central Asia have sought to curtail opium production for 25 years, the trend in Afghanistan has been in the opposite direction. Poppy cultivation and sales of its dangerous products increased during the Soviet occupation and the ensuing guerrilla and civil wars of the 1980s and 1990s.

The region's traditional drug routes to lucrative Western markets were through Iran and Pakistan. With the break-up of the USSR and the retreat of Russian forces, new routes began appearing into and through the former Soviet Central Asian republics.

This new drug trade made its strongest initial inroads into Tajikistan, where the situation was exacerbated by civil war between 1992-97. Part of the Tajik population fled the fighting into Afghanistan, thus indirectly facilitating development of new transport networks. At the same time, the attention of Tajikistan's law

enforcement agencies was diverted and their capacities weakened.²

By 1996, when the Taliban took control of most of Afghanistan, there were numerous poppy fields in that country and well established drug routes out. In 1997 it was widely believed the road from Kharog in Tajikistan to Osh in Kyrgyzstan was the most commonly used for smuggling Afghan opium through Central Asia and on to Russia. At that time Afghanistan was estimated to produce 2,400 tons of opium per year.³

The Kharog-Osh road became one of the first focuses of regional and international anti-drug efforts. As is common with smuggling, however, as soon as one route became more difficult, others opened up. While Afghanistan's poppy crop probably doubled over the next two years, new smuggling routes appeared at other parts of its borders.

The areas around Panj and Moskovskii are now considered the main avenues through which drugs enter Tajikistan from Afghanistan, while the significance of the Kharog-Osh road has considerably diminished.

Although the Taliban opposed the use of drugs by Afghans as counter to the teachings of the Koran, they derived approximately U.S.\$20 million or more each year from taxes on the poppy crop.⁴ The area under cultivation rose 43 per cent in 1998 over the previous year – from 64,000 hectares to 91,000. Production of opium is believed to have peaked the following year at an estimated 4,600 tons.⁵ That 1999 crop placed Afghanistan in the spotlight as the world's leading source of illegal opiates.

¹ UN Information Service, *Central Asian Republics, UN Launch Subregional Drug Control Plan*, UN Press Release SOC/NAR/741, 29 April 1996. A certain amount of opium is legally declared and produced in the world for legitimate medical purposes under strict international legal controls, notably the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and associated agreements.

² ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

³ UN Information Service, *UN Drug Programme to Launch Regional Law Enforcement Project Linking Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, Press Release SOC/NAR/758, 30 April 1997.

⁴ Jean-Christophe Peuche, "Central Asia: Charges Link Russian Military to Drug Trade", RFE/RL 8 June 2001.

⁵ UN Information Centre, *120 Percent Increase in Production of Raw Opium in Afghanistan for 1999*, Press Release AFG/106:SOC/NAR/810, 10 September 1999.

III. THE DRUG TRADE

A. DRUG PRODUCTION

Afghan heroin is considered to account for about 80 per cent of Western Europe's supply and an even larger portion of the market in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).⁶

In 2000 Kyrgyzstani⁷ law enforcement agencies seized 206 kilograms of heroin and 1,984 kilograms of opium. That same year Uzbekistan seized 675 kilograms of heroin and 1,700 kilograms of opium. Russia seized 984 kilograms of heroin and 2,185 kilograms of opium. Most of these substantial seizures are believed to have involved drugs produced in Afghanistan and moved through Tajikistan.

In the same year Tajikistan itself seized 1,883 kilograms of heroin and 4,778 kilograms of opium. By 1 September 2001, 3,033.5 kilograms of heroin had already been seized in the current year, further indication that the country is the primary gateway for heroin and opium moving through Central Asia into Russia and Europe.⁸

Partial seizure figures in the region for 2001 suggest a new development. The amount of heroin confiscated rose sharply in Tajikistan but dropped in the neighbouring countries. At the same time, Tajik opium seizures fell off drastically.⁹

⁶ The Commonwealth of Independent States is the loose association established after the dissolution of the USSR by most of the former Soviet republics, including Russia.

⁷ Kyrgyzstani refers to citizens of Kyrgyzstan, while the term Kyrgyz refers to the ethnic group. The same applies to the term Kazakhstani and Kazakh.

⁸ ICG interviews with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001, and with UNODCCP in Tashkent, September 2001.

⁹ From January through June 2001, Kyrgyzstani officials confiscated 58 kilograms of heroin, Kazakhstani officials seized 57 kilograms, and Uzbek officials 160 kilograms. During that same period Tajik law enforcement agencies seized 1,745 kilograms of heroin, almost as much as in the whole of 2000. At the same time, the amount of opium being impounded fell from close to 5,000 kilograms in 2000 to a mere 762 kilograms for the first half of 2001. ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam

The drop in confiscated opium coupled with the rise in confiscated heroin in Tajikistan indicates that opium is being replaced by heroin as the major drug export from Afghanistan and points in turn to an increase in heroin processing laboratories in that country.¹⁰

It is more profitable and also safer (due to greater ease of concealment) for the smuggler to transport heroin.¹¹ The change may also suggest that while the Central Asian states were becoming increasingly concerned about the drug trade and so making it difficult to set up heroin processing laboratories on their territory, there were fewer obstacles in Afghanistan.

The Taliban seem at least not to have challenged local commanders who accepted or established such laboratories. Despite the late military chief Ahmed Shah Massoud's aversion to narcotics trafficking, there have been no reports about initiatives to combat drug trafficking in areas controlled by the Northern Alliance.¹²

The impact of the Afghan/Central Asia connection has been relatively slight in Western Europe and the U.S., where the heroin price has remained fairly constant and use of the drug appears actually to have decreased slightly as users increasingly favour designer drugs such as ecstasy and other relatively safe performance enhancing substances.¹³

In contrast, the drug addict populations have been soaring in some parts of east and central Europe which had never experienced large-scale heroin trafficking under communism. By the late 1990s, 0.9 per cent of Russians were estimated to be abusing opiates, including heroin. Croatia, Bulgaria and

Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ One kilogram of heroin brings Central Asia drug smugglers about six times the money that one kilogram of opium brings. While it takes ten kilograms of opium to produce one kilogram of heroin, to which the cost of precursor chemicals must be added, the result is a much more compact as well as valuable commodity for the traffickers. ICG interview with the head of the MVD in Soghd, Col. Shvkat Yuliev, August 2001.

¹² ICG interview with the head of the MVD in Leninabad, Col. Shvkat Yul'iev, August 2001; ICG interviews with UNODCCP in Tashkent, September 2001.

¹³ UNODCCP, *Global Illicit Drug Trends in 2001*, (United Nation Publication, New York; 2001), pp.211, 231- 233.

Latvia – all countries considered as major drug transit points – registered opiate abuse rates from 0.6 to 0.8 per cent. Apart from Portugal, which has a percentage similar to Russia's, other European countries generally had opiate abuse levels under 0.6 per cent.¹⁴

The statistics are much grimmer in Central Asia and the Caucasus (also now a major transit route) where, by the end of the 1990s, the opiate abuse rates were estimated at 2 per cent in Tajikistan, 1.2 per cent in Georgia, 0.9 per cent in Kazakhstan, and 0.7 per cent in Uzbekistan.¹⁵ These levels were reached in a half-decade spurt, and it is not certain the rates have peaked.

Several factors may account for the fact that Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are confiscating less heroin while Tajikistan is confiscating more. First, Tajik law enforcement agencies apparently are becoming more effective at interdiction. Secondly, it is likely that some heroin is being flown out of Tajikistan from Dushanbe and Khujand directly to more lucrative markets in Russia and farther west.¹⁶

While poppy cultivation in Afghanistan expanded in the last decade, the Taliban's attitude was somewhat enigmatic. As early as 1997 the Taliban's chief ideologue and leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, called for restrictions in both cultivation and trade. Nonetheless, the Taliban continued to tax the poppy crop. As cultivation spread, the international community repeatedly called on the Taliban to curtail the harvest. In July 2000 Mullah Omar decreed that the Koran forbids cultivation and trade in the crop.¹⁷

The Taliban's commitment to eradicating a difficult to replace revenue crop was initially greeted with scepticism. Nonetheless, UN and U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) teams eventually acknowledged that the ban on poppies was effective.¹⁸

There was some speculation that this result had more to do with the drought than with a genuine commitment to curtail drug trafficking. Another theory was that the Taliban realised the opium/heroin market was oversupplied and stopped cultivation until prices rose.

While the regime's real motives can only be speculated on, Mullah Omar has consistently characterised drug use as un-Islamic. One telling sign of that attitude may be reports from UN drug officials who say confiscated heroin packages arriving from Afghanistan are sometimes stamped, "Not for use by Muslims".¹⁹ It is possible that Mullah Omar decided to ban the crop because of its detrimental effects on the Afghans themselves. Whatever the reasons, the ban was stringently enforced, and the crop largely disappeared from Afghanistan's landscape in 2000.

By the time the poppy cultivation ban went into force, however, it was estimated that 220 tons of heroin were stockpiled in Afghanistan. That is a considerable amount – the equivalent of a nearly two-year supply for the needs of the Western Europe market.²⁰ In addition, most visitors reported during the same period that opium continued to be smuggled from territory controlled by the Northern Alliance.²¹

Regional officials, as well as many Russian and Western authorities, prefer to blame the Taliban for the drug trade. Yet most of the drugs transiting Tajikistan go through the Jirgatal-Gharm areas, which border territory consistently controlled by the Afghan opposition. It is believed most Afghan drugs entering Kyrgyzstan come from that area.²² Some otherwise sympathetic regional, western and Russian

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.232.

¹⁶ ICG interviews in Tashkent, September 2001.

¹⁷ Gregory Gleason, "Central Asian 'Razborka': Fallout from Afghanistan's Opium Ban", *Eurasianet*, 29 May 2001.

¹⁸ "DEA: Afghan Opium Production Falling", AP, available at <http://www.myafghan.com/news.asp?Id=992045422>.

¹⁹ ICG interview in Tashkent, September 2001.

²⁰ "Taliban Stockpile Heroin for Europe", *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 December 2000-4 January 2001; UNODCCP, *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2001*, p.231.

²¹ ICG interview with Ilhom Naziyev, correspondent for Asia-Plus, Dushanbe, July 2001; Robyn Dixon, "Afghan Opium Pipeline Spews Misery on Tajiks", *Los Angeles Times*, 19 August 2001. Opium and heroin from Northern Alliance territory is believed to have been the most likely source for much of the more local Central Asian trade prior to the last months of 2001, while drugs from what were then Taliban areas are believed primarily to have been distributed during the same period through Pakistan and Iran. See Gregory Gleason, "Razborka", op. cit.

²² ICG interview in Tajikistan, July 2001.

policymakers say the Northern Alliance has been as active in the trafficking as the Taliban.²³

Outside Afghanistan, there is very little production of opiates in the region. Typically, police in Issyk-Kul (Kyrgyzstan) and in the south of Kazakhstan around Zhambyl, where poppy had once been grown legally in Soviet times, are very active in guarding against cultivation.²⁴ Criminal gangs have not been able to establish control of these areas, making it unlikely that poppies would be grown on any significant scale.

Kazakhstan produces considerably more cannabis and has had great difficulty in controlling its growth as has Kyrgyzstan. Most of the Kyrgyz cannabis crop grows around Issyk-Kul and areas bordering Kazakhstan, while the Kazakh crops grow in the southern border areas with Kyrgyzstan.²⁵ Cannabis continues to be widespread, in any event, because it is a naturally occurring weed in that area, which makes it a difficult target for law enforcement. However, those dealing in cannabis are predominantly local, without connections to major criminal rings and with few other prospects for earning cash.²⁶

B. DRUG ROUTES

Of the six known trafficking routes operating in 2001, two run through Pakistan and Iran, four through Central Asia.²⁷ Three of the latter are considered to be in Tajikistan, the other in Turkmenistan.

Tajikistan is still recovering from its civil war, which left much of the country's already impoverished economy in ruins. Unemployment is around 80 per cent in some areas.²⁸ The combination of its long border with Afghanistan and its barely functioning economy has made it the main gateway into Central Asia for Afghan opium and heroin.²⁹

Geography makes it difficult to guard Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan. Even during the Soviet-era there were many open areas. In the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), where Kharog is located, Tajiks report that they and their relatives on the other side of the Panj River in Afghanistan frequently cross the water frontier for weddings and other occasions.

The GBAO was initially considered the main drug artery into the CIS from Afghanistan, but over the past few years drug activity there has gone down considerably. That is partly due to the Aga Khan Foundation, which is considered literally to be feeding the barren region. In 1995 the foundation threatened to cut aid if residents engaged in drug smuggling.³⁰

While it is unusual for an NGO to wield such authority, even a cursory visit to Kharog illustrates just how dependent the area (40 per cent of Tajikistan's territory) is on the Aga Khan Foundation and other NGOs for everything from food to medical supplies and economic development projects. Practically nothing grows there except occasional potato crops, and almost all food has to be imported – something the government in Dushanbe cannot afford to do itself.

Aid conditionality appears to have been effective in GBAO, where the food assistance is worth more than the few somani a farmer would earn for his drug crop or for ferrying drugs across the river.

The Aga Khan Foundation has also provided aid, especially food, across the river in Afghanistan for

²³ ICG interview with Col. Mekhrali Sabzaliev, Deputy Head of the GBAO department of the Drug Control Agency Under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

²⁴ "Oblast' vysokogo davleniia", *Moskovskie novosti: novosti nedeli*, no. 31, 8-14 August 2001.

²⁵ ICG interview with Deputy Procurator of Issyk-Kul, Dzholdosh Kerembekov, May 2001; Kanai Manayev, "Narcotic Flood Threatens to Wash Away Central Asian Stability", *The Times of Central Asia*, 28 December 2000.

²⁶ ICG interview with the Deputy Procurator of Issyk-Kul, Dzholdosh Kerembekov, May 2001.

²⁷ "Uzbek Anti-Drugs Official Says Central Asian Drug Trafficking Increasing", *UzbekWorld.com*, 30 June 2001, available from: <http://www.uzbekworld.com/news/viewnews.cgi?newsid993927004,76763>.

²⁸ "Tajikistan: Poverty Pushes People to Drug Trafficking", *Eurasianet*, 21 December 2000.

²⁹ "Ekonomicheskie novosti", *Rossiyskaya biznes-gazeta*, 21 August 2001.

³⁰ ICG interview with the deputy procurator in Kharog, July 2001.

several years and has made its continuation contingent on no drug dealing.³¹

Overall, GBAO is no longer a high density drug trafficking area. In the first six months of 2001, local officials seized less than 37 kilograms of all drugs, including ten of heroin.³² In contrast, in the first six months of 2001, authorities in Khujand seized 114 kilograms of heroin.³³

Nevertheless, Tajikistan remains the key area for Central Asia's anti-drug efforts.³⁴ The main entry points are the towns of Panj and Moskovkii, in the south-west. From the former the route proceeds to Dushanbe or Khujand. From Dushanbe drugs are usually shipped out to Moscow or Western Europe and from Khujand to Siberian cities such as Novosibirsk, Omsk and other Russian eastern areas.³⁵ The route through Moskovskii goes to Osh, then Kazakhstan and on to Russia.³⁶

The drug trade is facilitated by corrupt law enforcement officials. One former Russian military intelligence officer, Anton Surikov, told *Moskovskie novosti* that large quantities of Afghan drugs were smuggled into Russia from Russian bases in Tajikistan on military aircraft.³⁷ Others praise the Russian troops and border guards in Tajikistan as the only forces seriously dealing with the drug trade.³⁸ In general, the extent to which Russian forces may have been involved appears to have declined since the end of the Tajik civil war.³⁹

In fact, there has been a considerable increase in the amount of heroin and other drugs the Russian border guards in Tajikistan have seized in 2001

over the previous year. This may be an indication that they are becoming more serious about combating the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan. The new efficiency may also reflect President Vladimir Putin's concerns about the effect of drugs on Russia.

Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director of Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency, claims that there are few heroin producing laboratories in the country. There are strict laws against heroin production, although implementation is clearly dependent on government control of territory and political will. The government in Dushanbe has been re-establishing its territorial control,⁴⁰ making it more difficult to set up labs, although there are suspicions some exist in the Gharm and Tavildara area where the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)⁴¹ has had its bases.⁴²

Turkmenistan shares a border of 744 kilometres with Afghanistan⁴³ and is considered another primary drug route. Some 80 tons of heroin are estimated to enter Turkmenistan each year with about 30 per cent staying in the country.⁴⁴ In 2000, the National Security Committee of Turkmenistan seized slightly less than 2,900 kilograms of opium and 220 kilograms of heroin, down from the previous year's totals of 4,600 and 240 kilograms respectively. The reduction has been attributed to drought, although the near consistency in heroin seizures may be an indication of the reserves of that drug believed to be maintained in Afghanistan.⁴⁵

The amount seized, of course, is only a small fraction of what is believed to transit Turkmenistan, and the country's neighbours, who are undertaking more serious efforts to curb the drug flow, are

³¹ ICG interview with Altaaf Hasham from the Aga Khan Foundation in Dushanbe, July 2001.

³² ICG interview with Col. Mekhrali Sabzaliev, Deputy Head of the GBAO department of the Drug Control Agency Under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

³³ ICG interview with Col. Akhmanov from the Drug Control Agency in Khujand, August 2001.

³⁴ ICG interview in Tajikistan, July 2001.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ ICG interview in Tajikistan with Vladimir Andrionov, 2nd Secretary, Embassy of Russia, July 2001.

³⁷ *Moskovskie novosti*, 29 May 2001.

³⁸ "Ekonomicheskie novosti", *Rossiyskaya biznes-gazeta*, 21 August 2001.

³⁹ ICG interview in Tajikistan, July 2001.

⁴⁰ Most notably by hunting down and killing some of the remaining unintegrated opposition commanders, such as Rakhmon Sanginov in August 2001.

⁴¹ An Islamist insurgent group that seeks to overthrow the government of Uzbekistan, which is believed to be involved in drug trafficking.

⁴² (for this paragraph as a whole) ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001; ICG interviews in Tashkent and Dushanbe, September 2001.

⁴³ Aleksandr Orlov, "Spasem SNG, borias' s narkotikami", *Gazeta SNG*, 14 August 2001.

⁴⁴ Gulshen Ashirova, "Turkmenistan in the Path of Afghan Drug Expansion", *The Times of Central Asia*, 26 July 2001.

⁴⁵ "Turkmen Addiction Rising", Institute for War & Peace Reporting, RCA No. 64, 10 August 2001.

critical of Ashgabat's uncooperative attitude. Their officials speculate that the transit traffic is facilitated by Turkmenistan's isolationist foreign policy as well as its links to both the Taliban and Northern Alliance.⁴⁶

Uzbekistan is also considered a main transit country for Afghanistan's opiates, but they enter primarily via Tajikistan rather than across the direct border. Uzbekistan is better protected along its 450-kilometre border with Afghanistan than is Tajikistan because the Amu-Darya River is a natural obstacle.⁴⁷ In 2000 heroin seizures amounted to 675 kilograms, up from 325 in 1999. In the first six months of 2001, however, only 160 kilograms of heroin were seized.⁴⁸ Opium seizures also fell, from 1,700 kilograms in 2000 to 92 kilograms in the first half of 2001.⁴⁹

Given Tajikistan's enhanced heroin hauls, Uzbekistan's apparent decline as a drugs route may be an indication that smugglers are more frequently flying their merchandise directly out of the region from Tajikistan.

It is believed that most precursors for the production of heroin in Afghanistan come from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Both inherited pharmaceutical and chemical industries from the Soviet era. Acetic anhydride, the most commonly used chemical in the production of heroin, is produced legally in Uzbekistan.⁵⁰ Kazakhstan also produces the chemical, and there are concerns over controls of its stocks.⁵¹

On average, 22 tons of the substance is enough to make seven to ten tons of heroin. In 1998 over 16 tons of acetic anhydride was seized in Uzbekistan, while being illegally transported. Between 1996 and 1998 four other large shipments, amounting to more than 72 tons of the chemical, were seized by Uzbek authorities. Not all of the seized chemical was locally produced – some came from Russia and China – but all the shipments were bound for Afghanistan.⁵²

Kyrgyzstan's heroin confiscation trend is similar to Uzbekistan's. Totals rose steadily from the mid-1990s and dropped in the first six months of 2001 to 58 kilograms of heroin and 69 kilograms of opium (from 206 and 1,320 kilograms respectively in the previous full year).⁵³

The amount of drugs seized in transit by Kazakhstan reflects similar patterns: a jump from 825 grams of heroin in 1996 to 150 kilograms between January and August in 2000;⁵⁴ then a fall in the first half of 2001 to 57 kilograms.⁵⁵ Over 98 per cent of drugs of all kinds seized by Russia are captured on the Kazakh border.⁵⁶

Most of the heroin that reaches Russia, however, has its origins in Afghanistan. In Moscow alone it is believed that 70 kilograms of narcotics arrive each day from that country.⁵⁷ According to the head of the Russian interior ministry's anti-drugs department, Konstantin Anufriyev, from January 2001 to August, 540 kilograms of heroin were seized.⁵⁸

⁴⁶ ICG interview in Tajikistan, July 2001; Turkmenistan has a strong interest in seeing peace in Afghanistan so that energy pipelines can be built across that country to Pakistan and China. That has led Ashgabat on several occasions to host mediation sessions between the Taliban and Northern Alliance.

⁴⁷ "Ekonomicheskie novosti", *Rossiyskaya biznes-gazeta*, 21 August 2001.

⁴⁸ ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

⁴⁹ AFP, "Drugs Addicts Double in Uzbekistan Amid Trafficking Increase", 27 June 2001.

⁵⁰ International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), *Annual Report 2000*.

⁵¹ UNODCCP, *Strengthening Drug Control and Crime Prevention Capacities in the Central Asian States*, July 2001.

⁵² INCB document No. E/INCB/2000/4; also see *Uzbekistan*, available from: http://www.ogd.org/rapport/gb/RP05_6_OUZBEKISTAN.html Turkmenistan registered similar seizures of chemical. In 1998 its authorities confiscated over 34 tons, in 1999 over fifteen tons, and in the first half of 2000 over 22 tons.

⁵³ Interfax, 27 June 2001.

⁵⁴ "Drug Trafficking via Central Asia Rising Sharply", *The Times of Central Asia*, 21 September 2000.

⁵⁵ "Drugs Sweep Largest City in Kazakhstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, 10 August 2000.

⁵⁶ "Afghan Drugs Feed Central Asian Habit", *The Times of Central Asia*, 15 June 2000. Not all the captured drugs are heroin or opium, of course. As noted above, Kazakhstan grows marijuana and hashish, particularly in the south, where the crop was estimated at 5,000 tons in 2000.

⁵⁷ ICG interview in Tajikistan with Vladimir Andronov, 2nd Secretary, Embassy of Russia, July 2001.

⁵⁸ ITAR-TASS, 21 August 2001.

Iran confiscated a massive 254.3 tons of drugs of all kinds in 2000.⁵⁹ In just one month, June to July of the following year, Iranian law enforcement officials seized nearly 8,500 kilograms of narcotics, including 4,787 kilograms of opium and 347 kilograms of heroin. In the same country-wide operation, 6,820 traffickers were arrested and 14,581 addicts rounded up.⁶⁰

Iran's opiates also originate from Afghanistan, and the trafficking may be facilitated by some of the two million Afghan refugees in the country. Almost every day there are armed clashes between Iranian border guards and drug traffickers along the Afghan border.⁶¹

Its perception that Afghan refugees are frequently involved in the drug trade has led Tehran to adopt a policy not to accept any more. Pakistan has done the same, meaning that all the surrounding states refuse further refugees fleeing the Afghan conflict. Apart from the costs of accommodating large numbers of refugees, all consider that the possible entrance of drug dealers (as well as religious extremists and terrorists) presents too great an additional risk to their already shaky political stability.

C. NARCO-STATE ECONOMIES

With all Central Asian economies in crisis, the drug business has become an important source of income for many people. Not only do drug barons have a vested interest in maintaining the trade, but so do many poor individuals living along transit routes who often have no other means of earning a living.

Given the economic importance of opium poppies to Afghanistan's own economy, the effectiveness of Mullah Omar's ban on their cultivation was impressive. But the prohibition had a severe impact on living standards in Afghanistan, where was estimated that perhaps as much as half its population and 80 per cent of the economy was in some way connected to the drug trade. Opium poppies grew in 27 of the 29

provinces, and 200,000 Afghan households were involved in this cultivation. In addition, over 200 laboratories for processing opium into heroin were believed to be in the country, each capable of producing ten kilograms of heroin daily.⁶²

Poverty drives involvement in Tajikistan, where the average family of five or six may have to get by on less than U.S.\$10 per month, and the malnutrition rate is one of the highest in the world.⁶³ In 2000 and 2001 the country suffered serious droughts that led to even higher levels of malnutrition and accompanying diseases.

In those two years the volume of crops harvested declined by 75 per cent from the 1999 level.⁶⁴ The drought also led to fires that destroyed 126,000 hectares of wheat.⁶⁵ As a result of the economic hardships, some 30 to 50 per cent of all economic activity in Tajikistan is reported to be linked to drug trafficking.⁶⁶

The low salaries of law enforcement and customs officials, which average less than \$50 per month, make them prone to corruption. As many as 50 per cent of Central Asia's customs officials may be involved in the drug trade to some extent.⁶⁷

One of the most notorious involvements of any official structure is suspected to be that of Russia's 201st Division, a military unit stationed in Tajikistan. Rumours are fuelled by the lack of transparency surrounding its activities. The division's aircraft are exempt from inspections even though in December 1997 twelve of its servicemen were arrested at the Domodedovo airport in Moscow carrying over eight kilograms of drugs, including three kilograms of heroin.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ "Drug Smuggling a Huge Problem in Iran", IRINA-IINA-OANA, 19 August 2001.

⁶⁰ FBIS-NES-2001-0729, IRNA, 29 July 2001.

⁶¹ "Ekonomicheskie novosti", *Rossiskaya biznes-gazeta*, 21 August 2001.

⁶² Artemov, Nikolay, "Durman-trava na eksport", *Versty*, 21 August 2001.

⁶³ *Summary of Fact Finding Mission to Tajikistan*, Open Society Institute, 2000.

⁶⁴ ICG interviews with First Deputy Minister of Emergency Situations and Civil Defence of the Republic of Tajikistan, Abdurahim Radjabov, and Second Deputy Minister, Col. Dzhuman Usmanov, July 2001.

⁶⁵ Nazarova, Saida, "Tajik Border Hardship", Institute for War & Peace Reporting. RCA No.63, 3-August 2001.

⁶⁶ "Tajikistan: Poverty Pushes People to Drug Trafficking", *Eurasianet*, 21 December 2000.

⁶⁷ ICG interview with the Procurator General for the Tajik Customs Department, Sharif Zhuraev, July 2001.

⁶⁸ Kanai Manayev, "Drug-Fuelled Crime in Central Asia", *The Times of Central Asia*, 4 January 2001.

Another incident that pointed to official involvement in the drug trade was the arrest of the director of the drug enforcement agency in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, and several of his subordinates.⁶⁹

Women are increasingly involved in the trade. In Tajikistan they make up 35 per cent of all those convicted for drug related crimes, in Kyrgyzstan 12.4 per cent.⁷⁰ Many of those in Tajikistan are war widows with multiple children and no legitimate means of earning a living.

Social workers have found that even programs aimed at educating this group are often ineffective since the women simply see their options as either feeding their families or not. Without other employment prospects, it is doubtful that Tajik women can be dissuaded from transporting drugs into Russia and elsewhere in the CIS.

The same trend can be seen in Turkmenistan where most drug traffickers are reported to be women providing for their families.⁷¹

There is also some indication that many Afghan drug dealers are women. A recent report from Peshawar found that most Afghans in prisons in that area of Pakistan were jailed for drug dealing, and women and children made up a sizeable proportion. Many of those women had lost their husbands in the Afghan civil war.⁷²

A particularly disturbing aspect of the drug trade is its widely suspected connection to the funding of arms for the warring factions in Afghanistan as well as for insurgent groups in the region. For example, one Iranian drug baron, Hadj Gulyam, reportedly helps finance Afghanistan's Northern Alliance through his profits and has opposed

measures aimed at controlling the flow of drugs from their territory⁷³ while Kyrgyz officials have charged that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is little more than a group of drug runners.⁷⁴

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 on the U.S., the link between Afghan drug money and terrorism has been raised frequently in the media and at international conferences. That link has long been suspected, but because it has been largely based on circumstantial or highly classified evidence, it has not been easy to follow up. However, according to the head of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Asa Hutchinson, "The very sanctuary enjoyed by bin Laden is based on the existence of the Taliban's support for the drug trade."⁷⁵

Even if the bin Laden connection is difficult to establish in the murkiness surrounding the drug trade, there are other areas where Central Asia's drug money has been linked to violent political causes. Thus, according to Alain Labrousse from the French Drug and Drug Abuse Observatory, the Pakistani secret services has used profits from Afghan opiates to finance violent dissident groups in India, including Islamists in Kashmir and, during the 1980s, Sikhs in Punjab.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Kanai Manayev, "A Chicken in Every Pot", *The Times of Central Asia*, 4 January 2001.

⁷⁰ For a survey of women in Tajikistan involved in the drug business and who use drugs see T.N. Bozrikova, Sh. Shoismatylloev, and V. Magkoev, *Zhenshchina I narkotik*, Open Society Institute, Dushanbe, 2000; also, Kanai Manayev, "Drug-Fuelled Crime in Central Asia", *The Times of Central Asia*, 4 January 2001.

⁷¹ "Turkmenistan in the Path of Afghan Drug Expansion", *The Times of Central Asia*, 26 June 2001.

⁷² "Locked Up Afghans Lured by Drug Mafia", *Afghan News Network*, 28 August 2001.

⁷³ Kanai Manayev, "Drug-Fuelled Crime in Central Asia", *The Times of Central Asia*, 4 January 2001.

⁷⁴ For a fuller discussion of the IMU, however, see ICG Asia Report No. 20, *Central Asia: Fault lines in the New Security Map*, 4 July 2001.

⁷⁵ Charlene Porter, "Drug Trade is Primary Income Source for Taliban, DEA Says", *Washington File*, available from: <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/af/a1100303.htm>.

⁷⁶ *Le Monde*, 21 October 2001.

IV. EFFECTS OF THE DRUG TRADE

A. ADDICTION

Afghanistan's opium has had the strongest impact on Pakistan and Iran. There are believed to be two million heroin addicts in Pakistan and a further two million casual drug users who smoke opiates and hashish.⁷⁷ Some sources say that the real rates are even higher, and over four million persons are addicted.⁷⁸ That would mean there is one addict among every 37 individuals in the population.

Iran reportedly has at least 1.2 million addicts and 800,000 casual users⁷⁹ but some claims are even higher, up to 6.2 million (ten per cent of the population) consuming drugs to some extent.⁸⁰

Officially Tajikistan has over 4,600 registered drug users, but popular opinion holds the number to exceed 100,000.⁸¹ Heroin addiction did not emerge as a significant problem until about 1996⁸² but it is unlikely to diminish as long as Tajikistan remains a transit state.⁸³ What most worries health officials is that youth are particularly drawn to drugs. In Khujand it is estimated that fifteen per cent of drug addicts are young people.⁸⁴

In 1999 Kazakhstan's official figures listed 37,000 drug users.⁸⁵ Unofficial estimates, however, are much higher: 300,000 out of a population of fifteen million. The country is also believed to have the highest number of intravenous drug users in Central Asia.⁸⁶

Uzbekistan is also registering more addicts. In 1999 there were 216 such persons in eastern Ferghana, the next year 428.⁸⁷ In the entire country officially registered addicts almost doubled, from 14,000 in 2000 to 26,000 in 2001.⁸⁸

According to official data, drug addiction in Kyrgyzstan rose by 350 per cent over the last five years. The highest rate – 50.6 per 100,000 – is in the capital, Bishkek.⁸⁹ Drugs have reportedly swept through the armed forces.⁹⁰ In 2001 the Kyrgyz AIDS Centre estimated there were 50,000 drug users in the country.⁹¹ Nonetheless, official figures admitted only 4,370 registered addicts.⁹²

Turkmenistan had the highest drug addiction of Soviet republics before independence: 124 out of every 100,000. Opium is the traditional drug of choice but heroin addiction is rising. Some 13,000 addicts are officially registered, a three-fold increase over 1996.⁹³

In Russia since 1990 registered drug users have increased by 400 per cent. In 2000 450,000 addicts were enrolled in state run drug treatment centres. The following year the official statistic was 625,000. The numbers of addicts not undergoing treatment is unknown but believed to be several times greater.

⁷⁷ Charles Racknagel, *Pakistan: Clinic Uses Social Ties to Treat Addicts*, RFE/RL, 26 March 2001.

⁷⁸ Interview with Brig. Gen. Riazullah Chib, Commander of the Anti-Narcotics Force in Punjab, FBIS-NES-2001-0805, *Karachi Tkbeer*, 18-25 July 2001.

⁷⁹ "11 Drug Dealers Killed, 2,500 Arrested in Swoop on Drugs", FBIS-NES-2001-0528, IRNA, 28 May 2001.

⁸⁰ "Iran's Top Justice Vows No Mercy for Drug Runners and Dealers", AFP, 27 June 2001.

⁸¹ "Ekonomicheskie novosti", *Rossiskaya biznes-gazeta*, 21 August 2001.

⁸² ICG interview with Muratboki Beknazarov, Director of the Tajik Centre for AIDS Prevention and Control, National Coordinator for the UNAIDS Project, in Dushanbe, July 2001.

⁸³ ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, in Dushanbe, July 2001.

⁸⁴ ICG interview with Khursheda Atobaeva, Soghd Region Committee of the Red Cross Society of Tajikistan, in Khujand, August 2001.

⁸⁵ "Kazakhstan: Up to 200,000 Drug Users Have Few Places to Turn to for Treatment", *Eurasianet*, 21 December 2000.

⁸⁶ Douglas Frantz, "Drug Use Begetting AIDS in Central Asia", *The New York Times*, 5 August 2001.

⁸⁷ "Drug Addiction on Rise in Uzbek East", *UZLAND*, 9 July 2001, available from:

<http://www.europeaninternet.com/russia/uzland/uzland.php3?id=529880>.

⁸⁸ "Drugs Addicts Double in Uzbekistan Amid Trafficking Increase", AFP, 27 June 2001.

⁸⁹ UNODCCP, *Kyrgyzstan: Country Profile*, available from: http://www.undcp.org/uzbekistan/country_profile_yr.html.

⁹⁰ "Afghan Drugs Feed Central Asian Habit", *The Times of Central Asia*, 15 June 2000.

⁹¹ Philippe Noubel, "AIDS Outbreak in Southern Kyrgyzstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, 5 July 2001.

⁹² *RFE/RL Newslines*, 28 June 2001.

⁹³ "Turkmen Addiction Rising", Institute for War & Peace Reporting, RCA no. 64, 10 August 2001.

Interior ministry data indicates that as many as three to four million Russians (out of 146 million) use drugs at least occasionally. The trade reportedly is not run by large organised criminal gangs, but by individuals or small groups.⁹⁴

Bulgaria, considered the transit point for 80 per cent of the Afghan drugs entering Western Europe, has experienced the side effect of rising addiction itself with a reported 40,000 to 50,000 addicts by 1998.⁹⁵

The vast quantity of drugs flowing out of Afghanistan has depressed the price in Central Asia, although it has remained relatively stable in the West. Heroin is now readily affordable in the region. In Iran a gram costs as little as 40 cents.⁹⁶ A single dose is as little as .015 of a gram.⁹⁷ At these prices, it is not surprising that Iran leads the world in per capita addicts.

The cost of heroin is considerably higher in the former Soviet Central Asian republics. In Tajikistan one dose costs 2-3 somani (U.S.\$1), or the price of a local cab ride. In Osh in Kyrgyzstan a dose stands at 50 sōm (U.S.\$1) – also the price of a cab ride.⁹⁸

Treatment programs are seriously underfunded. Regional governments have not made them a priority, and treatment centres have often been left to regional NGOs. In the GBAO region of Tajikistan, local NGOs claim authorities are only able to provide treatment for about two percent of the addicts (there are 600 in Kharog raion, 425 in Shugnan raion and 325 in Rushan raion).

Without follow-up, most of the addicts who are treated relapse. The NGOs dealing with addicts in

GBAO feel such follow-up should include some type of work placement. In GBAO some of the addicts were given jobs as bee-keepers after completing their treatment programs.⁹⁹

Private clinics have also stepped in to fill the treatment vacuum left by local governments. Some are controversial and are seen as doing little beyond making profits out of patients and their families, and the cost, which can run as high as U.S.\$3,000, is out of reach for most people.¹⁰⁰

In Tajikistan methadone therapy is not legal although a pilot program is being considered. If approved, it would be funded by the Open Society Institute, which is active in the region.¹⁰¹ In March 2001, health officials in Kyrgyzstan announced they would begin a program of free methadone distribution.¹⁰²

One problem NGOs encounter working with drug users is the attitude of police, who are generally hostile to users and often arrest those who come to treatment centres or needle exchange points. NGOs have been meeting with police and other local authorities to explain the programs and encourage them to go after drug dealers rather than users. Most report such interaction with officials produces some results.¹⁰³

However, more effort has been expended on interdiction than treatment in Central Asia. That contrasts with Western Europe, where treatment and harm reduction are given high priority.¹⁰⁴

Ironically, it is western donor countries themselves that have set the interdiction priority for Central

⁹⁴ "Russia Points Finger at Tajikistan in Rising Illegal Drug Trade," AFP, 22 August 2001; Sergei Blagov, "New Golden Triangle Feared in Central Asia," *The Times of Central Asia*, 19 April 2001.

⁹⁵ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 1998, released by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State, February 1999; FBIS-EEU-2001-0625, Sofia BTA, 25 June 2001.

⁹⁶ Kanai Manayev, "Drug-Fuelled Crime in Central Asia," *The Times of Central Asia*, 4 January 2001.

⁹⁷ ICG interview with the head of the Tajik MVD in the Leninabad Oblast, Shavkat Yul'chiev, August 2001.

⁹⁸ Of course, given the poverty rates in Central Asia that is still a meaningful expense for the average citizen.

⁹⁹ ICG interview with Orshag Khosobekov from the Vin'ot NGO in Kharog, August 2001.

¹⁰⁰ Igor Vassilenko, "Features of Conducting Harm Reduction Programs for Intravenous Drug Users in Central Asia", *Eurasianet*; "Kazakhstan: Up to 200,000 Drug Users Have Few Places To Turn To For Treatment", *Eurasianet*.

¹⁰¹ ICG interview with Zarina Abdullaeva, healthcare specialist working on harm reduction programs. Dushanbe, July 2001.

¹⁰² IRNA, 29 March 2001.

¹⁰³ ICG interview with Muratboki Beknazarov, Director of the Tajik Centre for AIDS Prevention and Control, National Coordinator for the UNAIDS Project, in Dushanbe, July 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Nancy Lubin, *Narcotics Interdiction in Afghanistan and Central Asia; Challenges for Western Assistance*, Open Society Institute, New York, September 2001.

Asia. Most aid they provide is targeted for interdiction. As a consequence, agencies responsible for drug control are able to devote fewer resources to treatment and harm reduction.

Attitudes appear to be slowly changing, however. The UNODCCP is surveying the extent of the drug problem in Tajikistan and other Central Asian states so it can construct an appropriate demand reduction projects.¹⁰⁵ Reports have appeared that Iran is rethinking its attitude towards abusers and beginning to stress treatment.¹⁰⁶

If Central Asian states do not want to see a substantial portion of their youth incapacitated as a potentially productive work force, more effort needs to be expended on harm reduction. While Western Europe's addict population has been a stable 0.3 per cent for a decade, Central Asia's rate has been booming.

Tajikistan in particular looks well placed to reach addiction rates rivalling Iran's and Pakistan's, which would be devastating for hopes of economic improvement. Given the correlation between poverty and drug addiction, however, every country in the region is seriously threatened.¹⁰⁷

The economic situation is one of the main causes of that frustration which makes Central Asia potentially highly explosive.¹⁰⁸ If real stability is to come to the region, the factors contributing to economic decline must be addressed, including prominently the rising level of youthful drug addiction.

B. HIV AND AIDS

One of the most serious side effects of the narcotics flow in Central Asia has been the emergence of HIV infections and AIDS among drug users who share needles. The disease came to the area relatively late, with first instances only at the end of the 1980s. Even today the rate remains relatively low, and the disease is still largely limited to the intravenous drug user community. Nonetheless, it is multiplying every year making it imperative to begin education, harm reduction, and treatment programs.¹⁰⁹

AIDS first appeared in the region in Kazakhstan's Karaganda area. Since then that area has seen a near epidemic among the intravenous drug user community.¹¹⁰ Part of the reason the infection spread so rapidly was ignorance. Until the mid-1990s, many people had not even heard of the disease.¹¹¹ Officially, Kazakhstan estimates that 1,700 persons are infected with HIV, but the unofficial figure is 10,000. In 2000, 85 per cent of those testing positive for HIV had become infected through sharing needles.¹¹²

The highest number of cases has been reported in the city of Temirtau in Karaganda. That city of 160,000 is the main transit point for drugs travelling through Kazakhstan to Russia. Over 1,000 people there have contracted the infection, slightly less than epidemic proportion, which is defined as infection of one per cent of a population.¹¹³

Nonetheless, the rate is worrisome. Since the disease made its appearance in the city it has killed 106 persons. Valeriya Gourevich, a doctor who runs a public health program in Almaty, believes that a half dozen Kazakh cities may have similar rates but as

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Recknagel and Gorgin Azam, "Afghanistan: Iran and Other Neighbours Face Growing Drug Problems", 26 June 2000, *RFE/RL*.

¹⁰⁷ Poverty levels in Central Asia range from a high of 80 per cent in Tajikistan, to 60 per cent in Kyrgyzstan, 50 percent in Turkmenistan and 30 to 35 per cent in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan See Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report*, for the Central Asian states for 2001.

¹⁰⁸ See ICG Asia Report No.16, *Incubators of Conflict: Central Asia's Localised Poverty and Social Unrest*, 8 June 2001.

¹⁰⁹ ICG Report, *HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue*, 19 June 2001.

¹¹⁰ ICG interview with Kazakhstan's Deputy Minister of Justice, Nurlan Mazhedevich, in Astana, 9 August 2001; UNODCCP, *Kazakhstan: Developing HIV/AIDS Prevention in Central Asian Countries*, 31 August 2001, available from: http://www.undcp.org/bin/printer_friendly.cgi.

¹¹¹ Douglas Frantz, "Drug Use Begetting AIDS in Central Asia", *The New York Times*, 5 August 2001.

¹¹² "Kazakhstan: Up to 200,000 Drug Users Have Few Places to Turn to for Treatment", *Eurasianet*, 21 December 2000.

¹¹³ Ian MacKinnon and Adam Piore, "The Other AIDS Crisis", *Newsweek*, 11 June 2001.

only Temirtau has conducted a major HIV testing program, it is the only one with reliable data.¹¹⁴

Through its Almaty office, the UN set up a number of HIV/AIDS projects in the Karaganda area, as have NGOs, most notably the Open Society Institute. The thrust of the projects has been to promote public awareness of HIV/AIDS and to establish "trust points" where information on the disease and other sexually transmitted infections as well as sterile syringes, condoms, and counselling are available.

Some success was indicated when drug user dispensaries in Temirtau recorded that during routine testing of first time visitors the percentage of HIV positive went down from 3.9 in 1997 to 0.6 in 1999. However, only 10 per cent of injecting drug users have been visiting the trust points.¹¹⁵

A negative development is the establishment of a prison in Karaganda for HIV positive inmates. The penitentiary holds more than 180 prisoners, and the treatment is reportedly inhumane. In July 2001 detainees staged a protest strike and demanded a meeting with local authorities to voice grievances. When the officials arrived, a number of prisoners committed suicide in front of them. The incident was not reported by the Kazakh media and only a few scattered accounts appeared.¹¹⁶

Kyrgyzstan allocates a mere U.S.\$26,500 for AIDS prevention and awareness programs.¹¹⁷ Detected HIV cases remain low -- at the end of 2000 officially 47.¹¹⁸ Only two, both intravenous drug users, were reported in Osh, the country's second city and a major transit point for heroin.

Only three to four per cent of the country's drug users are tested for HIV, and there are concerns

that an epidemic could break out. In 2001 those concerns were heightened when new registered cases of HIV raised the total number to 103, mostly in Osh and the south.¹¹⁹ Exchange points have found 30-50 per cent of returned needles test HIV positive.¹²⁰

Diseases that have spread along with HIV/AIDS include hepatitis A and B. In Osh, it is estimated that 35-40 per cent of all hepatitis cases are contracted through injection.¹²¹

The first case of AIDS was registered in Uzbekistan in 1987. By 1999 there were 69 registered cases of HIV,¹²² a number that rose to 228 by November 2000. By mid-2001 there were ten official cases of AIDS.¹²³

Like its neighbours, almost all of Uzbekistan's cases have been among intravenous drug users.¹²⁴ A program to promote an effective response to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) is being sponsored by the UN with a budget of U.S.\$153,000 over several years. While the annual amounts appear small, UNODCCP officials say they can accomplish a great deal more per dollar in Central Asia than in many other countries.¹²⁵

Despite the larger number of officially registered drug users, Turkmenistan has the lowest reported number of HIV cases. Only four have been tallied, and they were reportedly contracted heterosexual activity.¹²⁶ No cases of actual AIDS had been reported by the middle of 2001.¹²⁷

¹¹⁴ Douglas Frantz, "Drug Use Begetting AIDS in Central Asia", *The New York Times*, 5 August 2001.

¹¹⁵ UNODCCP, *Kazakhstan: Developing HIV/AIDS Prevention in Central Asian Countries*, 31 August 2001.

¹¹⁶ *The Times of Central Asia*, July 2001.

¹¹⁷ Douglas Frantz, "Drug Use Begetting AIDS in Central Asia", *The New York Times*, 5 August 2001.

¹¹⁸ "Central Asia Expects Help From UN Meeting On AIDS", *The Times of Central Asia*, 28 June 2001; "Kyrgyzstan: HIV Prevention Efforts make Progress Despite Barriers", *Eurasianet*, 21 December 2000.

¹¹⁹ Philippe Noubel, "AIDS Outbreak in Southern Kyrgyzstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, 5 July 2001.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ "Summary of Fact Finding Mission to Kyrgyzstan", Eurasia Policy Forum, *Eurasianet*, 10 May 2001.

¹²² FBIS-SOV-1999-0715, Interfax, 15 July 1999.

¹²³ UNODCCP, *Strengthening Drug Control and Crime Prevention Capacities in the Central Asian States*, July 2001.

¹²⁴ "Status of Reported HIV/AIDS Cases in Central Asian Republics", *Eurasianet*, November 2000.

¹²⁵ ICG interview in Tashkent, September 2001; UNODCCP, *Strengthening Drug Control and Crime Prevention Capacities in the Central Asian States*, July 2001.

¹²⁶ "Status of Reported HIV/AIDS Cases in Central Asian Republics", *Eurasianet*, November 2000.

¹²⁷ UNODCCP, *Strengthening Drug Control and Crime Prevention Capacities in the Central Asian States*, July 2001.

These low figures are treated with scepticism, given the volume of drug traffic. The UNODCCP has an HIV/AIDS/STD drug abuse prevention among youth program, budgeted at U.S.\$133,500.¹²⁸

Russia has been hard hit by HIV, largely in the drug user community. Officially there were 38,000 cases of HIV infection in mid-2000, 90 per cent acquired through needle sharing.¹²⁹ That number soared in the first half of 2001. As of 2 July 2001, officially registered HIV cases stood at 129,261.¹³⁰ Unofficially, the number is considered to be even higher.

In Moscow Oblast alone the Public Health Administration issued a warning in 2000 that the capital region would soon have more than 50,000 HIV infections.¹³¹ Estimates place the real HIV rates in Russia between 250,000 to 700,000.¹³²

In an effort to limit further outbreaks of AIDS in Central Asia states, NGOs have set up needle exchange points and education programs but funding remains inadequate.

In Tajikistan, such needle exchange points were opened under the auspices of the UNDP and the Open Society Institute. There are currently three such points in Dushanbe, five in Soghd province, and one in Kharog.

The largest number of HIV cases are reported in Soghd, which had 25 of the country's 33 cases in mid-2001.¹³³ In Khujand all eleven reported cases of HIV are among the intravenous drug user community.¹³⁴ Yet the needle exchange points do not reach nearly enough people.

In Dushanbe, a city thought to have 4,500 addicts, it is considered that only around ten per cent, or less than 500 addicts, use the points. Once

again, some estimates of addicts are much higher, up to 15,000 to 18,000.¹³⁵

In Iran 70 per cent of the HIV and AIDS cases are believed to have resulted from shared needles among drug users. Officially there are 2,721 AIDS cases, many among the prison population, 70 per cent of whose inmates are incarcerated for drug crimes. While the government acknowledges that there may be an additional 10,000 HIV cases, almost all unofficial estimates consider that a gross underestimation.¹³⁶

C. RISING CRIMINALITY

Apart from the increase in drug addiction and HIV infection, other social ills have accompanied the drug traffic. In the border regions with the highest volume of traffic, it has been reported that smugglers frequently take local residents hostage to ensure cooperation. In July 2001 the Iranian news agency IRNA reported that Iranian police had released 65 such hostages in the region of Taibad, bordering Afghanistan.¹³⁷

That is a small portion of the 1,378 Iranians reportedly being held captive by the drug trade.¹³⁸ In 2001 it was claimed that 26 Tajik hostages were being held in Afghanistan over drug debts.¹³⁹

Drug hostages are not always taken by force. A courier is often expected to leave a family member as a deposit to ensure delivery and return with payment for the merchandise.¹⁴⁰

Residents in major drug smuggling areas such as Panj and Moskovskii in Tajikistan tend to be uncooperative with law enforcement agencies since the latter's success can damage their livelihood. When border guards seize drugs, the dealers often

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ FBIS-SOV-2000-0615, ITAR-TASS, 15 June 2000.

¹³⁰ FBIS-SOV-2001-0710, Interfax, 9 July 2001.

¹³¹ FBIS-SOV-2000-0821, Vremya, 19 August 2000.

¹³² FBIS-SOV-2001-0710, Interfax, 9 July 2001.

¹³³ ICG interview with Muratboki Beknazarov, Director of the Tajik Centre for AIDS Prevention and Control, National Coordinator for the UNAIDS Project, in Dushanbe, July 2001.

¹³⁴ ICG interview with Zarina Abdullaeva in Dushanbe, July 2001.

¹³⁵ ICG interview with Muratboki Beknazarov, Director of the Tajik Centre for AIDS Prevention and Control, National Coordinator for the UNAIDS Project, in Dushanbe, July 2001.

¹³⁶ "Iran's Top Justice Vows No Mercy to Drug Runners and Dealers", AFP, 27 June 2001.

¹³⁷ IRNA, 28 July 2001.

¹³⁸ "Iran's Top Justice Vows No Mercy to Drug Runners and Dealers", AFP, 27 June 2001.

¹³⁹ Robyn Dixon, "Afghan Opium Pipeline Spews Misery on Tajiks", *Los Angeles Times*, 19 August 2001.

¹⁴⁰ Aksenov, Dmitrii, "Geroinoivaia respublika", *Versty*, 21 August 2001.

steal cattle and assets from the farmers involved in the unsuccessful venture.¹⁴¹

Law enforcement officials on the Tajik-Afghan border frequently turn a blind eye to drug traffic even if they are not accepting bribes. Every major shipment has strong vested interests behind it, and any border or customs guard impounding such a shipment is aware that a drug lord may take revenge on his entire family.¹⁴² That fact of life has left even honest personnel reluctant to tackle trafficking.

The increase in drug addiction has also affected crime in Kazakhstan. Since 1991 drug related crimes have increased from three per cent to fifteen or sixteen per cent of the total, and in some regions drugs are behind as much as 60 per cent of all robberies.¹⁴³ Two-thirds of the 80,000-90,000 incarcerated in the prisons are held for drug related crimes.¹⁴⁴

In Turkmenistan, drug related crimes are increasing although crime in general has fallen. In 1998 over 4,000 out of 13,500 convictions were for drug crimes. Ninety per cent of the 700 sentenced to death in 1997 were convicted for drug trafficking.¹⁴⁵

Russia has also seen a jump in its drug crimes. In 2001 every fourth crime involved heroin dealing. From January to July 2001 130,000 cases connected with the sale of heroin were opened.¹⁴⁶

D. ENTRENCHED CORRUPTION

The most difficult side effect of drug trafficking to quantify is the extent to which it has entrenched corruption in the region. Practically every international organisation and agency

points to corruption as one of Central Asia's most serious problems (sometimes even its most serious). Transparency International has consistently ranked the Central Asian states among the world's worst for corruption.

The underlying causes are complex, ranging from the Soviet legacy to the low wages paid by the current regimes. Yet, Frank Vogel, chairman of Transparency International, blames the leadership in the countries for not tackling the issue.

The lack of independent media, free public debate over policies, transparency in government tendering, and independent judiciaries and procurators all contribute to corruption at the highest levels and a perception that senior officials engage in murky deals.¹⁴⁷

Corruption within law enforcement agencies is widely acknowledged. It is facilitated by low wages, people's ignorance of their rights, and the opportunities officials have to extract bribes from ordinary citizens to increase their meagre incomes. Circumstantial evidence can be seen in most cities where customs and police chiefs often have relatively lavish homes that could not possibly have been bought on salaries.¹⁴⁸

In Tajikistan the problem is further exacerbated by the fact that warring factions on both sides during the civil war are believed to have engaged in the drug trade.¹⁴⁹ Many of those individuals now hold government positions which carry virtual immunity from prosecution. One example is the Tajik ambassador to Kazakhstan who was caught twice transporting drugs, the second time in Kazakhstan with 62 kilograms of heroin and U.S.\$1 million in cash.

Just after the ambassador was expelled, Tajikistan's trade representative was caught with 24 kilograms of heroin. Such large quantities of narcotics most likely

¹⁴¹ ICG interview in Tajikistan with Vladimir Andrianov, 2nd Secretary, Embassy of Russia, July 2001.

¹⁴² Dmitrii Aksenov, "Geroinovaia respublika", *Versty*, 21 August 2001.

¹⁴³ Valery Nikolayev, "Kazakhstan: Master Plan for Combating Drugs", *Transcaspian Project*, 29 June 2001. Available from: <http://www.times.kg/?D=print&aid=1024072>.

¹⁴⁴ "Summary of Fact Finding Mission to Kazakhstan", *Eurasianet*.

¹⁴⁵ FBIS-SOV-99-006, Interfax, 6 January 2001.

¹⁴⁶ FBIS-SOV-2001-0821, Interfax, 21 August 2001.

¹⁴⁷ See Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index*, June 2001. Also Transparency International Anti-Corruption Conference Papers.

¹⁴⁸ ICG observations in Central Asia over 2001.

¹⁴⁹ Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1999*.

involved the complicity of various law enforcement officials.¹⁵⁰

That the Tajik officials were apprehended and expelled (diplomat) or sentenced (trade representative) points to the fact that there are law enforcement agents who are serious about fighting the drug trafficking. That such large shipments reached Kazakhstan, which does not border Tajikistan, also points to corruption among law enforcement personnel in other transit states.

Another indicator that certain elements of the Tajik law enforcement agencies are complicit in the drug trade are the comparative statistics on seizures between agencies. While the country's police seized 137.9 kilograms of heroin in the first six months of 2000, the Tajik customs service and border guard, which are in the anti-drug front lines, confiscated only 21.5 and 15.8 kilograms respectively.¹⁵¹

Political immunity for deputies as well as diplomats impedes law enforcement agencies. In Osh, a Kyrgyzstan city long considered a transit and refinement centre, local residents believe a number of deputies in the local legislature effectively bought seats to protect themselves from prosecution.¹⁵²

The truth is difficult to gauge since such charges are frequently hurled at political opponents. Nonetheless, it is clear that legislative immunity has been abused throughout the CIS. It is important that the countries in the area assess the extent to which parliamentary immunity protects individuals engaged in criminal activities and draft legislation to correct shortcomings.

The World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and Western governments have repeatedly called on the Central Asian states to root out corruption. It is the biggest obstacle to attracting the levels of

foreign investment that could help them out of economic stagnation.

Once again, poor economies are one of the major factors contributing to the rise of extremism and potential for conflict in the region. That, coupled with the obvious problems posed by the failure to tackle drug trafficking effectively, should serve as sufficient incentive to challenge corruption from the top down, yet that has not happened.

Many officials, it is commonly believed, essentially buy posts, which obliges them to pass on a share of their earnings to the bosses who helped them. In turn, they attempt to recoup that investment quickly through extortion, accepting bribes, and other corrupt practices.¹⁵³ Often, therefore, the most powerful have the least interest in shaking up the system. Since they themselves had to buy their way up the ladder, they want no reforms now that they hold lucrative posts.

Nevertheless, if governments in Central Asia are serious about wanting stability, corruption is one of the most important issues for them to address. Experience elsewhere has shown that tackling corruption requires a broad program of complementary measures, including legislation, higher salaries, less bureaucracy and consistent political leadership. Genuine attempts to implement such policies in Central Asia would begin to undermine many of the region's largest drug traffickers.

¹⁵⁰ ICG interview with Association of Young Political Scientists in Dushanbe, July 2001; Reuters, 25 May 2001; Stephan Handelman, "Thieves in Power: The New Challenge of Corruption", *Nations in Transit*, Freedom House.

¹⁵¹ ICG interview in Tashkent, September 2001.

¹⁵² ICG informal conversations with residents in Osh, 2001.

¹⁵³ ICG Asia Report No. 22, *Kyrgyzstan at Ten: Trouble in the Island of Democracy*, 28 August 2001.

V. MEASURES TO COMBAT DRUG TRAFFICKING

A. LOCAL INITIATIVES

Each country in the region has sought to fight drug trafficking through setting up customs and control posts and erecting barriers against their neighbours. The Kharog-Osh road is a good example. Even though it is no longer considered a major drug artery, travellers encounter at least ten checkpoints from drug controllers, customs officials and border guards.

Mildly put, these often serve nothing but harassment. Officials are seen openly extracting bribes from drivers. At some checkpoints drivers are forced to take the tyres off their vehicles and let the air out to make sure there are no hidden drugs. It has been noted that the Kyrgyz officials treat Tajik travellers particularly badly.¹⁵⁴

Another measure is increased border control, including the erection of electric fences to seal territory from traffickers. Iran has decided to build such a fence along its 945-kilometre border with Afghanistan.¹⁵⁵ Kazakhstan and Russia have also taken steps to control their border, but as it stretches 7,668 kilometres, such a fence is impractical, and they are experimenting with mobile guard forces.¹⁵⁶

The Tajik-Afghan border has three layers of guards. The first are Russian border guards, mostly Tajik nationals commanded by Russian officers. The second is formed by Tajikistan's border guards, and the third consists of special forces. Around Panj, the area most heavily used by drug smugglers, special forces have been deployed. However, parts of the border remain poorly guarded, and corruption ensures that there is plenty of scope for illegal transit.

Apart from trying to control traffic, the Central Asian states have been eradicating opium

poppies.¹⁵⁷ Pakistan has been doing the same,¹⁵⁸ and in 2001 the UNDCP declared it poppy free.¹⁵⁹

Most importantly, as described above, the Taliban acted to eradicate poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. Between 1999 and 2000 the area under cultivation decreased from 91,000 hectares to 82,000, and in 2001 it was almost eliminated.¹⁶⁰

Since the U.S.-led coalition responding to the 11 September 2001 terrorism attacks has set as a goal removing the Taliban from power, their commitment to the poppy ban is probably moot. However, if a new government is successfully established, the anticipated international aid for it would provide important leverage for maintaining the ban.

Most countries have strengthened their drug trafficking laws although this has mostly involved only harsher sentences. In April 1998 Kyrgyzstan was the first country in Central Asia to pass a comprehensive law. Its new criminal code includes the death penalty for large-scale drug trafficking.¹⁶¹

Tajikistan's penalties for drug traffickers are also stringent. Under article 200 of the criminal code the death penalty may be employed, and fifteen to twenty-year sentences are not uncommon.¹⁶² The death penalty depends upon on the quantity of drugs caught on a person, rather than whether it is a repeat offence. Technically, the penalty can be imposed for anything beyond one kilogram, but it is rarely applied for that quantity.¹⁶³

Kazakhstan is revising the criminal code to ensure law enforcement agencies go after drug dealers rather than users.¹⁶⁴ Recently, however, drug

¹⁵⁴ ICG interviews along the Kharog to Osh road, July 2001.

¹⁵⁵ FBIS-NES-2001-0701, IRNA, 1 July 2001.

¹⁵⁶ FBIS-SOV-2000-0417, *Obshchaya gazeta*, no.15, 13-19 April 2000.

¹⁵⁷ Kanai Manayev, "Drug-Fuelled Crime in Central Asia", *The Times of Central Asia*, 4 January 2001.

¹⁵⁸ *The Nation*, FBIS-NES-2000-1129, 29 November 2000.

¹⁵⁹ *Karachi Business Recorder*, FBIS-NES-2001-0125, 25 January 2001.

¹⁶⁰ ICG interview in Tashkent, September 2001; "They Call it Poppy Love: UN Praises Taliban", *Asia Times*, 11 August 2001.

¹⁶¹ UNODCCP, *Kyrgyzstan: Country Profile*, available from: http://www.undcp.org/uzbekistan/country_profile_kyr.html.

¹⁶² ICG interview with the Procurator General for the Tajik Customs Department, Sharif Zhuraev, July 2001.

¹⁶³ ICG interview with the Deputy Procurator in Kharog, July 2001.

¹⁶⁴ "Summary of Fact Finding Mission to Kazakhstan", *Eurasianet*.

trafficking has become so serious that some officials have proposed introducing the death penalty for trafficking.¹⁶⁵ That measure has not been passed, but officials are taking steps to tighten the borders. In 2000 U.S.\$900,000 was allocated for this purpose, a figure that rose to U.S.\$1 million in 2001 and will double in 2002.¹⁶⁶

Political leaders have also waged anti-drug public relations campaigns. Turkmenistan's President Saparmurat Niyazov recently dismissed a police colonel with great fanfare because his family members were involved with drugs.¹⁶⁷

Such gestures have probably had less impact than those taken by Tajikistan's President Emomali Rakhmanov. Hounded by rumours that he himself was involved in the drug trade and realising the country lacked resources to deal with the problem itself, Rakhmanov invited the UN Drug Control Program (UNDCP) to set up a Drug Control Agency and promised there would be no interference.¹⁶⁸

B. REGIONAL COOPERATION

Officially, there is cooperation between Tajikistan and neighbouring countries over the drug trade. A series of bilateral accords have been signed between interior ministries and the Tajik Drug Control Agency, and there are also agreements between that agency and the customs committees in Russia, Uzbekistan, Latvia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, as well as India and China.¹⁶⁹

Under the 1993 Minsk Convention on Legal Aid and Legal Relations for Civil, Family, and Criminal Cases, CIS countries are expected to

cooperate over criminal matters including information exchange and extradition.

A Bureau for Coordinating the Fight Against Organized Crimes and Other Types of Crimes on the Territory of the CIS was established as its main operative structure in April 1993. Like many CIS entities, however, it is only a paper organisation. Most cooperation between CIS states is on a bilateral basis.¹⁷⁰

There are separate agreements between the Tajik drug control agency and the Russian interior ministry and security services (FSB), and cooperation is considered good.¹⁷¹

Tajikistan also has separate agreements with Iran and with the Organization of Islamic States Conference.¹⁷² Despite these, many consider there is actually very little if any cooperation between most of the CIS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and countries in the neighbourhood on drugs.

There has been no direct cooperation with China and the SCO, and CIS structures that are often extolled in the media are, in fact, usually rudimentary at best. A CIS centre in Khujand to foster cooperation between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is, unusually, considered functional.¹⁷³ Nonetheless, while Tajik law enforcement officials dealing with the drug trade find information exchange and joint operations with the Kyrgyz good, they consider cooperation with Uzbekistan problematic.¹⁷⁴

Likewise Tajik Drug Control Agency officials in Soghd, bordering on Uzbekistan, say that while they can work with their Kyrgyz counterparts they cannot with Uzbek agencies. Partly that is because Tashkent has not empowered those agencies to act without approval from the centre. In effect that means any decisions have to be volleyed between capitals

¹⁶⁵ "Ministers Argue About Introducing Death Penalty for Drug Trafficking in Kazakhstan", *The Times of Central Asia*, 21 December 2001.

¹⁶⁶ ICG interview with the Deputy Minister of Justice of Kazakhstan, Nurlan Mazhedeovich, in Astana, August 2001.

¹⁶⁷ FBIS-SOV-2001-0821, Interfax, 21 August 2001.

¹⁶⁸ ICG interview in Tajikistan, July 2001. For more on this unique agency, see below.

¹⁶⁹ Viktor Panfilov, "Na glavnom napravlenii bor'by s narkomafey", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 5 July 2001.

¹⁷⁰ Svetlana Shevchenko, "Pravo", *Rossiskaia gazeta*, 2 August 1997.

¹⁷¹ ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

¹⁷² ICG interview with the Procurator General of the Tajik Customs Department, Sharif Zhuraev, July 2001.

¹⁷³ ICG interview in Tajikistan with Vladimir Andrianov, 2nd Secretary, Embassy of Russia, July 2001.

¹⁷⁴ ICG interview with Col. Shavkat Yulchiev, head of the MVD in Soghd, July 2001.

before they can be passed down to local drug agencies. The Tajiks argue that much more narcotics could be seized in Uzbekistan if there was serious information exchange.¹⁷⁵

Despite Iran's strenuous anti-drug campaign, there is little cooperation with the Central Asian states. Neither Turkmenistan nor Uzbekistan have tried to initiate a cooperative relationship with Iran over this issue, despite the latter's long experience in interdiction and opportunities for information sharing.¹⁷⁶

Around 55 per cent of all seizures of Afghan drugs are made by Iranian security forces –, the five former Soviet republics seize only fifteen per cent all together.¹⁷⁷ Iran has some of the strongest penalties for drug trafficking. The death penalty can be employed against anyone possessing over 30 grams of heroin or over five kilograms of opium. From March 2000 to March 2001 there were 227,000 drug arrests, while 1,083 persons were killed in encounters with law enforcement agencies.¹⁷⁸

Even with harsh sentences, regular executions of drug dealers, and major interdiction efforts, however, Iran has not been able to end narcotics trafficking across its territory.

C. INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

1. The "Osh Knot"

The UN is active in funding drug control efforts in Central Asia, and almost all international assistance comes through its offices. As early as 1994 the UNDCP began considering a Central Asian project to strengthen regional law enforcement and build cross border cooperation.

In November 1997 the UN's Central Asian Project was signed with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. As the first UN anti-drug program in Central Asia, it sought to provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies, including vehicles, communications equipment, drug searching equipment and training.¹⁷⁹

Commonly known as the "Osh Knot", the project was based in Kyrgyzstan and aimed at stopping the flow of narcotics from Kharog in Tajikistan through Osh and on to Andijan in Uzbekistan and more distant markets. The program was fraught with difficulties, and the Kyrgyz State Commission of Drug Control tried to use it to further its own aims.

Since the lack of good communications equipment was a key factor limiting law enforcement officials' ability to catch major drug dealers, Osh Knot was supposed to establish a modern communications network in southern Kyrgyzstan.

While that was a seemingly simple task, lack of cooperation between Kyrgyz officials and UN departments prevented the Osh Knot team from getting the tender for the communications project off the ground, and it was decided to close the office in 1999.¹⁸⁰ In all, Kyrgyzstan has received U.S.\$3.5 million in international aid to combat drug trafficking since 1995.¹⁸¹

2. Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency

As Tajikistan is the country most plagued by the narcotics flow, much of the international community's efforts have focused on it. Dushanbe set up a National Committee for Drug Control in 1996, ratified the three UN conventions on drugs and began cooperating with the UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP) based in Vienna, under whose auspices it worked with the Osh Knot program.

President Rakhmanov also began talking openly about the country's drug problems including the lack

¹⁷⁵ ICG interview with the head of the Soghd department of the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Ivavaiev Nogachiev, August 2001.

¹⁷⁶ ICG interview in Tajikistan with Vladimir Andrianov, 2nd Secretary, Embassy of Russia, July 2001.

¹⁷⁷ Jean-Christophe Peuche, "Central Asia: Charges Link Russian Military to Drug Trade", RFE/RL 8 June 2001.

¹⁷⁸ "Iran's Top Justice Vows No Mercy to Drug Runners and Dealers", AFP 27 June 2001.

¹⁷⁹ Col. Alexander Zelitchenko, "An Analysis of Drug Trafficking and Use Within the Area of the International UN project 'Osh Knot'", *The Times of Central Asia*, 25 November 1999.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Lowe, "Closure of UN Drugs Programme in Osh Greeted with Dismay", *The Times of Central Asia*, 11 November 1999.

¹⁸¹ Interfax, 27 June 2001.

of qualified law enforcement specialists and corruption within law enforcement agencies. By 1997 he was discussing setting up a UN sponsored agency to combat the narcotics trade.¹⁸²

On 27 April 1999 President Rakhmanov signed an agreement with the UNODCCP to establish a drug control agency in Tajikistan.¹⁸³ It began work in March 2000 but everything had to be done from scratch. The legal basis for the agency had to be decided and its mandate and purview defined. Then personnel had to be selected.

Over 2,000 applied for the 350 posts in Dushanbe. Each applicant had to pass a series of exams, including psychological and physical. No one tainted by rumours of corruption was taken. Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, formerly the deputy minister of the interior, was appointed director of the agency.

As the UN financed the lion's share of the U.S.\$11 million budget, it demanded the right to approve all appointments and hires.¹⁸⁴ The budget appears small for the task. In comparison, the U.S. allocated U.S.\$186 million to a team of 282 special agents tasked with reducing trafficking in 31 high density drug trafficking areas in America.¹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, programs with a fraction of hefty Western budgets can be highly effective in the region.¹⁸⁶

Finding qualified cadres was considered a serious problem since so many law enforcement personnel were tainted. As there was little time to train new people, however, 99 per cent of those taken on came from law enforcement agencies.

Relatively high salaries were paid so that personnel would value their jobs. That appears to

be working as there have been no rumours of corruption.¹⁸⁷ The higher pay has caused some resentment among other law enforcement agencies, however. A procurator in the customs agency receives U.S.\$60 per month, while salaries in the anti-drug agency are U.S.\$100 to U.S.\$600 per month.¹⁸⁸

The agency was tasked with combating the trade in opium, heroin, cannabis and other drugs, as well as controlling pharmaceuticals used in the production of heroin and manufactured drugs such as hallucinogenics and LSD. It includes an operative division, an investigative branch, special forces, and even has its own jails.

The work of the investigative branch is particularly important since one of the problems in Tajikistan has been ensuring that cases against major drug lords actually go through the courts. No such individual has yet been convicted.

Most people found guilty by courts were simple couriers arrested with a few grams of heroin or opium. As investigations that put together solid cases take time, it is still a little early to evaluate the agency's work.¹⁸⁹

In the second half of 2001, however, a major drug lord was reported arrested for the first time.¹⁹⁰ No information has been released about the case, the disposition of which will be an indicator of the judiciary's role in drug control as well as the effectiveness of the new agency.

3. Other Initiatives

Other activity of or facilitated by the international community includes:

- The opening of a UNDCP country office in Tehran in 1999.¹⁹¹

¹⁸² ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

¹⁸³ UN Information Service, "Tajik President Opens Crime Commission, Signs Agreement for New Drug Control Agency", Press Release SOC/NAR/798.

¹⁸⁴ ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

¹⁸⁵ DEA, *High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas*, <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/programs/hidta.htm>.

¹⁸⁶ ICG interview in Tashkent, September 2001.

¹⁸⁷ ICG interview in Tajikistan, July 2001.

¹⁸⁸ ICG interview with the Procurator General for the Tajik Customs Department, Sharif Zhuraev, July 2001.

¹⁸⁹ ICG interview with Maj. Gen. Rustam Nazarov, Director, the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.

¹⁹⁰ ICG interview in Tashkent, September 2001.

¹⁹¹ UN Information Service, "United Nations International Drug Control Programme to Open New Country Office in Tehran", Press Release SOC/NAR/793, 27 January 1999.

- A UNODCCP grant of U.S.\$71,500 to Turkmenistan for the purchase of vehicles and computer equipment for the border guards.¹⁹²
- A joint effort between Western countries and the Central Asian republics to eradicate the poppy crop and keep it in check by biological methods.¹⁹³
- Various efforts to target money laundering as well as a project to strengthen the criminal justice system in fighting organised crime, and harm reduction and treatment programs.

The bulk of the UNODCCP's efforts continue to be directed at interdiction, border control, and strengthening law enforcement capacities. A precursor control project for the region with a projected budget of U.S.\$5 million is one of the larger projects under way.¹⁹⁴

The emphasis on law enforcement and interdiction over harm reduction by the Western donors has been decried as hypocritical by a number of NGOs working in the area.¹⁹⁵

Donors have also tended to take a short-term approach rather than committing funds for longer periods that would allow more coherent planning and coordination of projects.

4. The Special Challenge of Afghanistan

With the US and its allies now attempting to overthrow the Taliban regime, it is vital that

thought be given to how a new Afghan government might further limit poppy cultivation.

Shortly before the military events of Fall 2001, the U.S. had undertaken to contribute U.S.\$1.5 million to the UN drug control program to finance crop substitution in Afghanistan and help alleviate adverse economic effects on farmers who stopped poppy cultivation.¹⁹⁶ Britain and other countries were also considering aid to Afghan farmers who have substituted crops.¹⁹⁷

Such aid will now need to be increased significantly to assist the 1.2 million Afghan farmers who are estimated to have been directly involved in growing poppies before the Taliban instituted its ban and who now have much reduced incomes.

When the Taliban ban was instituted, several villages protested, with the men in one place reportedly shaving their beards in defiance.¹⁹⁸ That discontent will still be there even if the Taliban are gone.

If the international community is committed to the eradication of the poppy crop, a major program of assistance to farmers must be developed as an urgent priority, taking into account the lessons learned from similar programs in Latin America and elsewhere.

¹⁹² Gulshen Ashirova, "Turkmenistan in the Path of Afghan Drug Expansion", *The Times of Central Asia*, 26 July 2001.

¹⁹³ "Killer Frankenstein Fungus to Target Opium", *The Times of Central Asia*, 23 November 2000.

¹⁹⁴ For a full listing of projects and budgets see UNODCCP, *Strengthening Drug Control and Crime Prevention Capacities in the Central Asian States* July 2001.

¹⁹⁵ The European Union Drugs Strategy for 2000-2004 puts the emphasis on harm reduction and information on drugs rather than policing. Funding by the EU and members states for drug control in Central Asia tends to focus, however, on interdiction, and funding for harm reduction has been minimal. The EU Drugs Strategy can be found online at: <http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom/LoadDoc.cfm?MAX=81&DOC=!!!&BID=75&DID=62058&GRP=2592&LANG=1>.

¹⁹⁶ Robert McMahon, "Central Asian Neighbors Crucial to Afghan Sanctions", RFE/RL, 3 August 2001.

¹⁹⁷ Tim Cornwell, "Taliban Wipe Out Drugs Production in Afghanistan", *The Scotsman Online*, 22 June 2001.

¹⁹⁸ Charles Recknagel, "Afghanistan: UN Says Taliban Poppy Ban Hits Farmers Hard", RFE/RL 24 May 2001.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Central Asia's instability cannot be significantly lessened without a serious effort to tackle its multiple drug problems. Drugs provide the money for weapons and fighters, undermine legitimate governments and institutions and create criminal economies that resist reform. They go to the core of the conflict prevention challenge.

A comprehensive and sophisticated anti-drugs strategy must be part of efforts to calm the decades-old conflict in Afghanistan. Iran, Pakistan and the Central Asian nations will not feel secure as long as Afghan drugs have such a malign influence on their institutions and society. Unless the impact can be reduced, there is virtually no chance they will end their often unhelpful intrusions into the country's politics.

Drugs also make it much more difficult to push forward with the vital economic, social and political reforms that are necessary if Central Asia is to escape becoming a permanent, and explosive, locus of conflict and misery.

The United States and Europe have given only cursory attention to drug control in the region. Combating the problem will require far more resources than have yet been made available, including long-term funding and intense diplomatic activity.

Even then, the attempt will only be successful if it is part of a broader development strategy that alleviates poverty, increases food security and opens up economic opportunities. Such a strategy needs to cover the entire region and will require that the West lengthen its policy attention span.

Interdiction plays an important role in the fight against drugs in the region but it should only be one component, and certainly not the driving one, of that wide strategy. Too often drug policies are viewed in isolation from broader issues. As well as economic development, much more needs to be done to deal with the social impact of drugs in the region, including AIDS, crime and weaker institutions.

Governments must step up efforts to end corruption and reverse the erosion of legal

systems across the region. Interdiction will not succeed if it simply expands the repressive powers of states and does not take into account the need for improved human rights. Jailing more Afghan or Tajik war widows is no answer.

Donors need to take immediate steps to prevent Afghan farmers from growing poppies again now that the Taliban are being ousted. In the short term this means supporting incomes with humanitarian aid but in the longer term a comprehensive program of crop substitution and improved market access is needed. Any new government in Kabul should be warned to control drugs and immediately close processing labs.

Understanding of the drugs danger in Central Asia is still low. More study is required of the trade and the impact of anti-drugs strategies. Donors need to expand evaluation and follow-up to ensure programs work and do not have wider adverse effects. Better regional coordination and information sharing is essential, including between intelligence agencies.

Experiences in Latin America and elsewhere show that the most successful anti-drugs strategies grow out of community action. More could be done to involve local people in the design and implementation of drug control programs.

It is particularly important to build support for interdiction efforts by increasing civilian oversight of law enforcement as a means for avoiding much corruption and abuse.

Those involved in the drugs trade have an interest in perpetuating conflict. Trafficking is easier where law and order has been destroyed by war. Governments involved in conflict are more likely to turn a blind eye to the trade or co-opt it for their own ends. As institutions are corrupted, efforts to reduce poverty are undercut by bad governance. Worsening poverty increases the risks of conflict and provides more fertile ground for drug trafficking.

Unless the role of drugs in this vicious cycle is reduced, conflict of some sort will continue in Afghanistan, and the surrounding countries will be further destabilised.

Osh/Brussels, 26 November 2001

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS

AIDS: auto immuno-deficiency syndrome.

Al Qaida: terrorist network founded by Osama bin Laden.

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States, a loose organisation encompassing the former Soviet republics minus the Baltic states.

DEA: Drug Enforcement Agency, the U.S. agency responsible for narcotics control.

EU: European Union

GBAO: Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, in Tajikistan.

HIV: human immuno-deficiency virus.

INCB: International Narcotics Control Board.

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

STD: sexually transmitted disease.

UNAIDS: UN agency responsible for dealing with AIDS.

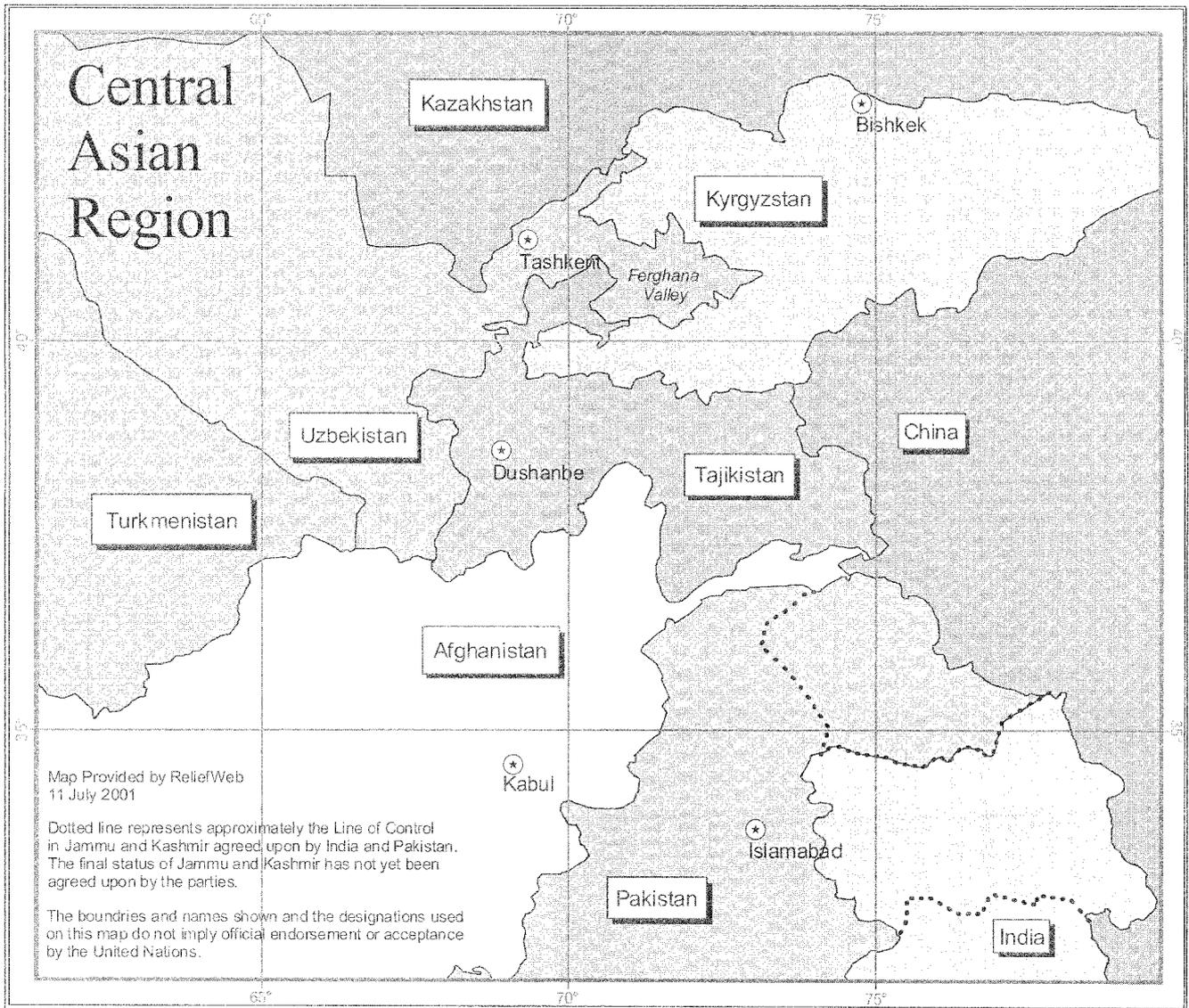
UNDCP: UN Drug Control Program.

UNODCCP: UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention.

USAID: U.S. Agency for International Development.

APPENDIX B

MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA



APPENDIX C

MAP OF AFGHANISTAN



APPENDIX D

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation committed to strengthening the capacity of the international community to anticipate, understand and act to prevent and contain conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts, based on the ground in countries at risk of conflict, gather information from a wide range of sources, assess local conditions and produce regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

ICG's reports are distributed widely to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.crisisweb.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analysis and to generate support for its policy prescriptions. The ICG Board - which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media - is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans has been President and Chief Executive since January 2000.

ICG's international headquarters are at Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Paris. The organisation currently operates field projects in nineteen crisis-affected countries and regions across four continents:

Algeria, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe in Africa; Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in Asia; Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in Europe; and Colombia in Latin America.

ICG also undertakes and publishes original research on general issues related to conflict prevention and management. After the attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, ICG launched a major new project on global terrorism, designed both to bring together ICG's work in existing program areas and establish a new geographical focus on the Middle East (with a regional field office planned for Amman) and Pakistan/Afghanistan (with a field office planned for Islamabad).

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently provide funding: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Foundation and private sector donors include the Ansary Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the Ploughshares Fund and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

November 2001

APPENDIX E

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APPENDIX F

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