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Drug-Trafficking through the Russia-Kazakhstan Border: Challenge and Responses

Today the dissemination of drugs is one of the most serious global challenges. Its destroying influence seems to be more dangerous than international terrorism. It is true that Russia is one of the main drugs consumers in the world. This paper focuses on the main direction of transboundary drug-trafficking to Russia, which is also the most socially dangerous kind of illegal transborder activity between Kazakhstan and Russia. The latter is reflected both in the cost of smuggling items and the number of people, lost for society as a result of taking opiates and other narcotics.

In order to estimate the scale of the problem and possible solutions, several key issues of drug-trafficking across the Russia-Kazakhstan border will be analyzed. These issues are: 1) global and regional conjuncture; 2) directions and routes of trafficking (including the significance of the Russia-Kazakhstan border); 3) the structure of drug abuse in border areas; 4) organization of drug-trafficking; 5) measures taken against drug-trafficking and narcotism.

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Global and Regional Conjecture

According to the UN, there are currently 200 million drug users in the world.¹ Marijuana is the drug of choice with approximately 140 million consumers. Another 30 million people use amphetamine-type stimulants, 13 million people use cocaine and 8 million to heroin.² Due to its profitability, it would be near impossible to eradicate drug trafficking in the foreseeable future. Drugs have a profit margin of 1000 percent, and the United Nations' experts claim that the annual turnover of drug industry is from \$55 to 400 billion. This amount constitutes at least 8 percent of the world trade. The International Monetary Fund estimates that every year 1.5 trillion "drug dollars" are laundered, which constitutes 5 percent of world gross product.³ Due to the huge financial resources, the drug industry is able to adjust itself easily to changing circumstances and to react quickly to new measures against it. This illicit business also takes an active part in globalization, being its shady side.

At present the structure of the drug trade depends on many factors, including product demand, specialization and geography of production, the narcotics business' reaction to counter-measures of national and international bodies, to name a few. Drugs are typically produced in Southern and South-Eastern Asia as well as third world countries in Latin America. In some regions planting and harvesting narcotics is the key income for the local population. The most powerful flows of drugs are directed according to purchasing capacity of transit states' and regions' population. Some such flows finish in these countries while others reach the more profitable EU and US markets.

Drug dealing is carried out by individuals, small groups as well as larger criminal organizations. The structure of drug dealing is made up

1 See "Ostanovit' narkoagressiiu," Press-Release of the Federal Service of the Russian Federation for Control over Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances [<http://www.gnk.gov.ru/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=49>]. Here and below, all the URLs are valid as of January 29, 2007.

2 See M. Ashimbaev, G. Kurganbaeva, L. Muzaparova, L. Guseva, A. Dosymov, "Narkotizatsiia obshchestva: sostoiianie, problemy, opyt protivodeistviia," *Analiticheskoe obozrenie* 1 (2004), p. 7.

3 Ibid.

of drug producers, laboratories (if necessary), a network of couriers (who often do not know each other), wholesale markets, and retailers, as well as additional units, such as killers, extortionists, and money launderers, which in Russian-speaking areas are called *krysha*, which means “roof” as well as “corrupted officials of all levels” in slang. The drug business is not a strictly centralized structure. This is due to the huge drug market’s capacity and the necessity of secrecy in order to preserve the key units when inauspicious circumstances take place such as arrests. Nevertheless, some individuals or groups cooperate with one another, integrating their information on the sale of drugs, conspiracy, counteraction to law-enforcement bodies and money laundering. With respect to intergroup cooperation, Columbian cartels are much more centralized than the major Eurasian narcotics groups, which appear to be at the early stages of formation.

Directions and Routes of Trafficking: The Role of the Russia-Kazakhstan Borderland

Producing up to 80 percent of opiates in the world, Afghanistan remains the main hub of “hard” drug production in Eurasia. Most opiates from Afghanistan are transported to the EU, which is the market with the largest purchasing capacity, via the Balkan route, which crosses Iran, Turkey, and the Balkan countries. At the same time the importance of the Northern, or *Silk* route, which crosses through Central Asia, Russia and states of Eastern Europe is increasing at a rapid rate and Afghanistan’s narcotics are steadily being redirected through this region. Poppy plantations’ squares increase quickly in provinces bordering upon the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries.

The global state of the cannabis market differs from the heroin market. Because of the relatively low cost (\$0.3–0.4 per gram in the CIS), a larger volume of cannabis is smuggled across borders. The larger volume of cannabis also increases the risk of being discovered. The favorable natural conditions for large-scaled cannabis planting (and wild vegetation) in wider geographic areas, such as Central Asia also influences the conjuncture of this illicit market. The key cannabis trafficking routes are much

shorter than the trafficking routes for opiates. It should be noted, however, that the Middle East and Central Asia provide a small percentage of the world's cannabis supply. But at the regional level, such areas as the valley of the Chu (Shu) River belonging to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are large suppliers of marijuana and hashish northwards to Russia.

Transportation of amphetamine-type stimulants is carried out in the opposite direction—from Europe to Central Asia and does not have an influence on the structure of drug consumption in concerned region.

The Russia-Kazakhstan border, which is the lengthiest continuous boundary in the world and extends over more than 7000 kilometers, has the key importance both for drug trafficking and the fight against it. When smugglers cross this border, they find themselves in another region and price zone. This border is one of the largest transit points on the way to the EU, and at the same time, one of the most capacious drug markets. The drug-related arrests at the Kazakhstan-Russian border is evidence of the huge scale of narcotraffic; the South-Eastern Regional Department of Border Guard Service seized more than 3.5 tons of heroin from 1997 to 2004. In 2004 alone, 416 kilograms of drugs including 100 kilograms of heroin were seized by border guards.⁴ Unfortunately, border and customs services do not always take stock of all seizures. This figure may be greatly underestimated as custom services (at least in the United States) are known to reveal only 5–10 percent of the total amount of drugs seized. According to many experts' estimates (which are based on similar US experience), border and customs services of Russia and Kazakhstan seize no more than 10 percent of smuggled drugs even in the favorable conditions—including effective border management and international technical aid to the mentioned services. Experts supposed that in 2002–2003, 100–150 tons were transported through the territory of Kazakhstan. In 2002 only 168 kilograms of heroin were seized.⁵

Conditions and volume of drug transportation across the border depend on many factors, including border regime, landscape, communications, and partly on the extent in which local population is involved in

4 "Vosem' ugovolnykh del vzbuzhdeno v otnoshenii pogrannikov-vziatochnikov na rossiisko-kazakhstanskoi granitse," Interfaks-Ural, December 24, 2004 [http://news.74mail.ru/news.php?news_id=27894].

5 Ashimbaev et al., "Narkotizatsiia obshchestva," p. 5.

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this illicit activity. The combination of mentioned factors shapes the structure of drug-trafficking in the area.

The Russia-Kazakhstan border is a contact one with respect to the landscape and communications. The landscape on the both sides is similar, with steppes and semi-deserts with rare, natural obstacles. The border rivers divide the two countries over a stretch of no longer than 150 kilometers. Natural obstacles are mainly found in the border stretches of the Republic of Altai and part of the Altai krai: this area is mountainous and therefore transboundary communication is much more difficult than elsewhere. But the geographic features typical of the remaining borderland make it suitable for communication transport: the border is crossed by 16 railways, about 200 roads (6 highways, 36 roads have pavement, 33 roads have no pavement, the rest are dirt roads and difficult to negotiate in bad weather).⁶

Such contactivity is convenient for drug transit using existing transport facilities despite the checkpoints. The use of major routes essentially shortens the delivery time. Drug smugglers do not believe that border and customs' checkpoints are insurmountable; they employ modern technologies in order to conceal drugs, and take advantage of high intensity of traffic and insufficient equipment of border guards and customs officials. These tactics leave few chances for the police to find and seize narcotics. However, as the chief of the drug control department of the Siberian Customs Service, lieutenant-colonel V. V. Kalinin pointed out, it is not profitable to transport large lots of drugs because it increases the risk of detention and full inspection.⁷ According to estimates of Russian Border Guard Service experts, at least 70 percent of the smuggled drugs are transported through working checkpoints rather than avoiding them. Yet other drug couriers use main motorways, railways, roads and paths trying to escape the border control.

Large-scale drug-trafficking takes place in almost every province.

6 Calculated from: *Chelovek i granitsa: Rossiisko-kazakhstanskoe prigranich'e: Sotsial'nyi pasport i odnomernye statisticheskie raspredeleniia*, Cheliabinsk, 2001, pp. 6, 11, 14-16, 24, 29, 34, 43, 48; data collected by the author was also used.

7 Information of the interview of Dr. Grigorii Olekh with the Head of Department for the Struggle against Drugs Smuggling at Siberian Operational Customs Office, Lieutenant Colonel of Customs Service V. Kalinin, August 4, 2004.

There is one exception; the Republic of Altai's borders are in the highlands and there is no regular communication. As it was mentioned above, heroin trafficking routes are on average longer than cannabis trafficking routes, and they are also more diversified. Cannabis is transported the Chu valley situated in the south of Kazakhstan while opiates flow from Afghanistan through the territory of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The opiate and cannabis delivery routes cross the border at the same points. These routes can be subdivided into a few main flows in the Russian illegal wholesale markets:

1. The *South Volga route* passes from Western Kazakhstan to the Low Volga region, and then branches to the Ukraine and the EU, Central Russia, the Volga regions and Northern Caucasus. Drugs cross the border between Atyrau and Astrakhan oblasts.

2. The *Northwestern route* stretches from Western Kazakhstan, Aktiubinsk, Kostanai, Karaganda and Northern Kazakhstan oblasts of Kazakhstan through Saratov, Samara, Orenburg, Cheliabinsk and Kurgan oblasts and then to non-bordering Kazakhstan oblasts of the Ural Federal District (Sverdlovsk oblast, Khanty-Mansi and Yamalo-Nenets autonomous districts), the Volga region and the central regions of Russia, mainly to Moscow, St. Petersburg. Some lots from the capitals are transported to countries in Eastern Europe.

3. The *Northeastern route* passes from Northern Kazakhstan, Karaganda, Pavlodar, Eastern Kazakhstan oblasts through Kurgan, Omsk, Tiumen, Novosibirsk oblasts and Altai krai to gas-and-oil producing regions of Siberia.

Based on the information concerning drug seizures at the Russia-Kazakhstan border, the author can surmise that in the last few years the main transboundary drug-trafficking routes have been shifting gradually eastwards. At the same time, the total volume of smuggled drugs is increasing along the length of the border. This tendency can be interpreted as the result of the high purchasing capacity of the population of the gas-and-oil producing regions in contrast to other Russian provinces. This the reason that this market is getting more attractive, taking into account the continuing rise of oil price.

The network of transboundary motorways crossing the border is more dense than the railways. The number of motorways with asphalt pave-

ment, leading from the center of the country to the border is seven times as great as the number of corresponding railways. Using motorways, smugglers can choose the time of delivery most convenient for them. This is why cars and especially lorries are used by couriers more often than trains. On the other hand, when narcotics are transported by passenger buses and trains, Customs and Border Guard officers have relatively little time to inspect passengers and freight. At some border sections, in particular in Volgograd and Astrakhan oblasts, drugs are more often transported by trains because there are few motorways in these regions.

The Structure of Drug Abuse in Border Areas

In Kazakhstan, as of March 2003, about 48,000 people were drug addicts (70 percent of them were heroin users) according to the information of the Ministry of Health Care, but by some unofficial estimates, a more accurate number of addicts was 250,000. By some Kazakhstan experts' point of view, 30 percent of the imported drugs are left in the country and 70 percent are transported out of the country, mostly to Russia.⁸ In Russia, about 400,000 persons are officially registered as drug addicts. During a one-year period (from autumn 2004 until summer 2005) state officials from various departments "increased" this number from 2 million (Prosecutor-General Vladimir Ustinov, November 2004)⁹ to 4 million (the Minister of Interior Affairs Rashid Nurgaliev, December 2004),¹⁰ or 3–8 million (the Director of the Department for Interdepartmental Interaction in the Preventive Sphere of Gosnarkokontrol Boris Tselinskii, June 2005).¹¹ In July 2005 the Ministry of Health Care and Social Development stated that there are 1.5 million drug addicts in addition to the 6

8 Ashimbaev et al., "Narkotizatsiia obshchestva," pp. 5–6.

9 Diana Igoshina, "Rossiya pereshla na geroin," *Strana.ru.*, December 15, 2004 [<http://www.strana.ru/stories/01/08/21/1260/235825.html>].

10 "MVD: v Rossii 4 milliona narkomanov," *Cry.ru.*, December 15, 2004 [<http://www.cry.ru/2004/12/15/news/201318/>].

11 "V Rossii 5,5 percent naseleniia - narkomany: Ofitsial'naia statistika - v 16 raz men'she," *NEWSru.com.*, June 15, 2005 [<http://www.newsru.com/russia/15jun2005/narkomany.html>].

million people who have taken narcotics at some point.¹² This figure surpasses corresponding indexes of heroin addicts in Great Britain and Italy (260,000), Germany (170,000), France (165,000), Spain (145,000)¹³ and other European countries. At the same time, the mass-media and officials (including those from Gosnarkokontrol [Russian Federal Service for the Control over Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances]) often manipulated these figures in an attempt to present the situation as catastrophic and to persuade the society to take extraordinary measures. They focused the attention of public opinion on the number of 6 million. It should be noted that for the last 10 years, the number of drug addicts has increased 10 times, and according to expert evaluations, the annual income of drug dealers is from \$8 to 18 billion.¹⁴

Among the imported narcotics, cannabis-derived drugs (marijuana, hashish) and opiates (heroin and opium) dominate. As mentioned above, cannabis derived drugs are transported in large amounts because of their low price, shorter transport routes and the necessity of crossing only one (Russia-Kazakhstan) or two (also between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) borders. But in many reports issued from 2000, Border Guard and Customs officials stress that the share of hard drug seizures increased in comparison with the share of soft drugs. It is because the heroin business is more profitable, small lots can be easier hidden from control, even from guard dogs.

Further development of cross-border drug-trafficking through Russia-Kazakhstan boundary will depend on solvent demand and profitability of the drug business. Considerable heroin influx to the border areas promotes price-cutting which causes the reduction in drug dealers' incomes. This effect provokes the drug dealers to invest in cheaper narcotics, particularly in opium as it accelerates. Naturally the number of seizures of large lots of opium has been substantially increasing recently.

12 Ol'ga Stroinaeva, "V odinochku nikto ne pobedit," *Parlamentskaia gazeta*, October 26, 2005 [<http://www.pnp.ru/archive/18050110.html>].

13 *World Drug Report 2004* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004), p. 29.

14 "Narkoagressiya: Ni v kakoi drugoi strane mira ona ne priobrela takikh masshtabov, kak v Rossii," (interview with a Deputy Director of the Federal Service for Control over Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Mikhailov), *Rodnaja gazeta*, May 14, 2004, p. 6.

Drug addicts try to make heroin from opium at home. Many Russian experts suppose that in Russia there is an increasing number of clandestine laboratories where raw opium is converted into heroin.¹⁵

Organization of Drug-Trafficking

The illegal transboundary transportation of drugs makes the couriers use more sophisticated methods of concealment. These manifold methods can be subdivided into at least six types: (1) masking drugs in vegetables and fruits transports, industrial goods and raw materials; (2) concealment inside human bodies (swallowing etc.); (3) concealment in baggage, under a carrier's clothes and inside shoes; (4) fitting up inside cars, lorries and train carriages; (5) concealment in packed lots of products and industrial goods (including factory wrapping and built-in hiding places; and (6) discarding drugs before arrival at checkpoints, which are later picked up by accessories.

In many respects, the method of drug transportation is determined by peculiarities of the transborder drug dealing organization. The following kinds of structural drug trafficking organizations, which move through the Russia-Kazakhstan border, can be marked out:

1. Individuals, who are independent from organized criminal groupings, transport small lots of drugs and sell them directly to consumers or at "wholesale markets." According to law-enforcement officials, this activity is carried out by people coming from Central Asia and other regions. They often mask their criminal intentions by buying and selling of other forms of mass consumption goods.

Small independent groups, which are usually formed by 3–5 people, transport drugs and sell them directly to the customer or at "wholesale markets." Such groups often comprised of family members. This type of organization allows smuggling of larger quantities of narcotics rather

¹⁵ In particular, this is the opinion of some Russian Border Guard Service's officials interviewed by Dr. Vadim Astashin during the international project "Drug-Trafficking as a Challenge to Russia-Kazakhstan Border Security" headed by the author and held in 2004 with support of the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center of American University (Washington, D.C., USA).

than trafficking carried out by individuals, and often provides a mutual safety net for the criminals involved. These criminal groups, or “teams,” do not stay together for a long time in the majority of cases.

2. The Major groups or groups associations control all key areas of drug trafficking, at least from purchasing to supply at wholesale markets. According to the Russian Federal Service for Control over Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, the drug business in Russia is controlled by 950 organized criminal groups,¹⁶ but not all of them transport drugs across borders. Those which are engaged in the drug industry sometimes allocate duties at various stages of the drug trade, including the transportation between specific parts of the route, bribery, blackmail, sale, etc.). Information on the level of organized crime development is poor and is given by police and security agencies and its volume is always strictly controlled.

In the post-Soviet period one of the main trends of transboundary narcotraffic has become the organized crime growth. They want to control not only smuggling, but sales as well. A considerable part or even the majority of these groups specialize in several kinds of transboundary criminal activity (e.g., smuggling in arms or consumer goods, human trafficking, stealing of cars, etc.). However, the author can agree with the following point of view: “small criminal groups, often consolidated due to relative or ethnic links, dominate.”¹⁷ Large hierarchical cartels of monopolists, controlling all operations of the drug market, have yet to appear. By some experts’ estimates, there is no highly-centralized structure on the Northern route. This is true even through the longer Balkan route as both are used by many competing narcotic cartels.¹⁸ The process of centralization is hampered by several factors, including the presence of broad lands for activity, necessity to survive in a hostile environment (it is easier to discover centralized structures) and even by unwritten norms of the criminal community. According to these norms,

16 Ibid.

17 Ekaterina Stepanova, “Nezakonnyi oborot narkotikov i ego sviazi s konfliktami i terorizmom: Afganistan i Tsentral’naia Aziia,” in *Razoruzhenie i bezopasnost’, 2001–2002: Mezhdunarodnaia bezopasnost’, novye ugrozy novogo tysiacheletiiia* (Moscow, 2003), pp. 67–68.

18 Ibid. See also Emil’ Pain, “Etnicheskaia spetsifika kontrabandy narkotikov v Rossii: mify i real’nost’,” International Eurasian Institute for Economic and Political Research [http://www.iicas.org/libr_rus/sng/18_02_03_libr_rus_sng.htm].

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drug-trafficking is a condemned occupation even among organized criminals who restrain their involvement to this process.

Supplying drugs to Russia, large groups divide traffic into several stages at which different carriers are involved; in some cases these carriers act as second-hand dealers. With such a scheme drugs are delivered to a fixed place and passed on to another courier who pays his or her partner for the completed work.

It is difficult to discover such criminal networks and it reduces the effectiveness of the "restriction strategy" of the struggle against narcotraffic. It is often admitted by Russian Law enforcement officials¹⁹ that in most situations, only small dealers and consumers are detained and convicted in the majority of criminal cases. Arrests of ordinary couriers do not pose a serious threat to the narcobusiness as replacing these couriers is not difficult. No wonder that the tactical achievements of police and security agencies cannot change the situation in the long term: organized criminals in Russia and Kazakhstan redesign their strategy and tactics. Sometimes criminal groups provide official structures by good indices for their reports exposing inveterate drug addicts (called *verbliudy* [camels] in slang) to police or servicemen at border control.

Together with corrupted officials (see below), criminal groups recruit employees of professions, which have the status or professional skill that helps smugglers bypass border control. Among such professions are railway workers and conductors of trains, passenger bus drivers and workers of wrapper-producing enterprises. Many inhabitants of border areas are also recruited to participate in the criminal business as they are perfectly orientated with the local and are well-informed about the Border Guard and Customs Services' work. According to estimations of some officials, more than 80 percent of the active local population works for smugglers in some of the border districts of the Volgograd and Astrakhan regions.²⁰ For a considerable number of the local, border area inhabitants, illegal transboundary operations are almost the sole source of income. The drug smugglers can pay assistants ten times as much as their legal salaries.

Russian officials often stress the ethnic character of the criminal

19 N. Kovalev, "Nezakonnyi oborot narkotikov ugrozhaet bezopasnosti i tselostnosti Rossii," *Narkomat* 1 (2003), p. 13.

20 Information provided by Dr. Vadim Astashin (see n. 15 above).

groups when considering the drug trafficking activities across the Russia-Kazakhstan border. They assert that the most of these groups are made up of Central Asian people, and mostly are Tajik criminal communities united by ethnic and family ties. The Russian officials also mention Caucasian (especially Azerbaijani) and Gipsy criminal groups.

Unfortunately, both mass-medias and officials often equate such criminal groups with ethnic communities as a whole. Such statements do not correspond with the statistical data. The calculation of the data, on the contrary, leads to a conclusion that drug-trafficking in Russia is an international business. As the Chief of Russian Federal Service for the Control over Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances (Gosnarkokontrol) Viktor Cherkesov stated on 30 March 2004, that only 330 of the 950 drug trafficking groups are formed on an ethnic basis.²¹ In addition, the Head of Siberian Federal District Branch of the Agency for Control over Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, A. Vedernikov notes that the majority of drug-traffickers and dealers arrested in this district were Russian citizens.²² Ethnic Russians are often used for transporting large quantities of drugs, as such persons do not arouse suspicions at the border and customs control.

On the whole, ethnicity (the role of Tajik, Uzbek and other migrants from Central Asia) is not a decisive factor in drug-trafficking, although it is crucial at some stages from poppy growth to retail distribution. In many cases, the Russian citizens and ethnic Russians (or representatives of other "European" ethnic groups) are both at the top of the most powerful groups and control the key stages of narcotraffic in Russia and transport to EU countries. According to opinions of the officials of the Astrakhan border guard, customs, and Gosnarkokontrol services, the role of Russian-dominated criminal groups has been increasing while the coordination centers of their activities have been moving from border

21 "Rasshirennoe zasedanie Kollegii FSN Rossii," Federal Service for Control over Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, April 30, 2004 [<http://www.gnk.gov.ru/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=72&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>].

22 Information recorded by Dr. Grigorii Olekh at a press conference of the Head of Siberian Federal District Branch of the Agency for Control over Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, Lieutenant-General of Police, A. Vedernikov at the "Interfax-Siberia" News Agency, July 30, 2004.

regions close to Central Asia to Moscow during the last years.²³

In an attempt to provide safety for their smuggling operations, drug-traffickers try to establish ties with border officials and structures, who are able to facilitate the transboundary transportation of narcotics, help them avoid punishment, or possibly return the confiscated drugs. Among the mentioned structures are border guard and customs services, regional branches of the Gosnarkokontrol, and the police. The most widely known facts concerning such corruption ties denote the involvement of low- and middle-level officials. Assumptions that many higher-standing officials are involved in narco-mafia are also widespread. The amounts of the bribes proposed can be a hundred times as great as the salary of these officials, especially with the border and customs control. However, several factors restrain the increase of narco-corruption. These include the risk of severe punishment, the possibility to get illegal income by far less risky ways, such as assistance to smugglers in consumer goods and some informal rules condemning drug-related activities, that are accepted even by criminal environment including bribable customs officials.

Measures Taken against Drug-Trafficking and Narcotism

Taking into account the considerations above, drug-trafficking is regarded as the most serious challenge for Russian border security in the direction of Kazakhstan. The present situation calls for serious measures against smuggling flows. The rough assessed value is comparable to Russian foreign trade turnover with Kazakhstan and causing huge damage to economic and social spheres.

Within the international experience, there are three main ways to combat narcotraffic: (1) restriction measures, including strengthening of border and customs control; (2) demand reduction programs, such as social advertising, health protection, active policy towards the youth; and (3) limited legalization of some drugs.

A combination of military and police measures, often referred to as “the war against drugs.” aims to make effective barriers at national bor-

23 Information provided by Dr. Vadim Astashin (see n. 15 above).

ders and seize illegal narcotics inside the country. It is almost the only way to try to diminish supply in a short space of time. Other ways, probably except international cooperation for struggle against drug-trafficking along its routes beginning with producer countries, could not have such fast and evident results.

However, international experience shows that the long-term effects of such strategies are not always so evident. For example, as American political scientist R. Lee assumes that the “war against drugs” in the United States resulted in an evident defeat: though the United States has spent roughly \$23 billion for drug export prevention and border protection programs, heroin and cocaine have become more cheap and available than at the end of 1990s. The mentioned measures caused reconfiguration of the transnational narcobusiness in the Americas: the role of the Mexican narco-cartels has been strengthened in comparison with Columbian ones.²⁴ Such a categorical estimation of the US policy’s results seems to be questionable, but in the author’s opinion, such a conclusion is reasonable in that the police and military force are principally insufficient for an effective struggle against drug-trafficking.

The most popular alternative strategy is to demand reduction, including prophylactic, rehabilitation, informational and other programs aiming to diminish the consumption of drugs. This way is far more economical: according to research carried out by RAND Corporation in 1994, \$34 million invested in demand reduction produced an effect comparable with \$783 million invested in antinarcotics programs or \$366 million for restriction measures.²⁵ However, demand reduction is not a panacea, especially with respect to those who are drug-dependent as antinarcotic advertising has little influence on their consumption. Additionally, a decrease in demand will evidently cause price-cutting, which could again increase the supply and widen the illegal market.

Advocates of absolute or partial liberalization of drugs argue that this

24 Rensselaer W. Lee, “Transnational Organized Crime: An Overview,” in Tom Farer, ed., *Transnational Crime in the Americas: Inter-American Dialogue Book* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 31.

25 Council on Foreign Relations, *Rethinking International Drug Control: Task Force Report* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997), p. 33, cited in Lee, “Transnational Organized Crime,” p. 33.

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way will do away with the narco-mafia as it will undermine its financial²⁶ and organizational potential, reduce related crime and corruption, and allow the state to take control of the drug markets. At the same time, this way may cause an increase in consumption. In addition, criminal groups can easily redirect their illegal activities, including even more dangerous kinds of activities such as arms smuggling.²⁷

To all appearances, Russia has chosen restriction measures which stress the necessity of the "hard-edged struggle against drug-trafficking." The same and even more expressive vocabulary than that used in the United States in the 1980s has been used. Such a perception is sometimes combined with ideas in the manner of "conspiracy theory," according to which the spread of drugs in Russia is not an uncontrollable process but "narco-aggression" against Russia skillfully organized by its enemies (the United States or some clandestine forces such as Zionists). This kind of idea represents a graphic example of an interpretation of non-traditional threats in traditional terms, and it induces to search for a "traditional" adversary supposedly waging a war behind the scenes. Within this approach, the situation in Russia is perceived as unique, and its systematic comparison with international experience in the struggle against drug-trafficking and drug consumption is rarely done. On the other hand, there is a serious danger that many elements of this international experience (including an unsuccessful one) will be spontaneously reproduced in less favorable conditions and with an even smaller effect.

Actually, the supporters of restriction measures in Russia and Kazakhstan propose a similar strategy to that which was used by the United States in the 1980-1990s, taking into account far more modest resources. This strategy is apparently the most popular both in power structures and in public opinion. The combination of concrete measures includes the strengthening of technical and organizational potential of force structures, the development of informational databases, the equipping of border checkpoints, and the establishment of new cynological centers. These activities require an essential increase in funding that is

26 As an illustration to this statement there are some estimates, according to which smuggling and following distribution of drugs make up 80-90 percent of Colombian narco-mafia's income. See Lee, "Transnational Organized Crime," p. 35.

27 Ibid.

sometimes achieved at the expense of other important areas. These areas, such as education, health care, support for children and youth activities, may have a direct or indirect importance in the struggle against narcotism.

The increase in support for the “restriction policy” has been somewhat fruitful, which is reflected in the greater number of arrests and volume of seized drugs. In some border regions, such as in the Orenburg oblast, prices for heroin doubled and achieved 1000 rubles, or approximately \$35 per gram. As discussed above, however, military and police structures, which have been able to provide good indices on seizures, were not, however, able to prevent an increase in consumption in the long term, as organization of supply proved to be very flexible and able to adjust to changing circumstances.

The efficiency assessment of the restrictive anti-narcotic policy in Russia brings us to a rather sad conclusion. Based on moderate experts’ estimations that assume the average Russian heroin addict consumes 0.5 grams daily and the total number of addicts is 1 million, the demand for heroin in Russia is more than 180 tons annually. As was mentioned before, the South Eastern Branch of the Federal Border Guard Service seized only 3.5 tons of heroin (that means 500 kilograms per year, on average) during the entire period of its existence. In 2003 Federal Customs Service seized 488 kilograms,²⁸ and in 2004, more than 680 kilograms of this drug was seized.²⁹ Hence, the total volume of heroin that is confiscated annually by Border Guard and Customs services is less than 1 percent of the Russian market demand while all law enforcement agencies taken together seize no more than 2.5 percent of the volume demanded by Russian heroin market.

Additionally, the growth of arrest statistics is partially reflected in the arrests of ordinary consumers; the share of criminal cases involving consumers was 60 percent of all drug-related trials in 2000.³⁰ It is no

28 Federal’naia tamozhennaia sluzhba Rossii, “Obzor deiatel’nosti tamozhennykh organov po bor’be s kontrabandoi narkotikov v 2003 godu” [http://www.customs.ru/ru/right_def/index.php?part592=10].

29 Federal’naia tamozhennaia sluzhba Rossii, “Itogi raboty Glavnogo upravleniia po bor’be s kontrabandoi FTS Rossii za 2004 god” [http://www.customs.ru/ru/right_def/fight_with_contraband/index.php?&date286=200507&id286=8724].

30 Kovalev, “Nezakonnyi oborot narkotikov,” p. 13.

wonder that in 2002, when the legally allowed amounts of drugs that a consumer could have in his possession without a risk to be prosecuted was increased, the number of drug-related crimes decreased by 25 percent, according to Kazakhstan's official statistical information.³¹ A similar situation took place in Russia; in 2004 the above-mentioned amounts were also increased.³² This decision of the Russian Government has been sharply criticized by Gosnarkokontrol and other agencies. It seems that such critics are partially justified, but at the same time such a decision will not have the essential influence on the volume of drug smuggling: transportation of permissible amounts does not cover the travel expenses of the couriers. So, the influence of the new norms on the volume of transboundary drug-trafficking to Russia is not evident while it caused a sharp decrease in statistics reflecting the achievements of the military and police forces.

The main alternative to prohibition and restrictive measures in Russia and Kazakhstan is the demand reduction policy. Some elements of this strategy are present in national and regional, and including border regions, anti-drug programs. Kazakhstan puts special stress on demand reduction measures due to the region's limited resources. In the Strategy of the Struggle against Narcotism and Narcobusiness in Kazakhstan for the years 2001–2005, it is stated that "the reduction of demand for drugs is the main instrument and the most prospective direction in overcoming drug addiction and drug business."³³

Similar efforts, directed towards drug-demand reduction and rehabilitation of drug addicts, are carried out in the border regions. The Saratov oblast is an example of a relatively successful regional policy,

31 Ashimbaev et al., "Narkotizatsiia obshchestva," p. 7.

32 According to the resolution drug consumers could own less than 1 gram of heroin or 20 grams of marijuana without the risk of being prosecuted for a criminal offence. See the Resolution of the Russian government N 231 "Ob utverzhdenii razmerov srednikh razovykh doz narkoticheskikh veshchestv dlia tselei statei 228, 228(1) i 229 Ugolovnogo kodeksa Rossiiskoi Federatsii [On the Approval of the Size of Average One-Time Doses of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances for Purposes of Articles 228, 228(1) and 229 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation]," adopted on May 6, 2004.

33 "Strategiia bor'by s narkomaniei i narkobiznesom v Respublike Kazakhstan na 2001–2005 gody." The document was confirmed by the Decree of the President of Kazakhstan, No. 394, on May 16, 2000.

where anti-drug centers work in some settlements (e.g., Balakovo, Krasnoarmeisk, Saratov). The oblast administration support clubs for teenagers and civil society structures, which carry out special projects. As a result the rate of drug addiction growth has slowed.³⁴ In Tiumen oblast, the Committee for Preventive Measures and Fight against Drug Addiction has been working since March 2001 as a part of the oblast administration. It coordinates activities within and between departments of education, science, health care, informational policy, social defense of population, committee on the young, tourism, physical culture and sport.³⁵

In Russia and Kazakhstan, measures taken for demand reduction should be more systematic, and coordination between military and police structures must be more effective. The chronic lack of financing is an even more serious problem; in Orenburg oblast, proper programs were financed (by federal and provincial authorities) 12 percent in 2003 and 6 percent in the first half of 2004.³⁶ In these conditions taking the most effective steps is difficult. Such steps may be, for instance, advertising against drug use in the mass media.

Suggestions concerning the legalization of “soft” narcotics were not seriously supported in Russia and Kazakhstan. There are strong arguments against such decisions, some of which have already been mentioned. The societies in both countries are intolerant towards drug addicts, and they are not ready to adopt such a decision. In some cases, persons who declare support for drug legalization are announced as representatives of the drug lobby, which is supported by the drug dealers. Taking into account these considerations, any serious discussion on drug legalization in Russia and Kazakhstan is not expected in the foreseeable future.

34 “Privetstvie gubernatora Aiatskova,” *Narkomat 3* (2003), p. 4.

35 See the statement of the deputy of the Federation Council of Russia A. S. Gavrin at the Second World Congress of Antinarcotic Forces, Moscow, June 26–27, 2003: “Tiumenskaia oblast’ bez narkotikov” [http://www.narkotiki.ru/ocomments_5542.html].

36 Privolzhskii Federal’nyi okrug, Kollegiia po voprosam bezopasnosti pri polnomochnom predstavitele Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Koordinatsionnoe soveshchanie rukovoditelei pravookhranitel’nykh organov, “O sostoianii i merakh po protivodeistviuu narkomanii i nezakonnomu oborotu narkotikov” (report distributed to official organizations), Nizhny Novgorod, 2004.

Conclusion

The Russia-Kazakhstan border is situated at the one of the most intensively used routes of international drug-trafficking. Unfortunately, smugglers now have a wide range of methods used to avoid border and customs control. Most of the drugs are brought through existing checkpoints and, taking into account these possibilities, there are no grounds to assume that more than 5-10 percent of such contraband is seized. Local achievements in some border regions may only result in the reorganization of various drug-trafficking structures, which are very flexible in respect to changing conditions. Demand reduction programs are poorly financed both in border regions and at the national level. Meanwhile, international experience shows that such programs can bring results with far fewer investments than for military and police measures.

Some common recommendations for the Russian and Kazakhstan's power structures are:

1. To stress the closure of borders as the panacea for the struggle against transboundary drug-trafficking is inexpedient. This recommendation is based on the fact that most smuggling goes through the existing checkpoints while flawed inspection procedures and the low salaries of officials make evident breaches within the system of control at the Russian borders.

2. Demand reduction should have more importance in national and regional antinarcotics programs. This is especially true in the border provinces and regions situated at the main routes of narcotraffic. Taking into account special vulnerability of enormously lengthy Russian boundaries, huge expenses with sufficient salaries for responsible officials are required to establish an adequate border control.

3. Both decision-makers and the community at large should not use the struggle against drug-trafficking as justification to inflict violations against basic human rights. Because of the reasons discussed above, such measures will not bring essential improvement but rather they will pose a serious threat to democracy and human rights.