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Afghan Narcotrafficking

The State of Afghanistan's Borders

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**Joint U.S.-Russia
Working Group on
Afghan Narcotrafficking**

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Principal Author:

George Gavrilis

Visiting Scholar, Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life (IRCPL), Columbia University
Author of *The Dynamics of Interstate Boundaries*

Contributors:

Vladimir Ivanov

Director, Branch in the Russian Federation, EastWest Institute

Marlene Laruelle

Research Professor of International Affairs, Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University

Director, Central Asia Program, Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University

Austin Long

Assistant Professor, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

David Mansfield

Independent Consultant

Ivan Safranchuk

Associate Professor, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO)

Editor in Chief, *Great Game: Politics, Business, Security in Central Asia*

Konstantin Sorokin

Adviser, Department of Education and Science, International Training and Methodology Centre for Financial Monitoring (ITMCFM)

Adviser, State Civil Service of the Russian Federation, Third Class

Ekaterina Stepanova

Head, Peace and Conflict Studies Unit, Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO)

Project Director:

David Firestein

Perot Fellow and Vice President, Strategic Trust-Building Initiative and Track 2 Diplomacy, EastWest Institute

Expert Group Coordinators:

Vladimir Ivanov

Director, Branch in the Russian Federation, EastWest Institute

Euhwa Tran

Program Associate, Strategic Trust-Building Initiative, EastWest Institute

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Head, Research Center, Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation (FSKN)

David Johnson

Former Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Kimberly Marten

Ann Whitney Olin Professor of Political Science, Barnard College, Columbia University

Cory Welt

Associate Director and Research Professor, Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University

Georgy Zazulin

Associate Professor at the Chair of Conflictology, St. Petersburg University
Russian Representative, European Cities Against Drugs

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CONTENTS

Introduction	8
The Shaky Architecture of Afghanistan's Borders	10
U.S.-Russia Cooperation on Counternarcotics and Afghan Border Management	14
Iran and the Border with Afghanistan: Going at It Alone	16
Pakistan's Border with Afghanistan: The Problem with the Durand Line	18
Afghanistan's Central Asian Neighbors and the Drug Trade: Three Countries, Three Approaches	20
Tajikistan's Border with Afghanistan	21
Uzbekistan's Border with Afghanistan	23
Turkmenistan's Border with Afghanistan	25
Conclusion and Recommendations	26
Endnotes	30
Acronyms	37

Introduction

Regional efforts to assist Afghanistan are floundering, and the international community still struggles to fight the growing cultivation and trafficking of opium.

A number of ministers, ambassadors and special representatives from Afghanistan and its neighboring countries gathered to discuss how to enhance regional cooperation at an informal ministerial-level meeting on the outskirts of Paris in December 2008. Kai Eide, then the United Nations secretary general's special representative on Afghanistan, said that regional cooperation had been slow to materialize and that there was a great need to identify initiatives that were attainable and of a “win-win” nature. Officials from the Central Asian Republics, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, the United States and other countries shared their thoughts on how to better cooperate at the regional level and agreed to follow up on a number of critical issues. Headlining the list was the desire to work more closely to strengthen border police and counternarcotics efforts.

Over six years after the Paris meeting, regional efforts to assist Afghanistan are floundering, and the international community still struggles to fight the growing cultivation and trafficking of opium. As David Mansfield, a leading development expert on Afghanistan, explains, “Policymakers seem to have lost all appetite for talking about the production and trade of opium in Afghanistan. While the discussion has thankfully moved past the lengthy communiqués of earlier international conferences on Afghanistan, where issues were laid out like a shopping list with little sense of priority, little has emerged in its place.”¹

Since 2011, the EastWest Institute (EWI) has convened a number of meetings of the Joint U.S.-Russia Working Group on Afghan Narcotrafficking to discuss ways to constructively and jointly enhance bilateral and multi-

lateral efforts against the cultivation of poppy and trafficking of Afghan opiates and heroin. The members of the working group recognize that much remains to be done if Afghanistan's borders are to be strengthened on all sides to better respond to the trafficking of narcotics.

In *Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment*, the working group comprehensively outlined the threats Afghan heroin poses to Russia, the United States and the broader international community. Among other findings, the report noted that efforts to interdict narcotics along Afghanistan's borders have fallen far below their potential. In *Afghan Narcotrafficking: Post-2014 Scenarios*, working group members presented future scenarios for the security, economic and political environment in Afghanistan and the consequences for the fight against Afghan opiates and heroin. Concurrent with these efforts, members of the working group held multiple discussions on the state of border management along Afghanistan's frontiers and outlined cooperative efforts Russia and the United States can undertake to assist counternarcotics initiatives at Afghanistan's borders.

This follow-up report has two aims. First, it assesses the state of border management along Afghanistan's boundaries. It focuses on the border control efforts of Afghanistan and its neighbors—Iran, Pakistan, and three Central Asian countries to the north.² Although the problem of Afghan opiates and heroin ultimately requires a comprehensive approach, the working group recognizes that border management is an important dimension of counternarcotics strategy and is one that has not received its fair share of attention and resources. The second aim of this report is

to propose attainable measures that Russia and the United States can take to combat the trafficking of narcotics along the borders of Afghanistan.

The task at hand is urgent. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) *World Drug Report 2014*, Afghanistan accounts for 80 percent of global opium production and 74 percent of global illicit opium production; over 90 percent of opiates produced in Afghanistan are trafficked out of the country.³ Progress also remains insufficient to prevent the importing of precursor chemicals, like acetic anhydride, that are used to process opium into heroin, despite noteworthy seizures by Afghanistan's authorities in recent years along the country's frontier regions with Pakistan.⁴ Afghanistan's Border Police (ABP) does not live up to its interdiction potential and in 2013 accounted for a mere 4 percent of the total drugs and precursors seized by Afghan forces.⁵ The ability of Afghan border authorities to deter traffickers will further decline unless international stakeholders pledge sustained border and security assistance beyond 2014. As a result, Russia's heroin crisis will intensify. Currently, there are 1.7 million opiate users in Russia, making up 68 percent of the country's drug addicts.⁶ The market value of Afghan heroin circulating in Russia is estimated to be a staggering \$6 billion,⁷ and Russia loses 3 to 5 percent of its GDP to narcotics, equivalent to the national health budget.⁸

Since the inception of the EWI working group in 2011, its members have determined that, "There is ... a clear and compelling interest on both the Russian and U.S. sides in stepping up cooperation on drug control in Afghanistan and beyond."⁹ The spirit of cooperation within

the working group has weathered the broader deterioration in Moscow-Washington relations, even as the Ukraine crisis has brought bilateral relations to an all-time low. Indeed, the rupture over Russian and U.S. policies towards Ukraine has affected the willingness to cooperate over Afghanistan. Afghanistan was supposed to be one of the key issues on the agenda of the cancelled Sochi G8 Summit, and there remains great opposition in the U.S. Congress to U.S. Department of Defense purchases of Russian helicopters on behalf of Afghan armed forces that would provide tactical air support and potentially assist in fighting cross-border illicit traffic.¹⁰ The working group does not expect that future U.S.-Russian cooperation over Afghanistan will somehow mend otherwise bruised relations; rather, the group believes in a more modest approach. It may be possible for Russian and U.S. officials to keep channels of communication open over Afghanistan, insulate their on-the-ground working relationship on counternarcotics, and keep a limited form of security cooperation alive at least in principle.

Even this modest cooperation requires that joint U.S.-Russian efforts tread carefully and avoid each other's geopolitical sensitivities. Nowhere is this more important than in Central Asia, particularly in states like Tajikistan, where Russia and the United States maintain a sizeable diplomatic presence and at times pursue different interests. A concluding section in this report lays out these cautions and makes recommendations on what Russia and the United States can do cooperatively to meet the challenges of narcotrafficking along the various exit points on Afghanistan's boundaries.

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The Shaky Architecture of Afghanistan's Borders

Afghanistan's border guards are stretched very thin, particularly along the borders of Central Asian states to the north.

For much of its history, the Afghan state had a border guard in name only. Warlords and authorities in frontier areas set up their own modes of border control, collecting customs duties and policing stretches of frontier as they saw fit.¹¹ The flexible and local approach to border control in the country was largely a function of its political geography; Afghanistan's various regions and frontier territories had stronger links historically to the territories of neighboring states than to one another. Their economic activity and social exchange depended on relatively unhindered cross-border exchange, a factor that contributed to the weakness of the central state in Afghanistan and impeded the development of a well-functioning border guard at the national level.

In the 1970s and 1980s during the Soviet intervention, Afghan officials set up a military-style border guard with Moscow's help. Afghanistan's Soviet-style border control appeared centralized, orderly and functional on the surface, but in reality it thinly papered over the system of security, tolls and regulations that local strongmen and warlords had put in place, and these practices were revived during the Afghan civil war in the 1990s.¹²

After the ouster of the Taliban, the multilateral state-building effort in the country neglected border assistance, preferring to focus on building up state authority and infrastructure in core territories. Border aid arrived belatedly, only as the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated. EU-member countries, particularly Germany and Italy, initially took

the lead in training border police and customs authorities at Afghanistan's ports of entry. In 2007, the UNODC launched the Rainbow Initiative, a series of strategies designed to deal with growing trafficking problems that Afghanistan and its neighbors faced along their mutual borders.¹³ The Rainbow Initiative built upon UNODC's much older legacy of engagement and assistance to Afghanistan and the region, bringing much-needed international attention to Afghanistan's anemic border controls. By 2009, aid to Afghanistan's borders increased markedly as the United States took a lead role in training Afghan Border Police and in funding state-of-the-art, well-equipped border crossings along the border with Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics.¹⁴

The increase in border management assistance was an admission on two counts: first, the country was woefully unprepared to manage its borders; and second, international donors had previously approached the issue in a scattershot way. One International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) official working in a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Mazar-e Sharif explained that there was little point in training Afghan Border Police on how to intercept drugs because they had no training in arrest methods or firearms use, and the consequences would be disastrous if smugglers started shooting at them.¹⁵

The aid that has come since 2009 was thus an attempt to provide a full gamut of training and infrastructure to improve border management. The United States and the Europe-

Type of border security force	Number of forces
ABP headquarters staff	4,000
ABP at airports and border crossing points	3,700
Afghan Customs Police	700
“Green” Afghan Border Police (see breakdown below)	15,500
Total border and customs police	23,900

Figure 1: Current Afghan National Security Forces border and customs security forces, by type

	Length of border (km)	Current number of authorized ABP	ABP per 50 sq. km ²⁰
Pakistan	2,430	10,900	4.5
Other borders	3,023	4,600	1.5
Iran	923	1,700	1.8
Uzbekistan	137	150	1.3
Tajikistan	1,206	1,150	1.0
Turkmenistan	744	1,600	2.1
Total “Green” Afghan Border Police	5,453	15,500	2.9

Figure 2: “Green” Afghan Border Police by adjacent country

an Union have both funded more comprehensive training modules for Afghan Border Police that have increased the professionalism and functionality of a large number of border authorities, despite the logistical obstacles they faced.¹⁶ They have also built border crossings and barracks for Afghan authorities who staff the borders, with particularly ample funding for the Afghan-Tajik border.

Despite the international assistance, the ABP are considered to be understaffed and under-resourced. The country currently has 23,900 border police, a small proportion of the 382,000 total number of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Current estimates indicate that 4,000 border police are located at headquarters, well away from the border.¹⁷ Approximately 15,500 are posted to positions along the so-called “green” border—sections of the border that fall in between official ports of entry where crossing of goods and people is generally not permitted.¹⁸ As Figure 2 shows, Afghanistan’s border guards are stretched very thin, particularly along the borders of Central Asian states to the north. Along the border with Tajikistan, the average number of border police on patrol is just one for every kilometer of border. Even along stretches of

border where Afghanistan’s border guards are in more ample supply, their numbers fall short relative to their counterparts; Afghanistan stations fewer guards than do Pakistan, Iran and Uzbekistan along their common borders.¹⁹

Despite the abundance of assistance in recent years, a 2013 assessment by the U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General found that the ABP had achieved very limited progress in building up its capacity. The assessment notes that the ABP had become better at coordinating their work with coalition forces in Afghanistan and that the professional development of recruits had improved along particular stretches of border (especially the north). It also discovered progress in the capacity of border services to process goods and people and to work with their counterparts at Joint Border Command Centers (JBCCs) along the border with Pakistan, which is discussed later in this report.

However, the assessment made it clear that, on the eve of the drawdown of U.S. and ISAF forces, Afghanistan’s border police were greatly lacking in many key factors. The ABP cooperated little with the army, even when

Source:
Center
for Naval
Analyses²¹

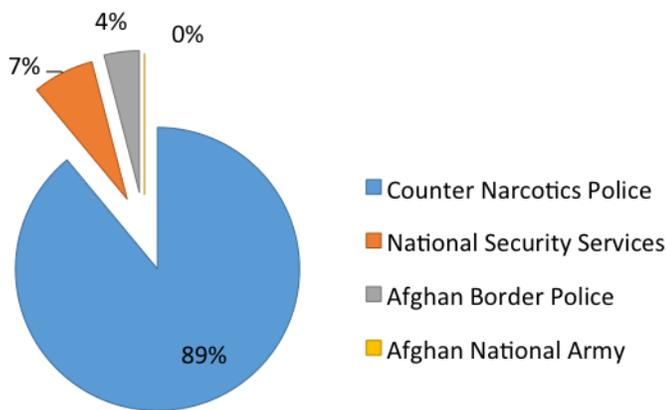


Figure 3: Drug Seizures by Afghan Forces in 2013

Drug	Metric Tons	Kilograms
Opium	77.45	77,449.83
Heroin	5.31	5,310.25
Morphine	8.36	8,360.03
Hash	63.66	63,662.06
Chemicals	69.11	69,107.44
Alcohol	29.85	29,845.88
Amphetamine	0.02	15.69
Total	253.75	253,751.18

Figure 4: Seizures by Afghan Forces in 2013 by Drug Type

Source: Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan²³

dealing with major cross-border threats such as armed insurgents or traffickers. They faced funding and procurement shortfalls, and some remote border posts had gone up to five months without resupply. Many recruits had not undergone formal intelligence training, which is essential to dealing with clandestine cross-border threats and organized crime.²² Given these shortfalls, it is not surprising that ABP accounted for only 4 percent of drug seizures by Afghan security forces in 2013. (See Figures 3 and 4.)

Presently, Afghanistan's border authorities remain highly fragmented, and their ability to manage the border depends on the quality of provincial leadership rather than the authority of officials at the Ministry of Interior in Kabul. Thanks to strong provincial leadership, Herat and Kunar provinces—respectively adjoining Iran and Pakistan—have borders that are relatively well run and stable. By contrast, Farah province's border authorities are struggling and are outgunned by well-armed drug convoys that tear across the border into Iran.²⁴ The international borders of Badghis and Faryab provinces with Turkmenistan are in particularly poor shape; dwindling numbers of border police were unable to deter attackers who burned down their posts.²⁵ In Kandahar, border and security services play up their counterinsurgency efforts while taking active part in illicit cross-border trade.²⁶ (See Figure 5.)

In the face of this highly volatile and discouraging situation, the United States and a number of other international actors continue to sponsor training and infrastructure for Afghan Border Police to enhance their capacity and professionalism.²⁷

Targeting capacity gaps is only part of the problem. Even if Afghanistan's border management institutions improve their ability to interdict, it is not clear that Afghan authorities have the willingness to do so. Provincial officials and warlords have been implicated in the drug trade. Key posts in the police and customs services along export routes have traditionally been bought and sold for immense sums, and some border commanders are multimillionaires. Corruption within the Afghan Border Police and Afghan Customs Police (ACP) remains a huge problem with no solution in sight.²⁸ As one recent investigative report found:

In many border provinces government officials and their networks have facilitated the trafficking of narcotic drugs from Afghanistan. Many claim that the involvement of senior government officials in the drugs is more serious than the Taliban's own connection with drug cultivation and production. Many respondents confirmed that most of the officials who are deeply involved in illicit drugs in key border provinces are attached to the Afghanistan Border Police, Afghanistan Customs



AFGHANISTAN

Administrative Divisions



Figure 5: Map of Afghanistan's Provinces

Department and provincial police headquarters.²⁹

A UNODC official admitted on the eve of Afghanistan's 2014 presidential elections that "political will for anti-drug initiatives is weak among members of the Afghan elite, many of whom have become increasingly dependent on the proceeds of drugs as foreign funding dries up."³⁰ Official collusion with drug traffickers, however, is but one factor enabling the drug trade. Another key driver is the role that drugs play in the country's political economy. The cultivation, processing and export of opiates help monetize the Afghan economy and provide livelihood for a significant segment of the population. Local, frontier populations and civilians from various walks of life can also be part of this illicit trade. Working group

member David Mansfield notes that along some of Afghanistan's borders, illicit trade has become more fragmented and less controlled by large-scale traffickers, as locals find it lucrative to engage in smaller-scale smuggling across the country's borders.

President Ashraf Ghani faces a tough task ahead in suppressing narcotrafficking along Afghanistan's borders. His administration will have to tackle the lagging capacity and pernicious corruption affecting the country's border management officials and those who oversee them; it will also have to develop a strategy of border management that takes into account the constantly changing nature of smuggling and the illicit economy.

Source:
University of
Texas Libraries

U.S.-Russia Cooperation on Counternarcotics and Afghan Border Management

Although Russia is happy to share intelligence and lend its drug control experts and officials to outside operations, it draws the line at military involvement in security operations.

Before the onset of the crisis in their relations in 2014, Russia and the United States had increasingly cooperated to confront the narcotics problem in Afghanistan. For example, Russia has trained Afghan security officers and counternarcotics police as part of a multilateral initiative that also involves the United States, NATO, Central Asian states and Pakistan, and it has donated small arms and munitions to Afghan law enforcement. In October 2010, Russian drug police officers took part in an operation alongside the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) that involved raids on four laboratories near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, resulting in the seizure of approximately \$60 million of opium and heroin.³¹

According to official data from the Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation (FSKN), such cooperative operations continued through 2012, yielding a total of seven FSKN-DEA operations in the country. These operations resulted in seizures of 2.5 tons of opiates, 3.5 tons of hashish, 1.5 tons of morphine and 5.5 tons of precursors—along with the destruction of 10 drug laboratories.³² In May 2013, more drug laboratories were destroyed in the northern province of Badakhshan, a key transit point for drugs headed into Central Asia and onwards to Russia. Op-

eration Samshit, as it was known, was mostly a Russian-Afghan endeavor but was backed up by intelligence from U.S. sources.³³

Such cooperation had been slow in getting off the ground and did not reach its full potential, even before the onset of the deeper crisis in U.S.-Russia relations. First, the operations were slow to develop because of a deep-seated disagreement that took place in 2008 and 2009 between the United States and Russia on how to tackle the drugs problem. Russia favored a more intensive approach—a combination of opium eradication in conjunction with interdiction efforts inside Afghanistan and the destruction of laboratories. The United States wanted to focus on interdiction of drugs—a lighter-touch approach that was intended to reserve manpower and resources to fight the insurgency without aggravating segments of the Afghan population who were profiting from the cultivation of opium.

The October 2010 raids were the product of a compromise that involved a degree of limited intervention inside Afghanistan, targeting drug smugglers and processing laboratories, without going after Afghan peasants or international criminal networks. This was the first operational instance where Russia and the United States made gestures of com-

Given Russia's and the CSTO's reluctance to have a security presence on the Afghan side of the border, the United States will have to find other ways to expand cooperation with Russia on matters of counternarcotics and border management in Afghanistan.

promise towards their respective approaches to counternarcotics. This compromise may have been easier to facilitate given the limited scale of Russian participation; as some Russian working group members noted, the operation was substantively a DEA-Afghan operation to which Russia sent FSKN observers.³⁴

A second factor that slowed the development of cooperation was opposition on the part of Afghanistan's ruling elite. Afghanistan's former president Hamid Karzai had not been an enthusiastic supporter of U.S.-Russian counternarcotics operations in Afghanistan. Following the October 2010 operation, he made his opposition public.³⁵ Such opposition slowed down the operations as Russian and U.S. officials had to engage in time-consuming discussions and concessions to Karzai before proceeding.

Last, Russia places certain limits on its direct engagement with Afghanistan by virtue of the Soviet experience there. Although Russia is happy to share intelligence and lend its drug control experts and officials to outside operations, it draws the line at military involvement in security operations. As working group member Ekaterina Stepanova explains, "Any direct Russian military involve-

ment or security operations in Afghanistan are ruled out—and will remain so after 2014. The taboo extends to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Russia-led security bloc...CSTO Secretary-General Nikolai Bordyuzha has formally excluded any such involvement, noting that 'this option has not even been discussed, and hopefully, will never be.'"³⁶

Bordyuzha has reiterated this position, explaining that CSTO prefers to reinforce its presence on the Tajik side of the border as "it is a position of our member states that they should not get involved in the operations held on the territory of Afghanistan."³⁷

Given Russia's and the CSTO's reluctance to have a security presence on the Afghan side of the border, the United States will have to find other ways to expand cooperation with Russia on matters of counternarcotics and border management in Afghanistan. Towards that end, the remainder of this report outlines the state of border management and counternarcotics initiatives along the borders of Afghanistan, focusing on Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. It concludes with a discussion of what Russia and the United States can do to improve the fight against narcotics at these borders.

Iran and the Border with Afghanistan: Going at It Alone

Iran spends nearly one billion dollars annually on counternarcotics efforts, and 3,000 troops of Iran's conscript army are deployed to assist border guards in counter-trafficking work along the frontier with Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In comparison to Afghanistan's other neighbors, Iran's counternarcotics efforts are the most intensive by far. According to the UNODC's latest available data, Iran accounted for 68 percent of the opium and heroin seized by Afghanistan and its six bordering states in 2012.³⁸ By comparison, Afghanistan and Pakistan respectively seized 23 percent and 7 percent.³⁹ (See Figure 6.)

These results come with a steep price. Iran spends nearly one billion dollars annually on counternarcotics efforts, and 3,000 troops of Iran's conscript army are deployed to assist border guards in counter-trafficking work along the frontier with Afghanistan and Pakistan. In addition to the sizeable police and military power deployed to the border, Iran has constructed substantial physical impediments to prevent smugglers from crossing the border. The 936-kilometer-long Afghanistan-Iran boundary is lined with 400 kilometers of embankments, 800 kilometers of deep canals, 39 kilometers of concrete walls and barriers and 140 kilometers of barbed wire fencing.⁴¹ In February 2014, a senior Iranian diplomat speaking at the EastWest Institute explained that the country has lost nearly 4,000 law enforcement officers in the drug war in over three decades.⁴²

Heroin is defined as a major security threat in Iran. It is estimated that 31 percent of Afghanistan's exported heroin crosses the border into Iran, and growing proportions of the trade remain in the country for domestic consumption. Iran's response has been to implement intensive and heavy-handed counternarcotics efforts,⁴³ and these have changed the calculus of criminal transnational networks who find it easier to ship drugs across the Afghan-Pakistani border.⁴⁴

Notwithstanding the country's tendencies towards unilateral border control efforts, Iranian officials have a history of cooperation with UNODC. Iran was one of the first states to raise the alarm several years ago when counternarcotics efforts stumbled in Afghanistan. Although Iranian authorities were quick to fault NATO and the U.S. presence in Afghanistan for failing to stop the opium tide, they also reserved plenty of blame for Afghanistan's political class. In past years, Iranian officials frequently complained to United Nations representatives that Afghan officials failed to follow up when they proposed cooperative border control and counternarcotics efforts.⁴⁵

In 2007 under the auspices of UNODC, Tehran agreed to take part in a counternarcotics action plan that was dedicated to fostering more intense cooperation across Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The plan included joint training, the adoption of compatible telecommunications equipment, intelligence cooperation and the creation of pilot liaison offices at key border crossings.⁴⁶

In 2014, the UNODC's sub-program on Illicit Trafficking and Border Control for Iran enumerated key developments along the country's borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan. These included putting drug-detecting dogs into service and training customs officials in interdiction practices. Under the auspices of the Trilateral Initiative with Pakistan and Afghanistan, two border liaison offices were established in the Iranian sites of Taybad and Mirjaveh near the Islam Qala-Zaranj crossing along the Afghanistan-Iran border as well as on the Taftan crossing with Pakistan.⁴⁷

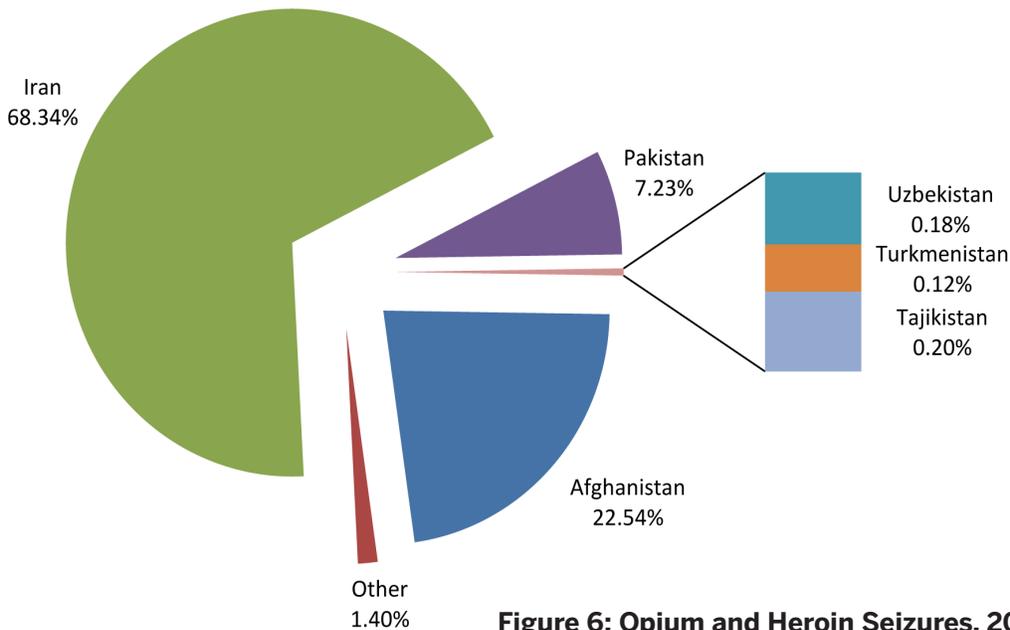


Figure 6: Opium and Heroin Seizures, 2012

It is worth mentioning that Iran will continue to play an active role in the fight against Afghan opiates and heroin for the foreseeable future. The Iran-Afghanistan Comprehensive Security Cooperation Agreement signed last year may be helpful for enhanced counternarcotics cooperation at the bilateral level. If counternarcotics cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan increases, Iranian officials may be more confident in allowing ever-larger volumes of Afghan exports, and licit trade will boost the Afghan economy and promote alternatives to the cultivation and processing of opium. Iran is already a major transit hub for Afghan exports, facilitating the transit of Afghan licit goods across its borders and onwards to the port at Chabahar for export to lucrative markets in India and the Middle East.

The opening of channels of communication with Iran and the election of President Hassan Rouhani affords the United States the opportunity to cooperate more directly with Iran on counternarcotics efforts.⁴⁸ This cooperation may be welcomed cautiously by Iranian officials. As a senior Iranian diplomat stated in February 2014 at an EWI meeting, “So far, there has not been any official U.S.-Iran cooperation on the matter, and no coalition to deal with this has been created. However, we’ve been working directly with Afghanistan, which has been working with NATO, so we have been working indirectly with NATO on this.... I think this is one issue where we

can work together with the U.S.”

To explore the possibility of U.S.-Russia-Iran counternarcotics cooperation, EWI is holding expert workshops in 2015. Such cooperation will not be easy by any means. Russian and Iranian officials are motivated to cooperate by their common and serious public health problem due to Afghan opiates and heroin. But it is unlikely that Russia will harness its amicable diplomatic relations with Tehran in order to act as a go-between for the United States at the present time. Moreover, the idea of cooperating with Iran on counternarcotics—nuclear and other disputes aside—does not enjoy unanimous support in the United States.

As one member of the working group expressed, “international counternarcotics cooperation with Iran is complex since it sanctions an unjust and corrupt judicial system which deteriorated during Ahmadinejad’s presidency.” Iran routinely dishes out the death penalty to individuals caught manufacturing, trafficking, possessing or trading opium, heroin and other psychotropic drugs, and 81 percent of executions in the country in 2011 were for drug-related offenses.⁴⁹ If the country’s decades of counternarcotics policies are an indication, the Rouhani government is likely to continue prosecuting the country’s war against narcotics and traffickers in much the same way.

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Statistics Online⁴⁰

Pakistan's Border with Afghanistan: The Problem with the Durand Line

The unsettled status of the Afghanistan-Pakistan boundary, or the Durand Line, as it is commonly called, impedes deeper counternarcotics cooperation across the two countries.

The 2,430-kilometer-long Afghanistan-Pakistan border poses particularly difficult obstacles in the fight against drug trafficking. In the north, the boundary is mountainous and riddled with unofficial crossings that number in the hundreds when the winter snows melt; in the south, the boundary stretches across remote arid territory and abuts some of Afghanistan's most active poppy-growing provinces.

A 2014 report on the state of Afghanistan's national security forces by the Center for Naval Analyses underscores the constraints this geography places on interdiction:

Afghan and Pakistani forces [respectively] man hundreds of posts spread across more than 1,500 miles of border, many of them in remote and isolated locations in the mountains. Simply manning, protecting, and resupplying these positions puts an enormous burden on both security forces....Most illicit men and material are interdicted far from the border on their way to central locations. Pakistan's Frontier Corps conducts some mobile operations close to the border, yet forces on both sides remain fixed largely in static positions. Most of these posts lie along recognized crossing points, yet there are hundreds of other small roads and donkey trails that bypass these positions. When passing within the line of sight of border posts, especially on the Afghan side, it is common for insurgents and smugglers to put harassing fire on these positions in order to fix border forces in their positions. Intimidation and bribery are also common methods for limiting interdiction.⁵⁰

The border's difficult geography is one of several factors that make it difficult for Afghanistan's and Pakistan's border and counternarcotics officials to stem the flow of illicit substances. Compounding factors include the unsettled status of the boundary, lingering mistrust between Afghanistan's and Pakistan's political elite and military forces and the much greater priority that Pakistan places on counterinsurgency operations over counternarcotics.

The unsettled status of the Afghanistan-Pakistan boundary, or the Durand Line, as it is commonly called, impedes deeper counternarcotics cooperation across the two countries: "When Pakistan became an independent state in 1947, it declared the line its international border with Afghanistan. Successive Afghan governments over the next sixty years rejected this position, even though some of Afghanistan's actions have constituted de facto recognition of the line."⁵¹

The frontier-like qualities of the Durand Line are usually blamed for enabling the insurgency and allowing the Taliban to move unimpeded across both states. These very same qualities have allowed the opium and heroin trade to flourish.⁵² UNODC reports that Pakistan is the destination and transit country for approximately 40 percent of Afghan opiates and that opiate processing takes place in small, mobile laboratories on both sides of the border.⁵³ And despite its long history of participation with UNODC initiatives, Pakistan is the world's highest volume transit corridor for opiates and cannabis and, along with India, is the main source of acetic anhydride, a precursor necessary to process opium into heroin.⁵⁴

Narcotics and precursors are difficult to interdict given the huge number of daily crossings—estimated at over 100,000—which take place across the Durand Line at official and unofficial crossings.⁵⁵ Despite major upgrades funded by the United States at the official Torkham and Wesh-Chaman border crossings—two of three official ports of entry into Pakistan from Afghanistan—border and customs authorities have not improved interdiction rates. According to a UNODC report:

Torkham Station border crossing is primarily a “Trade Facilitation Centre” that merely monitors trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Therefore, drug smuggling prevention is not a priority at the crossing. Containers, trucks or vehicles traveling to or from Afghanistan through Torkham are not thoroughly searched. UNODC experts observed that customs officials often stamped and signed cargo receipts and allowed trucks and containers to cross the border to Pakistan without conducting any checks. Moreover, the crossing is not equipped with the necessary equipment to check cargo for drugs and none of the staff has been trained to conduct such inspections. Although a drug detection kit has been provided by UNODC for use at the crossing, it is not apparently being put to use.⁵⁶

Making matters more difficult for drug interdiction along the border is the deep distrust that has prevailed for decades between Afghan and Pakistani officials and pervades economic and strategic issues. At the economic level, Afghanistan’s landlocked status and Pakistan’s high tariff policies encourage smuggling, promote corruption among officials along the border and breed feelings of dependency and economic injustice among Afghan exporters and officials.⁵⁷ These dynamics fuel the smuggling economy and discourage officials from working harder to stop it.

At the military level, the present state of the Durand Line is emblematic of the unrealized potential of bilateral relations. Neither government accepts the right of the other to pursue insurgents and smugglers over the border, and many border incidents have escalated into skirmishes that have caused casualties. In 2012, Afghan officials accused Pakistan of firing hundreds of rockets into Afghan territory, causing civilian casualties.⁵⁸ In

May 2013, a conflict over a disputed border post spiraled out of control, resulting in open fire across Afghan and Pakistani border authorities with ABP taking casualties.⁵⁹ Such incidents often ended with mediation by ISAF military officials, and it is unclear if the current state of calm prevailing along the border will remain for long after coalition force withdrawal.

Given the atmosphere and history described above, it is hard to see how Afghanistan and Pakistan can meaningfully cooperate across the border to interdict narcotics in the future. Although U.S. officials expanded great effort in funding and equipping the border crossings at Torkham and Wesh-Chaman and encouraged Afghan and Pakistani border services to interact, these Joint Border Command Centers are the only locations along the border where the two sides interact regularly.

At the same time, durable cooperation goes beyond increasing border management capacity and settling political differences along the border. It also requires harmonizing priorities. Pakistan’s chief priority along the Durand Line is not counternarcotics but counterinsurgency and fighting violent extremism.⁶⁰ Intercepting opiates, heroin and precursors is a secondary task when compared to the fight against insurgents. As working group member Ekaterina Stepanova notes, Pakistan’s approach is not all that different from the approach the United States took towards Afghanistan—fighting insurgents and terrorists took priority over the fight against narcotics.

The lagging interdiction efforts along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border have allowed greater quantities of drugs to travel into Pakistan and onwards to the Middle East, Europe and Africa from the south and towards China from the north. Although the transit of these opiates and heroin may not pose a direct threat to Russia currently, it is important to note that it may do so in the future. Afghan heroin is beginning to permeate the Chinese market by way of Pakistan, including in the western province of Xinjiang, which borders Central Asia. Any successful counternarcotics efforts along Afghanistan’s northern border with Central Asia may be in vain if future traffickers are able to access Central Asia and the Russian Federation via more circuitous routes through Pakistan and China.

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Afghanistan's Central Asian Neighbors and the Drug Trade: Three Countries, Three Approaches

Given recent spikes in Afghan opium production, the volume of drugs is likely to grow, with traffickers making use of upgrades in the road, rail and air systems of the Central Asian Republics.

Approximately 25 percent of Afghanistan's exported heroin is trafficked across the borders of its three Central Asian neighbors—Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.⁶¹ This minority share punches above its weight when it comes to economic and geopolitical impact. Traffickers made an estimated \$1.4 billion in net profit from heroin in Central Asia in 2009, a staggering amount relative to the region's economy and more so for smaller states like Tajikistan, whose GDP since 2009 has ranged from \$7 billion to \$8.5 billion. Among the many negative consequences of trafficking across Central Asia is corruption, as the scale of drug profits entices Central Asian officials at many levels—including law enforcement, customs officials and border guards who are tempted by lucrative bribes to look the other way—to enable and protect the drug trade. Moreover, the vast majority of northbound heroin winds up in Russia, where it severely strains the federation's public health system and law enforcement resources.

Given recent spikes in Afghan opium production, the volume of drugs is likely to grow, with traffickers making use of upgrades in the road, rail and air systems of the Central Asian Republics. A UNODC report notes that the volume of trade between Afghanistan and Central Asia has risen substantially over the past decade but that "there has been no cor-

responding enhancement in the law enforcement capacity to combat the illegal trade in narcotics at dry ports, seaports and border control points."⁶² Even licit economic and development initiatives can work to the benefit of narcotics smuggling. The U.S.-funded bridge at Nizhniy Pyanj on the Afghan-Tajik border has expanded trade links between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, but it has also become a vehicle for traffickers to move larger quantities of drugs. The Russia-led Customs Union, intended to facilitate trade between the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Belarus by decreasing border controls and simplifying customs procedures, will also complicate the fight against the drug trade. With Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan gearing up for entry to the Customs Union in the short- to medium-term, the importance of interdicting drugs at Afghanistan's borders will only grow more critical.⁶³

This section focuses on the three Central Asian states that share a border Afghanistan—Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. As will be seen, the borders are more different than they are similar. The states take different approaches to guarding their borders, display different levels of participation in multilateral border control and counternarcotics initiatives and have varying degrees of political will to fight the drug trade. The one key similarity is that all three of Afghanistan's

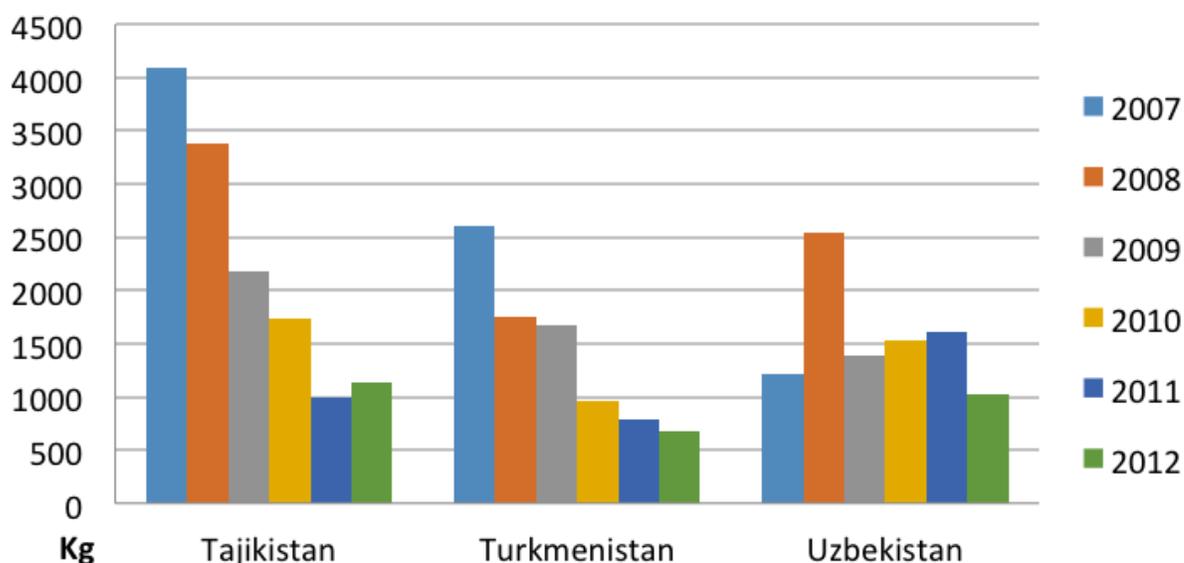


Figure 7: Opium and Heroin Seizures in Afghanistan’s Central Asian Border States, 2007-2012

northern neighbors are operating below their potential when it comes to deterring trafficking at their borders. Despite modest increases in seizures by some states in particular years, the overall trend is a reduction in drug seizures. UNODC notes that reported heroin seizures by Central Asian authorities at and within their borders dropped from 5,291 kilograms in 2008 to 1,810 kilograms in 2011.⁶⁴ (See Figure 7 for overall drug seizure trends in Afghanistan’s Central Asian border states.)

Russia and the United States are well placed to work together to strengthen the borders of the Central Asian states that face Afghanistan and improve their interdiction rates. To do so, they will have to address capacity gaps, corruption and political will problems, as described in the sections below on each of the three republics that border Afghanistan. At the same time, Moscow and Washington will have to be wary of each other’s geopolitical sensitivities in Central and South Asia and most especially in Tajikistan—the main conduit for drugs headed onwards to Russia via the Northern Route.

Tajikistan’s Border with Afghanistan

Tajikistan’s 1,207-kilometer-long border with Afghanistan is the primary conduit of opiates

bound for destinations in the Russian Federation. The border region is often described as ruggedly remote, difficult to monitor and lacking in infrastructure,⁶⁶ but its remoteness may be overstated. A decade of international assistance to both sides of the border has increased licit and illicit trade with Afghanistan enabled by a flurry of road- and bridge-building projects and common bazaars along the Pyanj River. By consequence, the nature of cross-border trade is constantly evolving.

As David Mansfield explains about a particular stretch of border in Badakhshan, “The primary goods being smuggled across the border are opium, heroin, charas and cigarettes from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and ‘wine’ and weapons from Tajikistan to Afghanistan. Much of the smuggling takes place at night and involves local people smuggling goods across the river via small boats and inner tubes. It is reported that small boat can take as much as 100 kilograms of drugs, those transporting goods by inner tube (from a truck) up to 10 kilograms.”⁶⁷

According to some observers, narcotics trafficking has become one of the country’s most lucrative resources, equivalent to as much as 30 percent of the country’s GDP and involving a substantial amount of official collusion by government elites and authorities in the border, customs and police services.⁶⁸ These

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Statistics Online⁶⁵

Unfortunately, the cooperative spirit that prevailed in previous years may increasingly be coming under strain as the United States and Russia are at loggerheads over how to reinforce the Afghan-Tajik border.

trafficking dynamics are sobering and persist despite more than two decades of border security assistance from Russia, the United States and the broader international community.

In the wake of its independence in 1992, Tajikistan agreed to maintain Russian troop contingents along its border with Afghanistan. These border guards played a key role in sealing off the border when Afghanistan's civil war heated up in the 1990s, and they maintained and expanded facilities such as border barracks. As multilateral and western assistance to Tajikistan increased over the years, the final Russian operational guards left the country in 2005. In the absence of their Russian counterparts, Tajikistan's border services soon struggled to maintain infrastructure and equipment and to adequately staff the more difficult stretches of border. For the next 10 years, western donors and multilateral institutions tried to pick up the slack.

Tajikistan is now the biggest recipient of border aid in Central Asia, with Russia, the United States, European Union, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and International Organization on Migration (IOM) playing important roles.⁶⁹ Along the Tajik side of the border with Afghanistan, the United States has bankrolled the creation of border crossings, customs facilities and barracks for border services. The United States, in coordination with the EU-funded Border Management Program for Central Asia (BOMCA), funded the construction and overhaul of 15 outposts on Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan, and it is estimated that another 20 may be needed to adequately house guards. In recent years, border aid sponsors turned their attention to the training needs of Tajik border and customs officials, and Dushanbe now hosts several training facilities funded and supported by the international community. Before the Ukraine crisis, Russian and U.S. officials had worked together to craft a curriculum at one of the training centers.

Tajikistan also hosts the largest U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) program in Central Asia, which supports Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency (DCA). The INL project in Tajikistan "supplements salaries for DCA personnel, provides training and

equipment, renovates facilities for use by DCA mobile units, and funds a DCA liaison office in northern Afghanistan that conducts joint operations with Afghans."⁷⁰ This funding has improved the quality of infrastructure and training at key facilities, such as the DCA district office at Ishkashim on the Afghan-Tajik border, which interacts with a liaison office that the U.S. DEA and Tajik DCA jointly operate in Taloqan in Afghanistan.

Russia and the Russian-led CSTO play an important role in matters of border security and counternarcotics in Tajikistan. At the 2013 CSTO summit in Sochi, officials promised to deliver aid to help Tajikistan reinforce its border with Afghanistan. This aid includes surveillance and signaling equipment as well as the construction of new border posts. Russia is also involved in training Tajik border officers and hosts Central Asian cadets at the border college in Moscow.

Most importantly, Russia is an essential member of a coordinating body that includes all border-aid donors to Tajikistan. The Borders International Group (BIG), as the coordination mechanism is known, allows border management stakeholders to meet approximately 10 times a year in order to present projects and monitor progress. The BIG mechanism prevents the countries and international organizations that dole out border aid from needlessly duplicating their efforts. BIG also plays a critical role ensuring that Russia's geopolitical sensitivities in Tajikistan are taken into consideration. As a result of their participation in BIG, Russian representatives have been supportive of international border assistance to Tajikistan, including aid sponsored by the United States. As a former EU ambassador who was part of BIG explained, "Russia always gave consistent support and, at our meetings, the secretary would often just cut and paste the Russian statement from the prior meeting."⁷¹

Unfortunately, the cooperative spirit that prevailed in previous years may increasingly be coming under strain as the United States and Russia are at loggerheads over how to reinforce the Afghan-Tajik border. Russia desires expanded bilateral military cooperation with Tajikistan, and this has included an offer to once again dispatch Russian guards to Tajikistan.⁷² This offer was opposed in 2012 and 2013 by U.S. officials who pressed instead for a continued multilateral approach that

would dilute Russia's role. According to working group member Ivan Safranchuk, Russia saw U.S. opposition as an attempt to limit Moscow's influence in Tajikistan. A compromise was eventually reached that the OSCE will coordinate key issues of border security, but the episode does not bode well for future U.S.-Russian counternarcotics cooperation in Tajikistan.

At this time, Russia and the United States do not speak with a coordinated voice when it comes to counternarcotics and border security in Tajikistan. The tension that prevails will do little to push Tajik officials to make more of the generous border security and counternarcotics assistance they are receiving and to take a less permissive approach to the trafficking networks that transit their borders and territory. The trafficking problem will only grow in the future, particularly once Tajikistan enters the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). If Tajikistan does not increase its capacity and willingness to fight the drug trade before its borders become the EEU's external boundary, then the results will be dire for the Russian Federation's war on drugs. In this scenario, Russian officials are very likely to insist on exerting more direct influence over Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan's Border with Afghanistan

Uzbekistan's border security measures are at their most intense along the 137-kilometer border with Afghanistan, where a series of electric fences, mines and heavily armed soldiers keep watch.⁷³ Although crossings along this border have been open to the Northern Distribution Network, which supplied U.S. forces and the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, they have generally been closed to the passage of Afghan goods and people. As working group member Ivan Safranchuk notes, this highly restrictive border regime is an effective deterrent to traffickers, but it also hampers the ability of Afghanistan to export goods to markets in Central Asia and beyond.⁷⁴

Traffickers bring Afghan opiates into Uzbekistan along the less well-guarded Tajik-Uzbek border, and UNODC reports indicate that Uzbekistan's heroin seizures along this border are higher than those along or near the Afghan border.⁷⁵ Uzbek authorities complain that Tajik border authorities do not do their

fair share to guard the border and argue that this compels Uzbekistan to police the border aggressively to make up for the deficit.⁷⁶ These unilateral measures include the indefinite closure of a number of official border crossings, and Tajik officials and civil society organizations point out that this impedes the livelihood of local populations who are cut off from markets, jobs and family on the other side of the border.

Trafficking networks now increasingly use trains to smuggle heroin from Central Asia's border regions onwards to Russia. More recent seizures have revealed changing tactics to move heroin, such as packaging it inside cotton, aluminum and concrete shipments on cargo trains moving from Tajikistan through Uzbekistan. In June 2012, eight kilograms of heroin were reportedly discovered in Tashkent on a train transiting from Dushanbe to Moscow; the heroin had been stashed in a liquefied gas tank.⁷⁷ At the same time, there is evidence that Uzbek authorities are colluding at some level with trafficking. As noted by the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent in 2010, "One of the principal obstacles to a sustained counternarcotics strategy is the presence of numerous corrupt officials throughout the counternarcotics system. Salaries of law enforcement officers are generally very low, and there are anecdotal accounts of customs and border officials supplementing their incomes by accepting bribes to ignore narcotics shipments. It is likely that some government officials are involved with narcotics trafficking organizations."⁷⁸

Despite its resolute counternarcotics stance, Uzbekistan is lukewarm on international counternarcotics initiatives, particularly when they require training and institutional reforms that Uzbek authorities consider an exclusive national security purview.⁷⁹ Instead, Uzbek authorities prefer to engage in bilateral cooperative arrangements that allow the country maximum flexibility and few obligations, and they are more likely to take part when the assistance comes in the form of technology and equipment transfers.⁸⁰

Uzbekistan's overall border control strategy may not be a model for the region to follow. The strategy is costly and selective, focusing mostly on enforcement and interdiction while neglecting other aspects of drug control and counternarcotics. While Uzbek authorities seize a much higher proportion of estimated

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trafficked narcotics than neighboring Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, seizure statistics do not always provide a clear picture on the efficacy of Uzbek efforts. Although Uzbekistan's heroin seizures rose an appreciable 25 percent in 2010,⁸¹ these seizures dropped precipitously in 2012.⁸² It remains unclear if the decline in seizures is attributable to growing collusion, more effective smuggling tactics or if it is a sign that border controls are dissuading traffickers from smuggling across Uzbekistan's borders. Furthermore, closed borders imply a lost opportunity for Afghan business and exports at a time of great fragility for Afghanistan's economy.

The United States and Russia may have an opportunity to work together to encourage Uzbekistan to modify its strategy of closure so that its border management system increasingly incorporates risk management and smart detection principles. One way may be to offer a much more expanded array of technical and equipment assistance on the condition that Uzbek authorities take part in more training and revamp their border control strategy as necessary. However, if the security situation in Afghanistan continues to erode, Uzbekistan will double-down on what it knows best—a policy of closure—and one that seems to give better results in stemming the flow of drugs.

Turkmenistan's Border with Afghanistan

Turkmenistan is an exceptional case when it comes to Afghanistan and the trafficking of narcotics. First, it is a minor player in the Northern Route but a major hub for the so-called Balkan route. As EWI's *Joint Threat Assessment* notes, "Thanks to its unique position and sizeable borders with both Afghanistan and Iran, Turkmenistan has evolved as an important subsidiary branch of the major westward trafficking corridor from Afghanistan to Iran and onwards [to Europe]."⁸³ The

consequences of narcotrafficking along this border are currently greater for Iran and Europe than for the Russian Federation. Second, Turkmenistan's border control policies are in line with its flexible and neutral approach to Afghanistan. Turkmen officials have engaged with Afghanistan's key political players across the border—both incumbents and insurgents. Although this approach leads to a more flexible and open economic border, the downside is that the border has enabled the growth of trafficking via the Balkan Route.

Between 1992 and 1999, Turkmenistan's borders with Iran and Afghanistan were jointly guarded by Turkmen and Russian border guard contingents. This was not a unique arrangement; Russia maintained similar operational contingents along Uzbekistan's and Tajikistan's borders with Afghanistan in order to protect what was until recently the external border of the Soviet Union. Turkmen authorities—particularly then President Saparmurat Niyazov and his circle of advisers—became confident that proximity to Afghanistan was as much an opportunity as it was a threat, and they pressured Moscow to reduce its border guards. Russia incrementally reduced its 3,000-strong border guard force in Turkmenistan, and the final 200 guards were removed in late 1999. Niyazov believed that while the USSR and Russia may have faced problems with Afghanistan, an independent Turkmenistan could safely do business with any and all Afghan authorities.⁸⁴ At the same time, narcotrafficking across Turkmenistan had increased with indications that state officials were colluding to protect and profit from trafficking.⁸⁵

Turkmenistan's economic and political influence in Afghanistan grew during the Karzai administration. As Sébastien Peyrouse notes, Turkmenistan became "an important partner for the Afghan border regions of Herat, Badghis, Faryab and Jowzjan, and offers substantial financial and technical assistance to the Turkmen minorities in Afghanistan."⁸⁶

Turkmenistan's self-professed principle of international neutrality allowed it to engage with both the government in Kabul and the Taliban. When Taliban forces got uncomfortably close to the border with Turkmenistan in 2007, Turkmen authorities used their lines of dialogue to offer the Taliban food, clothing and gas for their vehicles to move further into Afghanistan and away from the frontier—a creative form of border management.⁸⁷

Turkmenistan's border security and counternarcotics policies saw some nominal changes under President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, who succeeded Niyazov after the latter's death in 2006. In 2008, Turkmenistan and UNODC agreed to the Turkmen Border Initiative, designed to address the threat of drug trafficking along the borders with Afghanistan and Iran. The goals of the initiative included establishing a drug control agency, increasing interception rates through mobile units along borders and strengthening inter-agency and cross-border cooperation with Afghanistan and Iran. The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs praised Turkmenistan in 2008, saying the country "has taken a leading role in addressing the issue."⁸⁸

Russia and the United States had contributed training and technical assistance to Turkmenistan's counternarcotics and border control agencies, and Russian and U.S. officials in 2010 discussed how they might enhance cooperation to benefit Turkmenistan's counternarcotics capacity. In February 2010, the DEA's chief of operations met with FSKN's deputy director in Moscow to brief FSKN on its operations in Turkmenistan and noted that the newly established Turkmen Drug Control Agency was in need of more international assistance.⁸⁹

By 2010, Turkmenistan's media was parading apprehended drug smugglers on news programs, and President Berdimuhamedow put provincial officials on notice to improve counternarcotics efforts: "If the governors of

provinces do not achieve good results, I am warning that they will face consequences. If you do not take decisive action, even meeting your cotton or grain harvest quotas will not excuse you."⁹⁰

Despite Turkmenistan's more public counternarcotics posture, international officials and border aid sponsors complain that Turkmenistan still participates only cosmetically in international programs. Turkmen authorities have been generally reluctant to take part in sustained joint training exercises with Afghan authorities. In one extended meeting with U.S. military officials in 2010, the head of Turkmenistan's State Border Services declined to participate in joint exercises, citing the appalling weakness of Afghan authorities. Instead, he pressed U.S. officials to deliver more high-tech equipment, such as scanners and long-range optics.⁹¹ UN officials have often noted that Turkmen authorities continue to keep their distance, failing to respond to official letters, not showing up at program events and even cancelling meetings with international border management representatives without reason or warning.⁹²

Turkmenistan's policies towards Afghanistan and the common border are currently being tested. By 2013, the security situation along the border eroded severely. Turkmen officials deployed their channels of communication with the Karzai administration, insurgents and warlords to restore a semblance of stability. These efforts appear to have stumbled, leading Turkmen authorities to reinforce the border with additional guards. If the security situation continues to erode along the boundary, Turkmenistan will have to reevaluate its border security policies and the first part of 2015 indicates that Turkmenistan may be moving towards a policy of closure, not unlike neighboring Uzbekistan.⁹³ The upside is that Washington and Moscow may find themselves having more of an opportunity to assist Turkmenistan to improve border security and counternarcotics efforts along the border.

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Conclusion and Recommendations

Improving the ability of Afghanistan and its neighbors to interdict drugs at their borders is of mutual benefit to Moscow and Washington.

Afghanistan's opium economy and exports are undoubtedly a source of grave and mutual concern for the Russian Federation and the United States. For Russia, Afghan heroin has created a domestic addiction crisis with worrying effects on public health and law enforcement. For the United States, the growing drug trade threatens to upend more than a decade of costly investment in Afghanistan's state and society, a concern that centrally features in a December 2014 report of the U.S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control.⁹⁴ As such, improving the ability of Afghanistan and its neighbors to interdict drugs at their borders is of mutual benefit to Moscow and Washington.

Yet, cooperation between the United States and Russia may not come easily even when confronting a common threat. Fallout from the Ukraine crisis has damaged the bilateral relationship to an extent that will take years to repair. The quality of communications between Russian and U.S. officials has deteriorated sharply, making it difficult to cooperate over common aversions such as Afghan opiates and heroin. Indeed, complicating any cooperation is the reality that the U.S. government's list of sanctioned Russian citizens includes FSKN head Viktor Ivanov, a key official in the fight against narco-trafficking. Any future cooperation over Afghanistan will take place against a diplomatic backdrop that cannot be undone.

This period of heightened diplomatic and geopolitical sensitivities makes U.S.-Russian cooperation in Central Asia particularly thorny. As several Russian members of the working group pointed out, Russia is wary of any attempt by the United States to use counternarcotics as a pretext for an expanded security presence in Central Asia. This wariness is on par with Russia's desire to avoid an increased inflow of narcotics or a spill-over of

instability and militancy into Central Asia in the years ahead. As working group member Ekaterina Stepanova notes, the main implications of the withdrawal of U.S. forces for Russia "are not in Afghanistan, but in Central Asia,"⁹⁵ especially in states like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.⁹⁶ Accordingly, Moscow strongly prefers a division of labor where Russia takes the lead in Central Asia while the United States doubles up its counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan, which Russia considers geopolitically part of South Asia.

The United States is unlikely to agree outright to such a division of labor. Even as American foreign policy pivots to East Asia, the United States has strategic interests in Central Asia, and policymakers in Washington will not limit their ability to respond to future global security threats that may emerge in or around Afghanistan. As working group member Marlene Laruelle notes, the basis of U.S. foreign policy in the region is to offer the Central Asian states enough room to maneuver and maintain strategic autonomy from Moscow, autonomy that allows the United States to preserve its own influence.⁹⁷

These geopolitical considerations do not preclude cooperation over counternarcotics and border control. But any cooperation to improve the functioning and interdiction capacity of the borders around Afghanistan will require taking such sensitivities into account.

Recommendations

What can Russia and the United States do cooperatively to fight narco-trafficking at Afghanistan's borders? Mindful of the otherwise difficult period in U.S.-Russia relations, the working group proposes the following recommendations as a way for Russian and U.S. policymakers to further cooperate jointly and durably to strengthen the borders around Afghanistan against the drug trade.

Push Afghanistan's government to be proactive, not reactive, when it comes to counternarcotics strategy and initiatives.

President Ghani revised his national priorities to include counternarcotics after the London Conference, but this is only a first step. Counternarcotics must be infused into all initiatives, and no Afghan ministry should adopt a program without first spelling out its possible implications for counternarcotics. The same goes for future U.S. and Russian assistance to Afghanistan.⁹⁸ More specifically, Russian and U.S. policymakers should encourage Afghanistan to integrate counternarcotics and anti-corruption aggressively into the country's emerging border control strategy.

Encourage Afghanistan to cooperate more actively with Iran to improve interdiction along the Afghan-Iranian border.

Although Iran has mounted an impressive fight against counternarcotics, it is not enough to stem the massive opium and heroin tide that moves across Iran towards Europe and across the Caspian Sea to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The United States does not have a relationship with the Iranian government or law enforcement counterparts as the Russian Federation and FSKN do. Nonetheless, U.S. officials can encourage Afghan officials to deepen their cooperation with their Iranian counterparts and play a greater role in interdiction along the common border. For many years, the United States discouraged Afghan-Iranian cooperation, particularly where U.S. funds and initiatives were in play, a position that made it easier for Afghan officials to neglect truly deep counternarcotics cooperation with Iran. Joint U.S.-Russian calls for enhanced Afghan-Iranian cooperation can go a long way in encouraging Afghanistan to pick up the slack.

Push Afghanistan and Pakistan to finalize the status of their frontier.

The Durand Line remains formally unrecognized and is

a source of dispute and escalation between Kabul and Islamabad. This is not conducive to cross-border cooperation and makes joint counternarcotics operations at the border difficult. A settled boundary is a long-term and difficult process, but Moscow and Washington should not lose any opportunity to call for Afghanistan and Pakistan to mutually recognize and affix their frontier. Previous attempts at political resolution failed in part because they did not involve enough international stakeholders or material incentives. Together, Russia and the United States may have sufficient heft to open a dialogue towards resolution. A pledge to expand border security assistance can further nudge Afghanistan and Pakistan into dialogue.⁹⁹ Russia should also use its greatly improved relations with Pakistan to cajole the country to do more on the counternarcotics front, particularly along the border.

Speak with a common voice in matters of counternarcotics and border security in Central and South Asia and demand that Central Asian officials live up to the obligations of the counternarcotics and border management assistance that they have received.

Central Asian states, like Tajikistan, have adeptly collected assistance from the United States and Russia, often playing one against the other. Yet they have made few strides in the interdiction of narcotics or in fighting official collusion along their borders. Washington and Moscow should convey their messages to Central Asian leaders in a coordinated fashion. In the case of Tajikistan, they should relentlessly pressure Tajik officials to take a more concerted stance in fighting trafficking.

Work together to improve stretches of borders that do not function well.

Washington and Moscow can call on Tajikistan to allow Russia to make a greater contribution to help Tajik officials strengthen their side of

Russian and U.S. policy-makers should encourage Afghanistan to integrate counternarcotics and anti-corruption aggressively into the country's emerging border control strategy.

Russian and U.S. officials should agree to not let the bilateral crisis in their relations affect cooperation across their agencies in the field in Central and South Asia.

the border with Uzbekistan, whether by providing mentors for border guard contingents, ramping up training or simply providing more technical and operational equipment. This may reduce drug trafficking along that border and build on the cooperative spirit of the Borders International Group in Dushanbe. It would also benefit security along the Tajik side of the Uzbek border and allow the United States to ask Uzbekistan to reconsider its policy of closure and militarization.

At the same time, U.S. and Russian officials must come up with common standards by which to measure improvements in border management and interdiction rates along key stretches of border, like the Afghan-Tajik border. Making the OSCE the key coordinating body for border control assistance in Tajikistan may have been an expedient compromise, but the United States and Russia should be open to changing the method and substance of security assistance if the country does not achieve desired results against narcotics trafficking. This means that U.S. officials should be, at least in principle, cautiously open to Russia playing a greater role along Tajikistan's borders in the future.

Establish joint positions on counternarcotics and border control at international bodies where these issues are discussed, such as the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC), whose purpose is to facilitate information exchange and coordination of operational activities in Central Asia's law enforcement agencies, including those in customs, border services and drug control. For this to become

reality, the United States would have to be invited to full membership. In previous years, FSKN officials made statements of support in that regard, but in the current diplomatic environment there is likely to be little political support in Moscow to upgrade the United States from its observer position.

Jointly expand multilateral training of Central Asian and Afghan border police, customs authorities and counternarcotics officers. Before the crisis in their relations, Russia and the United States set a quiet precedent of working together, albeit in a limited fashion, to train Central Asian border officials. Joint U.S.-Russian training initiatives have reached limited numbers of border authorities and could be expanded extensively. While capacity and training gaps will not resolve the political impediments identified in this report, such training programs will send an important signal that the international community is not abandoning Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbors to their own devices in matters of border control and counternarcotics.

Deepen formal and informal cooperation across the FSKN and DEA field offices in Afghanistan and Central Asia. In order to mount a better counternarcotics fight along Afghanistan's borders, FSKN and DEA must interact more with one another formally and informally. Russian and U.S. officials should agree to not let the bilateral crisis in their relations affect cooperation across their agencies in the field in Central and South Asia, even if such cooperation remains limited and informal for the short term.



Afghan policemen keep watch on the railway in Hairatan border town in Balkh province, northern Afghanistan, Nov. 4, 2014.

ENDNOTES

- 1 David Mansfield and Paul Fishstein, "Eyes Wide Shut: Counter-Narcotics in Transition" (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, September 2013), 2.
- 2 Although Afghanistan shares a 76-kilometer-long boundary with China, this report does not include an assessment of that border. The Afghanistan-China border is remote, mountainous and virtually impassable for much of the year. Small quantities of opiates are moved across the border during the short period when the snows are melting. Afghan opiates and heroin are trafficked in much larger quantities to China via Pakistan and Tajikistan, and Chinese precursor chemicals that are used to refine opium into heroin make their way into Afghanistan over the same routes.
- 3 This is an increase from the previous year when UNODC reported that Afghanistan accounted for 74 percent of global illicit opium production. See UNODC, *World Drug Report 2013* (United Nations Publication, 2013). EWI's *Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment* noted that as much as 92 percent of opiates were being trafficked out of the country.
- 4 Afghan authorities reported in 2012 and 2013 that over 10,000 liters of acetic anhydride were seized in provinces adjoining the border with Pakistan and in Kabul.
- 5 By comparison, Afghanistan's counternarcotics police accounted for 89 percent and national police for 7 percent of total drug seizures in Afghanistan in 2013. These figures were provided to EWI by Afghan officials.
- 6 Ekaterina Stepanova et al., *Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment*, Joint U.S.-Russia Working Group on Afghan Narcotrafficking (New York: EastWest Institute, 2013), 13.
- 7 Stepanova et al., *Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment*, 30.
- 8 This point was made by Nikolai Patrushev, the chief of Russia's Security Council. See "Drug Use Losses Equal Health Budget," RIA Novosti, February 25, 2013.
- 9 Stepanova et al., *Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment*, 9.
- 10 The purchase has hit opposition in Congress despite its backing by the U.S. Pentagon. See "Dunford urges Congress to approve Russian helicopter deal for Afghan air force," *Stars and Stripes*, July 17, 2014, <http://www.stripes.com/news/us/dunford-urges-congress-to-approve-russian-helicopter-deal-for-afghan-air-force-1.293927>.
- 11 On the role of warlords in the Afghan political economy—licit or otherwise—see Dipali Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors, and State Building in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Jonathan Goodhand, "Frontier Wars: The Opium Economy in Afghanistan," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 5 (2005): 191-216; Kimberly Marten, "Warlordism in Comparative Perspective," *International Security* 31 (2007): 41-73; and Barnett Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 86 (2007): 57-78.
- 12 On Afghanistan's provincial political and security dynamics in the Soviet and other periods, see Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
- 13 The Rainbow Initiative is rooted in the Paris Pact, a multilateral counternarcotics effort initiated in 2003.
- 14 One example of this aid was the Focused Border Development Program, which was a training operation for Afghan Border Police. This program was funded by the United States and run by the Combined Security Transition Command in Afghanistan (CSTC-A). The U.S. Department of Defense and Homeland Security also bankrolled Joint Border Command Centers (JBCCs) along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to enable authorities and security officials

from both countries to manage migration and trade and filter out security threats like insurgents and narcotics smugglers.

15 The author George Gavrilis's conversation with the Deputy Commander of the Provincial Reconstruction Team, Mazar-e Sharif, March 2009.

16 One hurdle in training Afghan Border Police concerned transportation logistics. As road quality in border provinces deteriorated hand-in-hand with security, trainees had to be flown into Kabul. The flights required the United States and European countries sponsoring the training to find aircrafts and pay for the transportation costs.

17 To give another number for comparison, Afghanistan has more Kabul-based national security forces than border police for the entire country (respectively 26,000 and 23,900). See an extensive report on Afghanistan's National Security Forces (ANSF) mandated by the U.S. Congress and written by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA): Jonathan Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces* (Alexandria: Center for Naval Analyses, 2014), 100.

18 Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment*, 100-102.

19 As the CNA report finds, "ISAF personnel examined satellite imagery of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and estimated that the Pakistani side had approximately 1.5 to 2 times as many border posts as Afghanistan was planning at that time." From Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment*, 106.

20 "Green" border security missions are conducted in a 50-kilometer zone adjacent to the border. See Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment*, 27, 99-100.

21 Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment*, 100-102.

22 An extensive report on the ABP was conducted by the Inspector General of the United States Department of Defense. On intelligence-training gaps, the report notes that only 75 of the 450 officers and non-commissioned officers who comprise the ABP intelligence community had been properly trained. See U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General, *Assessment of U.S. Government and Coalition Efforts to Train, Equip, and Advise the Afghan Border Police* (Alexandria: Department of Defense Inspector General, 2013), 47.

23 These figures were provided to EWI by Afghan officials.

24 Reportedly, this is one area of the border where Iranian drug control agents have suffered heavy losses.

25 According to an international development official who provided this information to a working group member, it is not clear if the attackers were insurgents or traffickers or both.

26 Declan Walsh, "Powerful Afghan Police Chief Puts Fear in Taliban and Their Enemies," *The New York Times*, November 8, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/09/world/asia/powerful-afghan-police-chief-puts-fear-in-taliban-and-their-enemies-.html?_r=0.

27 The United States Department of State is looking at border checkpoints along the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border, the Afghanistan-Turkmenistan border, the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan border as well as the Torkham and Wesh-Chaman crossings along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to better understand what is working at these border checkpoints and how to facilitate cross-border cooperation that can generate increased trade flows in this region. Border crossings with Iran are presently not on the list of projects being studied for infrastructure improvements.

28 On corruption and appointments along drug routes, see George Gavrilis, "The Good and

Bad News about Afghan Opium,” CFR Expert Brief, February 10, 2010. Comments about the Ministry of Interior and border commanders amassing great wealth were made to the author in February 2014 by a European official who served in close proximity to the ministry over a three-year period. On corruption among customs and border services, also see U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General, *Assessment of U.S. Government and Coalition Efforts*. The assessment notes that Afghanistan’s Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Interior have joint responsibility over the Afghan Customs Police (ACP), with Interior having key oversight responsibility. In reality, the division of labor does not function well. Many positions in the customs services were filled with border police who have little requisite training and oversight. This has promoted corruption. According to the assessment, “An ACP customs officer at the Torkham customs yard was recently relieved of his duties for allegedly skimming more than \$20,000 in customs revenue each week for himself and others.” From U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General, *Assessment of U.S. Government and Coalition Efforts*, 27.

29 Najibullah Gulabzoi, “The Narco-State of Afghanistan: Deconstructing the Nexus between Drug Trafficking and National Security,” *The Diplomat*, February 12, 2015.

30 Ernesto Londoño, “As US Withdraws from Afghanistan, Poppy Trade It Spent Billions Fighting Flourishes,” *The Washington Post*, November 3, 2013. EWJ’s *Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment* noted that—despite assertions to the contrary by journalists and some policymakers—the Taliban controls a minority share of the opiate and drug trade. A recent U.S. government-funded assessment is more open-ended on the matter, stating, “Some argue that the drug trade is a major driver of the insurgency, especially in the south. There is, however, no consensus on the degree to which this is the case, or on whether the ANSF could in any capacity significantly alter this dynamic.” From Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment*, 44.

31 Also taking part in the raid was the U.S. Department of Defense, NATO and Afghanistan’s Ministry of Interior. FSKN head Viktor Ivanov noted that “this is the first operation in Afghanistan in which Russian drug police officers took part,” but stressed that Russian officers were there in agreement with Afghanistan and not as a military unit. Despite this, the participation of Russian agents in the high-profile raid hit raw nerves in Afghanistan. Afghan officials criticized their presence, alleging that they were unaware of Russian participation. From Matthew Chance and Paul Armstrong, “Russian Anti-Drug Chief Applauds Afghan Heroin Haul,” CNN.com, October 30, 2010; and Joshua Partlow, “Karzai Condemns Russian Involvement in Afghan Drug Bust,” *The Washington Post*, October 30, 2010.

32 “12-14 декабря 2012 года проходил визит председателя Государственного антинаркотического комитета, директора ФСКН России Виктора Иванова в США,” Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation, December 14, 2014, http://fskn.gov.ru/includes/periodics/events_all/2012/1214/113521704/detail.shtml.

33 “Russia, US Help Destroy More Drug Laboratories in Afghanistan (part 3),” *Interfax*, May 30, 2013, <http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?pg=7&id=420089>.

34 Working group member Ivan Safranchuk notes that it may be more accurate to call the October 2010 operation a U.S. operation with Russian/FSKN participation, rather than a fully joint one.

35 There were at least two reasons for Karzai’s opposition. First, the operations disrupted the drug laboratories and routes run by key Afghan players with political clout. Second, the operations did not sit well with large segments of the Afghan population who disliked seeing two powers with a legacy of invading and intervening in Afghanistan banding together to chase down Afghans—criminals or otherwise.

36 Ekaterina Stepanova, “Russia’s Concerns Relating to Afghanistan and the Broader Region in the Context of the US/NATO Withdrawal,” CIDOB Policy Research Project, June 2013, 6.

37 “CSTO Forces Deployed along Tajik-Afghan Border to Be Reinforced in 2014,” *Voice of Russia*, November 14, 2013.

38 It should be noted that Iran’s official statistics differentiate between seizures of opium, heroin and morphine base. For the sake of streamlined illustration, opium and heroin seizure statistics are presented here in combined form.

39 Statistics show that Iran accounts for the highest rate of opium and heroin seizures globally. According to the UNODC’s *World Drug Report 2013*, Iran accounted for 80 percent of global opium seizures and 30 percent of heroin seizures in 2011. See “Iran Deserving More Int’l Support in Anti-Drug Campaign,” UNODC (from *Fars News Agency*), December 1, 2014,

- <http://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/en/iran-deserving-more-intl-support-in-anti-drug-campaign.html>.
- 40 UNODC Crime Statistics Online, <https://data.unodc.org>.
- 41 Iran has particularly fortified the borders in the area of Islam Qala and Zaranj, according to the UNODC report: *Misuse of Licit Trade for Opiate Trafficking in Western and Central Asia: A Threat Assessment*, (UNODC, 2012), 53. It is important to note that Iran's border policing efforts are not solely directed at countering the drug trade. The country's perceived border security threats include illegal migration from Afghanistan, cross-border banditry as well as insurgency and terrorism. It is also worth noting that Iran converts some seized narcotics into pharmaceuticals.
- 42 UNODC sources indicate that the country has lost 3,700 officials in the fight against narcotics. See "Drug Trafficking And Border Control Situation Analysis," UNODC, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/drug-trafficking-and-border-control.html>.
- 43 Iran's counternarcotics efforts include doling out death sentences to drug traffickers. The punishment is often carried out by hanging. In a recent instance, officials decided not to re-hang a convicted trafficker who survived the first hanging attempt. See "Iran Minister Says No Need to Re-Hang Convict," Al Jazeera, October 23, 2013.
- 44 UNODC's *World Drug Report 2013* indicates that Iran's aggressive counternarcotics efforts are causing traffickers to rethink the routes they have been using. See UNODC, *World Drug Report 2013*, 33. It is also worth noting that although other countries in the region registered substantial interdiction falls, Iran's seizure rates remain high and drops in the interdiction rate have been far smaller than in Central Asia. See UNODC Statistics Online, <https://data.unodc.org>.
- 45 Based on a working group member's experience at the United Nations.
- 46 "UNODC Rainbow Strategy: A Regional Solution to a National Challenge," UNODC, 2007.
- 47 "UNODC Country Program 2011-2014," UNODC, <http://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/en/country-programme-sub-prog1.html>.
- 48 President Rouhani made remarks on the issue at an Asia Society event on September 26, 2013. In response to a question by EWI's David Firestein, Rouhani stated, "The principle of the illicit drugs that flow from Afghanistan is that it poses a serious threat to the entire region and the world. And we have been always cooperating with international organizations and regional organizations, and we're in the group of countries on this issue [trying] to curtail it. If a government wants to help, truly, there are different ways of helping in this process. The first help comes from inside Afghanistan itself. The governments that can, must, inside Afghanistan, halt the production of illicit drugs. And therefore there is no clear program in this area, but at the same time, we are in a continual cooperative relationship with the different countries on this issue. And you know it's also an internal issue for us. Annually, a group of our border guards has always lose their lives and become martyrs and are killed as a result of fighting the phenomenon of the transfer of illicit drugs." From Hassan Rouhani, "Video: Iran's President Tells Asia Society 'Sooner the Better' in Resolving Nuclear Issue," (presentation, remarks and discussion by Dr. Hassan Rouhani, President of Iran, New York, NY, September 26, 2013).
- 49 According to Human Rights Watch: "In 2011, Iran executed at least 600 people, second only to China. Eighty-one percent of these executions were for drug-related crimes, including for personal use. According to Amnesty International, in 2009, of the 389 executions recorded, 166—almost 43 percent—were drug-related. In 2010, about 68 percent of all executions recorded by the organization—172 of the 253 known executions—were for drug-related offenses." From "Iran: Donors Should Reassess Anti-Drug Funding," Human Rights Watch, August 21, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/08/21/iran-donors-should-reassess-anti-drug-funding>.
- 50 Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment*, 211- 212.
- 51 On the history of the Durand Line, its political consequences and the need to resolve its status, see "The Durand Line: History, Consequences and Future," The Hollings Center for International Dialogue, 2007. Also see *Recognizing the Durand Line*, EastWest Institute, 2001.
- 52 Ronald Neumann, "Borderline Insanity," *The American Interest*, November 1, 2007.
- 53 "Pakistan Country Profile," UNODC, <http://www.unodc.org/pakistan/en/country-profile.html>.
- 54 "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report," U.S. Department of State Bureau for In-

ternational Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222881.pdf>.

55 According to the World Trade Organization, half of Afghanistan's exports in 2012 moved across the Durand Line, destined for markets in Pakistan and other countries. This large volume of trade also complicates narcotics and precursor interdiction, as illicit material can be smuggled inside shipments of otherwise licit goods. See UNODC, *Misuse of Licit Trade*, 28.

56 UNODC, *Misuse of Licit Trade*, 29.

57 Reports show that as much as 70 percent of potential border revenue may be lost due to corruption. Following a site visit to Torkham and Wesh-Chaman, a U.S. Department of Defense team of expert evaluators noted that "the two largest and busiest border crossings in Afghanistan...generate the majority of the country's approximately \$1 billion in customs revenue. Coalition advisors at Torkham and Wesh-Chaman agreed that two to three times the amount of customs revenue actually collected for the Afghan government was probably lost to corruption." From U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General, *Assessment of U.S. Government and Coalition Efforts*, 26.

58 Hafizullah Gardesh, "Afghans Say Pakistan behind Cross-border Fire," Institute for War and Peace Reporting-Afghanistan, July 11, 2012, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/afghans-say-pakistan-behind-cross-border-fire>.

59 Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment*, 216.

60 According to Schroden et al., *Independent Assessment*, 209: "Pakistan has deployed an estimated 158,000 soldiers (including Frontier Corps forces and army) to the tribal areas near the border with Afghanistan. The army has conducted large-scale counterinsurgency operations in the region since 2009, with smaller operations dating back to 2002. Before 2002, the Pakistani army had never deployed forces to the tribal areas. According to the Pakistani military, more than 5,000 soldiers have died in these operations and many more have been wounded."

61 "Opiate Flows Through Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia," UNODC, May 2012, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghanistan_northern_route_2012_web.pdf.

62 UNODC, *Misuse of Licit Trade*, 9.

63 The Customs Union promotes trade but may also inadvertently facilitate smuggling. Consider the case of Kazakhstan: under current procedures, goods entering Kazakhstan for onwards transit to other countries undergo a single check at the external border of the Customs Union. They are generally checked again when they reach their final destination within the Customs Union and not, as was customarily the case, at the Russian border. The reduction of border checks makes it appealing to traffickers to hide drugs in licit cargo on Transports Internationaux Routiers [International Road Transport] (TIR) trucks and other modes of transport. In the event that Tajikistan joins the Customs Union, Tajik authorities will become the main line of defense for member states against the narcotics trade.

64 UNODC, *Misuse of Licit Trade*, 14.

65 UNODC Statistics Online, <https://data.unodc.org>.

66 Some of Tajikistan's border regions are well connected to Dushanbe, in particular the crossing at Nizhniy Pyanj, which is serviced by an upgraded road network. But much of the border of Tajikistan's autonomous Gorno-Badakhshan region remains logistically and politically distant from Dushanbe; indeed, much of Tajikistan's and Afghanistan's eastern border regions are better connected to one another than to their respective national capitals.

67 Statement based on working group member David Mansfield's comments at the EWI March 2015 Joint U.S.-Russia Working Group on Afghan Narcotrafficking meeting. In a debrief on Ishkeshem and Shignan, two border towns located in Badakhshan on the Afghan side of the border with Tajikistan, Mansfield explains that the common bazaar is said to have made it easier for independent smugglers without links to officials on either side of the border to operate, facilitating communication across the border. Consequently, narcotrafficking has become a more populist activity and may be slipping out of the hands of large-scale narcotraffickers, at least along this particular stretch of border.

68 As a report on international border control assistance to Central Asia notes, "The transit of Afghan opiates across Tajikistan is a lucrative business....It monetizes the Tajik economy and rivals the economic impact of other sectors and industries....The Tajik border services are a crucial part of the equation and are, as a number of international and Tajik officials and experts

maintain, part of the conduit that allows drugs access and protected passage into Tajik territory." From George Gavrilis, "Central Asia's Border Woes and the Impact of International Assistance," Open Society Foundations, May 2012, 38. Also see John Kucera, "The Narcostate," *Politico*, March/April 2014; and "Addicted," *The Economist*, April 21, 2012.

69 Gavrilis, "Central Asia's Border Woes."

70 "Program and Budget Guide: Fiscal Year 2013," U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 187.

71 Gavrilis, "Central Asia's Border Woes," 38.

72 For discussions on extending Tajik-Russian military cooperation, including border control cooperation and the return of Russian border guards, see "Таджикистан и Россия: граница в обмен на трудовую миграцию," Avesta.tj, August 3, 2011, <http://www.avesta.tj/9188-tadzhikistan-i-rossiya-granica-v-obmen-na-trudovuyu-migraciyu.html>; and "Глава ФСКН одобрил идею вернуть российских пограничников в Таджикистан," RIA Novosti, May 5, 2011, <http://ria.ru/antidrugs/20110505/371118860.html>. For information on the Russian-Tajik agreement on extending border cooperation but without the return of Russian border guards (as a result of then President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to Tajikistan in September 2011), see "ФЕДЕРАЛЬНЫЙ ЗАКОН ОТ 28 ФЕВРАЛЯ 2012 Г. N 12-ФЗ "О РАТИФИКАЦИИ СОГЛАШЕНИЯ МЕЖДУ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИЕЙ И РЕСПУБЛИКОЙ ТАДЖИКИСТАН О СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВЕ ПО ПОГРАНИЧНЫМ ВОПРОСАМ," Garant, March 1, 2012, <http://www.garant.ru/hotlaw/federal/383992/>.

73 Uzbekistan's border control practices are the most aggressive in the region, and policies of closure and restrictiveness are generally the rule along all of Uzbekistan's borders, not just the border with Afghanistan. On these dynamics, see George Gavrilis, *The Dynamics of Interstate Boundaries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chapter 5.

74 As noted by one working group member who conducted field research in Uzbekistan.

75 On seizures, see the AOTP/Paris Pact, Online Seizure Database, http://heroin2011.dbroca.uz/map_ids.

76 For example, Uzbek authorities threatened to permanently close a number of crossings along the Tajik border precisely for these reasons. See Gavrilis, "Central Asia's Border Woes."

77 Reported by AOTP/Paris Pact, Online Seizure Database, http://heroin2011.dbroca.uz/map_ids.

78 "2010 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)," U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 1, 2010, http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/incsr_2010.html.

79 The 2013 INL budget request for Uzbekistan was approximately \$743,000. In contrast, INL's budget for Tajikistan was just over \$8 million.

80 Gavrilis, "Central Asia's Border Woes."

81 "Central Asia Key to Afghanistan Heroin Smuggling – UNODC," Eurasianet.org, May 18, 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65425>.

82 Heroin seizures dropped from 1,004 kilograms in 2010, to 622 kilograms in 2011, and 262 kilograms in 2012.

83 Stepanova et al., *Afghan Narcotrafficking: A Joint Threat Assessment*, 28.

84 Ivan Safranchuk, "Внешняя политика Туркменистана: нейтралитет и афганский вызов [Foreign policy of Turkmenistan: Neutrality and the Afghan challenge]," *Большая Игра: политика, бизнес, безопасность в Центральной Азии [Great Game: politics, business, security in Central Asia]* 39, no. 6 (2014).

85 Turkmen authorities appear not to have been very proactive during Niyazov's presidency in cooperating substantively with international counternarcotics initiatives, possibly a consequence of alleged collusion with the drug trade at the very highest levels of politics. See Sébastien Peyrouse, *Turkmenistan: Strategies of Power, Dilemmas of Development* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), 113. Indeed, the spectacular firefights that took place in Ashgabat in September 2008, according to some observers, were signs that cross-border drug traffickers were colluding with officials. The high-tech weapons and firepower at the disposal of the embattled traffickers suggests that "they would not have been able to accumulate so much military equipment in the center of the capital without the support of people in high places." From Peyrouse, *Turkmenistan*, 114. At the same time, the 2008 events were a sign that President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow was taking a less permissive stance towards the drug trade than his predecessor.

86 Peyrouse, *Turkmenistan*, 113.

- 87 George Gavrillis, "Why Regional Solutions Won't Help Afghanistan: The Myth of Neighborly Harmony," *Foreign Affairs*, October 18, 2011.
- 88 UNODC, "Caspian Sea and Turkmen Border Initiatives" (work in progress), UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia, November 2008, 2.
- 89 Among the proposals put forward by U.S. officials was one calling for FSKN to provide assistance in joint NATO-Russian training for the Turkmen Drug Control Agency. See "Cablegate: Dea Chief of Operations Thomas Harrigan's Meeting With [sic]," *Scoop Independent News*, February 10, 2010, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WL1002/S00215.htm>.
- 90 "Cablegate: Turkmenistan: Women Increasingly Involved In [sic]," *Scoop Independent News*, February 10, 2010, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WL1002/S00531/cablegate-turkmenistan-women-increasingly-involved-in.htm>. Later that year, a border commander was arrested for allegedly taking part in the drug trade. His colleagues maintained that he paid for equipment out of his own pocket and that his office looked like a five-star business office. This suggests that official collusion continued, although it is difficult to ascertain how high up in government circles the collusion runs. See "Cablegate: Turkmenistan: Commander Arrested For [sic]," *Scoop Independent News*, August 13, 2009, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WL0908/S01659/cablegate-turkmenistan-commander-arrested-for.htm>.
- 91 U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM's) counternarcotics program had already outfitted the State Border Services with radio equipment.
- 92 As explained to a working group member by a high-level UNDP official familiar with issues of border management in Central Asia.
- 93 Bruce Pannier, "Turkmenistan's New Afghan Border Policy," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, October 10, 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan-afghanistan-border-policy/26631200.html>.
- 94 "Future U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts in Afghanistan," A Report by the U.S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, 113th Congress, 2nd session (December 2014).
- 95 Stepanova, "Russia's Concerns," 8.
- 96 Marlene Laruelle, a working group member, explains in a co-authored policy memo that "Russia seems to be abandoning its previous doctrine of exerting general regional influence in favor of pursuing more focused influence and integration with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan." From Alexander Cooley and Marlene Laruelle, "The Changing Logic of Russian Strategy in Central Asia: From Privileged Sphere to Divide and Rule," PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo 261, July 2013, 2.
- 97 On the broader dilemmas of Russian and U.S. geopolitical dynamics in the region, also see Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 98 The U.S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control has previously elaborated this recommendation to U.S. policymakers. It states: "Because of the drug trade's significant impact on so many facets of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, all U.S. assistance should incorporate a counternarcotics assessment. This assessment should consider how assistance will impact or can contribute to counterdrug efforts, thereby incorporating counternarcotics efforts into the overall U.S. strategy for Afghanistan."
- 99 On this issue, the former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald Neumann wrote: "The U.S. government should therefore lead a new effort at political resolution. Only the United States can leverage the necessary influence and incentives to broker a solution that will necessarily involve major pain for each protagonist. It will not be easy, for shaping a stable solution will require the participation of several parties beyond the United States, Afghanistan and Pakistan: Iran and Russia, because each has interests in a solution and each can act to spoil one; and the European Union and the United Nations, to smooth U.S.-Russian-Iranian sensitivities, to underwrite the necessary guarantees, and to augment the financial incentives to induce compromise. Whatever the role of others, however, it is clear that the United States will have to make the most expensive and politically difficult commitments to get Afghanistan and Pakistan to make their own difficult choices. All this will take years to accomplish, and still more years to protect." From Neumann, "Borderline Insanity."

ACRONYMS

ABP	Afghan Border Police
ACP	Afghan Customs Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
BIG	Borders International Group
BOMCA	Border Management Program for Central Asia
CARICC	Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Their Precursors
CENTCOM	United States Central Command
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNA	Center for Naval Analyses
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command in Afghanistan
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DCA	Drug Control Agency, Tajikistan
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration, USA
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EWI	EastWest Institute
FSKN	Federal Service for Control on Narcotics Circulation, Russian Federation
G8	Group of Eight
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
INCSR	International Narcotics Control Strategy Report
INL	U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
IOM	International Organization on Migration
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan
JBCC	Joint Border Command Center
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
TIR	Transports Internationaux Routiers [International Road Transport]
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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On the cover: Afghan border policemen display 86 kilograms of hashish captured during an operation in Nangarhar province, east Afghanistan, March 26, 2015.

Photos: Reporters/AP

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The EastWest Institute seeks to make the world a safer place by addressing the seemingly intractable problems that threaten regional and global stability. Founded in 1980, EWI is an international, non-partisan organization with offices in New York, Brussels, Moscow and Washington. EWI's track record has made it a global go-to place for building trust, influencing policies and delivering solutions.

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The EastWest Institute
11 East 26th Street, 20th Floor
New York, NY 10010 U.S.A.
+1-212-824-4100

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communications@ewi.info

www.ewi.info

Building Trust Advancing Solutions

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