

Drug and Human Trafficking in Central and South Asia

Drug trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering all exist in troubling proportions across the Afghan-rim region, comprising Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Transport corridors, promising to provide essential interdependence and linkages across the region, inevitably will also improve criminal access to important markets. Thus, no country in the region is isolated from crime problems of others. The very interdependence fostered by transport corridors means that the strength of the six countries—united as a whole—will only be as great as the weakest points among them. Isolationism within any of these regional states will no longer serve as a barrier, rather it will foster greater criminal opportunity.

Transparency, or the lack of it, has also served regional law enforcement agencies poorly, militating against intelligence interchange and cross-border cooperation. It is incumbent on regional states to ensure their border controls at regular crossings are of a high standard and can cope adequately with projected increases in freight and passenger movements, so that regular border crossings do not become the weak points in the regional system. The likely massive increase in the volume of freight and passengers across regular borders present an irresistible opportunity for traffickers that must be countered with effective but facilitative control regimes.

Drug Trafficking

The Afghan-rim region is the world's largest opiate producer, exporting *inter alia* to Europe, Russia, and the United States. The Afghan economy is largely



Margit Vermes

A Pashtun woman harvesting opium in Pakistan

Afghanistan as a Bridge: ADB Support for Regional Cooperation of Trade and Transport

With the rehabilitation of Afghanistan, ADB has supported several regional initiatives under the Technical Assistance for Subregional Economic Cooperation in South and Central Asia. Among others, regional cooperation has been activated on transport infrastructure and trade facilitation through the road corridors connecting some of the Central Asian republics (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), via Afghanistan, to sea-ports in Pakistan and Iran. The first Ministerial Conference on Transport and Trade in Central and South Asia was hosted by ADB and held in Manila in August 2003. As an outcome, the participating countries agreed to establish the Central and South Asia Transport and Trade Forum as an

instrument of cooperation in these sectors. ADB will host the second Ministerial Conference in Manila in September 2004. This follows the recent Dubai working group meeting in March 2004 where progress was reviewed and several measures were agreed to further the agenda.

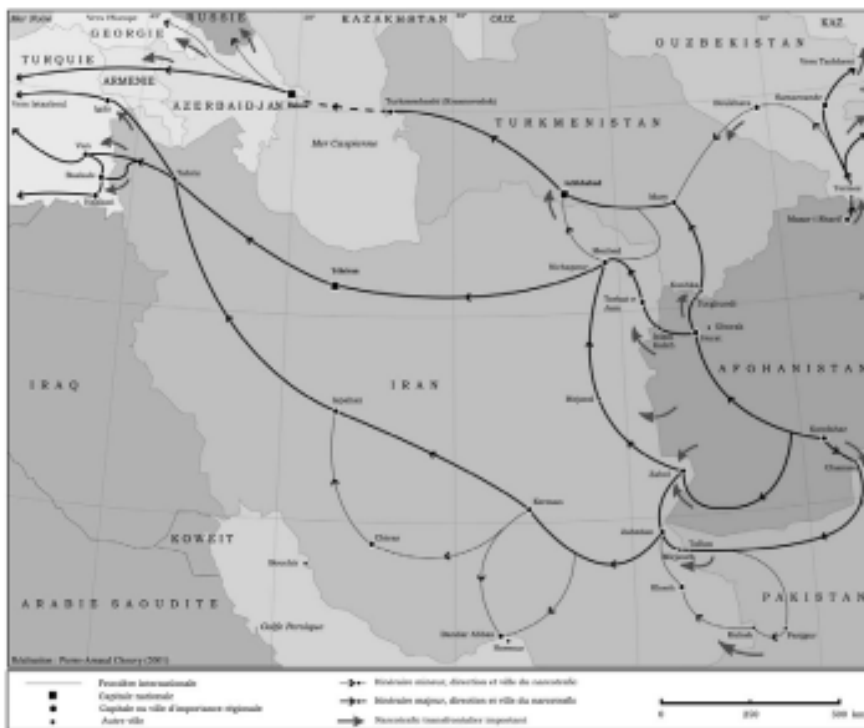
Under this regional cooperation program, ADB's publication on *Cross-Border Law Enforcement Cooperation on Drug and Human Trafficking and Money Laundering in Central and South Asia* describes the current status of cross-border trafficking in both drugs and humans and money laundering and recommends the way forward. These recommendations have significant implications and potential impact on ongoing programs of transport corridor development in the region. ■

Map 1. Northern Exit Routes



Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy geopium.org / geodrugs.net (AEGD) 2001

Map 2. Western Exit Routes



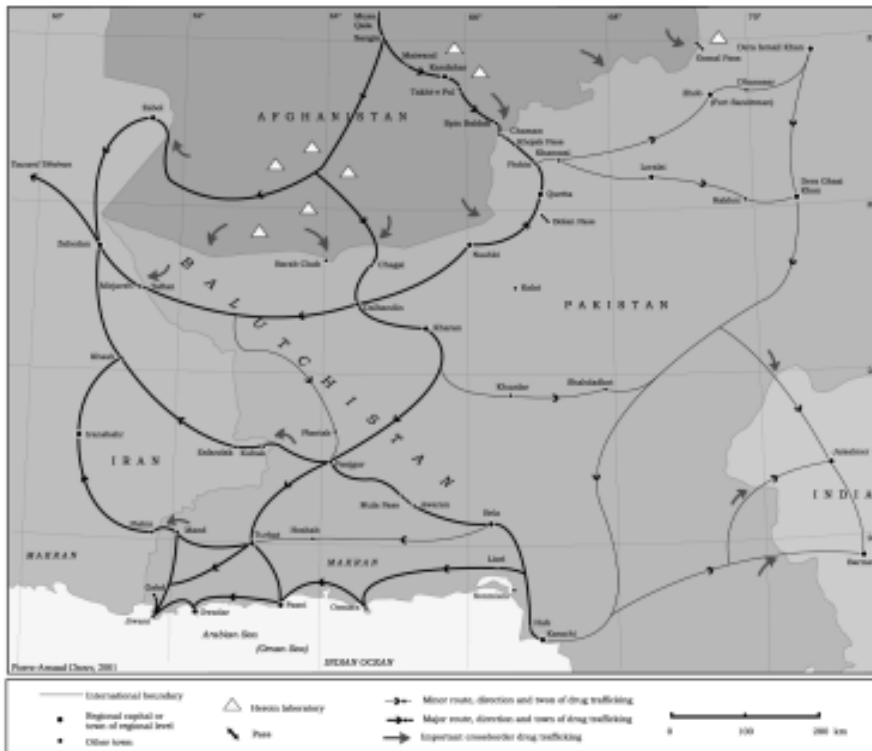
Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy geopium.org / geodrugs.net (AEGD) 2001

underwritten by narcotic production, and little effort has been made to reduce the extent of the problem in the last several years; hence, it has grown to record proportions. All six states have adequate anti-narcotic legislation, although some lack balance between interventions aimed at halting demand and supply. All regional countries have substantial resources aimed at enhancing enforcement to stem supply, while efforts are also being made to reduce demand in some countries. Key international donors and implementing agencies are assisting in regional projects aimed at improving the enforcement network. While anti-narcotic programs have significantly disrupted trade, there are few ways to monitor the accountability of agencies involved in this. There is little other than *ad hoc* bilateral cooperation. No regional mechanism exists nor evidence of extant regional cooperation on drug control. Gaps between national programs, and weaknesses arising from a lack of coordinated responses, continue to be the Achilles heel of drug control in this region.

Human Trafficking

Many people within the region are vulnerable to human trafficking. Displaced populations of a significant size exist in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Economic migration occurs within, and from all, of these countries, and major imbalances in economic conditions also marginalize large population groups. Substantial underground prostitution can be found throughout these countries, as can organized crime networks. Considerable evidence exists of organized human trafficking networks operating throughout the region with relative impunity. No country in the region has adequate legislative or enforcement mechanisms in place to counter human trafficking, and the concept of human trafficking is not only being inadequately enforced but also inadequately understood even in government. There is considerable and systemic underreporting of cases of human trafficking, abuse of returned victims, and lack of responses and programs targeting vulnerable popu-

Map 3. Southern Exit Routes



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lations to reduce supply. There is no regional cooperation on preventing human trafficking, and no regional mechanism or dialogue exists in this field. The terms and spirit of the global framework on human trafficking are not being met in this region.

Money Laundering

Given the extent of drug and human trafficking in the region, there exist extraordinary criminal profits to be laundered in, or exported from, the region. A recognized traditional method of value transfer, *hawala*, operates widely in the region and outside official scrutiny. Trade-based money laundering methods fed by widespread illicit smuggling of especially consumer goods exist in all Afghan-rim economies. There are few anti-money laundering authorities, no regional cooperation on this, nor any regional grouping or mechanism to combat money laundering in the region. None of the countries in this region are members of international anti-money laundering groups.

The Way Forward

The combination of accessibility and complexity of transport corridors in this region provide opportunity for traffickers of people and drugs. Traffickers seek to move their products within and between countries via the points of least resistance: those which provide them with the greatest chance of success. Traffickers will use transport corridor schemes to “shop” for points of exit. Similarly, those economies with the weakest banking controls and financial reporting, and those inundated with smuggled consumer goods, will inevitably become regional hubs for “black” money.

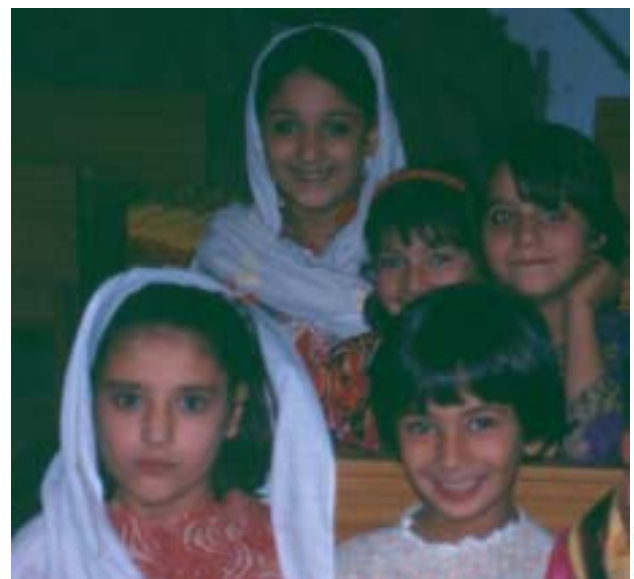
In an increasingly interdependent system, the only way forward is a collective one. National programs on all of

the thematic areas must be improved. However, the greatest tool in combating trafficking is to improve the way in which these countries work together to ensure that weaknesses do not exist between the various regimes.

In the same way that strength in economic terms often comes through collectivity, so strength in regional law enforcement comes through creating a web of bilateral and multilateral measures. These measures must be underwritten by robust and uniform national program in a context of measured transparency and rigorous accountability. Unproductive mistrust between regional countries militates against effective cooperation. It is important to build into national and regional strategies a range of confidence-building measures.

It is evident that more detailed research is required to counter trafficking in the region. This research should be undertaken in key areas of development, including but not limited to witness protection for human trafficking; the integrity needs of countries in the region; the deployment of technology at border-control points; the application of criminal intelligence systems and processes; templates and memoranda of understanding and bilateral arrangements for extradition and mutual legal assistance.

Any child could be a potential victim of trafficking



John Rive

Cross-Border Law Enforcement Cooperation on Drug and Human Trafficking and Money Laundering in Central and South Asia

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Recommendations to Enhance Regional Cooperation

Drug Trafficking

- Improve national programs, including the early ratification of existing international agreements, and the implementation of programs to the standards demanded by these
- Ensure national demand-reduction measures are treated in equal measure with supply-reduction measures
- Establish a regional Heads of Narcotic Law Enforcement Agencies forum
- Develop a multilateral memorandum of understanding on regional drug control, including provision for joint narcotic intelligence assessments
- Establish a network of cross-posted narcotic liaison officers in each regional country
- Establish a network of joint agency liaison posts at key border crossings
- Using risk-management techniques in inspection regimes, heighten enforcement capacity at regular border crossings, including the deployment of technologies
- Establish national integrity and accountability agencies
- Establish a regional heads of integrity agencies forum
- Develop coherent communications strategy aimed at improving real-time communications between headquarters and border elements, including the secure transmission of voice, data, and photographic information

Human Trafficking

- Improve national programs, including the early ratification of existing international agreements, and implementation of programs to the standards demanded by these
- Establish a regional heads of anti-human trafficking agencies forum
- Establish a national multidisciplinary, anti-human-trafficking unit, preferably answerable to a national committee
- Establish national databases of human trafficking cases
- Establish a national hotline for human trafficking victims, backed up primarily by social services
- Establish national assistance programs for returned victims of human trafficking
- Establish a regional forum for operational heads of anti-trafficking units
- Develop a multilateral memorandum of understanding on human trafficking, including provision for joint criminal intelligence assessment of human trafficking
- Establish national interdepartmental committees on human trafficking
- Establish a network for dialogue with the lead anti-human-trafficking agency in countries which are the primary destination of trafficked groups and individuals
- Use risk-management techniques in passenger-processing, and heighten enforcement capacity at regular border crossings, including deploying new technologies

Money Laundering

- Adopt and implement the Financial Action Task Force 40 Recommendations on Money Laundering
- Establish national financial intelligence units
- Establish regional heads of financial intelligence units forum
- Develop a multilateral memorandum of understanding on money laundering, including provision for joint criminal intelligence money laundering assessments

For More Information

South Asia Regional Department

Tel: +632-632-6188 • Fax: +632-636-2221 • E-mail: hjlee@adb.org