

Geopolitical drug Newsletter

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AFGHANISTAN

Drugs and the Taliban

Washington has attributed responsibility for the terrorist attacks in the United States last week to networks headed by the Saudi "billionaire" Usama Ben Laden, currently under the protection of Afghanistan's Taliban leadership. Further tarnishing these representatives of "Evil", numerous media sources claim that narcotics provide an important source of financing for their operations. The reality, however, is much more complicated. First of all, when the Taliban took power in Kabul in 1996, they merely inherited a situation that saw Afghanistan transformed since the early 1990s into the world's largest opium producer, ahead of Burma. Between 1994 and 1998, opium output totaled between annual 2,000 and 3,000 metric tons of raw material. The majority of this was turned into morphine and heroin in Turkey, and to a lesser extent in Pakistan and in certain Central Asian republics and the Caucasus. Only a fraction of the opium was transformed inside Afghanistan.

All previous records were broken in 1999 and 2000 when opium production in Afghanistan reached 4,500 and 3,200

tons respectively. Even so, experts¹ agree that taxes collected by the Taliban on opium production (the majority paid in kind), on transformation laboratories, and on the transit of morphine and heroin collectively amount to between \$50-100 million annually. This represents a derisory sum compared to Usama Ben Laden's personal fortune and to aid granted the Taliban by its principal supporters: Saudi Arabian sponsors and Pakistan (in the form of both money and arms).

On July 27, 2000, the Taliban Emir, Mullah Omar, published a decree forbidding poppy cultivation, calling it irreligious. His envoys to opium producing areas told peasants that the drought hitting the country was punishment from God for growing drugs. As a result, farmers in general abstained from sowing poppy that autumn, and with only minimal pressure from the Taliban government. A field study conducted by the UNDCP² in early 2001 in the two main opium producing provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar, as well as in other regions under Taliban control, showed that the surface area dedicated to poppy cultivation had decreased from 71,000 hectares (170,000 acres) in 2000 to only 27 hectares (65 acres) in 2001.

Mullah Omar's decree likely aimed to eliminate one of the main obstacles to recognition of the Taliban by the United Nations, while at the same time the Taliban believed it was in a position to finally defeat the forces of the Northern Alliance, led by Ahmed Shah Massud, in 2001. United Nations sanctions reinforced "hardliners" within the Taliban movement, who ordered the destruction of the giant Buddhas in Bamyán. This

move erased any benefits the Taliban hoped to gain from its crackdown on opium production. It cannot be ruled out that Pakistani and Central Asian drug mafias compensated the crackdown financially, fully or in part. With large stocks of opium accumulated during the past two years' record harvests, heroin prices threatened to collapse on the international market.

The UNDCP proved unable to evaluate the situation in regions where poppies had been cultivated on 12,000 hectares the previous year, in particular in areas controlled by the Northern Alliance (3,000 hectares). Heroin seizures in Tajikistan have failed to decline so far this autumn, though it is unknown whether the confiscated narcotics originate from "stocks", or whether they come directly from cultivated areas.

It is likely that narcotics help finance fundamentalist groups in Central Asia, such as that of Juma Namangani, one of the founders of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, whose bases are located in northern Afghanistan. In 2000, after leading 750 men on an incursion into Kirghizistan the previous year in an effort to reach Uzbekistan, Namangani had to retreat, but not before inflicting heavy losses on that country's police forces. He and his men then entered Afghanistan and, changing strategies, infiltrated in small groups into northern and wes-

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1• Notably those of the United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the authors of the Geopolitical Drug Watch (OGD) Annual Report 1998-99.

2• UNDCP Global Impact of the Ban on Opium Production in Afghanistan, July 2001 (second update).

tern Uzbekistan. According to a correspondent of the French daily *Le Monde*³, "This young warlord [Juma Namangani], whose brutality is legendary, allegedly seeks to control the prime drug transit routes in order to increase his market "area", and thereby his power." It is noted that the incursion in

2000 occurred almost exactly one year after that of 1999. Both came just after the opium harvest, as if their aim was to gain control of transit routes for the fruits of the harvest. While Ben Laden probably does not need to revert to drug money to finance his anti-Western struggle, this is not the case for those local

warlords who hope to destabilize Central Asia, still under Russian influence.

3• Sophie Shihab, "L'Onde de choc de la Guérilla islamiste s'étend en Asie centrale", September 9, 2000, p. 2, and "Uzbek Rebels Head for Ferghana" in "Intelligence", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 18, 2001.

MACEDONIA SERBIA

Dangerous Liaisons

The ethnic-Albanian guerrilla movements that flared up again in Serbia and Macedonia in late 2000 and early 2001, respectively, are deeply involved in the local criminal economy. The fighting and lack of police control in the disputed areas provide ideal conditions for the development of illegal trade. Ethnic-Albanian insurgents are finding it easier to act in Macedonia, and the results of NATO's "Operation Essential Harvest" remain uncertain.

In March 2001, Sokol Kociu, the former chief of the Albanian judicial police, and Mentor Hadergjonaj, a native of Kosovo, were arrested in Albania's capital of Tirana, on charges of cocaine trafficking between Colombia and Europe. The newspaper *Koha Jone*, friendly to the Albanian authority, alleged a few days later that this cocaine case was linked to another Kosovar, Ramush Haradinaj, a former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) who has become the leader of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo Party (AFK). In reaction to the media attack against Haradinaj, the independent newspaper *Tema* inferred that there was a connection between the accusation and the presence in Tirana of yet another Kosovar, Hashim Thaci. A rival of Haradinaj,¹ Thaci is the former political leader of the KLA and the current leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK, after its acronym in Albanian); the other party to have emerged out of the insurgent movement. This media skirmish sheds an interesting light on the political links and trafficking activities that unify Albanian-speaking areas throughout the region.

In Macedonia, one of the basic objectives of some leaders of the Albanian-speaking insurgency is to entice international troops to deploy on the contested territories, as they have in Serbia. If Macedonian security forces leave the conflict areas, the latter would then escape from the control and operations normally exercised by the police and customs. A similar situation has prevailed in Kosovo, making it easier for the Albanian-speaking guerrillas to operate. The June 9, 1999 signature of the Kumanovo agreement put an end to the conflict in Kosovo. The province has passed under international administration, falling prey to local mafia clans and groups from Albania and Macedonia, especially those friendly to KLA leaders, which have supplied them with arms and money since 1998. The clans' grip on illegal trade in petrol, cigarettes, building material, drugs, prostitutes, etc., and their control over territorial "turf" in order to extort money from businesses and firms, exacerbate tensions by causing numerous murders. The province has regained its status as a transit territory to Albania and Montenegro on the Adriatic heroin route. Seizures

of acetic anhydride at the border indicate that heroin manufacturing is growing in Kosovo, just like heroin use, which is fostered by the trauma of war and, above all, by the presence of western soldiers and employees of international organisations. In addition, marijuana and hashish are imported from Albania, while cocaine arrives from Latin America. The drugs enter Kosovo from either northern Albania or the Macedonian routes.

In the struggle over Kosovo, the clans close to Hashim Thaci benefit from his good relations with the governments in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, and Tirana. In Macedonia, Arben Xhaferi's Democratic Party for Albanians (DPA), which shares power with the VMRO, an ethnic-Macedonian nationalist party (the heir of the Macedonian Internal Revolutionary Organisation), is close to

1• Since the last election of October 2000. The two parties (AAK and PDK) arrived respectively third and second after their main adversary, the Democratic League of Kosovo (DLK) conducted by Ibrahim Rugova. The leader of the DLK always stood against guerrilla action in Kosovo.

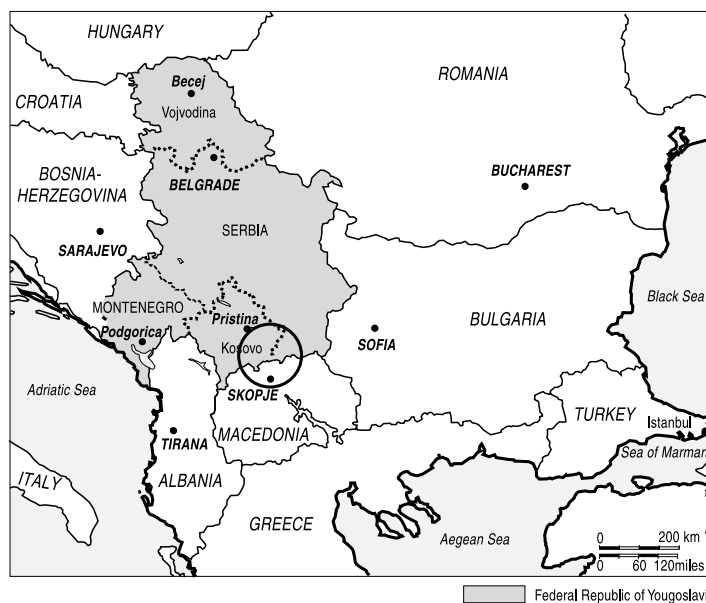
Hashim Thaci's party. In Tirana the relationship is maintained by counsellor Xhavit Haliti, the former local representative of the KLA government in 1999, who is close to the Albanian intelligence services. Some former KLA commanders, less well endowed in terms of contacts, are clashing with Hashim Thaci. They include Sabit Geci, Rrustem Mustafa, a.k.a. "Remi", both established in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, but also Ramush Haradinaj who is powerful in western Kosovo, near Montenegro and northern Albania. On September 12, 2000, Italian military officers of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) denounced Ekrem Lluka, a rich businessman close to Haradinaj who allegedly funds his party. The KFOR had seized nearly 40 metric tons of contraband cigarettes in a warehouse belonging to Lluka in Pec, in western Kosovo. He was freed after posting a hefty bail, but the policeforce of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) also suspects Lluka of involvement in drug trafficking in the Balkans.

Clan and criminal rivalries

During 2000, political, clan and criminal rivalries had a slow but real effect in Macedonia, where family and political bonds with Kosovo are strong. Two types of local smuggling networks can be distinguished. The "protected networks" (involving fake commercial documents and the collusion of customs agents) are controlled on the main routes by groups close to parties in power in Skopje (the ethnic-Albanian DPA and the ethnic-Macedonian VMRO). The second are the "autonomous networks", which use remote secondary roads through hard-to-reach mountains and forests. In 2000, the number two person in the ethnic-Albanian DPA, Menduh Thaci, who is said to be connected to ethnic-Albanian organised crime and involved in contraband cigarettes, was reportedly clashing with some trafficking barons. With tension high, the local Macedonian election in September 2000, unlike the Kosovo election of October, took place in an atmosphere of violence, especially in Albanian-speaking areas. Clashes between "activists" there killed one and wounded several. From

then on, the DPA, which, together with the VMRO, has held on to power at the price of repeated election fraud, has been accused of corruption together with the rest of the government of Macedonia. Discredited, it lost its ability to control the Albanian-speaking population. Macedonia is both fragilised by the conflicts between trafficking networks at its border with Kosovo, and by the different criminal interests in the Presevo valley, a region of Serbia peopled by Albanian-speakers and

kg of heroin and additional amounts of heroin and cocaine in early June 2001. In January 2000, the Army for the Liberation of the Albanian Population of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac (UCPMB) rose up in arms against Serbian control over the three areas. It launched sporadic attacks, essentially on the road joining Gnjilane and Bujanovac. From its base in Dobrosin, in the buffer-zone from which the Yugoslav military has been banned, the UCPMB

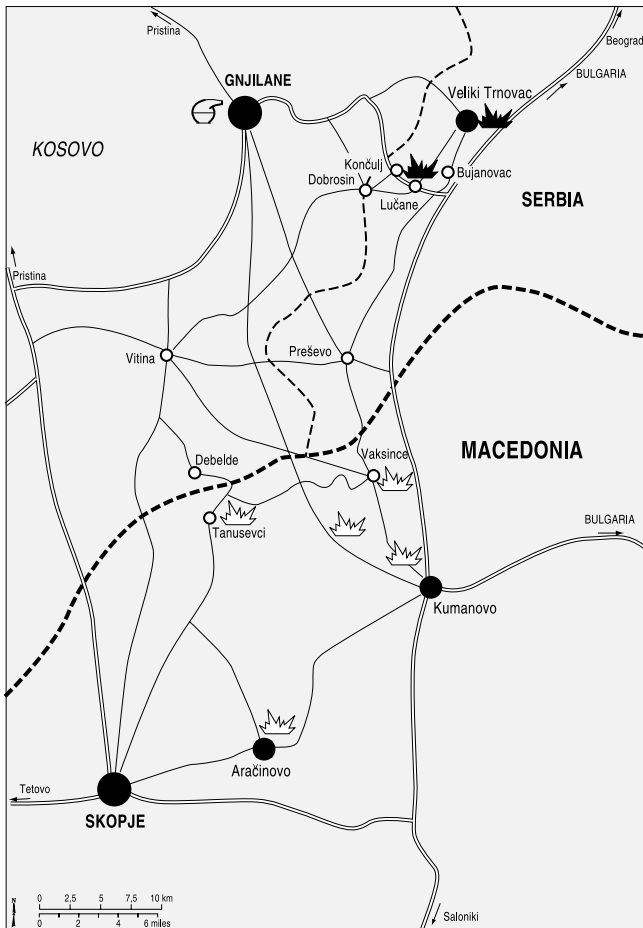


located on the road between Salonika, Greece, and Belgrade, the Serbian capital. The road between Gnjilane and Bujanovac leads into eastern Kosovo. Gnjilane is the largest drug trafficking centre in the province. Heroin coming from Sofia, Bulgaria, via Macedonia or Serbia is stored in the town and then redistributed westward, above all to Serbia and then on to Budapest, Bratislava and Prague, the staging posts on the Albanian drug routes to the rest of Europe. Heroin laboratories could also be operating in the Gnjilane area. According to the spokesperson for the UN mission in Kosovo, most large drug hauls occur in this region, although narcotics seizures there are small compared to the batches destined for Kosovo that are seized "upstream" on the Balkan route. For instance, two kilograms of heroin and cocaine were confiscated there in October 1999, and another 1.5

can easily monitor both the road and Serbian police movements. After its departure from Kosovo, Serbian police were deployed in this region with a view to cutting the illegal flow of petrol, cigarettes and drugs coming from Kosovo and Montenegro, which competed with the trafficking of the Milosevic clan in Belgrade. Between January 2000 and March 2001, most of the fighting took place in villages located on the Gnjilane-Bujanovac road (Konculj, Lucane), or near it, like Veliki Trnovac, a staging post on the Albanian heroin route known to Interpol since the 1980s, from which major mafia families come.

Control of the route

Control of the route is the main stake in the conflict, and the numerous checkpoints set up by the rebels and Serbian police serve this purpose. Serbian offi-



- Primary heroin stockpiles
- Secondary heroin stockpiles
- ☞ Heroin laboratories area
- == Main road
- Secondary road used by traffickers
- National border
- - - Internal border
- Main fighting areas between Albanian rebels and pro-government Forces
- ☞ January 2000 - March 2000
- ☞ February 2001 - July 2001

cers often fall victim to the anti-tank mines the guerrillas have laid on the paths patrolled by the Serbian police. Following the fall of the Milosevic clan and affiliated organised crime networks in early October 2000, regional crime underwent a reshuffling. Some ethnic-Albanian clans decided to launch an offensive, swelling the ranks of the UCPMB, laying new mines on the Gnjilane-Bujanovac road and intensifying arms and drugs smuggling. Bulgarian customs seized more than 250 kg of heroin destined for Macedonia and Kosovo in four sweeps against Turkish-Albanian networks between late October and late December 2000. On October 22, 2000, the guerrillas attacked and occupied numerous villages, hoping to provoke violent retaliation by Belgrade and intervention by the international community. Two individuals provide excellent examples of the ambiguity of the Albanian rebels' interest in Serbia and Macedonia. Muhamed Xhemajli, one of the most radical commanders of the

Presevo Liberation Army (UCPMB), has denounced the negotiations with the Serbian authorities last April and is reported to have left the UCPMB to continue fighting on his own. Xhemajli is alleged to have been a major drug trafficker in Switzerland before joining the KLA in Kosovo in 1998. The second is Xhavit Hasani, a native of Tanusevci, a village north of Skopje, Macedonia, and a stone's throw from Kosovo. This insurgent leader fled Macedonia in 1998 to avoid criminal charges, then joined the KLA and fought near Vitina in Kosovo. He is believed to have gained control of trafficking in drugs, arms and prostitutes in this border region between Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia since June 1999. Hasani was deported from Kosovo to Macedonia in March 2000 because of his involvement with the Presevo guerrilla in March 2000. He was freed on April 4, 2000 on a bail of 200,000 Deutschmarks, and in "exchange" for four Macedonian border guards who had been kidnaped in Kosovo near his Tanusevci fiefdom two days earlier. This case, plus the involvement of other Macedonian Albanian-speakers in Presevo and the use of the roads of northern Macedonia to supply arms to the UCPMB exacerbate the tensions in Macedonia. Police and the military are intensifying border surveillance. The restrained reaction of the new Serbian regime, in contrast with the atrocities perpetrated in Kosovo in 1999, took some breath out of the insurgency. It failed to provoke the intervention of international troops, also indirectly, because Serbia and Macedonia are improving their relations through public announcements and plan joint operations to enhance surveillance of their common border. Feeling threatened, the Albanian-speaking clans straddling the border decided to export their guerrilla to Macedonia, where Albanian-speakers make up a larger proportion of the population than in Serbia, making it easier for them to menace political stability on the national level. In February 2001, Tanusevci, in northern Macedonia near the border with Kosovo, was the first village to be occupied by the National Liberation Army

(NLA, the KLA of Macedonia, in which former fighters of the Kosovo KLA have enlisted). This new guerrilla movement has established an important rear base in Vitina, Kosovo, another of Xhavit Hasani's fiefdoms. Controlling the road that joins Skopje and Presevo via Aracinovo and Kumanovo – two large drug-trafficking hubs – would guarantee access to the Belgrade-Salonika corridor, which explains why fighting has been so intense there. Back in January 2000, Aracinovo had been the scene of a complex criminal case in which Albanian traffickers shot and killed three Macedonian police officers. The guilty men were never arrested, but searches carried out in connection with the triple murder resulted in the seizure of large amounts of narcotics. Major unsatisfied players in the Kosovo and Serbia conflicts have joined the National Liberation Army in Macedonia, eager to regain their ground in the local illegal economy. Daut Haradinaj, the brother of Ramush Haradinaj, the Kosovar leader accused of trafficking cocaine in the Albanian press, his former right-hand man, Gëzim Ostremi, as well as "Remi", all hold commanding posts in the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), the civilian continuity of the KLA, and have been included in a U.S. State Department blacklist since June 2001. They have been suspended of their duties at the KPC by the UNMIK, then charged by the Macedonian authorities for involvement in guerrilla warfare in Macedonia. Sabit Geci, who is suspected to be a mafia baron, was arrested in Pristina in October 2000 moments before the UN police carried out a large-scale sweep against his "business" interests (houses, bars, brothels), which resulted in the seizure of arms and small amounts of heroin. Hashim Thaci is the only Kosovar leader from the KLA to have distanced himself from the insurgency in Macedonia and to support Arben Xhaferi, the Albanian leader who, incidentally, is criticised within his own community. Macedonia, a victim of its geographic location, thus seems to be endangered more by the conflicts of interests opposing various criminal organisations than by legitimate political demands.

NEPAL

Cannabis and the Maoist Rebellion

A buffer-state between China and India, Nepal is also located on one of the axes of Islamic fundamentalism – Afghanistan-Northern Pakistan-Jammu and Kashmir (India)-Bangladesh – and it is well connected by air, especially to the Far East. These assets are taken advantage of by small-time dope smugglers and major drug barons alike—and now probably also by the local Maoist insurgency.

Nepal lost its power of attraction as a dream destination for western narco-tourists long ago. But other types of people are still interested. Drug traffickers have cashed in on the impoverishment of the country's rural dwellers, encouraging Nepalese farmers to grow cannabis. Cannabis crops are spreading everywhere in the country. Major Nepalese traders use legal export channels to ship large amounts of hashish to consumer markets in neighbouring countries and the West. It is also probable, although no concrete evidence has emerged so far, that Maoist insurgents use illegal crops as a source of funds.

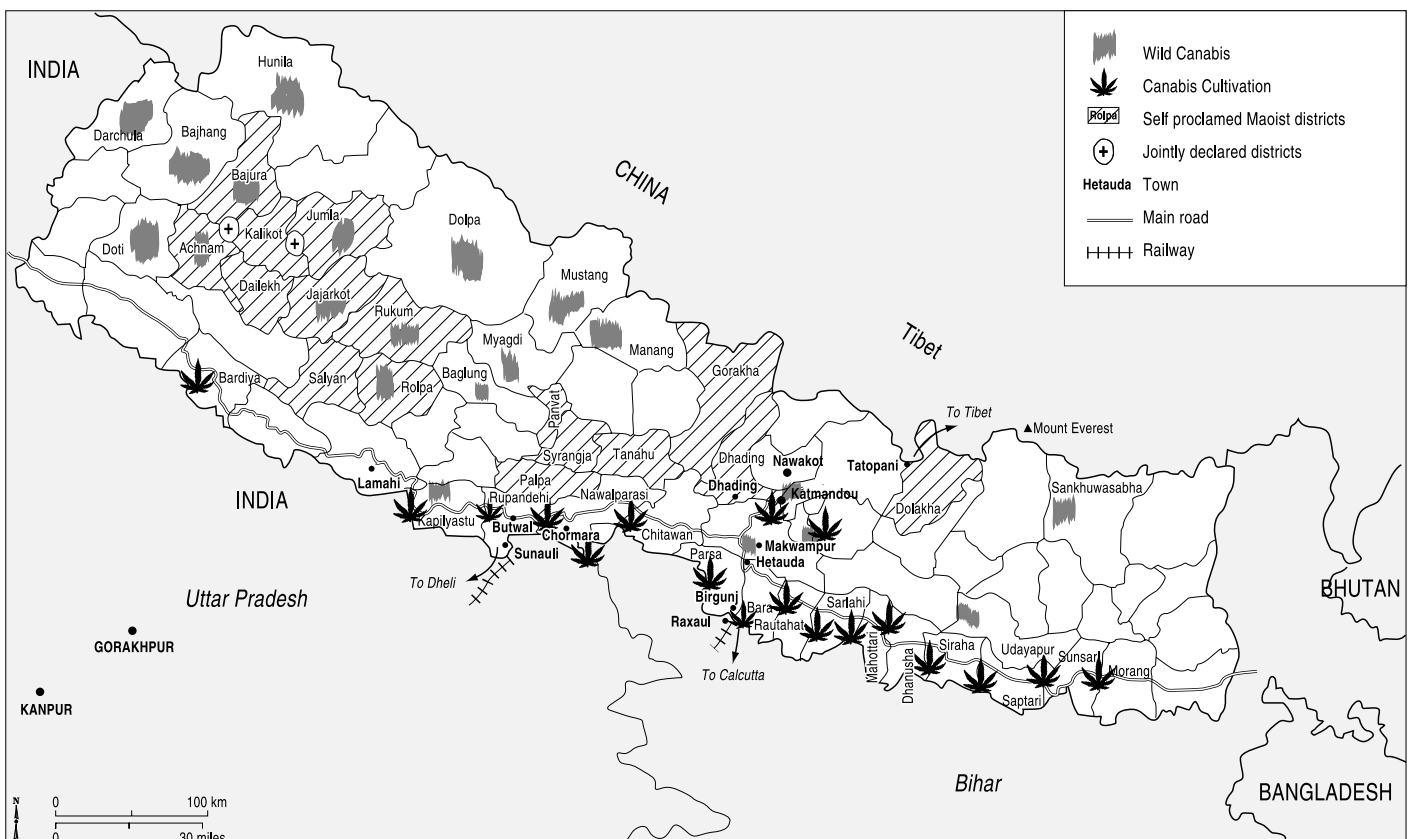
Marijuana seizures reached 6.4 metric tons in 1998 and 4 tons in 1999, while hashish seizures

totalled 2.5 tons and 1.3 tons, respectively. All that is known right now is that more cannabis products were seized in 2000 than in 1999. In August 2001, numerous drug hauls were carried out in the country. Two tons of hashish that had been sent from Nepal to New Delhi, India's capital, were intercepted in Meerut, India. Another shipment of 215 kilograms was seized near the Indian border in Sunauli, in Bhairahawa District, some 190 miles south-west of Katmandu, the Nepalese capital. In both cases, arrested traffickers told the police that other drug shipments had used the same route on previous occasions.

Another route goes through Raxaul, India, and Birgunj, which is just across the border

in Nepalese territory. With Sunauli and Karkabhitta, these are the three major drug routes leading into the Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, through which pass illegal goods travelling both ways (India exports synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals to Nepal). Likewise, the town of Tatopani is a transit point for trafficking between Nepal and Tibet.

Although there is no precise data on the scope of cannabis crops in Nepal, agents of the Narcotic Drug Law Enforcement Unit (NDCLEU) estimate that cannabis is cultivated in 18 of the country's 75 districts. Moreover, the cannabis that grows wild in an additional 21 districts is used to manufacture high-grade hashish. Nepalese



law enforcement officers maintain that the land used to grow cannabis is often leased out by Nepalese farmers to Indian traffickers, who use the Nepalese as a workforce on their own fields, providing the seeds, teaching them how to keep nurseries and how to manufacture more potent varieties such as Mirchi. It can also be wondered if Nepal's Maoist rebels, following the example of their Peruvian brothers in arms of the Shining Path, use hashish to bankroll their activities. For instance, NDCLEU officers note that the hashish seized in Meerut came from the Lamahi area, which is under the control of the guerrillas, like the rest of Western Nepal. Lamahi is the central market place for the hashish produced in the regions of

Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarko and Baglung, all of which are Maoist territory par excellence. The drugs manufactured there also end up in Chormara and Butwal, the latter being the Maoist bastion of the west of the country. Similarly, hashish produced in central Nepal such as Makwanpur, Dhading, Nuwakot are stored in Hetauda, south of Kathmandu.

It has also been noted that insurgent leaders have launched a violent attack against alcohol and "other social scourges": they have destroyed the local wine production and enacted "Dry Law" in numerous districts. Breaches are severely punished. By contrast, the rebel leadership have said nothing about cannabis, and production

goes on unhindered, for instance in Rolpa, the village where the insurgent government is based and from which the police is absent. After the arrest of cannabis traffickers and the destruction of their crops by law enforcement, Maoist rebels attacked police stations. The latter are alleged to protect the families that grow cannabis. One thing is beyond a doubt: the rebels must be aware that cannabis continues to be grown in Western Nepal because the whole region is under their control. Either the insurgents turn a blind eye on cannabis to please their social base -the farmers who earn their livelihood from it- or they derive a substantial profit from the crops and use it to bankroll their operations.

NIGERIA

New Ambitions in the Fight Against Drugs

Although Nigeria is attempting to restore an international image tainted by past military governments, it is still viewed as one of Africa's largest drug-trafficking centres. President Obasanjo's new civilian administration has made efforts in the fight against drugs over the last two years. However, Nigerian networks continue to be very active in the drug trade in spite of the government's apparent goodwill.

A record-breaking 60 kilograms of cocaine valued locally at US \$7 million was seized from a ship at Tin Can Island, in the port of Lagos, Nigeria's economic capital, on August 27, 2001. The Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) issued a detailed report on the conditions of arrest of a trafficker and two crewmen, which the Nigerian press widely echoed. The agency even explained that during the operation the traffickers offered \$334,000 to NDLEA officers in exchange for their silence but that they rejected the bribe. For several months, the Nigerian authorities have made efforts to show that they are willing to fight against drugs. The NDLEA, which was set up in 1990, has seen major changes in the last few months. The aim is to appoint as its head a man who can succeed in restoring the image of an agency that has long been thought of as

working with the drug trade -not against it- and who would be able to wage a truly effective war on drugs.

The Nigerian head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo, who was democratically elected in February 1999, appointed Bello Lafiagi, who worked for the State Security Service (an intelligence department), as chief executive of the NDLEA. He is the third NDLEA chief in two years. The first appointee, Ogbonna Onovo, one of President Obasanjo's personal friends, was removed, reportedly because he was needed elsewhere for «more important functions». The mission entrusted to Lafiagi's immediate predecessor at the helm of the agency, Ilyia Lokadang, was to transform the NDLEA's paramilitary outlook into a civilian outfit "with a human face". He was removed two months after his appointment and no explanations were

given. However, the AEGD correspondent has learnt that Ilyia Lokadang's head rolled because the United States felt that he was not credible enough (or not sufficiently pro-American) to be able to mount joint Nigerian-American counterdrug operations. Likewise, Obasanjo got rid of his advisor on drugs and economic crime, Yakubu Lame, on June 12, 2001, after strong pressure was applied by the American embassy. Lame, a university professor, was deemed incompetent for the job but was appointed as a reward for his work during election campaigns. The United States has not objected to Lafiagi and Washington even granted Nigeria full "certification" in the spring of 2001. So far, Lafiagi's greatest success in terms of reform has been to persuade the president to increase the wages of NDLEA officers considerably, so that they become less vulnerable to

bribery by drug traffickers, as was so often the case in the past.

Cannabis Growing and Transit Trafficking

One of the most serious problems facing the new NDLEA chief is the fast-paced spread of cannabis crops. Caught between the collapse of the price of agricultural goods on the domestic market and the demand for Nigerian marijuana on the world market, more and more farmers in southern Nigeria are giving up legal food and cash crops and grow cannabis instead. This is especially the case in Ondo, Edo, Delta and Rivers States. Fidel Oguche, the head of the NDLEA branch in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, has announced that 314 kg of marijuana and a cannabis farm were destroyed during the first six months of 2001. At national level, 15 to 20 metric tons of marijuana were seized each year between 1994 and 1999. The NDLEA's new leadership appears to have made substantial progress, claiming the confiscation of a total of 264 tons of marijuana and the destruction of 1,000 cannabis plants in 2000.

The Nigerian authorities also seem to have obtained results against the drugs that transit through the country. During the last few years, because Nigerian networks have relocated to neighbouring countries such as Benin, Togo, Chad and Niger, seizures of hard drugs decreased constantly in Nigeria. Cocaine hauls thus fell from 90 kg in 1994 to 15 kg in 1999. In 2000, they reached 50 kg, according to the Nigerian drug agency, which was also successful in convincing the press to trumpet its record haul of August 2001. The same phenomenon can be observed as far as heroin is concerned: heroin seizures plummeted from 287.5 kg in 1993 to a meagre 5.8 kg in 1998. They reached 81.6 kg in 1999 and nearly 60 kg in 2000. Likewise, for amphetamine-like substances a total of 322 kg was seized in 2000, up from 309 kg in 1997.

However, these NDLEA victories must be assessed against the U.S. State Department's 2000 report, which states, "real figures could differ sharply from those of the NDLEA". And, indeed, it cannot be denied that some Nigerian nationals are as active as ever in the international

drug trade; Nigerian drug runners continue to be arrested in Brazil, Colombia and Libya (AEGD source). Some arrests are not reported because they are too numerous for comfort. For example, a Nigerian national was arrested at Kotoka International Airport in Accra, Ghana, in possession of 10 kg of cocaine at the end of September 1999. A month later, two Nigerians were caught at New Delhi Airport, India, with 18.7 kg of heroin. In March 1999, a Nigerian and a Cameroonian were sentenced to ten years in prison in Namibia in a case involving 17.5 kg of cocaine; and nine Nigerians were arrested in Queens, New York, for forging credit cards and selling heroin. In April 1999, Thai customs seized 33 kg of heroin at Bangkok Airport from a citizen of Togo travelling to Lagos via Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The smuggler said that he was paid \$8,000 by a Nigerian boss. The majority of the 55 kg of heroin seized in a single day of 1999 in Pakistan was attributable to Nigerians, who accounted for 19 of the total 34 smugglers arrested that day.

In December 1998, at the occasion of the signature of a bilateral co-operation agreement against drug trafficking and money laundering between Uganda and Nigeria, Colonel Omania, Uganda's state minister for international affairs, declared that 20 Nigerians and 28 Ugandans had been arrested, while 30 kg of heroin, 8 kg of cocaine and 781,000 Mandrax tablets had been confiscated in his country during the previous two years. Omania also remarked that three Ugandan-Nigerian commercial joint ventures based in Uganda had served as cover for drug trafficking. The remark prompted Nigeria's high commissioner in Uganda, Maman Daura, to try to downplay the involvement of his fellow countrymen in the drug trade by arguing, as Nigerian officials usually do, that those who hold Nigerian passports are not necessarily Nigerian nationals. In fact, the opposite is true: Nigerian traffickers prefer using passports from other African countries that, rightly or wrongly, are not viewed as "suspect" as Nigeria by foreign law enforcement personnel.

Reducing Demand and Cutting Supply

The second major dilemma to be tackled by the new NDLEA boss is demand reduction, which is something of a Herculean task. Although reducing the demand for illegal drugs is one of the NDLEA's official missions, to be carried out together with the justice ministry, it has always been relegated in the background. Surely, it would be preferable to give demand reduction to a separate body, but the NDLEA leadership says that such a move would weaken the agency. Already, the NDLEA complains, the military courts that had jurisdiction on drug cases disappeared with the arrival of democracy and drug cases are now handled by civilian courts, meaning that suspects cannot be detained for more than 24 hours before a judge hears them. It is true that because Nigerian courts are glutted, most suspects are released before a judge can read their case, which gives them ample time to buy either official protection or favourable witnesses, or both. On the other hand, Nigerian drug laws are reputed to be among the toughest in the world. In addition to lengthy prison terms, convicts see their assets confiscated by the state whether or not they were purchased with drug money. In addition, Nigeria is one of the few countries where double punishment is in force, meaning that a Nigerian national who has served a prison term abroad is sent to prison again upon his/her return to Nigeria, not on the same charges as in the foreign country but for "dragging the name of Nigeria in the mud". This is why most Nigerians seek to avoid being sent back home by buying passports from neighbouring country like Benin or Chad, from which they can easily go back to Nigeria, albeit secretly. Additionally, Nigeria has signed an extradition treaty with the United States that was used against several important Nigerian «businessmen». To those who protest that this amounts to an abandonment of sovereignty by the Nigerian state, the American authorities reply that the files of suspected traffickers often get lost in the meandering Nigerian justice system. Four Nigerian drug barons were extradited to the United States in November 2000.

Galician Traffickers Change Tack

The Spanish police have hit Galician traffickers hard and their Colombian counterparts have implemented new strategies in order to smuggle cocaine into Europe for more than a year. Taken together, these phenomena have hurt the «business» of the Galician smugglers, who are trying to adapt by diversifying their activities.

Police infiltration and arrests have reduced the volume of business of Galician smugglers, the long-time partners of Colombian cocaine traffickers. Traditionally, smugglers in Galicia, a region at the north-western tip of Spain bordering the north of Portugal, received large shipments of Colombian cocaine and transported them to the rest of Europe. But for slightly more than a year, Colombian traffickers have tended to handle their cocaine imports themselves. They now act independently, doing without the Galician networks or using new sea routes, increasingly through the Strait of Gibraltar—45% of the drugs smuggled into Spain enter by the Mediterranean. In addition, Colombian traffickers now prefer to conceal their “merchandise” on cargo-ships or container-carriers. True, some Colombian drugs still transit through Galician networks; but the latter now act further north in Galicia or across the border in Portugal. There are various methods for receiving the drugs, which vary depending on the means of transportation used: containers or traditional means such as small vessels, yachts and fishing boats.

Since the beginning of 2001, a total of more than a metric ton of cocaine was confiscated in containers at the port of Vigo, Galicia. In February, Spanish customs seized 4,600 kilograms of the same drug from a Galician fishing boat flying a British flag 400 miles southwest of the Canary Islands. Again in March, not far off Spain’s Atlantic shore, a ton of cocaine was hauled even as it

was being transhipped from a Spanish mother-ship to a Spanish yacht that had come from Estepona. In the two latter cases, the final destination of the cocaine was Portugal. The increasingly diversified entry points now encompass the north of Galicia and Portugal, which has become an alternative trafficking territory following the tightening of police checks in Galicia.

In January 2001 already, two Galicians were arrested in Lisbon, Portugal’s capital, in possession of 2,700 kg of cocaine, which they had smuggled on a fishing boat. This type of joint-ventures between Galicians and Portuguese nationals has strengthened the latter’s bargaining position vis-à-vis the former. In Galicia, the boats that transport the cocaine no longer disembark it on the Atlantic west coast but further up in the north-west, toward Asturias Province or even the Bay of Biscay. In April 2001, cocaine packets washed up on beaches stretching from the Cantabrian coast to the French Basque Country. The origin of the drugs was probably a ship that sunk opposite Navia, in Asturias Province, while it was preparing to tranship the drugs on go-fast boats bound for the Asturian coast.

The problems encountered with the Colombians (see The Geopolitical Drug Newsletter N° XX) in the case of cocaine transportation have pushed the Galicians to diversify their product range. While it is true that they have been involved in hashish and heroin smuggling for some time, the Galician traffickers’ dependency on these

drugs has increased. During 2000, the amounts of heroin hauled in Galicia grew from 1% to 7% of total heroin seizures in Spain. A 100-kg shipment of Turkish heroin was confiscated from a trailer registered in Macedonia and driven by a Macedonian national in May at O Porriño. A year earlier in May 2000, a Galician trafficking ring was destroyed while it was receiving 100 kg of heroin from Turkey, the police said. When Turkish heroin is involved, the full payment is made in advance in Turkey, which implies a major change compared to the type of relationship that the Galicians maintained with their Colombian partners.

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