



COUNTRY FACTSHEETS, EURASIAN NARCOTICS:

TAJIKISTAN 2004

General Information

Population: 7,011,556  
 UNDP Human development index ranking: 116 (out of 177 states)  
 TI Corruption indicators: 2.0 (0 highly corrupted, and 10 highly clean)

After Russia took control of the khanate of Khiva in 1873, present-day Tajikistan, together with other the rest of Central Asia, was closed to opium trade routes. As a result of political upheavals in the region in the beginning of the 1990s, borders have been reopened and Tajikistan has become a major center of regional drug trafficking to Central Asian, Russian and European markets. Tajikistan currently holds the dubious honor of being the most popular transit country for Afghan opiates in Central Asia. It seizes roughly 80 percent of all drugs captured in Central Asia and stands third world-wide in seizures of opiates (heroin and raw opium).

Smuggling of Drugs

Over the last five years increases in heroin seizures in the countries of Central Asia have been sharper than those reported for traditional routes to Western Europe (i.e. Pakistan, Iran, Turkey). Tajikistan is the Central Asian country with both the best connections to the source – Afghanistan – and a major destination – Russia. Tajikistan shares a 1,200 km border with Afghanistan, including a lengthy one with the province of Badakhshan, now the third-largest opium-cultivating province in that country. For protection of this border, the country relies on Russia's 201<sup>st</sup> Mechanized Infantry Division, mostly comprised of local Tajik soldiers under Russian command. The two governments have agreed to transfer this responsibility to the Tajik military over the next few years, placing a heavy burden on under-funded forces – though the pace of this transfer is uncertain.

The first seizure of 6.3 kg of heroin in Tajikistan was registered in 1996. Between 1991 and 2001, close to a 2,000-fold increase in seizures of raw opium was registered, from 1.9kg to 3,664. In recent years, heroin seizures have increased steeply: while in 2000 more opium was seized than heroin (4.8 tons to 1.9 tons), today the situation has reversed (2.3 tons to 4 tons) in 2003.

Health and Economic Aspects

**Corruption:** There are many indications that drug money is corrupting all levels of the Tajik government. In 2000, the country's ambassador to Kazakhstan was arrested with 62kg of heroin in his cars and the former chief of the Tajik Drug Control Agency is currently on trial for various charges ranging from corruption to murder. Since drug trafficking is one of the major sources of income in the country, this might be unsurprising.

**Money laundering:** Tajikistan's economy and banking structures are not conducive to money laundering - the country is isolated, the banking system is undeveloped and the economy lacks extensive international links. However, there are few problems for drug traffickers utilizing their cash in such an undeveloped and unregulated economy.

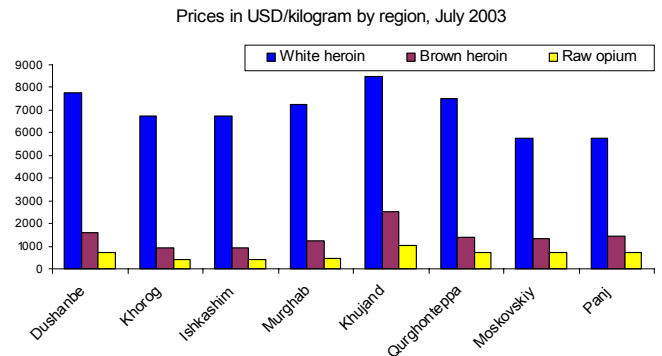
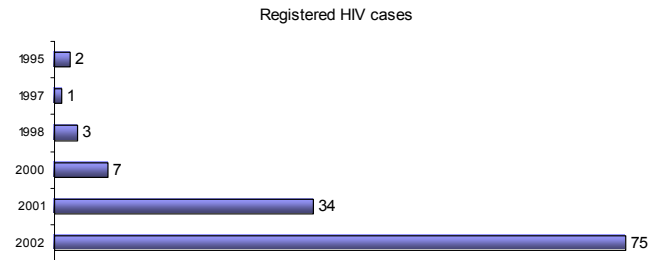
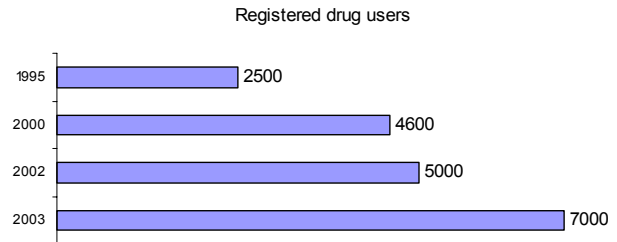
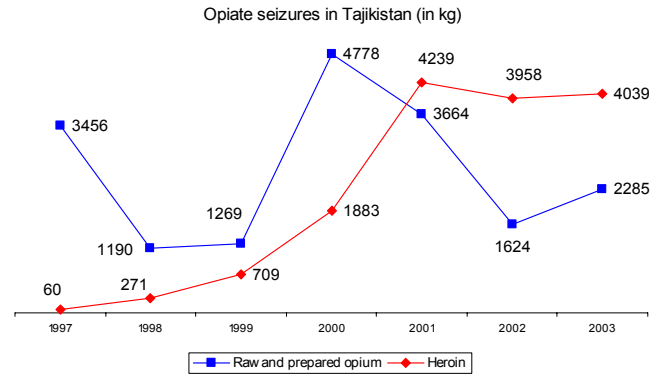
**Drug abuse and HIV epidemics:** The number of Tajiks using hard drugs has increased sharply in recent times. An HIV epidemic is brewing and the first documented AIDS case emerged last year. An estimated 60-65% of HIV infections are among intravenous drug users. Economic and political constraints make it unlikely that an effective response to the threat can be mounted in the short term.

Political and Societal Aspects

Tajikistan is still feeling the effects of the civil war between 1992 and 1997. The collapse of the national economy and an accompanying increase in poverty have encouraged many poorer citizens to engage in drug trafficking. Simultaneously, these conditions allow those higher up the chain to work with impunity. Small and local groups of criminals appear to be coalescing into larger networks, which is likely to involve a hardening of the drug industry in the face of law enforcement and political control efforts.

This trend will also raise the incentive and ability of armed groups to prolong domestic instability. Many analysts believe that influential figures from both sides of the civil war, many of whom hold positions in the government today, are now involved in the drug trade. To that extent, regulation of the drug trade might be seen as one of the few examples of an issue with bipartisan appeal in Tajik politics. Unfortunately, many of the reasons for this are the wrong ones.

The societal implications of this are grim. While involvement in drug trafficking provides such huge profits and power, the ability of the government to address social problems – drug-related or otherwise – is crippled. Moreover, as politics is privatized into a self-interested profession, the desire to implement development programs is lessened.



## Counter-Narcotics Efforts

### State

The state drug commission began work in 1996, charged with combating illegal trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances. With substantial UNODC funding and technical assistance, Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency was established on June 1, 1999. It is a law enforcement body with a broad mandate, including the collection of data and the control of precursor chemicals. The Agency has 350 staff and offices in three regions. Recently, President Imomali Rakhmonov signed a protocol opening a DCA office in Kazakhstan and there are plans to open others in Central Asia and Russia.

### Civil Society

Compared with some of its neighbors, Tajikistan is relatively open to NGO activity. Indigenous groups have difficulties, however, because of a lack of funding, expertise, and experience at self-organization. Drug use is increasingly acknowledged and to some degree accepted with resignation in many parts of Tajikistan, making mobilization for its defeat more difficult. Concurrently, HIV is a source of stigmatization.

There are currently 11 medical clinics focusing on drug rehabilitation and treatment. Much of the funding for this comes from the UNODC "Reducing drug demand in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan" project. Also active in Tajikistan is the International Harm Reduction Development Program of the Open Society Institute, whose aim is to assist local capacity in harm reduction projects.

### Regional Cooperation

Universally acknowledged as the front line against northbound Afghan trafficking, Tajikistan's cooperation is required for any effective regional or international counter-narcotics effort. It has signed the Central Asian Counter-Narcotics Protocol with UNODC and its Central Asian neighbors. Last year, treaties related to drug trafficking were concluded with the Security Service of Ukraine, the State Drug Control Committee of Russia, the Committee of National Security of Kazakhstan, as well as a broad memorandum with the interim Afghan administration. In 2000, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and

Uzbekistan signed the Treaty on Concerted Action in Combating Terrorism, Political and Religious Extremism, Transnational Organized Crime and Other Threats to the Stability and Security of the Signatory Parties (an agreement whose breadth is adequately illustrated by the length of its title).

In July 2003 Tajikistan became a participant country in Operation Topaz, coordinated by the International Narcotics Control Board. Its security forces also participate in the Kanal operations, an annual joint effort by law enforcement agencies across Eurasia against drug trafficking.

### International

Tajikistan is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1972 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, and other UN narcotics agreements. Because of Tajikistan's economic and political situation, the most effective resources and programs emanate against the drug trade originate outside the country. The major focus of these is on the Tajik-Afghan border, where efforts are made by a long list of agencies, including UNODC, the US government, Russia's Border Guard Committee, the Japanese government and Tajikistan's customs.

On January 27, 2003, the U.S. and Tajik Governments signed a Letter of Agreement on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement, operationalized by U.S. government assistance on a range of security and law enforcement programs.

Tajikistan is a party to numerous regionally-based drug control agreements organized through ECO, OSCE, UNODC and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, among others, and other international and regional organizations. Three broad regional UNODC programs were approved by the state drug control commission in 1998 and two of these are currently being implemented.

## Related publications by the Silk Road Studies Program and the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute

### Database of the Narcotics, Organized Crime, and Security in Eurasia Project:

The current version of the database contains statistics and information on illicit drugs and related issues in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) Russia, the and Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan).  
<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/drugtrade.htm>

**Publications: (View these and more online at <http://www.silkroadstudies.org> and <http://www.cacianalyst.org>.)**

"Stemming the Afghan Heroin Industry in Central and Southwest Asia", by Svante Cornell, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2004.  
*Stability and Security in Tajikistan: Drug Trafficking as a Threat to National Security*, Silk Road Paper by Johan Engvall, December 2004.  
*Counter-Narcotics Policies and their Challenges in Central Asia*, Silk Road Paper by Kairat Osmonaliev, November 2004.  
*U.S. Afghanistan Policy: It's Working*, CACI Occasional Paper by S. Frederick Starr, October 2004.  
"Transnational Crime: the Neglected Threat", by Svante Cornell, *Axess*, September 2004.  
Niklas Swanström and Svante Cornell, "Is Afghanistan's Opium Boom Reversible?", *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst*, 14 July 2004.

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