

Russia Campaigns for U.S Cooperation In Fight Against Afghanistan Dope

by Rachel Douglas

May 28—Victor Ivanov, head of the Russian Federal Narcotics Control Service, is taking the point, in an escalating Russian campaign to secure effective international cooperation against the lethal flood of heroin from Afghanistan. In the latter half of May, Ivanov made a number of high-profile statements, putting the Obama Administration on the spot, for its non-action against the narcotics production and trafficking, centered in that occupied country. The interventions included Ivanov's appearance in a dramatic hour-long documentary, "Afghanistan Opium: Wind from the South," aired on First Channel national television May 17, in the context of preparations for a major international conference on Drug Production in Afghanistan: A Challenge to the International Community, to be held in Moscow June 9-10.

At the same time, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has emphasized Russia's demand for the UN to require foreign forces, in Afghanistan under its authorization, to destroy opium crops.

On May 23, Ivanov announced that he had just provided names and contact data for nine major Afghan and Central Asian traffickers to his U.S. counterpart, Gil Kerlikowske, in a short meeting between the two at Sheremetyevo Airport in Moscow. "I handed him a list of nine ... people living in Afghanistan or elsewhere in Central Asia, and involved in drug trafficking," said Ivanov at a press conference, adding that Moscow was prepared to prosecute those traffickers. It was his fourth meeting with Kerlikowske in a year, Ivanov said, noting that he had earlier given the United States the names of about 25 other additional traffickers, and data on 175 drug labs in Afghanistan.

"To destroy these drug laboratories is the most



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Russia's drug-control chief Victor Ivanov (left) provided his U.S. counterpart Gil Kerlikowske (right) the names and contact data for nine major Afghan and Central Asian traffickers, as part of Russia's campaign to engage the U.S. in shutting down the Afghan drug trade.

urgent task, because these are already well-established cartels, with a stable hierarchy and structure, funding sources, and technological equipment to produce narcotics," Ivanov said. Insofar as Afghanistan currently accounts for 95% of world heroin output, Ivanov insisted that eradication at the source is far more effective than chasing down processed narcotics around the world.

Russian Today television also played up statements by Lavrov on May 24, as he prepared to meet UN Representative for Afghanistan Staffan de Mistura in Moscow. "The major reserve that should be put into action in Afghanistan in the struggle with drug trafficking is the destruction of not only drug laboratories and drug trafficking routes, but also direct opium production outlets," said Lavrov. "We cannot come to agree-



USMC/Lance Cpl. Matthew P. Troyer

The Russian death toll from Afghan heroin is 30,000 a year; 82 die from it every day. There are at least 2.5 million addicts. Shown: Afghan poppy farmers in Helmand Province survey their field, April 2010.

ment with some of our European colleagues on the destruction of drug crops.”

Lukewarm Response

From the Obama Administration’s very first days in office, Victor Ivanov has advocated joint efforts to wipe out Afghanistan’s dope production and rebuild the country’s infrastructure and industry, as a centerpiece of Russian-American cooperation (*EIR*, Feb. 6, 2009, “A Worthy Russian Proposal”). Both he and the Russian Foreign Ministry have repeatedly expressed disappointment at the lukewarm response.

On March 24 of this year, Ivanov renewed Moscow’s bid for cooperation, presenting a detailed proposal to the NATO-Russia Council meeting in Brussels, for wiping out Afghanistan opium production within five years, along with the related trafficking and money-laundering infrastructure. The very next day, Russia’s Foreign Ministry issued an official Commentary on the “Refusal by the U.S. Contingent Command to Destroy Opium Poppy Crops in Afghanistan.” It blasted the bogus argument that Afghan farmers have no alternative to growing dope, charging that this “actually means, if not directly, then certainly indirectly, conniving with drug producers. Such an attitude ignores the fact that thousands of people die from heroin made from this opium poppy, including in Afghanistan itself, where the

number of drug addicts has already reached 1 million,” of an estimated 2009 population of under 34 million.

On May 19, Lavrov returned to the Afghan dope plague, answering questions from members of the State Duma: “I fully support the need for tougher approaches to stopping the narcotics threat,” he said, “including the destruction of opium plantings in Afghanistan. We are seeking for the Afghan narcotics threat to be defined by the UN Security Council as a threat to world peace and security, in order for actions to be taken on the basis of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which provides for sanctions and the use of force in cases of necessity. We also advocate

that the mandate of the international security force [ISAF] around the NATO contingents include the obligation to destroy opium poppy plantings, and we propose that landowners in Afghanistan who provide land for planting opium be listed by the UN Security Council as persons subject to UNSC sanctions, with all attendant consequences.”

Lavrov alluded to the tepid reaction to Ivanov’s Brussels intervention in March, saying, “We are working closely with the Russian Federal Narcotics Control Service. Its leader, V.P. Ivanov, was in Brussels a couple of months ago, speaking before the Russia-NATO Council. This topic has not been forgotten. It cannot, however, be solved in one swoop. We either have to slam the door, thus losing any possibility of influencing the situation, or we have to be a bit more patient, despite everything, although I fully share the alarm over the narcotics situation in Russia, especially because a great quantity of this vile stuff is coming in from our neighbors.”

On April 4, Lyndon LaRouche cited Barack Obama’s posture in the new Afghanistan Opium War, as a potential item in a bill of impeachment: “By refusing to go after the opium trade, which is the logistical and financial backbone of the Taliban insurgency, the Obama policy is giving those narco-insurgents a free hand to kill American soldiers.” LaRouche also called for the dismissal of Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the U.S. and

NATO commander in Afghanistan, who has overseen the disastrous Obama policy. (*EIR* cover story, April 9, 2010, “Obama’s Afghan Opium War: New Grounds for Impeachment.”)

‘Wind from the South’

In the First Channel documentary, Ivanov and expert commentator Yuri Krupnov, leader of Russia’s Development Movement, presented evidence of the devastation caused by Afghan opium production: 100,000 deaths annually, of which nearly one-third occur in Russia. The Russian death toll from Afghan heroin is 30,000 in a year: 82 people die from it every day. The country has at least 2.5 million drug addicts, with 80,000 young people trying heroin for the first time each year. The TV footage showed drug-intoxicated and dead young Russian heroin users.

“Afghanistan Opium: Wind from the South” repeatedly showed Obama Administration Afghanistan envoy Richard Holbrooke, while the documentary drew out at length the U.S. refusal to respond seriously to the Ivanov plan presented in March. To Holbrooke’s insistence that a serious war on drugs would be a distraction from the war on terrorism, the TV show counterposed Ivanov, citing UN anti-drug official Antonio Mario Costa, on \$60 billion as the price tag on Afghanistan’s narcotics business, while Krupnov emphasized that these funds rocket around the world by electronic transfer, being used to fund crime and terrorism.

First Channel also undercut Holbrooke’s argument that the Afghanistan opium poppy is “too large-scale” to destroy, reporting that, in reality, only 1.5% of the country’s arable land is involved, and only 6% of the population. European NATO members, involved in Afghanistan, are themselves losing 10,000 people annually to Afghan heroin, commented Krupnov; while Great Britain, a driving force within the foreign occupation, has near-Russian levels of Afghan heroin use. “Whom are they defending?” asked Krupnov.

Famous retired generals Leonid Ivashov and Makhmud Gareyev were interviewed on the strategic dimensions of the conflict in Central Asia, with Gareyev recalling the 1970s-80s scheme—it was Zbigniew Brzezinski’s project, above all—of using Afghanistan-based Islamic radicals against the Soviet Union.

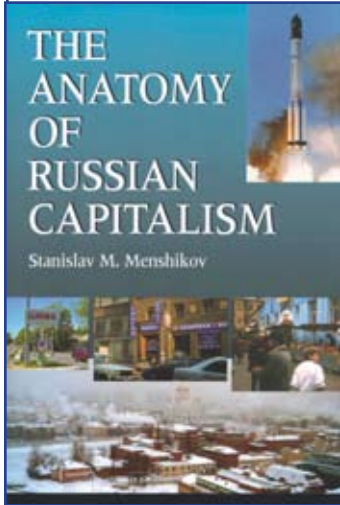
Diplomatic Agenda

On May 22, Ivanov was in Beijing for talks with Chinese State Councilor and Minister of Public Secu-

rity Meng Jianzhu. They agreed to step up anti-drug and other law enforcement cooperation, bilaterally, and through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO foreign ministers, meeting May 22 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, announced that Afghanistan, including the narcotics business, will be high on the agenda at the June 10-11 Tashkent summit of the SCO.

In further remarks about his airport meeting with Kerlikowske, reported by RIA Novosti May 26, Ivanov noted that stated U.S. drug policy is to prioritize reducing demand, though social programs. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, he said, “Until we liquidate narcotics production, there will be endless conflicts there.” This is why he “insists on destroying the opium poppy plantings and on classifying the Afghan heroin situation as a worldwide drug threat.”

Ivanov said that he hopes the June 9-10 forum in Moscow can “define international legal measures in the fight against the Afghan threat, for eradication of the poppy plantings, and the development of Afghanistan.”



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