

2008 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report

The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) is an annual report by the Department of State to Congress prepared in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act. It describes the efforts of key countries to attack all aspects of the international drug trade in Calendar Year 2007.

Kyrgyz Republic

I. Summary

The Kyrgyz Republic continues to have only very modest domestic production of illicit narcotics or precursor chemicals, but it is a major transit country for drugs originating in Afghanistan and destined for markets in Russia, Western Europe, and to a limited extent, America. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (GOKG) attempts to combat drug trafficking and prosecute offenders. The GOKG has been supportive of international and regional efforts to limit drug trafficking and has initiated major initiatives to address its own domestic drug use problems. The GOKG recognizes that the drug trade is a serious threat and is focused on secondary and tertiary drug-related issues such as money laundering, drug-related street crime and corruption within its own government.

Drug abuse continues to be a serious issue in Kyrgyzstan. While the GOKG has been a supporter of counternarcotics programs, it is still struggling to deliver a clear and consistent counternarcotics strategy to either the Kyrgyz people or the international community.

Due to a change in leadership at the DCA (Specialized drug enforcement force) in August 2005, it appeared there was a positive change in direction for the DCA. After a period of readjustment of personnel and tactics, the DCA began a strong enforcement effort, exceeding agreed targets set for seizures during the second half of 2006.

In February 2007, the leadership of the DCA was again changed. The former Director, was elevated to Minister of the Interior, and a new DCA Director, took the reins of the DCA. Some top officials were lured away with the new minister, while others took positions within the MOI. The personnel turnover appeared to hamper DCA effectiveness. The Kyrgyz Republic is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of Country

The Kyrgyz Republic shares a common border with China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Mountainous terrain, poor road conditions, and an inhospitable climate for much of the year make detection and apprehension of drug traffickers more difficult. Border stations located on mountain passes on the Chinese and Tajik borders are snow covered and un-staffed for up to four months of the year. These isolated passes are some of the most heavily used routes for drug traffickers.

Government outpost and interdiction forces rarely have electricity, running water or modern amenities to support their counternarcotics efforts. The Kyrgyz Republic is one of the poorest successor states of the former Soviet Union, relying on a crumbling infrastructure and suffering from a lack of natural resources or significant industry. Unlike some of its Central Asian neighbors, the Kyrgyz Republic does not have a productive oil industry or significant energy reserves. The south and southwest regions—the Osh and Batken districts—are the primary trafficking routes used for drug shipments from Afghanistan. The city of Osh, in particular, is the main crossroads for road and air traffic and a primary

transfer point for narcotics into Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and on to markets in Russia, Western Europe and the United States. The Kyrgyz Republic is not a major producer of narcotics itself; however, cannabis, ephedra and poppy grow wild in many areas.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2007

Policy Initiatives. With U.S. assistance, the Kyrgyz Republic established its first inter-agency counternarcotics Mobile Interdiction Teams (MOBITS) in an effort to stem the trafficking of narcotics along its borders with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Law Enforcement Efforts. The Drug Control Agency (DCA) was established in 2003 with the assistance of the U.S. Government and UNODC. It has become a lead agency that coordinates all drug enforcement activities in the Kyrgyz Republic. To stop illegal transnational organized drug crime, the DCA continues to work with its counterparts in Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

From May to December 2006, the DCA participated in training/mentoring programs coordinated by the U.S. embassy narcotics office with the objective of increasing seizures of drugs in transit. The seizure goal agreed on to stimulate DCA's efforts was 225kg of illicit narcotics. For the period of May to December 2006 the DCA made 70 seizures. The seizure breakdown as follows: 153kg of heroin, 170kg of opium, 583kg of marijuana and 26kg of hashish. This was a grand total of 934kg of illicit narcotics. The approximate street value was almost \$900,000. Though this was a substantial amount of narcotics, more work is required in the area of heroin and opium seizures. All arrestees during this special operation were prosecuted and received jail time. Since the beginning of 2007, the DCA has conducted six joint "controlled delivery" operations targeted on organized crime drug lords. In 2007, the DCA registered 87 seizures, but the amount of drugs seized in each case diminished. As of September 30, 2007 the DCA had seized 117kg of heroin, 26kg of opium, 673kg of marijuana, 5kg of Psychotropics and .33kg of hashish.

Kyrgyz officials have emphasized coordination among enforcement units (Ministry of Interior, National Security Service, Customs, and Border Guard) to increase effectiveness in the field of combating drugs. As a result, joint operations are now being conducted at railroad stations, airports, and major highways. The DCA believes that drugs are being delivered to the southern part of the country by well-organized criminal groups and, in some cases, law enforcement officers are involved in this process. To combat this, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), the Nebraska National Guard, U.S. Customs, DEA and INL launched the initial phase of the MOBITS Assistance Project. In August 2007, 32 Kyrgyz law enforcement officers from the DCA, Ministry of the Interior, Customs Service and Border Guards were trained and completely equipped to form the first of four planned MOBITS Teams. The team was deployed in September 2007, after the completion of five weeks of training. Its mission is to identify drug trafficking targets and to seize all the illicit narcotics it can. These teams patrol remote southern areas between fixed border posts along the Kyrgyz border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Corruption. Corruption remains a serious problem and a problem for effective law enforcement. In 2007, several Kyrgyz law enforcement officials were apprehended while trafficking narcotics in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz DCA now possesses a relatively good reputation, and its staff goes through a very thorough vetting procedure and receives substantial salary supplements from the U.S./UN counternarcotics project. The MOBITS Units are also thoroughly vetted.

Agreements and Treaties. The Kyrgyz Republic is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol and the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. The Kyrgyz Republic is also a party to the UN Corruption Convention and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. It is also a party to the Central-Asian Counternarcotics Protocol, a regional cooperation agreement backed by the UN.

Cultivation/production. While there is no significant commercial production of drugs in Kyrgyzstan, cannabis and ephedra grow wild over wide areas, especially in the Chui valley region, and around Lake Issyk-Kul. In the past, Kyrgyzstan was a major producer of licit opium, and was the Soviet Union's main source of ephedra plant for decades. However, with skyrocketing opiate imports from Afghanistan, it has become less risky and easier to import drugs from Afghanistan via Tajikistan than to produce them locally. The Kyrgyz government carries out yearly eradication campaigns against illicit crops. Despite sporadic cases of drug cultivation, this problem, compared to that of drug trafficking and drug transit, has little impact on the general drug abuse problem.

Drug Flow/Transit. Despite improved law enforcement efforts, there has been no appreciable impact on the transit of Afghan narcotics through the Kyrgyz Republic. Illicit opium cultivation in Afghanistan is still high. Due to a very limited and rudimentary transportation system, traffickers mostly utilize lengthy overland routes leading through Afghanistan's neighboring countries. A significant share of the drugs smuggled through Central Asia in 2007 entered the region through Tajikistan. Together with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan represents the main conduit for onward smuggling of opiates.

Following a pattern observed across the Central Asian region in 2007, the share of opiates seized in Kyrgyzstan increased significantly. In particular, the southern border provinces of Osh and Batken again experienced a high flow of drugs in 2007. This is the area where the MOBITS Teams will be present and active. In the last few years, trafficking activities have increased on the long and mountainous border between the Tajik Garm region and Batken in Kyrgyzstan. Onward smuggling through the Kyrgyz Republic takes drugs mainly to the Uzbek part of the Fergana valley, and across the Northern border into Kazakhstan.

Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction. Existing economic problems and budget constraints prevent the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic from effectively addressing the rapidly deteriorating drug abuse and HIV/AIDS problem. Insufficient allocation of budget funds hampers successful implementation of prevention and treatment programs as well as training of professional staff. Although, for the past few years, funding for international financial and technical assistance programs to address HIV/AIDS problems in Central Asia has increased considerably, the GOKR have devoted insufficient attention to the conceptual and strategic development of a modern drug treatment service provision system capable of stemming drug abuse and/or a HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The programs for drug users in the Kyrgyz Republic are conducted by state institutions in partnership with civil sector organizations. UNODC also has a number of drug assistance programs. The UNODC completed a regional demand reduction program, "Diversification of HIV Prevention and Drug Treatment Services for Injection and other Drug Users in Central Asia." This four-year project sought to improve and further develop a range of HIV prevention and drug treatment services for injection drug users in selected localities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Efforts included outreach, low-threshold services and inpatient provision of HIV/AIDS prevention education, access to condoms and sterile injection equipment, counseling, detoxification, treatment and rehabilitation. Emphasis was placed on the replication of existing successful initiatives in the region, in-service training through exchanges among organizations in the region and training seminars organized at the regional and national levels. However, 2007 was the final year for this project.

USAID worked to reduce demand for illegal drugs by supporting work with vulnerable populations through its five-year Drug Demand Reduction Program (DDRP) that was completed this September 30, 2007. Focused in the Fergana Valley in Kyrgyzstan, DDRP worked with target populations, including vulnerable youth, prostitutes, and prisoners. DDRP aimed to increase these groups' access to and use of quality drug demand reduction services, social support, and other healthy alternatives to heroin/opiate use. The project used an

evidence-based public health approach, drawing on regional and international experience in drug prevention and treatment. Vulnerable youth were the primary focus of an “ABC” program, which focuses on abstinence, faithfulness to one partner, and condom use through a social marketing campaign, as well as peer-to-peer HIV education.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs.

Road Ahead. The DCA currently has good momentum toward becoming a solid and respected drug enforcement force for the Kyrgyz Republic. DCA should continue to benefit from U.S. narcotics assistance delivered through the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek. An additional enhancement to U.S. counternarcotics programs has been the assistance of the Nebraska National Guard in providing assessment, training and guidance to the DCA. The Guard’s presence on the ground is of great value in forming working relationships with the DCA. Another initiative is the assignment of two liaison officers (former U.S. counternarcotics officers) to work with the MOBITS headquarters and to provide guidance, mentoring and technical assistance to the MOBITS teams. The most significant initiative in terms of funding is the MOBITS Interdiction Teams. This \$1 million project will give Kyrgyz law enforcement entities the capability to strike anywhere and apprehend drug traffickers while they are in the act of transporting narcotics.