



## Drugs finance Taliban war machine

*The Afghan Opium Survey 2008 released at the end of November by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) shows that opium has become less important to the Afghan economy due to a decrease in cultivation, production and prices.*

However, opium finances the Taliban war economy and is a major source of revenue for criminal groups and terrorists. Opium cultivation in 2008 declined 19% to 157,000 hectares. Production was down by 6% to 7,700 tons. The Survey shows that prices are also down by around 20%. As a result, the value of opium to farmers dropped by more than a quarter between 2007 and 2008, from \$1 billion to \$730 million. The export value of opium, morphine and heroin (at border prices in neighbouring countries) for Afghan traffickers is also down, from \$4 billion in 2007 to \$3.4 billion this year.

The Afghan opium problem is therefore shrinking in size and becoming more concentrated in the south-west of the country where 98% of the opium is grown.

In Afghanistan, authorities impose a charge (called ushr) on economic activity, traditionally set at 10% of income. Opium farming may have generated \$50-\$70 million of such income in 2008. Furthermore, levies imposed on opium processing and trafficking may have raised an additional \$200-\$400 million. "With so much drug-related revenue, it is not surprising that the insurgents' war machine has proven so resilient, despite the heavy pounding by Afghan and allied forces", said the Executive Director of UNODC, Antonio Maria Costa

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## SUCCESS STORY of the CITY of HULST: 15 years off coffee shops

*Hulst, City Hall*



signed travelled to Hulst. Later, at the ECAD Mayors' Conference in London in 1995, the Mayor of Hulst signed the ECAD Resolution as the first and only Dutch city.) Consequently, for fifteen years there hasn't been any drug tourism.

The present Burgomaster of Hulst Jan Frans Mulder (picture) is disappointed that this success of the zero tolerance policy is not acknowledged at all. In a conversation the Burgomaster referred to coffee shops as "an old-fashioned phenomenon from about 20 years ago, outdated because of trade methods of supplying the drugs by internet and mobile phones. Besides, if one coffee shop is allowed, there is no stopping others. The government would seem to stimulate things which should not be stimulated".



Also in Burgomaster Mulder's previous positions, the policy has been stricter than the official Dutch one.

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*Photo: www.panoramio.com*

The City of Hulst is situated close to the border between the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders). This picturesque city, which dates back to 1180 and has about 28.000 inhabitants, annually attracts over 1 million tourists, most of them day-trippers.

In the early 1990-ies, the city was confronted by government-allowed coffee shops. The idea was to have 1 coffee shop per 25.000 inhabitants. After many legal procedures the then Burgomaster (Mayor) Mr. Kessen succeeded in introducing a zero tolerance policy towards coffee shops. (In order to support Burgomaster Kessen, both Torgny Peterson, the Swedish director of ECAD and the under

## METHADONE DOES NOT PROVE TO REDUCE CRIME

Scottish extensive methadone programme has been once again questioned in a new study. This programme supports roughly 22 000 addicts with methadone and the effi-



ciency of this investment has been challenged recently by a new research at Glasgow University's Centre for Drug Misuse Research. */READ MORE ON PAGE 2*

## DUTCH BAN ON MAGIC MUSHROOMS

**The Netherlands will ban the sale and cultivation of all hallucinogenic "magic" mushrooms starting December 1, 2008.**

The Dutch government proposed the ban in April, citing the dangerous behavioural effects of magic mushrooms following the death of a French teenager who jumped from an Amsterdam bridge in 2007 after consuming the hallucinogenic fungus. */SEE PAGE 3*

# Drugs finance Taliban war machine

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He also pointed to the danger of opium stocks held by the Taliban. "For a number of years, Afghan opium production has exceeded world demand. The bottom should have fallen out of the opium market, but it hasn't. So where is the missing opium?" said Mr. Costa.

"Lack of price response in the opium market can only be the result of stock build-ups, and all evidence points to the Taliban".

The UN's top drug control official suggested that ongoing efforts by the Taliban to manipulate the opium market may result in less opium in 2009.

"Since they are hoarding opium, they have the most to gain from lower cultivation. This would drive up prices, and result in a re-evaluation of their stocks", said Mr. Costa.

Mr. Costa insisted on the importance of "keeping down both opium production and prices".

"If the Taliban can disrupt the market, so can NATO: drug production and trafficking would be slowed by destroying high value targets like drug markets, labs and convoys - which the Afghan army, backed by NATO, are starting to do. International efforts have also been stepped up to reduce the inflow of precursor chemicals needed to produce heroin", he said.

*"These measures are meant to hit organized crime and insurgency in order to cut the Afghan drug economy's umbilical cord to the world, breaking the link between opium farmers in Afghanistan and heroin addicts in Europe"*, said Mr. Costa.

"The downward trend in Afghanistan's opium economy would gain speed with more honest government, more security, and more development assistance", said Mr. Costa.

By UNODC

## METHADONE DOES NOT PROVE TO REDUCE CRIME

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Professor Neil Mc Keganey and a group at Glasgow University's Centre for Drug Misuse Research that conducted the research tested more than 400 drug users on the point of whether those given methadone used heroin less often than those receiving other forms of treatment.

The study found that the sample group of those who received methadone over the last three months took heroin on less number of days. However those who received higher doses of methadone would not significantly reduce the amount of days they spiced it up with heroin in comparison with those who took lower doses of methadone.

The study also found that crime tendency should not drop down faster if those on heroin would be provided with methadone instead.

Professor McKeganey commented:

*"One of the major drivers for the methadone programme in Scotland has been the belief that by providing methadone there will be a substantial reduction in the crimes addicts commit. What this research has identified is that that is not being borne out. With a methadone programme in Scotland that is costing, at a conservative estimate, £25 million a year, there is a big question mark about whether we should be providing more methadone to more addicts"*.

Tory leader Annabel Goldie says that the argument about supplying addicts with methadone would reduce crime does not hold any more. "I have never disputed that methadone has a part to play in proving a bridge for some addicts between dependency and recovery, but this new analysis shatters one of the alleged benefits of a widespread methadone harm reductions programme - namely, less crime committed by addicts."

The Scottish government launched a drugs strategy in May that focused on helping addicts become drug-free; the ministers have at least £94 million to be spent on these plans for over three years.

/Source: Scotland on Sunday

## International cooperation against drug trafficking

**The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa, met recently with Victor Ivanov, Director, Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation . They discussed international cooperation to counter drug trafficking from Afghanistan and opportunities for UNODC to cooperate with Russia in the field of counter-narcotics.**

Mr. Costa welcomed Russia's support for a pilot project to train counter-narcotics and law enforcement personnel in Central Asia and Afghanistan. "This is a clear demonstration of Russia's will to bolster security in Afghanistan and beyond its borders." said Mr. Costa. He also thanked Russia for its support for the Paris Pact, an initiative

launched in 2003 to promote coordinated measures to counter narco-trafficking in and from Afghanistan, as well as a project to strengthen security on the Tajik-Afghan border.

Mr. Ivanov voiced concern about "relentless flows of illegal drugs", including through the so-called "northern route" crossing CIS countries and onward to Western Europe.

«We consider UNODC an important partner in fighting the Afghan drug threat and support UNODC's cooperation with the regional security mechanisms active in Central Asia, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

/By UNODC

# DUTCH BAN ON MAGIC MUSHROOMS

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A challenge to the ban was rejected by a court in Hague on Friday. From Dec. 1 the production or sale of fresh magic mushrooms could lead to a maximum jail sentence of four years, a spokesman for the Dutch Justice Ministry said on Friday.

"We are targeting the growers and the shops who are selling the mushrooms," the spokesman said.

The active ingredient in magic mushrooms is *psilocybin*. Effects last up to about six hours and can include nausea, vomiting, muscle weakness and drowsiness in the early stages after consumption.

The psychological consequences of *psilocybin* use include hallucinations and an inability to discern fantasy from reality. Panic reactions and psychosis also may occur, particularly if a user ingests a large dose, according to the U.S. Justice Dept's National Drug Intelligence Center.

Some proponents of magic mushrooms say that their use aids in spiritual awareness, gaining personal insight and meditation. Selling dried magic mushrooms is already illegal in the Netherlands and carries a maximum jail sentence of eight years, the justice ministry spokesman said, but from next week a new ban will apply to fresh mushrooms which have been previously sold in so-called "smart shops".

Staff in the stores, which stock mushrooms or "paddos" ranging from Thai to Hawaiian varieties for about 15 euros (about \$20) a pack, said the ban will put users at greater risk.

"People will just go picking in the forest, and that can be dangerous. Or they will go to street dealers, and get mixed up with hard drugs," said David Henriks from the Tatanka shop.

Posters in shops outlined the effects of different types of mushrooms, such as strong visual experiences or feelings described as "body highs". They also suggested dos and don'ts of consumption, and rated the mushrooms for their intensity.

"It's always safer to have the information before taking drugs," said Roy Williams of the Innerspace shop, adding that in the past few weeks people had increasingly been buying "grow your own" mushroom kits in the lead-up to the ban.

The Dutch association of smart shops (VLOS) had tried to reassure authorities by promising tighter self-regulation and noted that most mushroom-related incidents involved young tourists mixing mushrooms with alcohol and cannabis.

On Friday the VLOS said it was highly disappointed with the court's decision to reject the challenge to the ban.

"Under this government we have had a whole series of bans, and people have had enough of this," said Paul van Oyen from the VLOS, adding that he would advise the board of the association to launch an appeal.

He said some of the 180 or so smart shops in the Netherlands would likely have to close because of falling turnover, and he expected to see a huge discount sale over the weekend as shops tried to get rid of supplies.

Figures from the Amsterdam emergency services show there were 55 call-outs for mushroom-related incidents in 2004, a figure which had more than doubled by 2006 to 128, with the majority of youngsters involved coming from Britain.

In recent years the Netherlands has dropped some previously tolerant policies and has tightened laws on drug use and prostitution. Several brothels and sex clubs were shut down in 2008, city councils are planning to close marijuana-selling coffee shops near schools, while tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption in coffee shops have also been forbidden.

*(Additional reporting by Svebor Kranjc, editing by Paul Casciato)  
Reuters.com/By Catherine Hornby*

*"The use of magic mushrooms has hallucinogenic effects. It is proven that this can lead to unpredictable and therefore risky behaviour",  
- Dutch Health Ministry*

## Postbank says "NO" to coffee-shop money

Dutch Postbank closes bank accounts of those clients who run coffee-shops. The bank reckons it would be irresponsible to facilitate marijuana and cannabis trade.

Postbank, which has approximately 8 million account holders, will also limit the possibilities for brothel owners and prostitutes to have and open bank accounts in Postbank. Only those with legitimate license are welcome, the bank says.

Kees Verhagen, Postbank spokesman has stated: "We wouldn't want to make it easier for coffee-shops by providing them with a bank account. If we discover via bank account operations that our client runs a coffee-shop we will terminate all business with this client."

The decision has been criticised by the Union for cannabis growers, who called it "utterly hypocritical" and hold that the bank would not consider terminating any loans or hire-purchase plans.

*/By Drugnews*



Photo: [www.travelpod.com](http://www.travelpod.com)

# Danes giving in to heroin prescription

*Starting January 2009 some of the Danish heroin addicts will be receiving free heroin provided by Danish tax-payers.*

According to some rough estimates each heroin addict is going to cost over 14 000 Euro annually. Swedish news agency TT has announced that those, who are over 18 years old, have stayed at a deadlock with their addictive behaviour for years and are in desperate need for their drug will "qualify" for two heroin injections per day under the supervision of medical personnel. It could be approximately 600 persons who would be in this group.

Anne Mette Dons, senior practitioner at one of departments of the Danish *Sundhedsstyrelsen* has admitted that that could become a lifelong treatment.

This issue has been a hot potato subject for political discussions in Denmark along with the gravity of drug addiction as a whole and lots coffee-shops in Christiania have been closed recently. However, politicians have come to a decision to invest as much as over 7 million Euros per year into this new heroin supply project.

Anna Mette from Sundhedsstyrelsen acknowledges that it will be an expensive en-

terprise, however, it will provide drug addicts with a "more normal and sound life". She has also added that a lot of public spending on resolving drug crime would be saved by this arrangement.

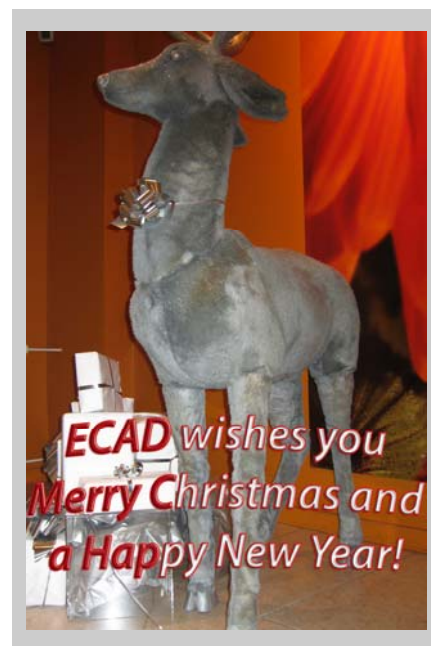
The treatment will be offered in 3-5 Danish clinics, which already in spring will be affiliated to already existing centres for addiction treatment. Those in addiction would be able to come to the clinics in the mornings and evenings and inject under the control of medical workers, doctors and nurses. The arrangement for acute help in case of the overdose is therefore needed. Anna Mette Dons is aware of the possible life risks for the addicts who tend to consume various kinds of stuff along with the heroin, the mixture could be lethal.

Since the maintenance expenses will be high, the clinics will not stay open at nights, the addicts will be provided with methadone then for home intake.

Mats H. Svensson leading Methadone open treatment programme at the University of Lund, (one of the few methadone treatment programmes in Sweden) implied that helping drug users to a worthy life implies taking risks since far from all can hold their abuse at one stable level. The free

heroin will likely be complemented with heroin that would come from some other source. "When it comes to heroin addicts tend to tolerate bigger amounts of this drug and would want more and more of it until one day they reach the extended dose, which will be lethal.

*By News agency TT, Drugnews*



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The present zero tolerance policy is about to be evaluated, but will certainly not be altered. Meanwhile, other border towns with coffee shops experience serious difficulties with drug tourism including rip deals and murder.

Among others Terneuzen (Zeeland), a short distance from Hulst, suffers from serious nuisance, and some mega coffee shops are to be closed altogether.

In November, councils of border towns held a conference to decide

how to deal with coffee shops providing cannabis themselves in order to banish criminal associations.

It would be much wiser to stop bickering about the matter and adopt the approach of zero tolerance like the city of Hulst.

*Jan Berlijn, ECAD expert correspondent from the Netherlands*

\* The city of Hulst was a member of ECAD between 1995 and 2003



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ECAD member cities work to develop initiatives against drug abuse supporting the United Nations Conventions.

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