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International bank system needs Afghan drugs to live

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The situation with the production of drugs in Afghanistan has reached a critical level. The States, having spent huge amounts to combat drug trafficking in Afghanistan, contributed to the opposite effect (many believe that Washington wanted exactly that). The Russian Federation suffered most from it.

The latest UN report says that the production of opium in Afghanistan has increased by almost 50 percent over the last year. According to the report, released Wednesday by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the total square of agricultural land that is used in Afghanistan for poppy cultivation, increased by 36 percent in 2012 compared to 2007. The total production of opiates reached 5,500 tons, which was almost 50 percent more than last year (3,700 tons).

Afghanistan has long become a leading producer of opium in the world (75 percent of global production last year, according to UNODC). The Taliban became the biggest beneficiary, senior Afghan government officials, corrupt commanders of the army and officers of law enforcement agencies are no less involved in the business.

Since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. has spent nearly \$7 billion to combat the production of opiates through the eradication of poppy fields, allocation of subsidies for alternative crops and incentive payments to the population of opium-free regions. However, the recent UNODC report shows that the opium trade has gone deeper in the real sector of the Afghan economy, becoming the leading sector of production.

UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov described the results as "sobering." In the foreword to the report, written in collaboration with the head of the branch of Afghanistan, he wrote that the persistent opium "virus" threatened to further destabilize the country after the withdrawal of ISAF international forces. In an interview with *Reuters*, Fedotov said that Afghanistan could soon become a "full-fledged narco-state" unless the international community gave the country appropriate support. "An integrated, comprehensive response to the drug problem is required," said Fedotov.

Who will propose a specific plan and who will implement it? The Americans, in an anticipation of the withdrawal, wrap up all operations. What kind of operations were they? There were so-called "response teams" organized to burn poppy fields. But, according to UNODS, eradication efforts reduced this year by 24 percent, after attacks on those teams became more frequent: 143 deaths vs. 102 in 2012. The Afghan army refused to escort the teams. The Americans preferred to raid villages in search of Taliban fighters rather than expose themselves to dangers in combat actions on the border with Pakistan - the stronghold of the Taliban and the main center of poppy cultivation. As for the promotion of alternative crops, it was complicated with incomparable prices (much higher on opium) and complete uncertainty of the future of Afghanistan. And this uncertainty has been growing.

The withdrawal of international forces, the core of which is U.S. soldiers (about 10,000 people), is scheduled for the end of 2014. An agreement is being developed between the U.S. and Afghanistan on how bilateral relations should be built after the withdrawal. Experts suggest that

with the departure of Hamid Karzai, who has served his two presidential terms, another person will come, who will most likely become US-oriented in the next few years. Civil war scenarios are also possible. The deteriorating level of security will affect economy; GDP is to decline this year by ten percent, according to World Bank forecasts. U.S. analysts say that agricultural infrastructure was destroyed during the war against the Soviet Union. They also indicate an increase in the use of drugs in Afghanistan (the consumption of opiates between 2005 and 2009 doubled; the consumption of heroin has increased 140 percent). Supposedly, this is the reason why many farmers turned to growing poppy, Amar Toor wrote in *The Verge*.

However, according to the Russian Federal Service for Drug Control, under the Taliban (before 2001), the opium poppy production was minimal. It increased dramatically - nearly 40 times - with the deployment of American troops in the country. Today, "four million farmers are engaged in the cultivation of opium poppy. A third or a half of the population of Afghanistan is involved in the production of drugs," Chairman of the State Anti-Drug Committee, the head of the Russian Federal Drug Control Service, Viktor Ivanov, said on November 11 at a press conference. According to Russian security services, there are about two thousand heroin laboratories in Afghanistan, and more than four million people are involved in the process.

Ivanov sees completely different reasons for such a sad state of affairs. "The drug industry is needed for many thousands of drug addicts. The international bank system needs it as well, because it is the bank system that eventually absorbs income from this industry," said Ivanov. According to him, more than \$1 trillion was invested in transnational crime of selling heroin. "Those wars that take place in Afghanistan are the wars between drug cartels. The international community needs to fully accept responsibility for the situation in Afghanistan," said Ivanov.

"The crowning effort in Afghanistan is to curb drug trafficking by motivating specific countries, unions and companies," military expert Boris Podoprighora, former deputy commander of the joint group from the North Caucasus, told Pravda.Ru. In his opinion, it goes about Russia, the countries of the SCO and the CSTO.

"We need to work with the north of Afghanistan, where Uzbeks and Tajiks live. We should boost their economy and give those people alternative employment. This is the only way to protect Russia from heroin and opium drug trafficking."

On October 28, a two-day meeting of the heads of anti-drug agencies of Central Asian anti-drug quartet finished in Islamabad. The group includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and Tajikistan. The meeting considered the implementation of the "road map" (2012 - 2017) of the four states in the field of anti-drug cooperation. The group of four is to have another member - Iran, that shares

more than two thousand kilometers of land border with Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the UN, Iran takes the lead in the struggle against drugs.