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Pajhwok

AGO implicates Qadeer in drug smuggling case

By Mir Agha Samimi

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The Attorney General Office (AGO) has accused an influential lawmaker, Zahir Qadeer, from eastern Nangarhar province, of smuggling drugs. The MP was asked to appear before prosecutors.

In this regard, the AGO sent a letter to the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs two days ago. The ministry forwarded to the lower house the letter, whose copy was made available to Pajhwok Afghan News.

Security officials arrested five border policemen from the eighth border battalion in northern Takhar province nearly four years ago.

The five were carrying 1,235 kilograms of heroin in a police vehicle, the letter said, adding Qadeer was commander of the said battalion at that time.

The letter quoted the detained policemen as acknowledging that the heroin had been taken from Qadeer's house for supply to the border police base in Takhar.

Qadeer was also accused of illegally appointing his cousin Bilal as his secretary when he was the police commander. Bilal would aid Qadeer on narcotics-related issues, the letter said. It said Bilal had offered security officials \$100,000 for 20 minutes of relief.

"Bilal's salary was 6000 afghanis only. How could he afford such a huge amount for a short time? Haji Zahir Qadeer was leader of a smuggling gang and had given the money in Bilal's custody," the letter added.

A US newspaper, Boston Globe, had reported two years ago that President Hamid Karzai after his reelection in 2009 ordered the release of five drug smugglers from a jail. The paper said the released men included Bilal, the nephew of a politician, Haji Din Mohammad.

Din Mohammad is the uncle of Qadeer and was campaigner for Karzai during the presidential election.

The AGO said security officials had obtained from Bilal keys of the box containing the drugs. The letter quoted one of the detainees as telling interrogators if they did not find the person to whom the drugs were to be delivered, they would have to park the vehicle at Qadeer's office.

The Attorney General Office also quoted a letter belonging to the National Directorate of Security saying the former border police commander, Haji Zahir Qadeer, had been involved in misusing his authority and making illegal appointments at the Sher Khan dry port.

In its own letter, the AGO said that other co-accused in the case had completed their dossiers and Haji Zahir Qadeer's dossier should be followed and dealt in line with the relevant law.

Talking to Pajhwok Afghan News, Zahir called the letter a political plot against him, saying he would not accept it.

However, he acknowledged that five border personnel had been arrested on the charge of smuggling drugs, but he was not involved.

The five policemen were released in compliance with a presidential decree, he said, adding their arrest was also a politically motivated action.

"Why the AG office did not release such a letter four years back," he questioned. Calls seeking comments from officials at the AGO were not answered in this regard.