

Drug Criminals Are Using The High Tech As A New Weapon

**Speech by
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**at the Launch of INCB Annual Report
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Ladies and Gentlemen:



Good morning and welcome. First I would like to take a few minutes to present some of the highlights of the annual report of the Board for 2001 and this will be followed by a question and answer period.

Globalization and new communication technologies have changed the way we live and have brought economic, educational and cultural benefits to our society. Along with the benefits, however, comes the danger that the advantages of these innovations are being undermined by individuals and criminal groups for illicit gain. These technologies have provided many opportunities not only for the civil but also for what Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has called the “uncivil” elements of society, drug trafficking and crime. The Board, as guardian of the international drug control treaties, has a responsibility to alert Governments and the public at large to these challenges and has done so in several previous issues of its annual report. This year the entire first chapter of the annual report analyses the challenges that globalization and new technologies pose to drug law enforcement.

Like legitimate business, drug trafficking organizations have restructured, decentralized and globalized. More than ever before, drug traffickers have become *criminals sans frontières* whose activities are spread across several jurisdictions and are therefore extremely difficult to detect with traditional law enforcement techniques. Cyber criminals use these new technologies to:

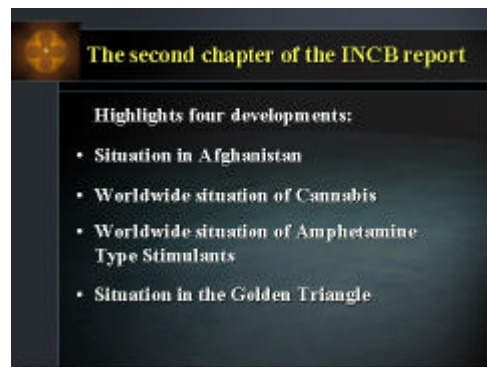
- agree on illicit drug sales and purchases online;
- keep in touch with each other by using Internet chat rooms protected by firewalls to make them impenetrable;
- communicate with each other by using mobile telephones with prepaid cards that can be bought anonymously;

to name just a few examples. Encryption technologies and cellular phone cloning enable drug traffickers to carry out their business undetected for several years. The new technologies have also made crimes easier to commit, a trend that the Board calls the “amateurization” of drug-related crime: prospective drug chemists and drug traffickers no longer need special contacts or resources, they can find much of the needed information on Internet search engines. The Internet also puts them in touch with like-minded individuals in different parts of the world and permits them to locate supply sources of which the user would otherwise have been ignorant.

In this environment, the methods of traditional law enforcement with its structured hierarchies and clear geographical demarcation lines are often insufficient. Transnational drug-related crime with its

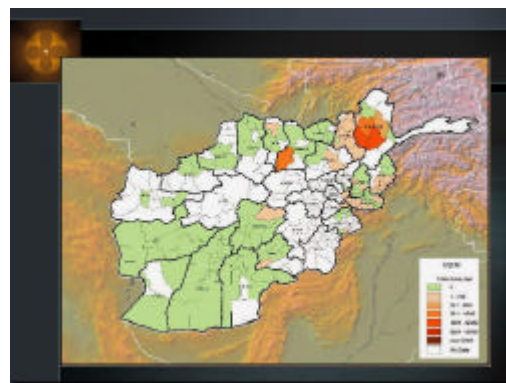
cross-jurisdictional operations and low-profile network structure challenges the approach of conventional drug law enforcement. The rapidity with which criminals have taken advantage of technologies has not been met by equal progress within the ranks of law enforcement. The legal framework for prosecuting these crimes often does not exist. You will all remember that the perpetrator of the ILOVEYOU virus, which infected computers around the world and caused damage estimated at more than US\$ 10 billion, could not be held responsible for the damage inflicted nor could he be extradited to face prosecution in the United States. The INCB report examines what should be done by Governments in order to address high-technology crime effectively. At the national level, INCB recommends that Governments should establish specialized inter-agency high-tech drug units. Such dedicated anti cyber-crime units should be provided with critical infrastructure protection to protect their information and intelligence databases from “cyber attack”. At the international level, measures should be harmonized as far as possible to ensure that offences, sanctions and standards of proof are similar in countries throughout the world, in order to prevent the growth of data havens. The Council of Europe’s Convention on Cybercrime represents the most advanced international collaboration to date in the area of high-tech crime and consideration might be given to the development of a United Nations Convention against cyber crime. Such a convention would have to balance concerns of security and protection from crime with concerns for civil liberties, dignity and privacy.

The second chapter of the report addresses issues related to the functioning of national and international drug control, what Governments have done to implement the

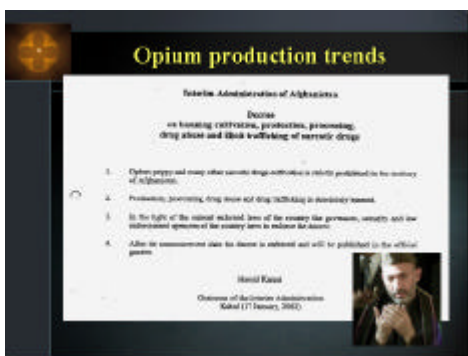


international drug control treaties and how they have cooperated with the Board. I would like to highlight two developments:

The situation in **Afghanistan** has been of concern to the Board for some years because of the country’s pivotal role in opium poppy cultivation. In May 2000, when Afghanistan was still the largest opium poppy cultivator, the Board invoked article 14 of the 1961 Convention, which happens when the aims of that Convention are being endangered by the failure of, in this case, Afghanistan to pursue effective action against such cultivation. In accordance with article 14, INCB held consultations with the two authorities controlling Afghanistan at the time: the Northern Alliance/United Front on the one hand, the Taliban on the other.



cultivation which led to a sharp decline in the cultivation of opium poppy for the 2000-2001 growing season in most areas controlled by the Taliban. In the current growing season, however, there are signs that opium poppy cultivation has resumed in some areas. The Afghan Interim Authority has reacted swiftly to that development by imposing a complete ban not only on the



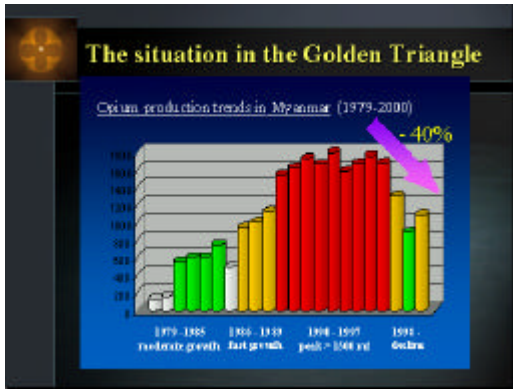
cultivation of opium poppy but also on manufacture and trafficking of opiates. INCB will continue its dialogue with the Afghan authorities to ensure that the ban is enforced. INCB has also held talks with the Secretary-General, with his Special Representative for Afghanistan Ambassador Brahimi and with other United Nations entities coordinating assistance for that country. For many years, Afghanistan has been the largest producer of opium poppy in the world. Civil war, violence, instability and corruption created a situation where drug trafficking and terrorism flourished with devastating consequences for Afghanistan and the world. The international community must make every effort to ensure that such a situation does not repeat itself, in Afghanistan or indeed, elsewhere in the world. More information on the view of INCB on Afghanistan can be found in press release No.4 of your press kit.

The second chapter of the report of the Board also contains an in-depth examination of the **control of cannabis**. Lately there has been an increasing

divergence of the application of control measures required under the 1961 Convention. The overwhelming majority of countries in the world apply the measures foreseen under the treaties. Some countries have even introduced more comprehensive measures than those required in the treaties by, for example, controlling cannabis leaves and the seeds of cannabis. However, other States, however, mostly in Europe, have introduced legislative changes involving decriminalization of personal use of cannabis and preparatory acts for such use, including cultivation and possession.

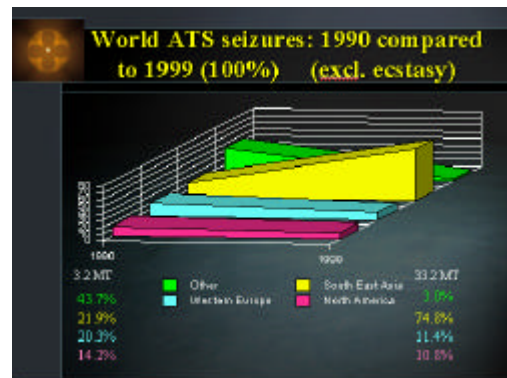
The current situation can therefore be called paradoxical. While all cultivation of cannabis is banned in one country, in another the exact same actions will have almost no consequences for the perpetrator. This runs counter to the principle of any international legally binding instrument which is, after all, adopted to ensure uniform and collective action across the globe. If a majority of Governments indeed believes that cannabis should no longer be under international control, then the mechanism prescribed in the 1961 Convention should be followed. This could lead to a removal of cannabis from the schedules of the Convention. Based on its experience the Board, however, believes that treating cannabis like alcohol or tobacco would be a historical mistake, especially at a time when policies aimed at fighting the abuse of alcohol and tobacco are being given the attention they deserve. More information on this issue can be found in press release No. 5 of your press kit.

The INCB annual report for 2001 also provides also an overview of the current drug control situation on opium production, ATS and a response to the challenges.



Ever since, Myanmar opium production has steadily declined by some 50%. To some extent, this drastic reduction can be attributed to adverse weather conditions. On the other hand, the Government's commitment to drug eradication activities, coupled with enhanced cooperation with UNDCP, also played a crucial role.

On opium production: a joint US/Myanmar Government Opium Yield Survey was conducted 2-6 March, 2001 to assess opium poppy crop. The team went to the poppy fields in the Shan State of Myanmar where, according to UNDCP Yangon, 95% of the national opium cultivation is concentrated. US/Myanmar assessment of the samples collected confirms lower opium yields this year compared to the last year and far lower yields than yield samples collected during the mid-1990s. Current opium production was estimated by the US at 865 metric tons against 1,085 metric tons in 2000, confirming a continual downwards trend since 1996. During that year, opium production peaked at 1,760 metric tons.



Serious problems of ATS abuse exist in Thailand and the Philippines, while all other countries in the region report the trend to some extent. In recent months, Cambodian officials have especially noted emerging ATS abuse trends. Chinese officials have also recognized the problem, although its extent is uncertain.

1. UNDCP Myanmar 2001:

- a) In a bid to mobilize and raise public awareness about the drug problem, UNDCP Myanmar launched the first drive of its "Civil Society Initiative" on 12 October 2001. The "Stars against Drugs" event recorded the commitment of a group of well-known local celebrities who agreed to lend their names, status and time to drug prevention campaigns. These include several youth-targeted awareness raising initiatives. All of them are to be simultaneously launched on 26 June, marking the International Day against Drugs and Illicit Trafficking. Another drug prevention-orientated step was undertaken as recently as January 23, 2002. Thanks to the signature of the "Memorandum of Understanding to Counter Together the Drug Problem in Myanmar", eight Myanmar-based non-governmental organisations and UNDCP committed themselves to work together in a consortium. The signature of the document marked the inception of a permanent and accessible forum through which projects and activities can be planned and implemented in a coordinated and synergetic fashion. The consortium will concentrate its efforts on five areas. These are: drug abuse awareness raising and advocacy; provision of wider access to treatment and rehabilitation for drug users; HIV/AIDS prevention among injecting drug users; community-based drug abuse prevention; and poverty alleviation by generating alternative means of income for opium growing communities plagued by food shortage.
- b) In 2001, the Myanmar-based UN agencies formulated a Joint Plan of Action to respond to the HIV/AIDS plague nationwide. Seven priority areas have been identified including targeted condom use, behavioural development, care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS, reduction of the harmful consequences of injecting drug use, blood safety in rural areas, surveillance system, enhancing the capacity of national NGOs and the communities. The government estimated that 30% of the national HIV positive cases are attributed to intravenous drug use. Against this background, UNDCP is to play a central role in implementing the forth component of the Joint Action Plan, since it directly touches upon its drug control mandate. The field office in Myanmar has led the formulation and negotiation of this component with the stakeholders. It is estimated to cost US\$2.6 million for an initial 2 year period. Within this framework, UNDCP's role will be to strengthen and support the network of implementing partners, coordinating and monitoring their activities in order to ensure internal synergy as well as proper integration with the other modules of the Plan.

The form of administering ATS varies from one country to the next. Ingesting pills is the most common method, while some countries such as Thailand report an increasing number that are “chasing the dragon” (inhaling) similar as with “ice” in East Asia. The affected populations are essentially two distinct groups: those who use ATS for instrumental purposes, to enhance or prolong work performance; and those in those in the adolescent and young adult age group who use ATS for social and recreational purposes. Methamphetamine and ecstasy are two of the most prominent forms of ATS that are used in the region.

ATS is also representing a significant innovative factor in trafficking trends.

Heroin and methamphetamine produced in Myanmar are trafficked largely through transit routes crossing the porous Chinese and Thai borders; to a lesser extent over the Indian, Bangladeshi, and Lao borders; and through Yangon onward by ship to other countries in the region. Although Thailand remains an important route for heroin from Myanmar to Southeast Asia, trafficking through China has increased significantly over the past several years. China shares a 2,000-kilometer border with Myanmar. The majority of heroin produced in Myanmar is now trafficked through China en-route to the international market, reflecting China’s importance as a transshipment route. Most seizures of Myanmar heroin now take place in China and in particular in the Yunnan province bordering Myanmar. Yunnan Provincial Narcotic Control Committee reported total provincial seizures of 8,000 kg in 2001, almost 3 times more than the year before. The total seizures of heroin in China in 2001 doubled compared with in 2000 ending up to record high figure of 12,300 kg. Europe and USA are no longer dominating as destinations for heroin originating from East

Asia, as Australia has emerged as a new major destination.

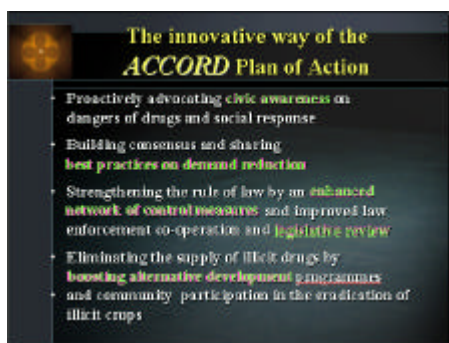
The dominant part of the crystallized methamphetamine produced in South China is aimed for Japan, the Philippines, Korea and the Taiwan Province of China. Record seizures of ATS are reported from Japan, mainly crystallized methamphetamine from China but also in the form of tablets from Southeast Asia. Japan seized 85 kg of ATS in 1995 compared with 1,975 kg in 1999 and 1,026 kg in 2000. There are reports from Japan of a growing volume of seizures of methamphetamine tablets originating from Southeast Asia. It is interesting to notice the price difference, one tablet (street price) cost US\$1.- in Bangkok and US\$20.- in Tokyo.

Most of the drugs produced in the region are exported out of the source country for consumption in another country. Major cases involving trafficking of drugs are consequently to be considered as transnational and need to be well organized by a number of people to prevent intervention by law enforcement agencies. Therefore the main part of the international drug trafficking is to be considered as organized crime per definition in the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. The level of trafficking of drugs in the region makes organized crime an important issue to be addressed.

The growth of trafficking of heroin in China is consistent with the growth in consumption. The extremely high seizures of heroin in 2001 match the reports indicating that 70% of known HIV/AIDS infections are related to sharing of needles. In Yunnan province HIV prevalence among IDUs rose from 0% in 1994 to 70% in 1997. The spread of HIV is directly linked to Intravenous Drug Use along trafficking routes from Northern Myanmar into China. UNAIDS officials, national counterparts,

and co-sponsors all agree that the IDU trends have either continued or expanded in the region. IDU is recognized as a major vector of transmission among IDU populations who are also contributing to the infection of general populations through unprotected sex. Countries most affected by the IDU trends include Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, China and Vietnam. Among these countries, IDU is either driving the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as is the case of China and Vietnam, or significantly contributing to it, as is the case in Myanmar and Thailand. Production of ATS mainly bound for the Philippines has been detected in South China. Efforts to tackle such new threat will be discussed on Thursday 7 February with the countries concerned.

As a response to the challenges, the Drug Control Memorandum of Understanding of the Greater Mekong Subregion with six member countries and UNDCP has been since 1993 the most innovative international cooperation initiative then replicated in various parts of the world. The ACCORD Plan of Action for a Drug Free ASEAN 2015 has been recognised by the United Nations Economic and Social Committee as the first political and technical drug control partnership fully owned by many countries, with clear targets, task forces, timelines, a business plan, a funding strategy and a monitoring mechanism.



Furthermore, the INCB report presents **some of the major developments in drug abuse** and trafficking and measures by Governments to implement the international drug control treaties by addressing those problems. More information can be found in the regional highlights outlined in release no. 3 of your press kit. In addition to the annual report, the Board also publishes three technical reports on narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors.

I wish to add my personal concern. **The use of heroin is a principal cause of HIV/AIDS infection in many countries of the region.** Unprotected sex between injecting drug users and their partners, who may include sex workers, facilitates HIV transmission. HIV/AIDS ravaged countries become even more vulnerable to the predations of organized crime and the cycle intensifies as it is repeated. Although not all countries in Asian and the Pacific will be equally affected, the evidence suggests that HIV/AIDS will rival war as a major cause of death, impoverishment and instability in the 21st century, globally and within the Asia Pacific region. HIV/AIDS is becoming a significant cause of human and State insecurity in the Asia Pacific region, flourishing in and reinforcing conditions that can lead to war, social violence, humanitarian emergencies and economic collapse. It will claim more lives in the first decade of this century than all the wars fought in the 20th century. Without immediate action, the disease will kill and blight the prospects of whole generations in the worst affected countries, placing an intolerable burden on public health systems and exacting a heavy economic as well as human toll.

Finally **the links between transnational crime and insecurity** are now well-documented. Militias and other rebel groups are increasingly dependent on

the illicit trafficking of drugs to finance weapons purchases, while people smugglers and those who control the international sex trade are furthering the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Measures to impede trafficking operations can directly contribute to conflict reduction efforts. Conversely, if the activities of transnational crime are not curtailed the future stability of countries in our region may be undermined.

Thank you for your attention. May I now take a few questions please.