



UNITED NATIONS  
*Office on Drugs and Crime*

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## An Imminent Heroin Tsunami? Early Warning and Threat Assessment

OSCE Task Force Chiefs of Police

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Mr. Chevalier,  
Secretary General,  
Minister Dewael,  
Commissioner-general,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My compliments to Belgium for initiating this event and for making criminal justice a priority during its Chairmanship of the OSCE.

The OSCE prides itself on early warning. And this meeting is all about threat assessment. With so many police chiefs in one room, let me take this opportunity to warn you about an impending threat heading this way from Afghanistan.

This year, Afghanistan had a bumper crop of opium – more than 6,000 tons – which is being converted into 700 tons of heroin.

According to our estimates, 20% of this heroin is coming directly into the OSCE area through Central Asia and the Silk Road. The remaining 80% is coming through Pakistan and Iran into Western Europe. Whatever the exit route, this tidal wave will soon reach your policing jurisdictions.

Drug traffickers seek the paths of least resistance, namely areas where there is instability, corruption and weak law enforcement. That is where your collaborative efforts are most needed.

You all have a vested interest in containing the problem in and around Afghanistan. Otherwise you will have to deal with the effects downstream, namely in your own countries.

Look at the basic economics. A gram of heroin in Kabul costs around one Euro. That same gram on the streets of Brussels costs close to one hundred Euros. The cost of the police work needed to intercept that heroin in Brussels is around one hundred Euros. In Kabul, the same law enforcement expenses would be around one Euro. Prevention is cost effective; fighting drug trafficking at or near the source is a form of prevention.

NATO is trying to improve the security situation in Afghanistan and major donors are providing development assistance. I hope that through sticks and carrots, the number of opium-free provinces can be doubled in Afghanistan next year. You can help – in three ways.

First, I urge you to improve information sharing and cooperation on drug control and crime prevention, particularly through the UNODC-led Paris Pact initiative.

My Office is assisting in the creation of intelligence sharing centres in Central Asia and the Gulf region. I encourage partners like Interpol, Europol, SECI-Centre, and OSCE, to help get these important projects off the ground.

Better law enforcement is essential because at the moment we estimate that only one quarter of all heroin being produced is seized. This compares poorly with the approximately 45% of all cocaine that is seized around the world every year.

Why the big difference? Consider this. Colombia makes one third of all global seizures of cocaine and blows up hundreds of cocaine-producing labs every year. Afghanistan can take credit for only 3% of all opium seizures and is almost powerless against its drug lords.

So it is not your fault. The problem is at the source. But until Afghanistan is in a better position to strengthen its drug control regime and improve law and order, transit and destination countries will have to shoulder an extra burden.

Second, we need to turn up the heat on the drug lords, for example by developing an international list of the most wanted major drug traffickers. The Security Council has already developed a Consolidated List concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban with 478 entries, two-thirds of which are individuals and one third entities. I urge you to consider such a model for a list of traffickers connected to the drug trade in Afghanistan. It could build on Interpol's "red notice" system and the possibilities afforded by the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. It would put a name and a face to men who are profiting from instability, and hold to account institutions who support these criminals. This would open the way for a travel ban, seizing assets, and extradition – and put an end to the era of the bullet and the bribe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a third issue on the subject of Afghanistan that I would like to bring to your attention. This year Afghanistan's supply of opium (6,000 tons) outstrips world demand by 30%. That's an extra 1,500 tons of opium – for which there is no demand – that is being either stored or trafficked somewhere. The question is where? Are there new markets that we don't know about? And what will become of the profits worth 600 million dollars in Afghanistan or around 10 billion dollars at wholesale prices in the West? Could this be a funding source for future terrorist attacks in the OSCE area? I urge you to try to help us solve this worrying puzzle.

Mr. Chairman, I have concentrated by remarks on Afghanistan because I think that the situation there is currently one of the greatest threats to the OSCE region.

There are other threats from organized crime, but they are less clearly defined. A lack of information on crime makes threat assessment difficult and is a major impediment to evidence-based policy or strategic action.

I therefore encourage this Task Force of Police Chiefs to improve crime data collection and analysis to help form a clearer picture of the crime situation in the OSCE area. As custodian of the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, UNODC would certainly welcome more comprehensive data on crime trends.

In conclusion, I appreciate the growing cooperation between the OSCE and UNODC in the field of criminal justice, which builds on good cooperation in counter-terrorism and law enforcement. I am also proud that the criminal justice assessment toolkit, which UNODC devised, will be a “deliverable” for the upcoming Ministerial Council in Brussels.

Congratulations to Belgium for its Chairmanship of the OSCE over the past year, and best of luck in preparation for the Ministerial Council.