

Drug Supply Reduction: An overview of drug supply and trafficking in Iran

Production and Cultivation

No legal or illegal cultivation of narcotic plants is reported to take place in the Iranian territory in large scales. However, there are various reports published in late 2005 and 2006 on Law Enforcement engagement in locating small opium poppy fields in remote areas of the country. The Iranian press has also reported many instances of eradication of few hectares of opium poppy by police forces in remote areas in 2006.

Manufacture

No manufacture of illicit drugs has been reported in Iran in 2006. Nevertheless, the possibility of the existence of small heroin processing laboratories on the main trafficking routes from Afghanistan-Pakistan toward the western border of Iran ought not to be ruled out. Recently and to the dramatic increase in the abuse of synthetic drugs, the existence of illegal synthetic drug manufacturing laboratories been observed.

An Overview of Drug-Related Issues in Iran Years 1989 - 2004

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>DURATION</u> (in Iranian years)	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>UNIT</u>
1	Average annual drug production in Afghanistan	1989-2003	2,329	Ton
2	Number of armed clashes with drug gangs	1989-2003	12,238	Cases
3	Number of gangs dismantled	1989-2003	13,232	Gangs
4	Number of members of drug gangs killed in clashes	1989-2003	4,983	Individuals
5	Number of Law Enforcement members killed encountering drug gangs	1989-2003	3,700	Individuals

6	Number of Law Enforcement members disabled encountering drug gangs	1989-2003	11,000	Individuals
7	Number of arms seized in clashes with drug mafias	1989-2003	14,661	Units
8	Number of confiscated vehicles in clashes with drug gangs	1989-2003	36,927	Vehicles
9	Number of confiscated motorcycles in clashes with drug gangs	1989-2003	12,507	Motorcycles
10	Number of drug-related cases filed in courts	1989-2003	1,962,049	Files
11	Number of addicts sent to prison	1979-2003	911,646	Individuals
12	Number of drug dealers sent to prison	1979-2003	1,644,497	Individuals
13	Number of drug-related deaths	1994-2003	15365	Individuals
14	Increase in the price of opium	1989-2004	494% Per kg	Growth rate
15	Increase in the price of heroin	1989-2004	354% Per kg	Growth rate
16	Increase in the price of hashish	1989-2004	210% Per kg	Growth rate
17	Increase in the price of morphine	1989-2004	353% Per kg	Growth rate
18	Number of arrested drug gang members	1989-2003	967386	Individuals
19	Number of arrested drug addicts	1989-2003	1714601	Individuals
20	Number of drug-related cases of HIV + and AIDS	2004	6,730 IDU HIV/AIDS against total of 11,220 cases	Individuals
21	Amount of seized heroin	1979-2004	63769	Kg
22	Amount of seized opium	1979-2004	1950461	Kg
23	Amount of seized morphine	1979-2004	214887	Kg
24	Amount of seized hashish	1979-2004	455655	Kg
25	Amount of other drugs seized	1997-2004	13805	Kg
26	Percentage of population worried about the drug problem	2002	90%	Percentage of the total population
27	Number of drug	2004	4000000	Individuals

	abusers as announced by DCHQ's Secretary General			
28	Number of public drug-related centers	2003	172	Centers
29	Number of private drug-related centers	1382	267	Centers
30	Number of addicts turned in to public centers for rehabilitation	1996-2003	204170	Individuals
31	Various types of Scientific Sources published	2002-2003	100	Subjects
32	Individuals trained in workshops and training programmes	2002-2003	43650	Individuals
33	Capacity-building of NGOs	2002-2003	300	NGOs

Source: Components of Iran National Comprehensive Plan 2005

Different Types of Drugs Seized Years 1997-2004 (Figures in Kg)

Year	Types of Narcotics					Total
	Heroin	Morphine	Opium	Hashish	Other Drugs	
1997	1986	18949	162414	11096	255	194676
1998	2894	22291	154454	14376	248	194263
1999	6030	22764	204485	18907	1088	253274
2000	6189	20764	179053	31581	1459	238593
2001	4001	8668	81061	46084	1314	139814
2002	3978	9520	72850	64166	1584	152098
2003	3327	13063	97575	76991	1664	189841
2004	4715	12878	174091	86500	6174	284358
2005	5553	6937	225095	67277	6319	311181

Source: National Drug Control Reports of DCHQ, 1999 – 2004

Drug Seizure Methods in the Islamic Republic of Iran - 2005

<u>ROW</u>	<u>METHOD</u>	<u>%</u>
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1	Vehicle Inspection at checkpoints	33
2	Armed clashes	26
3	Infiltration and drug seizure from camel narco-caravan	9
4	Ambush and Patrolling	8.5
5	Surveillance	6
6	House search	5
7	Undercover operations (U/C)	4
8	Unclaimed drugs at depots	4
9	Body and luggage Inspection	2
10	Others	2.5
11	TOTAL	100

Source: National Drug Control Report, 2005

Trafficking

Iran is still one of the main conduits for illegal drugs trafficking; namely opium, hashish, heroin and morphine base, which originate from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and are destined mainly for markets in Europe and the Persian Gulf and Middle East region.

Comparison of Heroin Seized in the World and in Iran in Kilogram, 1987 – 2003

Year	Location		Percentage
	In the world	In Iran	
1987	17000	1446	8.5
1988	21900	1760	8.0
1989	24100	1478	6.13
1990	23400	1800	7.70
1991	22700	1750	7.71
1992	25000	4113	16.45
1993	26700	1990	7.45
1994	28200	908	3.22
1995	31260	2075	6.64
1996	28500	805	2.83
1997	33340	1986	5.96
1998	32600	2894	8.88
1999	36200	6030	16.65
2000	53700	6189	11.53
2001	54000	4001	7.41
2002	48500	3978	8.20
2003	53200	3327	6.25

TOTAL	560300	46530	8.3
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Sources: UNODC Global Illicit Drug Trends, 1999, 2000, 2003 and UNODC World Drug Report 1997, 2004, 2005 and National Drug Control Reports of DCHQ, 1999 - 2004

**Comparison of Opium Seized in the
World and in Iran in Kilogram, 1987 – 2003**

Year	Location		Percentage
	In the world	In Iran	
1987	56900	36770	64.6
1988	61600	39360	64.4
1989	41900	26208	57.4
1990	36600	20800	62.5
1991	41500	23483	56.8
1992	52800	38254	72.4
1993	85300	63941	75
1994	144500	117095	81
1995	245700	126554	51.5
1996	174200	149577	86.6
1997	195450	162414	83.10
1998	179200	154454	86.20
1999	239400	204485	85.42
2000	213200	179053	83.98
2001	105750	81061	76.65
2002	97100	72850	75.03
2003	133700	97575	72.98
TOTAL	2104800	1593934	75.7

Sources: UNODC Global Illicit Drug Trends, 1999, 2000, 2003 and UNODC World Drug Report 1997, 2004, 2005 and National Drug Control Reports of DCHQ, 1999 – 2004

Trafficking Entry Routes

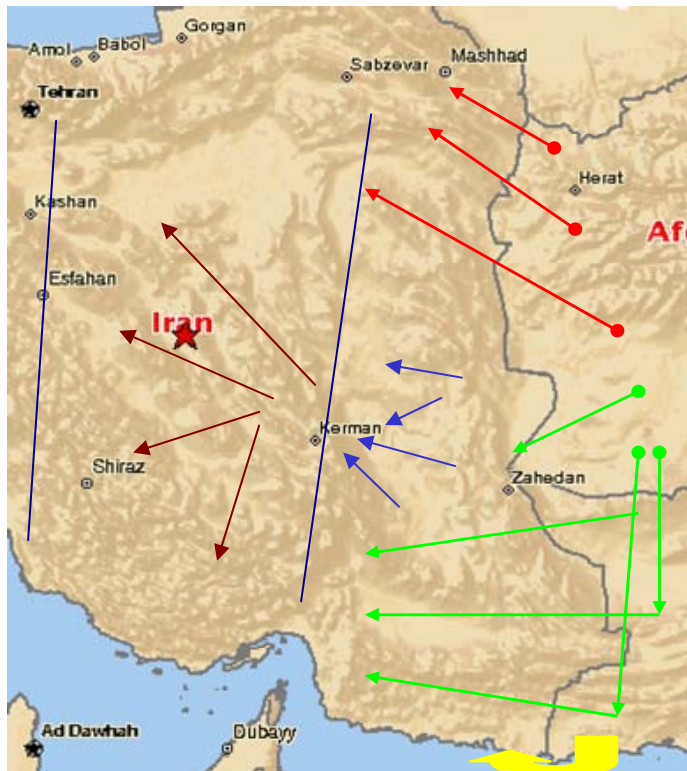
There are three main trafficking routes used by drug traffickers in Iran, namely: Northern, Southern and Hormuzgan major routes. The Northern and Southern routes are somehow inevitable routes for the traffickers because the geographical characteristics of eastern Iran leave little choice considering the existence of huge "Loot" and "Salt" deserts which can not be passed except through a few locations and in certain hours. Although entry points (90 entry points have been identified by the authorities) may be changed, general directions remain the same.

Before discussing about these three routes and their branches, a number of issues should be discussed at this point so to facilitate a better understanding of drug trafficking and drug distribution in Iran. The first issue that should be noted is that there are two types of trafficking: One which is responsible for the major bulk of drugs which enter Iran both for domestic consumption and or for export to third countries. This is done by drug lords; Two, small amounts of drugs brought into the country by individuals, either Afghans or Baluchies, etc. Some of the later group is referred to as "*Barducks*", a term which literally means "on the shoulders." This stems from the fact that almost all Iranians carry various items like medicines or legal drugs, kerosene, etc. on their shoulders when traveling across the border to Afghanistan and Pakistan. On their return, they again carry their load on their shoulders; this time, items like used clothing, garments, second-hand radios, recorders, TVs and other electronics. During the rule of the Taliban, short-wave radios, tape recorders, TV sets and other similar items were prohibited in Afghanistan; so, they were very cheap. But some "*Barducks*" would also bring back from Pakistan or Afghanistan small amounts of heroin or opium, each load seldom exceeding 5 kilos; most of the time, it's just 1 kilo or even less. Meanwhile, the Afghans who more or less freely go through the border to Afghanistan and back to Iran on foot also bring back to Iran small amounts of heroin, hashish and opium.

The drug lords who control the major bulk of the market have their own territory over which they rule; and, seemingly, over the years, some type of division of labor and flexible territorial divisions have evolved. These drug lords also have their own armies of loyal followers and have built up strong connections over the years; connections established through regular bribes. Hence, a portion of drugs which have been seized comes from individuals acting on their own and when territorial divisions are violated, which often happens.

For years the southern route has been regarded as the main drug trafficking route and it still remains more important in terms of the total amount of drugs

smuggled into the country. However, there has been significant increase in the frequency of drug trafficking by individuals.



The Northern route – Khorasan Province

With an area of more than 315,000 sq km, Khorasan Province borders Turkmenistan to the north and northeast, Afghanistan to the east, the provinces of Mazandaran, Semnan, Esfahan, and Yazd to the west, and the provinces of Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan to the south.

As mentioned, a large number of Afghan refugees have settled in the province, mainly due to its proximity to Afghanistan. It is also one of the major transit points for illegal Afghan migrants. The mountainous and desert terrain of the area as well as the low population density makes the control for law enforcement difficult, if not impossible.

The trafficking routes originating from Khorasan Province which have been identified are:

1. Afghanistan-Khorasan-Semnan-Tehran
2. Afghanistan-Khorasan-Turkmenistan-Golestan/Mazandaran Province-Tehran

It should be noted that these routes are the main trafficking ones. There are many other sub-routes and because of the intensity of law enforcement and control, routes are immediately changed and new routes established.

Trafficking in Khorasan is carried out by groups of Afghans-Iranians. Crossing the border mainly by foot, they operate in large- or small-armed groups. The larger groups often resort to kidnapping and murdering civilians in order to ensure the logistic support of the locals. Smaller groups (2-4 individuals) usually carry up to 10 kg of heroin or opium per person while larger groups carry several hundred-kilo consignments using donkeys and camels.

The Southern Route: Sistan and Baluchestan and Kerman Provinces

With the land surface area of 178,431 sq. km and population of 1.7 million, the province of Sistan and Baluchestan borders the Sea of Oman to the south, Pakistan and Afghanistan to the east, Kerman and Hormuzgan Provinces to the west, and the province of Khorasan to the north. It is divided into seven main districts (and seven main towns). The district of Zahedan where the provincial capital, Zahedan is located has a population of 420,000. There are 6500 villages in the province.

According to the UNDP 1999 Human Development Report, Sistan and Baluchestan is Iran's poorest province with the lowest Human Development index (HDI), Gender Development index (GDI) and poverty index in the country. From out of the total 1.7 million population, there are 300,000-350,000 refugees/immigrants (Afghans) and 20,000 local nomads. Inhabitants of the province live in a sparse area lacking water and arable land. Population concentrations are very distant from each other (average distance is 65 km). There are 4,909 km of roads of which only 1,544 km are asphalted. The landscape is mostly sandy desert with bare hills and scarcely any vegetation. 20% of the population lives below the extreme poverty line. Nearly 810,000 out of 1.7 million people are considered literate (or 48%) of which 58% are male and 42% are female.

The lengthy border with Pakistan (976 kilometers) and the history of the territory and the ethnic groups that inhabit it have determined the overall development of Sistan and Baluchestan Province. Its ethnic roots can be traced to the nomadic tribes generally identified as Baluchies and Sistanis that were and still are distributed among the Iranian, Pakistani, and Afghan territories. Fierce and rebellious to any kind of foreign domination, they have managed to preserve their cultural and economic independence throughout the histories of Iran and Pakistan. Their nomadic traditions and trading skills coupled with their ancestral rejection of geopolitical frontiers have made these ethnics particularly known as "smugglers" of different types of goods within the Baluchestan territories in Iran and Pakistan.

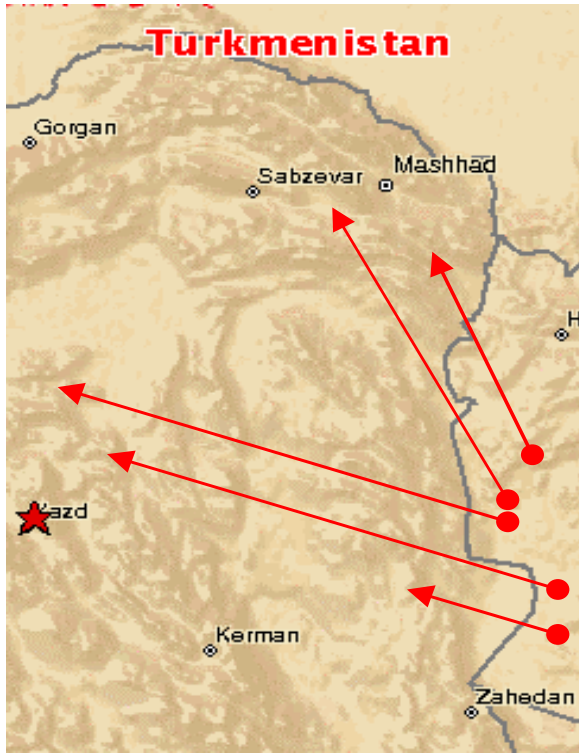
According to a recent study carried out in Shirabad, a small town near the Sistan and Baluchestan provincial capital, Zahedan, 40% to 65% of Shirabad residents earns their living either by smuggling goods between Iran and Pakistan or by providing logistical support to local drug trafficking criminal organizations. It is worth mentioning that according to the same study none of the local leaders of local drug trafficking organizations live in Shirabad itself. It also means that the largest portion of the revenue generated by illegal activities is neither invested nor spent in this town.

According to Iranian Law Enforcement authorities, there are 50 smuggling routes currently in use in Sistan and Baluchestan Province. Key locations are identified as Mirjaveh, Zahedan, and Iranshahr. Because of the new tactics adapted by the smugglers, the number of these routes has increased dramatically in the past 5 years.

The following are the identified trafficking routes originating from Sistan and Baluchestan Province:

1. Sistan and Baluchestan-Kerman-Yazd-Tehran
2. Sistan and Baluchestan-Khorasan
3. Sistan and Baluchestan-Bandar Abbas and/or Hormuzgan (Persian Gulf area) – Fars - Khuzestan

Trafficking in Sistan and Baluchestan Province is carried out by large well-armed motorized convoys. Different local groups, or tribes, may join the traffickers against the law enforcement units operating in the area. Contrary to the situation in Khorasan Province, tribal links do ensure the overall support for the traffickers by the local communities.



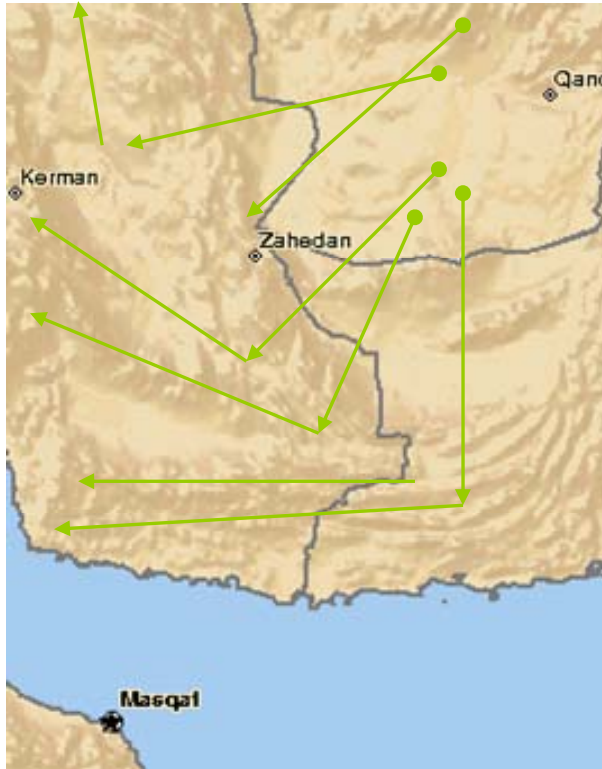
Hormuzgan Route

Hormuzgan Province is situated along the coast of the Persian Gulf in the vicinity of the Sea of Oman. The provincial capital, Bandar Abbas, is the most important Iranian port. Ferries link Bandar Abbas to Dubai. TIR trucks and lorries enter the port for loading and unloading commercial goods and cargoes. Good roads link Bandar Abbas to the central part of Iran and a railway directly links Bandar Abbas to the Tehran-Istanbul and Tehran-Damascus railways. Being a commercial port, Bandar Abbas is an easy trans-shipment point for both outgoing deliveries of illicit drugs to destinations in Europe and the Persian Gulf region and for incoming chemical precursors destined for illicit refineries in Afghanistan.

Identified trafficking routes originating from Hormuzgan:

1. Gawater port (Pakistan)-Sistan and Baluchestan-Chabahar port
2. Gawater port (Pakistan)-Bandar Abbas port-Khouzestan

Smuggling through the Hormuzgan route takes place either by speed boats and small vessels or by the use of land vehicles through Sistan and Baluchestan Province. Recent reports from the Anti-narcotic Forces of Pakistan confirm concerns of Iranian Law enforcement over the increased use of this route for illicit shipments to the coasts of both Iran and Oman.



Entry to exit points: Trafficking routes from Iran central parts

The trafficking gangs that operate from Iranian border areas to outskirts of Kerman Province – city of Bam, in the south and outside boundaries of Khorasan province, do not enter into trafficking of drugs to central Iran and larger cities like Tehran, etc. There seems to be an unwritten pact between the organized trafficking from borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan to Kerman and Khorasan provinces and those organized gangs that traffic drugs from central parts to Tehran and other major drug depots deep into Iranian territories. The later groups are actually involved in both domestic distributions in major cities and urban areas as well as acting as bridge of transiting drugs into Iran exit points via third markets. Information on central trafficking routes and organized crime groups behind is extremely scarce. Again unofficially some of these groups enjoy strong connections for their trafficking activities.

Drug Trafficking Exit Routes from Iran

As far as exit routes are concerned, the traditional exit points at the border with Turkey have now been complemented with a number of new routes, which also reflect the increased integration of Iran within the region and the rest of the world. Accordingly, these routes can be identified as follows:

1. Western route

The oldest and most common trafficking route: Tehran - West Azerbaijan - Urumiyeh -Turkey

In recent years the following new routes have complemented the usual and direct route through Urumiyeh:

- Tehran - East Azerbaijan - Republic of Azerbaijan-Turkey
- Khorasan/Mazandaran- Gilan/Ardebil - Republic of Azerbaijan-Turkey

2. Northern route

This new trafficking route is used both for circumventing the Iranian law enforcement checkpoints and for shipping illicit drugs directly to the CIS countries, particularly to the Russian Federation. The route is Khorasan Province-Turkmenistan.

3. Southern route

Illicit drug consignments, mainly hashish, flow through this route towards the Persian Gulf region, the European and North American markets, as final destinations of small consignments. The routes include:

- Bandar Abbas – Smaller port facilities along Iranian southern shores - United Arab Emirates
- Iranian southern shores – Kuwait/Iraq

4. Eastern route

The eastern route is mainly directed to the Middle East markets. This is Khuzestan and Kermanshah Provinces – Iraq. However, because of the recent developments in Iraq, new routes through Kermanshah and Kurdistan provinces are used both for smuggling drugs and firearms.



Other exit routes/trafficking methods

- A. Swallowing and using human mules has become more common practice in smuggling illicit drugs into Iran. This is done in many cases by Afghans leaving Iran and then returning for seasonal works to major cities.
- B. Seizures of opium and heroin, although very minimal, continues by the Iranian Customs through random checking of outgoing parcels as well as from Iranian travelers destined to Europe and Americas in 2005. The main bulk of these seizures are opium that are for personal use of target Iranian community in Europe and the United States.
- C. International Iranian airports are also been used more frequently for smuggling amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) and small cache of cocaine to Iran. The main entry point is Tehran airport and those arrested are mainly travelers from Thailand.