



MISSION REPORT

- 1. Name:** Roberto Arbitrio,
Representative
UNODC- I.R. Iran
- 2. Place visited:** Mashad, I.R. of Iran, and Iranian border with
Afghanistan (Dogharun)
- 3. Date:** 5 - 7 February 2005
- 4. Purpose of the mission:** Attending the Sixth International DLOs Conference
and visit to the Iranian border with Afghanistan.

A UNODC team composed of Mr. Moradi, Deputy to the Representative, Ms. Ninette Haghverdian, Secretary and Mr. Ahmadi, IT expert, and lead by the Representative went to Mashad, Iran, to attend and provide required support to the Sixth International Conference of DLOs on 5 – 7 February 2005.

The Conference was attended by representatives from 20 countries and several international organizations (Interpol, ECO, UNHCR and UNODC) and by delegations from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The organizers of the conference were the Anti-Narcotic Police, the Drug Control Headquarters, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNODC with the active contribution of Mr. Dave Parker, UK DLO based in Iran. The list of participants is annexed to the final document of the Conference.



Images from the Conference: participants and the chairmanship

Participants were engaged in lively discussions related to each of the items under the agenda. Current drug trafficking patterns in Afghanistan and in the region were discussed. The UK made a presentation on drug control measures taken in Afghanistan with particular regard to the eradication campaign. The importance of timely exchange of intelligence among national authorities and DLOs was emphasized by all participants. The experience of several FANC was shared and it was agreed that close coordination and extended cooperation are needed to address the increasing inflow of narcotics in the region. UNODC presented the drug control strategy for Iran (2005 – 2007) resulting from a close consultation with stakeholders (national authorities and the international community represented by the Mini Dublin Group). Participants agreed that the UNODC drug control strategy for Iran should be taken as a reference in the provision of both bilateral and multilateral assistance.

The agenda, final documents and list of participants of the Conference are annexed to this report. A full collection of the presentations made is available upon request and a CD with all the presentations has been distributed to all participants soon after the closure of the Conference.

Mission to the border

The third day of the conference was devoted to a field visit to the border. The Anti Narcotic Police provided the organizational and logistic support to participants who were brought to a military outpost along the border near Dogharun. In Dogharun the customs check point is equipped with a scanner for vehicles and trucks which allows for the potential detections of narcotics. About 250 trucks are passing daily from the Iranian side into Afghanistan. During a briefing at the military outpost, participants were informed that the goods in the trucks are mainly coming from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, through the Iranian port of Bandar-e-Abbas, up to Dogharun. The goods would be property of Afghan traders. Trucks containing vehicles were quite common. From the Afghan side, some trucks containing seeds and dry fruits would be passing into Iran.



Participants were escorted along the border for several kilometers to assess the nature of the terrain and the drug control measures put in place. After the main border checkpoint in Dogharun, the terrain is flat and several barriers are in place. In particular, different layers of protection could be identified, namely:

1. Observation tours along the border with Afghanistan (point zero of the border).
2. Barbed wire after a buffer zone from point zero of the border.
3. Soon after the barbed wire, there is a strip of soft land to trace footprints of intruders.
4. A road is running along the border, close to the barbed wire. On the other side of the road, few meters away, there is a canal (4 meters deep and 4 meters wide) to stop intruders and vehicles. The canals are often cleaned up by excavators and loaders since the strong wind in the area is filling up the canal with dust.
5. After the canal there is a high sand bank to stop vehicles and to make difficult the crossing by foot or by animal (donkey, camel).
6. Fortified tours armed with heavy machine guns and manned 24 hours a day were located along the border.
7. Mobile patrolling by land cruiser or by foot.
8. Small trenches for heavy machine guns and basic protections to be used in case of attack from the other side of the border.

The physical barriers could be assessed as effective and able to provide enough obstacles to the traffickers.



An Afghan village is located few kilometers away from the border and it was visible to participants. There would be several villages some of them long ago evacuated and used by traffickers for hide outs. We were informed that drug traffickers were sheltered in that village and that some of the raids into the Iranian border were originating from there. Iranian police has no possibility of going into Afghan territory to pursue the traffickers and limited information/intelligence is available with regard to the village.



The Afghan village close to the border with Iran

The landscape changed drastically after some kilometers. The flat area finished to give start to a number of high hills with very intricate passes. Iranian experts informed that this is the most difficult area to be controlled. In fact, due to the nature of the landscape, very limited measures could be taken. There are no observation towers, no barbed wire, no canals and sand banks. In other words, the border is completely open. There are some fortified towers, and foot and car patrols are taking place during the day and night.



Finally, participants reached a military outpost and were welcomed by the local commander. The seizure of about kg 600 of opium was showed. Some of the opium packs held labels with the name of the producers. Together with the opium, several Kalashnikov machine-guns, grenade-launchers, heavy machine guns and rifles were confiscated to the traffickers.





The local commander gave a briefing to participants and several questions were addressed to him. The traffic of narcotics usually takes place at night and drugs are carried by men in backpacks or by donkeys escorted by armed guards. No camels are used in this area. Traffickers are ready to use violence and they are provided with weapons and communication systems. Several clashes were recorded in 2004 which left 45 traffickers killed and 5 Iranian officers dead and 110 wounded. The border outposts and fortified tours are provided with communication means. Some mobile radar units were noted. Once the narcotics are seized, they are sealed, labeled and handed over to judicial authorities. Since 21 March 2004, 3,400 Kg of opium and heroin were seized out of which 50 Kg was pure white heroin. There is very limited cooperation with Afghan authorities and almost no cross-border cooperation. Some border posts have been provided by Iranian authorities to Afghan border forces and, apparently, these border posts are still empty and they are not used. There are cases of Iranians kidnapped by Afghans on the basis of failed deals among traffickers. There is no case of trafficking in human beings in that part of the border while in the area of Zahedan it is quite common. The difficult terrain makes it very difficult to detect the traffickers and it is assumed that despite all efforts a considerable quantity of narcotics is crossing the border undetected.