
A Third of Afghan Forces Involved in Drug Trade

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According to Russia's Federal Drug Control Service, a third of Afghan troops have deserted to join the country's drug trade industry.

"A concentration of foreign forces and fighting in a drug-producing state has ensured a climate of rampant desertion from the local armed forces and police," Viktor Ivanov, director of the federal body, explained.

Afghanistan is known to be a primary source for opiate production, including heroin. The country is also a large producer of marijuana.

Speaking at the Second Anti-narcotics Ministerial Conference in Moscow, Ivanov explained that most of the drugs produced in the Middle Eastern country end up in Russia and Eastern Europe, due to its closeness to the region.

Opium production in the country has steadily increased over the years, despite the presence of a United States counter-narcotics mission. Last year opium production reached record-high levels.

The anti-narcotics mission is headed by the private company Blackwater — now renamed Alumni — which received a contract from the U.S. government worth US\$309 million for training the Afghan National Interdiction Unit, the Ministry of Interior and the Border Police.

According to Ivanov, the situation is particularly troubling since the Islamic State group is now financing itself from drug money, with an estimated annual income of US\$1 billion from drug trafficking.

Reports of the IS group operating in Afghanistan have raised concern, and even prompted an outspoken rejection by the Taliban.

The United Nations will hold a General Assembly on drugs next year, to address the global problem.

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