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Precursor Control on Central Asia's Borders with China



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Abbreviations

DCA	Drug Control Agency
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

INTRODUCTION

The chain of opiate smugglers and the tangle of their routes across Central Asia lead back to the source of their product in Afghanistan. However, the difficulties of addressing the Afghan drug trade at its source are large and manifold, as the enduring instability and continuing production of opium in that country attest. The amount of money being spent in Central Asia on addressing opiate trafficking is further evidence that the returns to counter-narcotics funding are, unfortunately, higher outside of the pivotal country than within it.

However, the progression of goods from opium farmer to heroin consumer requires the early and inescapable addition of precursors. Crucially, Afghanistan does not produce these. The necessity of procuring large quantities of precursor chemicals in order to convert opium into heroin creates an opportunity for disrupting drug distribution early on in the production process. The effective detection and interdiction of precursor smuggling into Afghanistan would create immense pressure on opiate smuggling networks, choking them at the source of supply.

The Paris Pact is the international coordination group for counter-narcotics programs in Central Asia and regional efforts to address precursor trafficking fall within its remit. In October 2004, at its first meeting in Vienna, its Policy Consultative Group recommendations on precursors included reference to formation of a Precursor Task Force. While the focus at that meeting was on the Tajik-Afghan border, the Group observed that China is a major producer of precursor chemicals for licit purposes and borders three Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan. It is a 16 hour drive by heavy truck between the Chinese-Tajik and Tajik-Afghan borders.

However, even basic knowledge of these border crossings was sparse and control regimes had yet to be assessed. In light of this, in September and October 2005 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office for Central Asia undertook fieldwork to assess border posts on the Central Asian-Chinese borders. The total assessment period was 4 weeks and included meetings in central agencies as well as at the posts themselves.

From north to south, the crossings covered were the Kulma Pass, Irkeshtam, Torugart, Narynkol, Kolzhat, Khorgos and Dostuk; the only points not visited were the two northernmost crossings in Kazakhstan, Bakhty and Maykapchagay. The fieldwork also investigated unmanned sections of the borders.

Part 1 of this report discusses the current state of knowledge regarding precursor trafficking in Central Asia. The dearth of information on the routes by which heroin producers in Afghanistan source precursor chemicals - particularly acetic anhydride - keeps counter-trafficking efforts in a preliminary phase. In this situation, China is a valid target for investigation, given its large chemicals industry, its provision of precursors to Myanmar and its proximity to Afghanistan.

The apparent success of licit regulatory systems in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (see Annex) places the focus of investigation firmly on smuggling rather than diversion. This is the motivation for visiting Central Asia's border crossings with China and Part 2 describes these. It also documents officials' perceptions towards,

knowledge of and actions against precursor trafficking through these crossings. In general, they perceive the threat as low, their knowledge is low and there is no counter-trafficking effort.

Part 3 provides a summary of risks and highlights that there are multiple causes for concern. Precursor smuggling is feasible through all of the Central Asian border crossings with China and the risks of detection are not high. The Tajik-Chinese border is currently the lowest priority, while Irkeshtam, Osh and the area around Bishkek are particularly important because they are possible bottlenecks in precursor trafficking.

The investigation concludes that there is a pressing need to address the Central Asian-Chinese borders in regional precursor control efforts. Training and equipment for officers at these posts should be included under ongoing and planned programs. More broadly, concerned regional and international agencies should consider how to raise the perception of risk that Central Asian officials hold towards this issue. Important in this will be establishing links and encouraging cooperation with China.

PART 1: **Precursor Trafficking in Central Asia**

Shifts in Processing

Over the last decade, heroin processing facilities sourcing Afghan opium have become more concentrated geographically. Traditionally, heroin processing took place outside Afghanistan, notably in Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. In recent years, however, the general trend has been for laboratories to move upstream along smuggling routes and Afghanistan itself is now a major centre not just for opium production but also its conversion.

The processing of high grade opiates continues in Iran and Turkey. While Pakistan's problems with drug addiction continue, it has been more successful in uprooting production facilities. Pakistan's processing capacity is now negligible and the drug trade there revolves around shipping opium and morphine base to Iran.

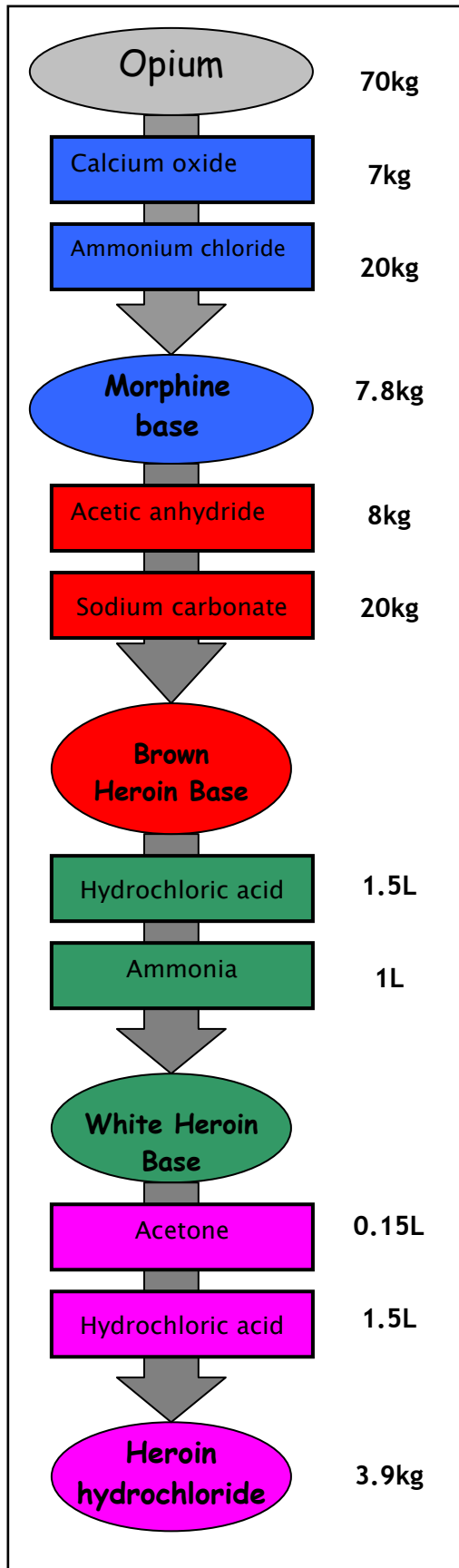
Within Afghanistan, there has been a simultaneous shift, or rather proliferation, of processing facilities to include the country's northern regions. It is a regular lament of Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency (DCA) that it is aware of many heroin production laboratories just over its border with Afghanistan. These directly feed routes through Tajikistan.

For Central Asia, the significance of these two shifts is substantial, since the region as a whole has minimal processing capacity. Laboratories still active in Iran and Turkey produce for local consumption and for western routes to Europe and only minimal quantities of Iranian and Turkish heroin leak back into Central Asia. Thus, **all of the processing of opiates present in Central Asia occurs in Afghanistan.**

This situation clearly reflects the advantages for producers of concentrating processing in Afghanistan. Of all the places from which to feed Central Asian routes, northern and northwestern Afghanistan offers them the best security. This allows them to locate facilities close to exit points along Afghanistan's borders with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Their proximity to the borders also facilitates stronger cross-border links to onward trafficking networks, which helps to smooth demand and gives better and more direct intelligence on law enforcement efforts in transit countries.

However, the advantages that arise from the geographical concentration of production capacity also create a crucial disadvantage. With the retreat of heroin processing into Afghanistan, lines of supply become more vulnerable because geographical concentration limits the number of possible precursor smuggling routes to feed these facilities. For counter-narcotics efforts, this offers the opportunity to attack heroin production without having to wait for the security situation in Afghanistan to improve.

Figure 1: Opium to heroin conversion



Precursor Trafficking to Afghanistan

Figure 1 describes the method that a BKA team in Afghanistan observed for making heroin and lists the different precursor chemicals and the volumes of these that producers require.

For the purposes of heroin precursor control the primary chemical of concern is acetic anhydride, for two reasons. Firstly, it performs the crucial acetylation step in conversion and, in comparison with possible substitutes, acetic anhydride is less toxic and more widely available. It is therefore usable in Afghan processing facilities, conditions in which are usually quite rudimentary. It is also less risky for traffickers' personal safety to move containers of acetic anhydride over difficult transport infrastructure.

Secondly, given the volume of heroin seizures in Central Asia, it is clear that large amounts of acetic anhydride, a substance with no legal use in Afghanistan, are going into the country. The prospects for detection are therefore more promising. There are fewer licit uses for acetic anhydride than other bulk chemicals in the process, such as sodium carbonate, which are anyway not restricted under international conventions. Unlike heroin trafficking, which can occur via individuals walking over unguarded borders, shipments of acetic anhydride generally have to follow more developed transport routes and are therefore likely to come into contact with border controls.

Afghanistan does not produce acetic anhydride, yet in recent years there have been very few seizures in any of the countries it borders. Pakistan, which has been a major source of acetic anhydride in the past, has not reported any seizures for the past 5 years.¹ Furthermore, licit trade in Central Asia is not large. The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) *Precursors* report for 2003 notes that "no shipments of acetic anhydride in licit international trade were reported to Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran,

¹ Interview with Joint Director of Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Forces, September 17 2004.

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan; only two shipments have been imported to Pakistan".²

The INCB therefore concludes that "the acetic anhydride being used in illicit heroin manufacture in Afghanistan is smuggled through neighbouring countries and not diverted in the region".³ There have been occasional seizures beyond Central Asia in which Central Asian countries have been the purported destination,⁴ yet there has been no identification of routes and methods for smuggling closer to Afghanistan.

In Central Asia, only Uzbekistan produces any acetic anhydride and the region does not have a great licit demand for the chemical (see Part 2). In agreement with the INCB it is therefore reasonable to surmise that illicit acetic anhydride shipments transiting Central Asia to Afghanistan come from outside the region. It is possible that

Figure 2: Seizures of acetic anhydride in and around Afghanistan.

Year	
1996	7.2 tons smuggled in railway cargo, sourced from the Republic of Korea and seized in Uzbekistan.
1996	17.4 tons smuggled with engine oil, sourced from Russia and seized in Uzbekistan.
1997	Two shipments totalling 10.02 tons mislabelled as corn oil, sourced from China and shipped via the UAE and Iran, seized in Turkmenistan.
1997	32 tons hidden in railway cargo, sourced from China and seized in Uzbekistan.
1998	45.6 tons seized in Turkmenistan, details unavailable.
1999	12.07 tons seized in Turkmenistan, details unavailable.
2000	Two shipments totalling 40.29 tons sourced from Singapore, seized in Turkmenistan.
2000	Two shipments totalling 42.47 tons sourced from the Republic of Korea, seized at Mary Customs in Turkmenistan.
2000-1	Three shipments totalling 38 tons sourced from the Republic of Korea, misdeclared as textiles and seized in Iran.
2003	11 tons mislabelled as petroleum jelly and hydrogen peroxide sourced from the Republic of Korea, apparently via China, seized in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan.
2003	3 tons seized in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan.
2004	375 litres seized in Afghanistan, details unavailable.
2004-2005	Afghanistan's Special Narcotics Force registers 30 tons of precursors destroyed – details unreported.

Russia's vast chemical industry is a source of precursors brought through Kazakhstan and it is also possible that precursors are smuggled through the Balkans and may transit Turkmenistan.

Furthermore, there is a general assumption held by foreign observers that some routes for trafficking opiates out of Afghanistan are probably used for smuggling precursors in. The INCB believes this likely⁵ and established criminal contacts and networks of corruption for drug trafficking would presumably be useful for smuggling illicit chemicals. However, the problem with this assumption is that it excludes as sources those countries not seen as destinations for Afghan opiates.

This is a substantial risk because it is not clear that the belief in overlap between precursor and opiate smuggling is valid. There is no coherent view on this among Central Asian law enforcement officials, but there

² s123, p.23.

³ s123, p.23.

⁴ Such as in Russia – INCB *Precursors* 2004, s.134, p.21.

⁵ INCB representative at a meeting of the Central Asian Support Group for Precursor Control, Tashkent March 2-4 2004.

are many dissenting opinions, among them the Chief of Counter-Narcotics in the Kyrgyz Ministry of National Security,⁶ the Deputy Chief of Kyrgyz Customs,⁷ the Chief of Almaty's Drug Combat Unit⁸ and the Chief of Counter-Smuggling in Osh Customs.⁹ Given the generally low knowledge and priority attached to precursor smuggling among Central Asian officials (see **Part 2**), the information underpinning these opinions is difficult to assess. However, combined with the consensus that opiate traffickers specialize on routes geographically,¹⁰ this argues for considering the possibility that precursor flows do not follow traditional drug routes.

China

In particular, China should be a concern, due to its large chemicals industry¹¹ and the substantial precursor contribution it makes to drug production in Myanmar.¹² Therefore, with the evidence on precursor trafficking routes inconclusive, **this report considers China a reasonable target for investigation.** It will do so from the perspective of Central Asian counter-narcotics efforts, since this is the perspective that UNODC's Regional Office for Central Asia is best-placed to take. The focus here is therefore on Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan's borders with China and this investigation seeks to assess:

1. the potential for precursor smuggling across these; and
2. the ability of Central Asian law enforcement agencies to offset this potential, which comprises:
 - a. their knowledge and prioritization of precursors; and
 - b. their ability to detect precursor trafficking.

To this end, the major geographical areas of investigation are the border regions themselves. However, the analysis also considers other borders and areas where this impacts on smuggling potential from China to Afghanistan.

⁶ Interview September 21 2005.

⁷ Interview September 22 2005.

⁸ Interview October 20 2005.

⁹ Interview September 19 2005.

¹⁰ Interview with Director of Tajik DCA, September 12 2005; interview with Chief of Counter-Narcotics in the Kyrgyz Ministry of Security, September 21 2005; interview with Chief of Osh City Police, September 19 2005; interview with Deputy Chief of Kyrgyz Border Guards, September 22 2005; interview with Chief of Almaty Drug Combat Unit, October 20 2005; interview with Deputy Chief of Kyrgyz Customs, September 22 2005; interview with Chief of Tajik Border Guard Intelligence, September 12 2005. The Chief of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Interior's Counter-Narcotics Department was one official who argued against this consensus – interview September 21 2005.

¹¹ China produces all 23 precursor chemicals in the 1988 Convention – Yan H. and Meng N., "China cracks 74,419 drug-related crimes in 9 months, Xinhua, October 27 2005.

¹² "Bid to stem flow of drug chemicals", *South China Morning Post*, October 28 2005; Yan and Meng, 2005; "Burma welcomes Chinese controls on chemical exports", *The Myanmar Times* via BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, August 29 2005.

PART 2: The Central Asian-Chinese borders

This section describes the Tajik-, Kyrgyz- and Kazakh-Chinese borders and assesses the feasibility of precursor smuggling across them. As well as topography and border regimes, the attitude of officials towards precursor control is also relevant because it determines the vigilance with which officers at borders apply safeguards. The following therefore moves from north to south along the Central Asian-Chinese borders, concluding with the important overall factors of corruption and cross-border cooperation.

Figure 3: Central Asia's borders with China



Summary: Kazakhstan's Border with China

Kazakhstan and China share a 1,533 km border punctuated by 5 official crossing points. Trade between the two countries has been increasing rapidly in recent years and China is now Kazakhstan's second most important trade partner after Russia. Almost all goods travel by overland routes. The official policy of both countries is to encourage further trade expansion, a policy evident in the upgrades that have occurred at their border crossings.

The majority of traffic across the Kazakh-Chinese border is towards Kazakhstan. As in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan is enjoying its relatively recent access to China's manufacturing capacity and in towns close to the borders the penetration of Chinese-made consumer goods is obvious.

More so than for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, China is also important to Kazakhstan as an outlet for exports. The majority of these are raw materials, particularly minerals. While Kazakhstan does not feature as one of China's major import partners, its exports are nevertheless significant for Xinjiang's (the Chinese province bordering Central Asia) development.

The level of precursor knowledge amongst Kazakh officials is low. Some officials acknowledge this and others do not. Kazakhstan conducts its own precursor training seminars as well as participating in training provided through international assistance, including from UNODC. However, these do not appear to have achieved great coverage. Most senior officers interviewed had been given training at some point, but the majority of officials checking goods at posts had not.

Law enforcement officers do not consider precursor control a priority and do not consider the Chinese borders to be a concern. For example, the Chief of the Almaty Drug Combat Unit prioritizes checks on licit stocks of precursors and thought China unproblematic.¹³ On a different tack, the Deputy Chief of Customs at the regional headquarters of Utegen-Batyr argued that precursor problems arise with a pharmaceutical industry, which Kazakhstan does not have but is currently developing.¹⁴

Officials believe that Kazakhstan is too far from Afghanistan; with too many borders in between, to be a likely transit country for heroin precursors.¹⁵ They consider Pakistan more likely, as well as suggesting that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan would have more problems controlling such flows.¹⁶ They also place faith in the Chinese side for its "harshness" on trafficking in illicit goods.¹⁷

Dostuk

There is both a road and rail crossing at Dostuk and this is Kazakhstan's most heavily used border point with China. Nine million tons of cargo crossed here in 2004, the

¹³ Interview October 20 2005.

¹⁴ Interview October 20 2005.

¹⁵ Interview with Chief of Khorgos Customs, October 21 2005.

¹⁶ Interview with the Chief of Kolzhat Border Guards, October 26 2005; interview with Chief of Almaty Drug Combat Unit, October 20 2005.

¹⁷ Interview with Deputy Chief of Dostuk Customs, October 22 2005.

majority imports and by rail. Kazakhstan's official expectation is for 11 million tons in 2005; as of September 2005, it had registered 7.5 million.¹⁸ The government predicts continuing rapid growth in imports through Dostuk.

On average, 400-500 carriages arrive at Dostuk every day. This encompasses every category of good. Kazakhstan imports train-loads of heavy machinery for construction and road-building (see Figure 4). There is also a massive quantity of consumer goods, including everything from televisions to clothing. Significantly in the context of this investigation, **Kazakhstan imports a substantial quantity of liquids through Dostuk.**¹⁹ Most of these are construction goods, such as paint.

Dostuk is Kazakhstan's biggest crossing for transit traffic, with some 40% of imports shipped onwards to third countries. Major destinations are Russia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.²⁰

Figure 4: Heavy machinery imports through Dostuk



For unclear reasons, Customs was reticent in discussing the road crossing at Dostuk. The road from the nearest settlement²¹ - Ucharal - is in a generally fair condition but with significant stretches that are very poor. A 4WD requires at least four hours to cover this distance, although the road is currently undergoing an upgrade.

5-7 trucks cross Dostuk daily, almost all imports, although Khorgos and Kolzhat are more attractive for traders because of the better-developed infrastructure from the border to major urban centres. This is not a great deal of traffic relative to the volume that travels by rail, which may account for the dismissiveness of Customs in discussing the road crossing.

The priority of Customs at Dostuk is the detection and suppression of smuggling for the purposes of tax evasion. This is done through the misdeclaration of shipments, where Kazakh businessmen are able to take advantage of the large amount of traffic to avoid detection. According to officers at the post, Chinese exporters have

¹⁸ Interview with Deputy Chief of Khorgos Customs, October 22 2005.

¹⁹ Interview with Dostuk Customs, October 22 2005.

²⁰ Interview with Deputy Chief of Dostuk Customs, October 22 2005.

²¹ Other than Dostuk itself, which is now a town of some 4,500 people.

traditionally been willing to complete their declarations according to the instructions of their Kazakh partners, regardless of the inaccuracy. This situation is apparently improving somewhat,²² although the frequency of misdeclaration is probably still high. In the year to September 2005, Customs' Counter-Smuggling Department initiated 7 cases and 6 of these were for 'economic smuggling'.²³

China and Kazakhstan do not use the same rail gauge and therefore all trains arriving to the Kazakh side must be re-loaded. This occurs through three methods, depending upon the type of cargo.

Firstly, there are two sheds of approximately 80 metres length for re-loading between side-loaded carriages. This is done by hand and is the normal method for 'loose' cargo such as consumer goods and some types of construction material. Secondly, in an outdoor area of similar size, a sliding crane shifts large bulk items between top-loading carriages. Thirdly, on outdoor tracks, a number of large cranes lift heavy machinery and occasionally whole containers between Chinese and Kazakh wagons.

Customs also maintains another shed of approximately 80 metres by 20 metres, where they drop carriages they wish to inspect more thoroughly. During UNODC's site visit there were around 8 carriages in this area, although the Chief of Customs Counter-Smuggling did not appear to know why they were there or what was in them.²⁴

Customs is supposed to supervise all re-loading. This is an unrealistic task because of the volume of traffic, but current systems do not greatly narrow the scope for smugglers to avoid detection. For example, during UNODC's observations in the area dedicated to side-loading carriages, the Customs officer was at least 40 metres from where labourers were re-loading and his attention was elsewhere.²⁵ Given the available facilities, it is likely that this is the regular situation in the absence of specific cause for concern.

Dostuk reports directly to Astana via an online system. Dostuk Customs also collects and analyzes the data it sends but this is mostly in order to compile trade statistics. There does not appear to be any kind of risk analysis done on this data, although officers at the post believe that this occurs in Astana. The Chief of Customs Counter-Smuggling claims to pay particular attention to goods bound for 'problematic' countries, such as Afghanistan, but this is due to a concern for arms trafficking.²⁶ Regardless, many shipments intended for Afghanistan are registered in transit to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan or even Kyrgyzstan.

There have been several cases of attempted precursor importation through Dostuk. Kazakh Customs and Border Guards turned these shipments around because they had not received pre-export notification. Customs officers reported this with

²² Interview with Deputy Chief of Dostuk Customs, October 22 2005.

²³ Interview with Chief of Dostuk Customs Counter-Smuggling Department, October 22 2005.

²⁴ Despite being happy to show UNODC staff around these facilities and explain their operations, Customs considers them sensitive and did not allow photography.

²⁵ Observations October 22 2005.

²⁶ Interview October 22 2005.

little concern and there has apparently been no further investigation into these cases.

This reflects the low priority that staff at the post attach to precursor detection. Although this was one of the only posts on the Central Asian-Chinese borders at which officials claimed a firm knowledge of precursors, neither the Deputy Chief of Customs nor his Chief of Counter-Smuggling listed detection as a priority. There are a number of precursor test kits at Dostuk (Customs could not give an exact number) and there is one officer trained in the use of these. Senior officials had not received any feedback on their use and did not appear to know if they had been used.

Customs is expecting to install scanners soon, similar to that at Khorgos (see below). Officers at Dostuk predicted these would be operational by the end of 2005, although this seems unlikely since there had been no preparations at the post for their arrival as of October.

Khorgos

The road network feeding Khorgos is in very good condition and it receives the heaviest amount of road traffic on the Kazakh-Chinese border. Khorgos is 370 km from Almaty and 45 km from Zharkent and it is the best-equipped of any of Kazakhstan's crossings with China.

The breakdown of imports and exports through Khorgos is similar to that at Dostuk - **including imports of liquids** - although the total volume is smaller. Around 30 trucks enter Kazakhstan per day and 5-7 go to China. According to Customs officers at the post the trend in traffic is stable and even decreasing. They believe that this is because their monitoring systems have deterred some Kazakh businessmen who previously smuggled through the post. The Customs Chief speculated that some of this traffic now uses Kolzhat,²⁷ where systems are less sophisticated (see **Kolzhat**, below).

Khorgos is connected to Astana via an online system that makes all computer activity visible at Customs headquarters. There are also numerous video cameras in the passenger and cargo terminals that send live feeds to Customs at the post and in Astana. As at Dostuk, Customs officers at Khorgos examine the traffic data they send to Astana but generally only to compile trade value and volume statistics.

An automated system registers information on every vehicle coming from China, such as its physical dimensions, weight and number plate. Customs then scans every

Figure 5: Khorgos' TC scanner



²⁷ Interview October 21 2005.

vehicle with a TC scanner built and serviced by China (see Figure 5). As can be seen in Figure 6, this is essentially an x-ray machine. The officer responsible for the scanner does not consider it very effective.²⁸ It cannot differentiate between organic and inorganic matter and even when Figure 6 appears on Customs' computer screen, it does not give a level of detail helpful for discerning the content of loads. It can show if there are containers hidden within others only if the outer set are not metal. Importantly for precursor detection, it provides no information on the content of barrels and liquids in general are invisible to it.

During the TC process, Customs takes the driver's documents and scans them into their register. This includes the declaration, which is then compared with the TC scan. In light of the results of this, Customs officers give their opinion on any need for further inspection. **It is rare for them to recommend this. Instead, inspections are intelligence-led.** Despite taking some pride in their equipment, Customs argues that the suppression of smuggling is also the responsibility of other law enforcement agencies that are better-trained for fighting the drug trade.²⁹

Senior officers do not believe that they or their subordinates are knowledgeable on precursors but do not consider precursor smuggling a threat or high priority. They have access to a range of precursor test kits - Kazakh-, US- and Russian-made - but senior officers had no feedback on their usage.

In 2004 China and Kazakhstan announced the construction of a free trade zone centred on Khorgos. According to the Chinese press, there will be zero tariffs and the free movement of people and goods within this area.³⁰ Both sides have identified the land for this project; China has begun construction but Kazakhstan has not.³¹ A railway is also being extended to Khorgos from the Chinese side of the border.

This effort and the advantages Khorgos has in terms of its development, its road network and its geographic position make it likely that traffic volumes will grow in the future, despite recent stagnation. If the Chief of Customs there is correct in believing that their detection systems have deterred smugglers, the planned roll-out of these systems at other crossing points as well as the completion of the Chinese railway will restore the growth in trade through Khorgos.

²⁸ Interview October 21 2005. The scanner is intended to detect hidden compartments but officials agree that these would have to be quite large to be visible.

²⁹ Interview with Chief of Khorgos Customs, October 21 2005.

³⁰ "China & Kazakhstan to build a free border trade zone", *People's Daily Online*, February 26, 2004.

³¹ Interview with Khorgos Customs, October 21 2005.

The TC scanner at Khorgos produces an x-ray image of the vehicle, which has a greater level of detail than shown here in the printout but not significantly so. Below the image is the driver's declaration, which lists the category of good and its weight. The total weight is given in the bottom left corner.

Контейнерное изображение 20051020076.cpf № ГТД: 52600/20105/0008211 Номер груза/веса: 884080/33238С



№	Код ТНВЭД	Наименование товара	Вес товара(кг)
1	8714999000	ПРОЧИЕ ЧАСТИ И ОБОРУДОВАНИЕ К ТРАНСПОРТНЫМ СРЕДСТВАМ, КЛАССИФИЦИРУЕМЫЕ В ТОВАРИХ ПОЗИЦИЯ...	506.0
2	6204623100	ДЖИНСЫ	6703.0
3	6201990000	ПРОЧИЕ КУРТКИ (ВКЛЮЧАЯ ЛЫЖИКИ), ВЕТРОВКИ, ПИЖАМКИ МУЖСКИЕ ИЛИ ДЛЯ МАЛЬЧИКОВ, ИЗ ПРОЧИХ Т...	218.0
4	6112120000	КОСТЮМЫ СПОРТИВНЫЕ, ТРИКОТАЖНЫЕ ИЗ СИНТЕТИЧЕСКИХ НИТЕЙ, МАШИНОГО ИЛИ РУЧНОГО ВЯЗАНИЯ	699.0
5	6402999600	ОБУВЬ ПРОЧАЯ НА ПОДОШВЕ, С ВЕРХОМ ИЗ ПЛАСТМАССЫ, С ДЛИНОЙ СТЕЛКИ 24 СМ ИЛИ БОЛЕЕ, МУЖСКАЯ	707.0
6	5407930000	ТКАНИ ПРОЧИЕ, ИЗ СИНТЕТИЧЕСКИХ КОМПЛЕКСНЫХ НИТЕЙ РАЗЛИЧНЫХ ЦВЕТОВ	1072.0
7	8528126203	АППАРАТУРА ПРИЕМНАЯ ЦВЕТНОГО ИЗОБРАЖЕНИЯ С РАЗМЕРОМ ДИАГОНАЛИ ЭКРАНА БОЛЕЕ 52 СМ, НО НЕ Б...	2096.0
8	8529907205	ПРОЧИЕ ЭЛЕКТРОННЫЕ МОДУЛИ, ПРЕДНАЗНАЧЕННЫЕ ИСКЛЮЧИТЕЛЬНО ИЛИ В ОСНОВНОМ ДЛЯ АППАРАТУРЫ, КЛ...	1074.0
9	8520321900	ПРОЧИЕ МАГНИТОФОНЫ С ЦИФРОВОЙ ЗАПИСЬЮ ЗВУКА КАССЕТНОГО ТИПА, С ВСТРОЕННЫМ УСИЛИТЕЛЕМ И С О...	693.0
10	6210209100	ПРОЧИЕ СВИТЕРА И АНАЛОГИЧНЫЕ ИЗДЕЛИЯ ТРИКОТАЖНЫЕ ИЗ КЛОПЧАТОБУМАЖНОЙ ПРЯЖИ, ДЛЯ МУЖИЧ ИЛИ...	4657.0
11	3921131000	ПЛИТЫ, ЛИСТЫ, ПЛЕНКА, ФОЛЬГА И ПОЛОСА, ПОРИСТЫЕ ГИБКИЕ ИЗ ПОЛИУРЕТАНОВ	228.0
12	6405209100	КОЖАТЫЕ ТУФЛИ И ПРОЧАЯ ДОМАШНЯЯ ОБУВЬ С ВЕРХОМ ИЗ ТЕКСТИЛЬНЫХ МАТЕРИАЛОВ, С ПОДОШВОЙ ИЗ ...	420.0
13	8544119000	ПРОЧИЕ ПРОВОДА ОБМОТОЧНЫЕ МЕДНЫЕ	82.0
14	7009920000	ПРОЧИЕ ЗЕРКАЛА СТЕКЛЯННЫЕ В РАМАХ	146.0
15	6403109900	ВИТРИНА МЕТАЛЛИЧЕСКАЯ	709.0
16	9606100000	КНОПКИ, ЗАСТЕЖКИ-ЗАВЯЗКИ И ИХ ЧАСТИ	193.0
17	6203199000	ПРОЧИЕ КОСТЮМЫ МУЖСКИЕ ИЛИ ДЛЯ МАЛЬЧИКОВ ИЗ ПРОЧИХ ТЕКСТИЛЬНЫХ МАТЕРИАЛОВ	105.0
18	9403105900	ПРОЧАЯ МЕБЕЛЬ МЕТАЛЛИЧЕСКАЯ ТИПА ИСПОЛЬЗУЮМЯ В УЧРЕЖДЕНИЯХ, НЕ ПРЕВЫШАЮЩАЯ ПО ВЫСОТЕ 80 С...	98.0
19	8543892000	АНТЕННЫЕ УСИЛИТЕЛИ	29.0

Вес ВСЕГО: 20435.0(кг) Произведено техническое инспектирование (TC-SCAN) ---2005Год10месяц20день 21:23(1/1)

Figure 6: Printout of a TC scan at Khorgos

Kolzhat

The road from Kolzhat to Almaty is 340 km long and in very good condition. There are several towns between and by car the journey takes approximately four and a half hours. The Customs facility at Kolzhat is subordinate to the Utegen-Batyr regional headquarters in Chilik (see Figure 3), which is also responsible for the Karkara crossing on the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border (discussed below).

Customs and Border Guard officers at Kolzhat contradicted Utegen-Batyr on a number of regulations. Firstly, when discussing trade statistics, Customs in Utegen-Batyr noted a small amount of export traffic, yet officers at the post reported that no exports are allowed. Secondly, officers at Kolzhat claim that they do not let Chinese vehicles cross into Kazakhstan and that reloading onto Kazakh trucks takes place on the Chinese side. However, officials in Utegen-Batyr explained that Chinese trucks are occasionally licensed to travel as far as Almaty. Finally, Utegen-Batyr thought that transit traffic is forbidden through Kolzhat, while officers at the post remembered some machinery and parts that came through in transit.³²

Kazakhstan imports a wide variety of goods through Kolzhat, including consumer goods, clothing and **quantities of liquids as construction materials**. Trade volumes vary seasonally due to the type of import. During low periods, 6-8 trucks cross daily; during more intense periods the number is around 10-15.³³ During UNODC's visit to Kolzhat, which occurred as the post was opening for the day, there were around 50 Kazakh trucks waiting to cross to China to pick up loads. However, this may have been due to the crossing being closed over the previous three days for national holidays.

Kolzhat is currently undergoing refurbishment and its immigration and Customs procedures are therefore in a state of flux. Border Guards note the details for each Kazakh truck and give the driver authorization to cross into China. **All re-loading of goods takes place in China** and Kazakh Customs did not know the level of supervision that occurs. Given that the inspection of goods is the importer's responsibility at the other crossings on the Kazakh-Chinese border, there is reason to believe that supervision is not strict. Upon the return of the truck to the Kazakh side, Customs notes its details and weighs it in the only functional inspection facility at the time of UNODC's visit. Drivers can pay tariffs and taxes at the Kolzhat post itself, which Utegen-Batyr Customs explained was quite unusual for Kazakhstan.

It is rare for Customs to carry out inspections and officials in Utegen-Batyr reported that these are unlikely unless there are significant problems with paperwork. Inspections would also be quite challenging in colder months with current facilities. In the categorization used in Utegen-Batyr, 90% of staff there and at the Kolzhat post are 'fiscal', which makes their detection ability and data analysis questionable. As at Dostuk and Khorgos, they rely on Astana for the latter.

³² Interviews with Utegen-Batyr Customs, October 20 2005; interview with Deputy Chief of Kolzhat Customs, October 26 2006; interview with Chief of Kolzhat Border Guards, October 26 2005.

³³ Interview with Deputy Chief of Kolzhat Customs, October 26 2005.

The Chief of Kolzhat Border Guards received training on precursors in 1998 but did not believe that staff at the post are knowledgeable. This opinion seems valid given that the Deputy Chief of Customs did not appear to have heard of the term 'precursor'. Utegen-Batyr holds Russian- and US-made precursor test kits and can send them to Kolzhat on request.

Narynkol

The Narynkol crossing is closed due to a lack of traffic. Goods crossing the Chinese border now use the better-developed Kolzhat and Khorgos crossings because they move in larger loads.

Other Border Sections

As discussed in Part 1, precursor trafficking is generally confined to serviceable roads and railways. The large and open distances over rugged terrain on the Kazakh-Chinese border make it **unlikely that a shipment of precursors would or could circumvent border controls.**

A Note on the Kyrgyz-Kazakh Border

In considering the routes by which precursors would travel from the Kazakh-Chinese border to Afghanistan, conditions on the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border are significant. Notably, smuggling along this border is rampant. According to Kyrgyz DCA officers and local UNODC staff, **it is common for trucks to drive across the river that marks the border east of Bishkek in order to avoid paying taxes and tariffs.** This includes truckloads of fuel.

UNODC visited the Kyrgyz side of Karkara, the easternmost border crossing on the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border. This is a poorly-equipped facility, which Customs and Border Guard officers explained was due to the small amount of traffic. They reported that trade crossings were very rare and most traffic was for locals visiting.³⁴ However, after the site visit UNODC observed three Kazakh trucks approaching from the Kyrgyz side.

Summary: Kyrgyzstan's Border with China

Kyrgyzstan has two border crossings on its 858 km with China; Torugart and Irkeshtam. The large majority of Kyrgyzstan's exports to China are in scrap metal, while its imports from China include a wide range of goods. Export growth is slowing but the growth of import volume and value continues to climb rapidly. Nationally, Kyrgyzstan is not a significant trade partner for China but its export markets have some importance for Xinjiang, particularly for traders in the nearby Chinese city of Kashgar. The majority of traffic is therefore towards Kyrgyzstan.

The level of precursor knowledge is low amongst Kyrgyz law enforcement officials. Even in Kyrgyzstan's DCA, which is the lead national agency in precursor control, senior officers report that precursor knowledge is not yet adequate.³⁵ For the most

³⁴ Interviews September 23 2005.

³⁵ Interviews DCA Bishkek office, September 21 2005.

part, officials in central agencies recognize this, but do not see it as a significant problem.

For example, the Chief of the Counter-Narcotics section of the Osh City Police did not believe that its officers had any desire or ability to investigate precursor trafficking.³⁶ This essentially means that law enforcement personnel are not able (or willing?) to enforce laws they have been ordered to. Thus, when the Director of the Osh DCA wrote to the Chief of Counter-Smuggling for Osh Customs and requested their greater attention to trade in liquids, the latter's instructions to his border posts³⁷ had apparently had no effect on the officers UNODC interviewed at crossings.

As in Kazakhstan, **detecting and stopping precursor trafficking is not a priority** for Kyrgyz officials. Some, such as the Deputy Chief of the Kyrgyz Border Guards, consider precursors a general threat to the region but not a high priority domestically because Kyrgyzstan is not a transit country. Pakistan was mentioned as more important,³⁸ as were Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.³⁹ The Chief of Counter-Narcotics in the Ministry of Security also thought that Kazakhstan should be the major concern because of its long border with China,⁴⁰ which ignores the porous Kyrgyz-Kazakh border (see above).

The DCA was ambivalent about China as a source of smuggled precursors, seeing little current evidence but giving an example of illicit precursor importation from there. This was done over several years during the mid- to late-1990s, when a series of companies registered to a Chinese owner executed several shipments. When Kyrgyz law enforcement investigated these businesses, most of the information supplied in their registration was false and the owner has never been found.⁴¹ The Deputy Chief of Customs also gave reason for concern when he reported that he receives intelligence on traffickers organizing precursor shipments from within China. However, further traces of them are never noted, which he presumes occurs because China interdicts them.⁴²

A risk at both Torugart and Irkeshtam arises from Kyrgyz Customs' use of Chinese declarations for imports. Customs officers at the posts cannot read these and therefore cannot know whether there is a heightened risk of precursor smuggling, such as if the driver is declaring barrels of liquids. Their only method for determining the type of goods imported is to physically inspect loads. This rarely occurs.

Torugart

The Customs headquarters responsible for Torugart is in Naryn, 190 km away along a road that is unsealed for most of the distance. Trucks take around 16 hours to cover this distance.

³⁶ Interview September 19 2005.

³⁷ Interview with Chief of Counter-Smuggling in Osh Customs, September 19 2005.

³⁸ Interview with Deputy Chief of Kyrgyz Border Guards, September 22 2005.

³⁹ Interview with Chief of Ministry of Interior Counter-Narcotics Department, September 21 2005; interview with Chief of Counter-Narcotics in the Kyrgyz Ministry of Security, September 21 2005.

⁴⁰ Interview September 21 2005.

⁴¹ Interview September 21 2005.

⁴² Interview September 22 2005.

Torugart is never open in both directions. Instead, during the morning (0900 until 1300), Kyrgyz trucks cross into China. From 1400 until around 1800 (depending on traffic), traffic flows in the opposite direction. The crossing is closed on weekends and private vehicles are rarely permitted to cross.⁴³

The Chinese and Kyrgyz Customs checks are 110 km apart but 7 km from Kyrgyz Customs China maintains a Border Guard checkpoint. While Chinese drivers are permitted to travel 550 km into Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz drivers can only drive to China's Customs post, where they must re-load and turn back.

Official statistics show imports through Torugart growing rapidly. According to the Chief of Naryn Customs, the amount for the first 8 months of 2005 - USD 4.7 million - was greater than all of 2004 (USD 4.4 million).⁴⁴ However, this growth may be inflated artificially as a result of an investigation by Kyrgyzstan's Special Prosecutor's Office in February 2005, which revealed significant under-reporting of trade by Kyrgyz Customs at Torugart (discussed further below, see **Corruption**). This has likely led to somewhat more accurate book-keeping. Further statistical discrepancies are apparent in the number of vehicles reported - the Border Guards register shows an average 1,430 crossings per month for 2005,⁴⁵ compared with Customs' 450.⁴⁶

Figure 7: Unused Customs facilities at Torugart



Significantly, **smugglers have previously targeted Torugart for large shipments of liquids.** In these cases, forged Chinese documents were used in an attempt to conceal 20t and 1.5t of spirits in separate loads. Only prior information allowed Customs to make the seizure.⁴⁷

This is unsurprising, since **officers rarely inspect loads.** Torugart is at an altitude of 3,752 metres and Customs claim that the climate prevents them from conducting physical checks

on trucks. The facilities there are in a state of decay (see Figure 7) and Customs procedures are limited mostly to stamping declarations - in Chinese - and registering vehicle details. Officers defend this by arguing that the terminal in Naryn imposes better controls.⁴⁸

On the 16 hour drive to Naryn, however, there is ample scope for dropping goods or re-loading them onto other vehicles. Naryn Customs explained that an officer will accompany a convoy of trucks to ensure that this does not happen, yet the use of this practice is occasional at best. UNODC's visit to Torugart occurred on a Sunday but

⁴³ The only non-trade vehicles are generally government cars, since private vehicle crossings require special permits.

⁴⁴ Interview September 26 2005.

⁴⁵ Interview with Deputy Chief of Kyrgyz Border Guards, September 22 2005.

⁴⁶ Interview with Naryn Customs, September 26 2005.

⁴⁷ Interview with Naryn Customs, September 26 2005.

⁴⁸ Interviews at Torugart and Naryn, September 25-26 2005.

even then there were several trucks travelling individually on the Torugart-Naryn road.

Furthermore, with regard to precursor detection, the same problems of unconcern and inability to detect are present in the Naryn terminal. Re-loading is not mandatory since Chinese trucks can continue to Bishkek and the comparison of declarations with goods is difficult since both the declarations and the labels on goods are usually in Chinese. While Naryn does have a precursor test kit, the officer responsible for it has recently been moved to another post. Tellingly, after noting that Kyrgyz companies import industrial chemicals for skin processing through Torugart, the Chief of Naryn Customs could not say what these were, despite consulting with other officers.⁴⁹

Irkeshtam

Irkeshtam is 262 km from Osh and the first 45 km from Sary-Tash towards the border is in a very poor condition. This requires 3 hours in a 4WD and the total time for a truck from Irkeshtam to Osh takes around 16 hours, although in bad weather drivers can find this journey takes several days. However, a Chinese contractor has sealed the first 15 km out of Irkeshtam in 2005 and this is in excellent condition (see Figure 8). Furthermore, the Asian Development Bank has approved a USD 32.8 million loan for work on 124 km of the Osh-Irkeshtam road, although it is unclear if this includes the already sealed section.⁵⁰ The completion of this project (due to begin in early 2006) will significantly increase the trade flows through Irkeshtam.

Currently, the majority of these are imports from China. As through Torugart, Kyrgyz exports are mostly limited to scrap metals. Also repeating the situation at Torugart, the Border Guards estimate of vehicle crossings - at 1,000 per month⁵¹ - is higher than that of Customs - 600-700.⁵² Kyrgyz drivers are not allowed to cross Irkeshtam but wait on the Kyrgyz side until they can re-load on to a Chinese truck.

Imports include all types of goods. The Chief of Customs Counter-Smuggling in Osh, who is responsible for Irkeshtam as well as the Uzbek- and Tajik-Kyrgyz borders in Osh oblast, reported that the volume of goods coming through Irkeshtam is far too much for consumption in Kyrgyzstan. He estimates that 85-90% of these are onward smuggled to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.⁵³ Most of these originate from companies based in Xinjiang's capital Urumchi and driven via Kashgar.

Figure 8: The sealed road section near Irkeshtam



⁴⁹ Interview September 26 2005.

⁵⁰ "ADB to help upgrade 124 km stretch of former southern Silk Road", *Asia in Focus*, September 28 2005.

⁵¹ Interview with Chief of Irkeshtam Border Guards, September 18 2005.

⁵² Interview with Chief of Irkeshtam Customs, September 18 2005.

⁵³ Interview September 19 2005.

Irkeshtam is open 24 hours a day but **inspections at any time are rare**. Officials defend this with reference to the weather conditions they work in. Without prior and specific intelligence, Customs will not check vehicles.⁵⁴ All goods are supposed to travel to the terminal in Osh, where Customs collects duties. The situation with Customs accompaniment from the border to the terminal is similar to the ineffective system in place at Torugart, leaving ample scope for dropping and re-loading goods en route.

Osh Customs has a precursor test kit but the post at Irkeshtam does not. The Chief of Counter-Smuggling believes that precursor training is required, as well as methods to ensure that officers link it to actual perceptions of risks. In support of this view, he noted that those officers that the US trained in radiation detection do not carry the equipment they have been given for this purpose.⁵⁵

Other Border Sections

Kyrgyzstan's border with China is at high to very high altitudes, mostly running along rugged mountains. From UNODC's observations and the reports of locals and officials, **it is very unlikely that precursor smuggling would occur through unofficial crossings.**

Summary: Tajikistan's Border with China

Tajikistan's border with China is 414 km long and there is one border crossing at the Kulma Pass. It has only been open for the past 2 years and large-scale economic links are only in the embryonic phase, although solidifying rapidly. The high and rugged terrain along the border and the isolation of Tajikistan's eastern Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBO) from the country's economic centre in the west hampers the development of trade. The national statistics - which have Chinese imports as around 5% of Tajikistan's total - also underestimate the importance of China to locals in GBO, for whom the opening of Kulma has been very beneficial.

Precursor knowledge amongst Tajik law enforcement officials is low. Few officials had a firm view on precursor trafficking and those who did - such as the DCA Director and the Chief of Border Guard Intelligence⁵⁶ - pointed to Pakistan as an important source of acetic anhydride for Afghanistan. They believe that Tajikistan's poor infrastructure would hamper precursor smuggling, especially from China.

The overwhelming majority of trade traffic is of goods coming from Kashgar. GBO has little to export but traders from as far away as Dushanbe have been crossing into China to buy up consumer goods for re-sale in Tajikistan. Larger scale trade on Chinese trucks has begun and is likely to increase rapidly.

The Kulma Pass

The Kulma Pass is at 4,362 m and its Customs headquarters is in Murgab, which is 140 km away. Weather conditions prevent the crossing from staying open all year, with

⁵⁴ Interview with Chief of Osh Customs Counter-Smuggling, September 19 2005; interview with Chief of Irkeshtam Customs, September 18 2005.

⁵⁵ Interview September 19 2005.

⁵⁶ Interviews, September 12 2005.

Customs estimating that its maximum possible opening period is from May until November. During its operational period, Kulma rotates through 15 days open and 15 closed; when open it is 24 hours a day. The road from Murgab is initially in a poor condition, but after the turn-off away from Tokhtamish, it is excellent (see Figure 9). However, it was only completed during the spring of 2005 and will probably suffer during the winter.⁵⁷

In comparison with crossings in Kazakhstan or even Kyrgyzstan, **traffic volumes through Kulma are small.** In its first year of operation in 2004, during which it was open for three months, 27 trucks crossed, almost all of them Chinese.⁵⁸ In 2005 Customs expects at least 60 regular crossings, plus China's gesture of sending 50 trucks through to Dushanbe during its trade negotiations with Tajikistan. Customs lists construction and consumer goods, including clothes, as the major import categories.⁵⁹

Procedures at Customs usually consist of the officers collecting declarations in Chinese and sending these to Murgab. They consider that their job is "not the documents, just to see the goods".⁶⁰ Officers cannot read declarations so they generally open vehicles to see what sort of goods are inside. They rarely make use of the convoy system to escort trucks to the terminal because in the first two years of operation trucks have not arrived regularly enough. UNODC observed 6 trucks waiting in the unguarded Murgab terminal, although these included some from Kyrgyzstan.

One officer at Kulma received precursor training in 1999 that he considered informative.⁶¹ Neither Kulma nor Murgab have a precursor test kit.

Figure 9: A Chinese truck approaching the Kulma Pass



Other Border Sections

Most of the Tajik-Chinese border is above 4000m and there are no serviceable roads that cross the dividing mountains other than through Kulma.⁶² **Precursor smuggling from China into Tajikistan is unlikely to occur anywhere except through Kulma.**

⁵⁷ Interview with Kulma Customs, September 16 2005.

⁵⁸ Figures from Tajikistan's Ministry of Transport - A. Blua, "Tajikistan: Traders look to China for brighter future", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Europe*, August 20 2004.

⁵⁹ Interviews at Kulma, September 16 2005.

⁶⁰ Interview September 16 2005.

⁶¹ Interview September 16 2005.

⁶² Observations along the border, September 14-17 2005.

Corruption

A significant contextual factor affecting the feasibility of precursor smuggling across the Central Asian-Chinese borders is the presence of corruption among border control officers. There are several reasons to believe that this is pervasive.

Firstly, law enforcement officials who do not work at border posts confirm it. Secondly and similarly, non-officials lament that it is widespread. It is rare for those engaged in bribery to agree, but research by a UNODC staff member that focused on interviews with employees of logistics companies found that corruption at border crossings - particularly amongst Customs services - is systematic.

Thirdly, there have been sporadic investigations by central agencies that reveal or hint at large-scale corruption. For example, in Kazakhstan in August 2005, the country's National Security Committee reported the arrest of a group with 15 members, apparently highly organized and including officials, that extorted from "entities involved in foreign economic activities" at a border crossing with China. Details on which crossing are unavailable, although the involvement of several officials in Almaty's Customs suggests that this related to Khorgos or Kolzhat. To give an idea of the profitability of such corruption syndicates, the National Security Committee estimates the revenue of this group was in the "millions of dollars".⁶³

In another case in 2005, Kyrgyzstan's Special Prosecutor conducted an audit of Torugart, comparing Customs' import reports with export summaries provided (informally) by China. The proportion of goods unreported on Kyrgyzstan's side was around 50%.⁶⁴ This would include some degree of smuggling, but corruption is a large contributor to this discrepancy.⁶⁵

Corruption is a concern in the context of this investigation because it facilitates precursor smuggling. It reduces further the incentive that officials have to inspect goods or scrutinize Customs declarations. In essence, they are being paid *not* to concern themselves with the content of trucks and carriages. In these circumstances, border controls have little deterrent effect and little capacity for detection.

Faith in China

A common opinion that Central Asian officials hold is that China is so strict on smuggling and border control that it provides an effective deterrent. The sensitivity of the government in Beijing to the restive Uighur minority in Xinjiang has led to the militarization of the province. More generally, China has shown its willingness to execute or imprison for long periods smugglers in everything from heroin to antelope horns.⁶⁶

⁶³ "Kazakh criminal gang involving state officials busted", Interfax-Kazakhstan via BBC Monitoring Central Asia, August 4 2005.

⁶⁴ UNODC became aware of this case in February 2005. Initially, the Special Prosecutor's Office calculated that Torugart Customs had only been declaring 20% of its trade, but later revised this conclusion to 50%.

⁶⁵ Significantly, Border Guard headquarters in Bishkek has registered around double the number of vehicle crossings at Torugart as was reported to UNODC by Customs during a visit to the crossing.

⁶⁶ "Crime in China Dec 04-Jan 05", compiled Chinese press reports via BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, February 9 2005.

The idea that this is an effective method of controlling precursors is highly questionable. Most obviously, China's harshness against the drug trade has not prevented the growth and establishment of a large population of addicts in Xinjiang who continue to obtain narcotics, particularly heroin.⁶⁷

Furthermore, Beijing's strong reaction to the situation in Xinjiang has not rid the province of corruption. This is a problem across China and, it seems, Xinjiang is not immune.⁶⁸ Regardless, it is Central Asia's responsibility to check imports and therefore China's vigilance on precursor diversion domestically is unlikely to affect its control efforts at Xinjiang's borders. At Khorgos and Dostuk Kazakhstan and China have agreed to this arrangement and at other border posts, Central Asian officials did not know how China's export control regime worked.

Overall, therefore, Central Asian officials' belief in the deterrence and detection capacity of China against smuggling arises more from a general view of China as harsh on crime rather than with reference to actual trends in Xinjiang. This faith renders Central Asian border controls more vulnerable than they should be. This is essentially a problem with international cooperation on intelligence sharing between China and Central Asia. Such cooperation is still difficult, leaving the Central Asian side without information that would be important in guiding analysis and operational priorities for precursor control.

International (Non-)cooperation

Despite the regional effect of precursor smuggling, including its eventual detriment to China through heroin trafficking, there is little cooperation between it and Central Asia on precursors. In the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China have signed agreements on precursor control,⁶⁹ but these are derivative of drug control, which is itself a lower priority for cooperation than counter-terrorism.

No Central Asian official interviewed during the fieldwork has heard of discussions with China that included precursor control. There is mutual disinterest in raising the issue, since Central Asian officials do not perceive it as a threat on the Chinese borders and China may have little desire to raise a problem which it feels it exports without great cost and which may conflict with the priority of trade expansion. In contrast, its efforts at precursor control along its borders with Myanmar and Laos have increased substantially in recent years. This has included the extension of invitations to officers from Myanmar to train in China in programs that include precursors as a central subject.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ China's National Surveillance Center on Drug Abuse, *Report of Drug Abuse Surveillance 2003*, June 2004.

⁶⁸ G. Fabre, "State, corruption, and criminalization in China", *International Social Science Review*, 53:3, 2001; A. Wedeman, "The intensification of corruption", *China Quarterly* 180, 2004.

⁶⁹ These agreements are not yet in force because not all countries have ratified them – interview with Deputy Director of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Regional Anti-Terrorism Centre, December 5 2005.

⁷⁰ "Burma police sent to China for drug enforcement training", *The Myanmar Times* via BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, September 21 2005.

There are problems with Central Asian-Chinese cooperation on all drug trade issues,⁷¹ but **action on precursor control is noticeably lacking**. Not only does this rule out joint operations against precursor trafficking, it also reduces the accuracy of regional analyses of smuggling routes and intensity. This is evident in the comments by the Deputy Chief of Kyrgyz Customs (see above), who thought that the information he had on precursor shipments being prepared in Xinjiang did not constitute a threat, basing this on a presumption that China arrested the perpetrators. The other possibility - that some shipments are carried out successfully - cannot be assessed without China informing target transit countries of its actions. Importantly, most officials at border posts and many of those in central agencies did not expect to hear from China if it makes arrests relevant to them, even if these occurred on or close to the borders. **The lack of communication on precursors severely undermines the intelligence-led approach to smuggling detection that Central Asian border crossings rely on.**

Law enforcement links across the Central Asian-Chinese borders are likely to improve but it is also likely that precursors will continue to have a low priority. Without a formal setting that includes the issue as one requiring information exchange, **cooperation on intelligence sharing will require the establishment of informal links between interested officers**. Currently, both the links and the officers are uncommon.

⁷¹ For example, very few of those officials interviewed knew of a series of cases in which China arrested citizens of Central Asian countries for drug trafficking in Xinjiang. The Chinese press usually reported on these, but word of them had apparently not reached even some very senior Central Asian law enforcement officers.

PART 3:

Summary of Risks and Recommendations

General Risk Factors

It is currently feasible to smuggle precursors through all of the crossings UNODC visited on the Central Asian-Chinese borders. Despite the variety of conditions and significant differences in traffic volumes through these, a number of factors are present at all of them.

- 1. Central Asian law enforcement officers do not consider the detection of precursor smuggling an operational priority.** Those officials with a direct responsibility for precursors, such as Kazakhstan's Drug Combat Units, operationalize this as the monitoring of storage conditions at sites holding legal stocks. DCA officers in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, who express some concern for precursor smuggling, do not perceive China as a threat in this regard. Furthermore, they prioritize drug detection far higher than precursor interception.
- 2. Central Asian law enforcement officers are not knowledgeable on precursor chemicals.** With the exception of precursor specialists - such as in the Tajik Ministry of Interior group on Licit and Illicit Precursor Circulation - officials have varying but generally low knowledge regarding which chemicals are important for heroin production. This holds even where instruction is readily available, such as in the Kyrgyz DCA's officer manual and the lists of restricted chemicals at crossing points. Officials at border crossings are unlikely to allow unfamiliar liquids across, but as the confusion at the Naryn headquarters suggests, they are also unlikely to be able to determine whether declarations match goods.
- 3. Central Asian law enforcement officers do not see China as a security threat.** With the exception of Xinjiang-linked terrorism in Kyrgyzstan and to a lesser extent Kazakhstan, officials do not consider the Chinese borders worrisome for security reasons. This reduces their motivation to inspect loads randomly or thoroughly.
- 4. The reliance on intelligence-led detection is not supported by actual access to information.** Central Asian officials base their detection efforts on intelligence, yet on possible precursor smuggling over their borders with China, information from the source - Xinjiang - is not easily available and intelligence sharing on this threat is problematic.
- 5. Related to this, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are keen to facilitate trade flows across the Chinese borders.** The trend towards larger trade flows is a key point in assessing the future risk of precursor trafficking. This risk has been and will, under present conditions and official attitudes, continue to increase rapidly. The tendency of all countries is to reduce barriers to trade by making cargo crossings easier. Because they do not perceive the Chinese borders as a threat, their moves to offset direct security controls have lagged the increased smuggling opportunities. Traffic flows are increasing rapidly and crossing upgrades are not keeping pace.
- 6. Corruption is pervasive.** The apparently high level of corruption amongst border control staff, including on the Chinese borders, reduces the effectiveness of

inspection regimes. Officials are less inclined to inspect and less inclined to study declarations.

7. Smuggling and misdeclaration are common. In contrast to the low priority that Central Asian Customs attaches to precursor smuggling, all officers express concern for tax evasion through smuggling. Despite this, successful smuggling seems to be commonplace and inspection regimes leave ample scope for misdeclarations. Officials at all levels are satisfied with or at least resigned to the fact that **border staff see a very small amount of the cargo they are responsible for monitoring.** The quantity they could inspect without interfering with trade flows is far higher than under current practice.

Kazakhstan

Smuggling precursors through Dostuk is feasible and the risk of this is high. Procedures for checking the huge amount of traffic through Dostuk leave ample scope for moving precursor loads without detection. It is also the only crossing where there have been attempts to import these illicitly. Customs considers itself knowledgeable on precursors but their detection is not a priority. Trade through Dostuk may be offset somewhat by the completion of the railway to Khorgos. The medium-term outlook is for greater volumes of traffic, however.

Smuggling precursors through Khorgos is feasible and the risk of this is high. Officials do not consider themselves knowledgeable on precursors but do not believe there are threats related to their post. The road network feeding Khorgos is the best of any of the crossings between Central Asia and China.

There is a large volume of traffic passing through the crossing and Customs sees little of what it is carrying. Officials hold a degree of pride in the level of sophistication of their technical equipment but the manner in which they currently use this is not effective for detecting precursors. It also seems to contribute to the rarity of physical inspection of loads. Overall, the border regime does not create a high risk to precursor traffickers. The strictness and sophistication of China's import controls do not ameliorate this risk because they do not apply to its exports.

Kazakhstan and China's plans for Khorgos will continue to raise the risk of precursor trafficking. Volumes of trade are likely to grow and the completion of a train terminal will create a significantly higher burden on precursor detection.

Smuggling precursors through Kolzhat is feasible but the risk of this is unclear. Procedures on the Kazakh side are conducive to smuggling since the inspection of loads is rare and there are opportunities for misdeclaration. However, Kolzhat is the only post visited in this investigation at which goods are re-loaded under Chinese supervision. The strictness of this was not observed.

However, proceeding with a concern that China does not prioritize efforts against illegal precursor exportation to Central Asia - discussed in Part 3 - and continuing this investigation's focus on Central Asian capacity, Kolzhat remains a concern. Trade volumes are likely to rise through Kolzhat, particularly if China and Kazakhstan finalize agreements on two-way traffic and allow the passage of Chinese trucks into Kazakhstan.

Kolzhat's capacity to offset these increasing opportunities for trafficking is low. Customs precursor knowledge was particularly low and border staff did not consider there to be any threats emanating from China that were relevant to their work. Strikingly, other Kazakh Customs officers believe that Kolzhat has become more popular for smugglers.

The Kyrgyz-Kazakh border

The Kyrgyz-Kazakh border is relevant to assessing the attractiveness and feasibility of smuggling precursors through Khorgos, Kolzhat and Dostuk to Afghanistan. Part 3 discussed its porosity - it is not a formidable barrier to smuggling and therefore precursor shipments that have made it onto Kazakh territory are fairly free in their access to Kyrgyz territory. In terms of attractiveness for precursor trafficking, the better infrastructure in Kazakhstan compensates somewhat for its greater distance from Afghanistan.

This increases the importance of the area around Bishkek and the Bishkek-Osh road for precursor control. Trafficking through Torugart requires transiting the Bishkek area, at least until a trade-serviceable east-west road linking Naryn with western Kyrgyzstan is constructed (work has not begun). Similarly, precursor shipments that come through Kazakhstan and take advantage of the porous Kyrgyz-Kazakh border also need to use the Bishkek-Osh road. The alternative route is through Uzbekistan and the sum of risks involved is currently in favour of trafficking through Kyrgyzstan and then Tajikistan; or through Kyrgyzstan and then across the porous Kyrgyz-Uzbek border in southern Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan

Smuggling precursors through Torugart is feasible and the risk of this is high. There has been proven corruption or at least systematic under-reporting of traffic volumes. Moreover, misdeclaration can easily occur and border staff are content with the current situation in which they rarely observe any loads passing through the crossing.

Smugglers have targeted Torugart in the past for efforts to move large quantities of liquids illicitly. Law enforcement knowledge of current flows of liquid imports is not comprehensive, nor is their precursor awareness high.

These factors interact in the context of increasing trade volumes, presently weighted in favour of imports and projected to become even more so. With regard to onward transportation routes, Torugart is somewhat less attractive than Irkeshtam because heavy vehicles must travel as far north as Bishkek before turning south again towards Afghanistan. Balancing this are the more favourable border procedures at Torugart, where Chinese trucks can drive from Kashgar to Bishkek with the expectation that their load will not come into the open.

Smuggling precursors through Irkeshtam is feasible and the risk of this is high. There appears to be a high level of corruption at the post and misdeclaration can occur with ease. Border staff rarely see the cargo they are approving and traffic volumes have been increasing quickly. The opportunities for precursor smuggling will

continue to multiply in the medium term. Trade through Irkeshtam is likely to increase further, particularly as the Irkeshtam - Sary-Tash - Osh road improves.

Furthermore, there are established syndicates and methods for smuggling a broad range of goods onwards into Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Routes through western Tajikistan down into Afghanistan would be particularly attractive for smuggling from Osh. Actors in the drug trade have significant power here and precursor knowledge and detection capacity is generally low.

Tajikistan

Smuggling precursors through the Kulma Pass is feasible but use of this route is unlikely. Customs there is unlikely to detect a misdeclared precursor shipment and the law enforcement presence in GBAO would not deter such an effort.

Nevertheless, transportation from Kulma to Afghanistan would be challenging. This is not so much because the Pamir Highway from Murgab to Khorog remains in a poor condition. Its condition is not insurmountable as the overland trade between Khorgos and Xinjiang and even Dushanbe and Xinjiang attests.⁷² However, a major difficulty faced in attempting precursor smuggling through Kulma to Afghanistan is that **vehicle traffic between GBAO and Afghanistan is not heavy.** According to Customs at the Khorog-Afghanistan bridge, the only vehicles that cross are delivering humanitarian aid. The Aga Khan Development Network usually organizes these in large convoys.⁷³

There is a risk that Customs is under-reporting private vehicle crossings. Furthermore, Xinjiang-Afghanistan trade will grow, particularly if Tajikistan grants China's request for transit rights to Afghanistan.⁷⁴ This would create a direct corridor for trafficking, one which travels through a poor, sparsely populated and poorly-policed area. Currently, however, **the risk of precursor trafficking through Kulma is low.**

Recommendations

A number of recommendations follow from this analysis:

- *Extend precursor training - such as under UNODC's RER/E29 "Precursor Control in Central Asia" project - to include sessions at the Chinese borders for officers stationed there.*

The vast majority of officers at crossing points with China have never received precursor training and this contributes to their low perception of risk and lack of motivation to attempt detection.

- *Encourage replication of internationally-led trainings.*
- *Ensure the distribution of technical equipment (e.g. test kits) to Chinese border crossings and collect feedback on their usage.*

⁷² "Tajikistan looks to the east", AKIpress, July 29 2004.

⁷³ Interview September 13 2005.

⁷⁴ Interview with Khorog Customs, September 13 2005.

- *Conduct an assessment mission to the Chinese side of the borders.*
- *Request from Central Asian Customs departments the quantities and types of liquids imported from China.*
- *Include China on the agenda of meetings between the Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Tajik agencies responsible for precursor control.*
- *Consider organizing a Central Asia-China meeting that includes a discussion of precursors.*

UNODC could help to facilitate a meeting between central drug control agencies in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China at which precursors should be on the agenda. This would help to establish dialogue on the issue and encourage all countries share information on precursor trafficking.
- *Conduct a mission to the Tajik-Afghan border to assess export controls.*

Previous missions have focused on import controls out of concern for drug trafficking. In light of the present investigation, it is possible that the Tajik-Afghan border is a last line of defense against regional precursor trafficking. It has not been viewed as such and therefore a mission should be conducted to assess the prospects for precursor control there.
- *Make clear to the Tajik and Kyrgyz DCA officers that precursor investigations are also relevant to the awarding of performance bonuses.*

DCA officers tend to interpret their bonuses as rewards for heroin seizures, which is understandable given the national and regional focus on this. UNODC should ask Directors to ensure that officers understand that precursor interdiction is viewed with the same importance.
- *Mobile Units (MU) in Tajikistan should play a role in precursor detection*

MU's traveling inland should shift part of their focus and intelligence-gathering to incoming traffic toward Afghanistan.
- *Consider the establishment of special border post investigators, including the Chinese borders.*

Officers empowered by central agencies to stay in and observe border crossings for short periods without warning would provide useful insights into how border controls are applied and would be a strong incentive for other border officials to act in accordance with central guidelines.

Appendix: Precursor Control in Central Asia

Licit Control

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are all parties to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 and its 1972 amending Protocol, as well as to the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Their legislation on precursor control refers to the chemicals listed in these Conventions, most importantly to the Tables of the 1988 Convention. Their legislation limits the usage of precursor chemicals and subjects their licit circulation to regulations that are, at least in law, quite stringent.

Tajikistan

The control of licit trade in precursors in Tajikistan is outlined in its central drug control law, "On Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors" (December 10 1999). This comprehensively covers the regulation of licit activities, which is supplemented by the law "On Licensing of Some Types of Activities" (May 17 2004). In order to operationalize these acts, the government adopted the resolution "On Procedures of Issuing Licenses in the Field of Licit Circulation of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors" (November 9 2000).

The body designated to authorize precursor importation and use is the Licensing Commission, chaired by a triumvirate of the DCA Director, the Health Minister and the Interior Minister, with the DCA as lead chairman. These three officials must sign off on all licenses and the Commission is mandated to check on the conditions under which precursor stocks are held. A final relevant authority is the General Prosecutor's Office, which has the power to investigate the lawfulness of all legal entities, including persons, and therefore can monitor the licit usage of restricted chemicals.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan's law "On Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors" (May 22 1998) allows for the licensing of legal entities and individuals registered as businesses to use and import precursors. The government elaborated the guidelines for this further with "Rules On Licit Control of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors in the Kyrgyz Republic" (May 4 2000). Procedures for licensing are given in the regulation "On the Registry of entities involved in the legal circulation of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors", which requires that all entities using precursors be entered in a database.

By Presidential Decree No. 182 on June 17 2003 the DCA is to maintain this registry and is the sole agency responsible for licensing precursor use. However, it also receives assessments on precursor storage conditions and on people with access to stocks from the Ministry of Interior Counter-Narcotics Department.⁷⁵ More generally, the Prosecutor Office's broad powers to scrutinize all public and private organizations

⁷⁵ The official title of this agency is the Department on Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking of the Ministry of Interior.

as well as individuals allows it to investigate those engaged in licit precursor activities.

Kazakhstan

The most important provisions of Kazakhstan's precursor control legislation are part of its law "On Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, Precursors and Measures to Combat Illicit Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse" (July 10 1998). More specifically on licit circulation, this law was supplemented by the "Rules on State Control of Circulation of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors". This provides a comprehensive categorization of restricted activities related to precursors.⁷⁶

Kazakhstan's peak drug control body, the Committee on the Fight Against the Drug Trade and Control Over Drug Trafficking (attached to the Interior Ministry), is responsible for licensing general uses. For precursor circulation with the health care system, it is the Ministry of Health. However, import and export licensing is solely the responsibility of the Committee. The Interior Ministry's Drug Combat Units, which are located in police departments but administratively separate from them, are responsible for checking the holding conditions of precursor stocks produced or imported. Finally, the General Prosecutor's Office has the right to monitor all legal entities and therefore has a role in licit precursor circulation

Overall, officials in all three countries believe that their systems for licit control function well and are effective at preventing diversion. As mentioned in Part 1, the INCB would seem to concur. This situation is not surprising since the legitimate demand for precursors in Central Asia is not great, which raises the risks of faking a licit demand and seeking licensing. Instead, smuggling is more attractive. Against this, officials do not express confidence in their capacity for control, but rather disinterest.

Counter-Smuggling

As a criminal offence in all three countries, there are many agencies with a mandate to counter precursor trafficking. While licensing regimes purposefully restrict the number of relevant actors, counter-smuggling broadens this range substantially.

Tajikistan

As the lead in all narcotics-related law enforcement, the DCA is also tasked with anti-trafficking efforts against precursors. However, its counter-narcotics responsibility is to focus on the most serious cases and there have been none related to precursors that would fall into this category. The Ministry of Interior basically occupies all the same legislative territory with its Counter-Narcotics Department. The group on Licit and Illicit Precursor Circulation is within this Department. Technically, since precursor smuggling is a crime, every police officer is also responsible for countering precursor trafficking, but their practical contribution is negligible.

⁷⁶ "The development, production, processing, transportation, sending, acquisition, storage, distribution, sales, use and destruction of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors."

Further law enforcement power is available in the Department for Public Security and Terrorism, located within the Ministry of State Security. This Department's primary task is to investigate large organized crime groups and their involvement in the drug trade, for which it also prepares analyses on major routes used for smuggling narcotics and precursors.

Kyrgyzstan

The situation in Kyrgyzstan is similar to that in Tajikistan. The DCA is designated as the lead agency in countering precursor trafficking and its officers are the most knowledgeable in this regard. Conceivably, the narrower range of institutions with responsibility for licit circulation has contributed to reduced interest in precursor trafficking amongst other law enforcement agencies. The far greater problem, however, is that precursor knowledge and interest are not widespread.

DCA responsibilities also overlap with the Ministry of Interior Counter-Narcotics Department, charged with the prevention, identification, suppression and investigation of criminal and administrative offences related to trafficking in precursors. The National Security Service, within the Ministry of National Security, is also authorized to investigate precursor trafficking cases, although its focus is on cases involving transnational organized crime.

The Customs Department also has a drug control division and through this fulfils its mandate for ensuring that import and export controls on precursors are effective. At the borders, this responsibility is shared with the Border Guards.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's counter-trafficking apparatus is somewhat more compact. The Drug Combat Units are responsible for all forms of smuggling related to the drug trade and report information on this directly to the Drug Control Committee. The National Security Committee's departments overlap with those of the Drug Combat Units at the provincial level. However, its primary focus is on major cases, particularly those with an international dimension. At the national level, the National Security Committee takes the lead in liaising with foreign agencies and is capable of carrying out international joint operations.

Along the borders and at border posts, the Border Guards are responsible for preventing the illegal crossings of goods. The Customs service has the same task at official crossings and includes a Department on Customs Crime, within which is a Drug Control Unit. These officers are authorized to conduct a wide range of operations related to precursor trafficking across Kazakhstan's borders, including controlled deliveries.

Figure 10 shows legislative provisions in the three countries that relate to punishment for precursor trafficking. These are contained within their respective Criminal Codes, which refer back to the central drug control laws.

Figure 10: Criminal provisions relating to precursors

Note: The scale of quantities for the purposes of punishment are regularly changed

	Offence	Penalty	Amount
KAZAKHSTAN	Unauthorized production, acquisition, storage, transportation, sending for sale and trafficking. <i>Art. 263, Part 2 of the Criminal Code</i>	Imprisonment for up to six years	The size of seizures is divided into "small", "large" and "extra large".
KYRGYZSTAN	1. Unauthorized production, storage, transportation, sending for sale or sale of precursors. 2. Violation of regulations on licit circulation if it has resulted in their loss. <i>Article 251 of the Criminal Code</i>	Range from 100 times the minimum monthly wage to 15 years imprisonment, depending upon the quantity.	The quantities referred to by classifications such as "large" are not specified.
TAJIKISTAN	1. Illegal production, manufacturing, processing, purchase, acquisition, storage or sending precursors for the production of drugs or psychotropic substances - <i>Article 202(1) Parts 1, 2 & 3 of the Criminal Code.</i> 2. Theft of precursors <i>Article 202(2), Part 1, 2 & 3 of the Criminal Code.</i>	2-12 years imprisonment depending upon the quantity.	Classified as "large" and "extra large".

The above penalties envisaged in each country's respective legislation are considerable. Combined with the empowerment of a number of law enforcement agencies to detect, investigate and punish precursor trafficking, they constitute a comprehensive legislative framework.

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