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ROUTES OF ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING OF NARCOTIC DRUGS ACROSS NATIONAL BORDERS

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Annotation: In today's globally challenging era, one of the pressing issues that has not lost its relevance is the illegal transportation of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and potent psychoactive materials across state borders through smuggling. Drug addiction remains widespread, especially among young people, and cases of importing these substances and distributing them within the country are frequently encountered.

Keywords: narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, potent psychoactive materials, smuggling, drug situation, border checkpoints, improvement of the material and technical base of customs posts.

Introduction Today, in Uzbekistan, great attention is being paid to combating crime, and preventive measures by law enforcement agencies are being strengthened. In particular, drug addiction — often called the plague of the century — can rightly be considered one of the most painful problems for any nation. Combating the illegal circulation of narcotic drugs is one of the most important tasks of the customs authorities.

This is because the illegal trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances can lead to the spread of incurable infectious diseases in society, changes in the human gene pool, the growth of the shadow economy, and a negative impact on the overall criminogenic situation — all of which are well known to us.

The illegal trade in narcotic drugs has a long history, and today, with the emergence and increasing consumption of new psychoactive substances, improving the fight against this phenomenon has become particularly important.

Main Part As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has emphasized: *"Threats such as religious extremism, terrorism, drug addiction, human trafficking, illegal migration, and 'mass culture' are intensifying, undermining the beliefs and family values that humanity has adhered to for centuries."*

The political, economic, and social situation in Afghanistan — which has become the epicenter of the narcotic threat — affects not only Uzbekistan, but also the entire Central Asian region, as well as Russia, Europe, and other countries that are now facing increasing drug-related problems.

The transit of narcotics from Afghanistan has become a major issue not only for Central Asia or Uzbekistan but also for European countries, which are the main consumers of these drugs.

When speaking about drug trafficking, two main global centers of narcotic production are usually referred to — Afghanistan and South America. In particular, global drug trafficking routes are primarily connected with Afghan heroin and Latin American cocaine, which together define the overall narcotic situation in the world.

Golden Crescent - this region covers the territories of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan — the main countries producing opiates. According to available data, approximately **90% of the world's opium** comes from Afghanistan.

Northern Route - Afghanistan – Central Asia – Russia – Europe. Uzbekistan is one of the countries located along the "*Northern Route*" through which narcotic substances are transported from Afghanistan to the Russian Federation and Europe. "Opium" and "heroin" mainly enter the country from **Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan**, and directly from **Afghanistan**.

Balkan Route - Afghanistan – Iran – Turkey – Balkan Peninsula – Europe ("*Balkan Route*")

This is one of the main routes that passes through Iran to Turkey, then to the Balkan countries, and further into Southern and Central Europe.

Golden Triangle - the term "*Golden Triangle*" refers to the mountainous region along the borders of **Thailand, Myanmar and Laos**, which has been one of the world's centers for the illegal cultivation of narcotic drugs since the 1950s. At one time, this area produced the largest amount of **opium poppy** in the world, from which **heroin**, also known as "*the Asian white death*," was made.

By the late 1980s, control over the parts of the *Golden Triangle* located in **Thailand** and **Laos** was established. However, in **Myanmar**, this issue remains unresolved. Therefore, **Myanmar currently accounts for about 95% of opium production in Southeast Asia**.

Silver Triangle - this term refers to the countries in South America that produce narcotic substances: **Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia**. Colombia leads the world in cocaine production, producing up to **430 tonnes** annually. Peru and Bolivia follow it. Because these countries are located in the Andes mountain range, they have favorable conditions for cultivating the coca plant. Most of the cocaine is trafficked to **Europe** and the **United States**.

North American Route - South America – Mexico – USA

African Route - South America – Atlantic Ocean – Africa – Europe. Previously cocaine was delivered directly to Europe, but in recent years an "**African route**" has emerged. By quantity, this route has become comparable to the North American route. When smuggling cocaine by sea in containers, drug couriers often hide it among exotic fruits or mix it into coffee, wine, and other liquids. This forces authorities to take additional measures to detect and intercept shipments.

Today synthetic drugs are also becoming widespread. The **People's Republic of China** is recognized on one hand for strict policies against illegal drug circulation — including penalties up to the death penalty for certain drug crimes. On the other hand, China is a world leader in producing synthetic drugs and the precursors used to manufacture them, and in exporting these chemicals. For example, substances such as **sibutramine** and **ephedrone** have been manufactured and distributed there. Many factories in that country produce **acetic anhydride**. Unfortunately, despite controls and bans, these chemical precursors produced in China regularly reach morphine- and heroin-producing factories in the **Golden Triangle** via established routes.

Conclusion The problem of drug addiction — one of the dangerous social ills — in recent years has worried not only our country but the whole international community. Law-enforcement agencies of the Republic of Uzbekistan have strengthened border control, and transit channels for narcotic substances through our territory are being steadily uncovered. This forces organized groups and drug criminals to act more cautiously when moving such substances across borders, and to use new, unconventional methods of concealment and disguise. In turn, this requires that the law-enforcement bodies responsible for combating the illegal circulation of narcotic substances treat counter-drug measures in this area with greater seriousness. To that end, it is necessary first to improve the material and technical base of border checkpoints and customs posts and to strengthen personnel capacity; to enhance early-detection mechanisms for narcotics entering the republic; to establish electronic exchange of initial information with neighboring and foreign states about incoming and transit cargo and international postal shipments; and, in light of modern threats, to continually amend and supplement laws and subordinate regulations that govern the legal and illegal circulation of narcotic drugs and their precursors.

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1. **Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-73 dated May 7, 2024** *"On strategic measures to eliminate the negative impact of the illegal circulation of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances on public health and the gene pool of our country."*