

Putin: Attack Drug And Terror Infrastructure

by Rachel Douglas

On returning from his state visit to Germany, which focussed on the scope and terms of collaboration between Russia and the West in a post-Cold War world, Russian President Vladimir Putin opened up a new dimension of what the tasks of that collaboration ought to be: a serious war on drugs. That was the main agenda item of a meeting of Russia's Security Council on Sept. 28, chaired by Putin.

The Russian President discussed the fight against narcotics as inseparable from the question of terrorism. He promised Russia will take new initiatives against dope-linked financial flows, as well as the physical shipments—moves that have far-reaching international implications. He said that the situation with drug addiction in Russia is “acute,” and “we must respond to it professionally and as rapidly as possible.”

“This problem is extremely acute today, and not only in and of itself,” Putin told his Security Council. “It is directly connected with the success of the struggle against crime. . . . And, of course, it is very closely interwoven with topic number one in the world, the struggle against terrorism. The narco-business is one of the main sources of financing for terrorist groups and irregular military units.”

Putin reminded the Council that 80% of heroin on the world market comes from Afghanistan, much of it shipped through Russia, with Afghan guerrillas controlling the trafficking. In the very recent period, he said, “a particularly large quantity of narcotics coming in from Afghanistan has been seized. The dope dealers, attempting to warehouse what they have accumulated in huge quantities over many years—industrial-size quantities—are rushing across the border, to hide this from possible destruction.” He called for upgrading Russian border forces.

Narco-Terrorism

Putin defined the problem of narco-terrorism: “Terrorism and narcotics are absolutely kindred phenomena. They have common roots and a similar destructive force. Terrorism, like the drug trade, has a highly ramified international network, and is transnational, beyond a doubt. . . . This illegal business produces superprofits, and ‘dirty’ monies are spent for ‘dirty’ purposes.”

Next, Putin reviewed the headlong spread of dope in Russia. Highly refined drugs have an ever-greater market share. In first place is Afghan heroin, which comprises 28% or more of the dope consumed in Russia. Drug consumption has

spread throughout the various social layers, especially in economically depressed regions, bringing with it a very rapid spread of HIV infection. Drug addiction hits younger people more than before, the average age of first-time users being 14 years old. Every fifth conscript into the Armed Forces has used narcotics.

Russia is not only an end-product consumer, but also a major transshipment corridor for dope. Putin said that the problem could not be stopped just by seizing narcotics. Rather, “It is time to revise the criteria for our work in this sector as a whole. We must put an effective barrier to all forms of penetration of narcotics into illegal circulation, destroy the infrastructure of the narco-networks, and eliminate demand. . . . Therefore our objective is to close off all channels for the proliferation of narcotics, both external and domestic.”

The Money Flows

The Russian President turned to the question of dope finances: “An important subset of tasks has to do with eliminating the financial channels for the narco-business, which can be done not only by a fight against criminal elements, but also with an entire system of special measures. These include combatting the legalization of criminal incomes.”

Going after “the financial channels for the narco-business”—as readers of *EIR* know from our dossiers on “Dope, Inc.” over the past two and a half decades—leads into the thick of the Anglo-American-centered world financial system. Really cleaning up the drug money business throughout Eurasia, would certainly be consistent with the vision of a continent free of the “clash of civilizations,” as conveyed by Putin in his Sept. 25 speech to the German Bundestag (Parliament). Such efforts are sure to encounter vicious resistance, not only from on-the-ground narco-traffickers, but from ostensibly respectable financiers and strategists in London and elsewhere, including Moscow, who have their uses for the dope trade, as they do for terrorism.

Russian officials are speaking more and more plainly about finding and holding accountable the sponsors of transnational terrorist units. At a press conference on Oct. 2, Putin's press spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky reviewed the situation in Chechnya, links between Chechnya and terrorist camps in Afghanistan, and international counterterror efforts. While stressing the current, unprecedented levels of Russian intelligence-sharing with the United States and European countries, Yastrzhembsky also denounced the harboring of terrorists in Britain. He said that Russia had previously provided names of specific organizations operating in London, among the 100-some foreign organizations funding the Chechen insurgents, but that no actions had been taken.

Yastrzhembsky hailed UN Security Council resolution No. 1373, adopted on Sept. 19, which obliges member-states to take measures against terrorist activities on their territories. Russia has signalled a desire to apply the same approach to the dope trade.