

Finally, the transit of precursors and essential chemicals was also considered. In 2006, the US DEA seized 2 tons of ephedrine coming from Iran, that passed through France and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Maghreb was another African area used as transit route for cocaine destined for Europe.

For years, **Morocco** has been considered the major producing Country of hashish in the world and, notwithstanding the drug policy of this Country to contain cannabis crops, 80% of the European market is supplied by Morocco. Crops were mostly concentrated in the Rif area (a mountain chain near the Mediterranean coast) and in the region of Larache. According to recent estimates, 96,600 farmers grew illicit cannabis crops, and almost 800,000 persons earned their livelihood from these cultivations, that is 2.5% of the Moroccan population (estimated at 29.6 million persons).

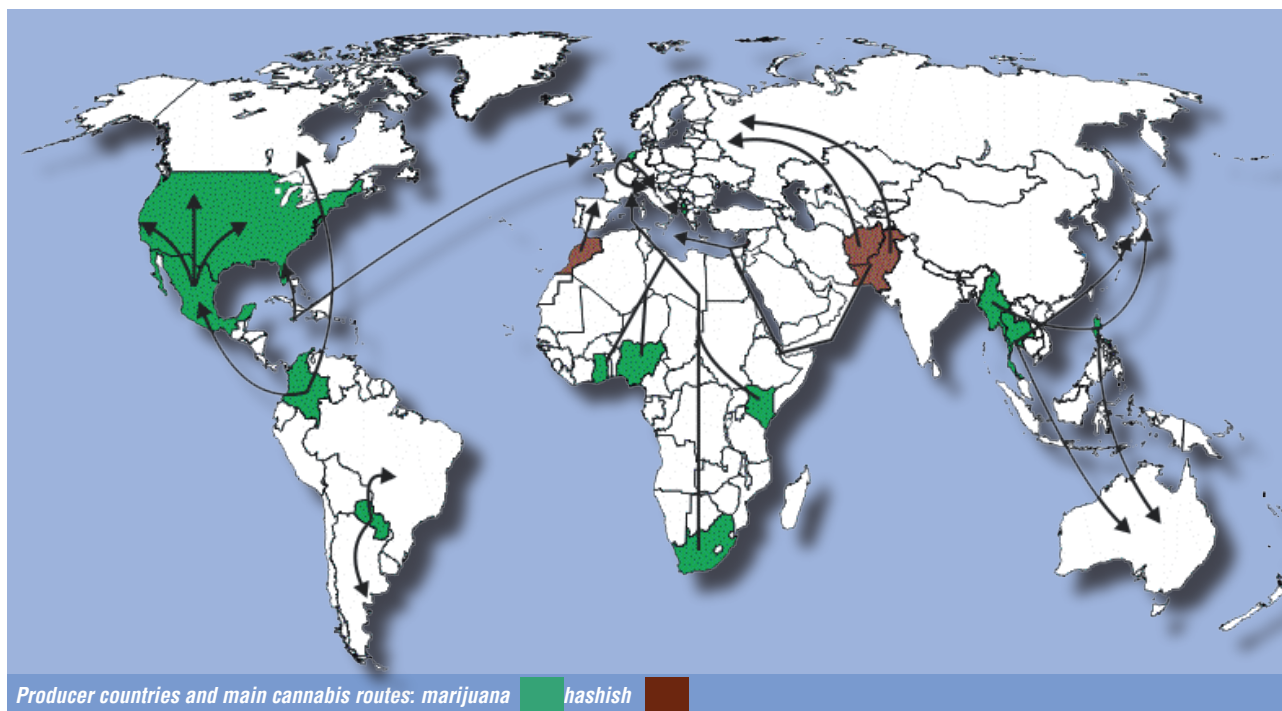
The cannabis trafficking was mainly carried out by sea from the ports of Tangier, Casablanca and Nador, but also from the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, used as stocking/sorting points of the largest hashish loads. The Moroccan Authorities also recorded a significant number of overland seizures – drugs concealed inside false bottoms in adequately prepared private vehicles and tourist coaches on board ferry-boats connecting Morocco with Europe, in particular with Spain.

The total commercial value of the Moroccan cannabis resin was valued about 12 billion USD, that were mostly used to finance the European drug trafficking networks. An additional part of the illegal proceeds from Moroccan hashish came back to this kingdom in the shape of gold bars and of investments in the property and tourist sectors (the legislation on money laundering has only been recently enforced).

The strengthening of the counter-narcotics apparatus in Morocco and, above all, along the South coasts of Spain in order to curb the clandestine migration phenomenon (that is closely linked with hashish illicit tracking), generated alternative trafficking routes towards the other Countries of Mediterranean Africa. A rise in Moroccan hashish seizures carried out in Algeria, Tunisia and Libya has been lately recorded. In 2007, the different Moroccan Enforcement Forces seized about 200 kg. of cocaine, and the half of them were seized at the Airport of Casablanca.

The most widespread phenomenon was that of the human couriers: above all African nationals, but also the Europeans, were employed to transport, by air, the drugs in corpore (65%) or inside luggage (35%).

In most cases, the flights originated from Western Africa Countries and destined for EU Countries, in particular to Spain, Portugal, Italy, Holland, France and Great Britain.



Also the other Maghrebi Countries (Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) were getting more involved by the trafficking routes, above all the hashish illicit routes, bound for Europe. Recently, a conference of the Inter-Ministerial Committee of the Western Mediterranean Countries (CIMO) has revealed that:

- in Algeria, trafficking in hashish coming from Morocco is carried out along the Sahara Route, with the involvement of local crime groups, that only put a very small part of this hashish onto the illicit local market. The bulk of this illicit trade has reached Europe and the other neighbouring Countries, such as Libya and Tunisia. This illicit trafficking financed the terrorist networks, and these funds used to purchase logistic support and weapons;
- Tunisia, is closed to Italy and strongly committed in the maritime activities in the Mediterranean Sea. This Country is directly involved in drug trafficking operated by local criminal organizations in Europe and has become an important stocking and transit area of narcotic drugs, above all of hashish, but also of cocaine;
- Also Libya has become a major transit point of narcotic drugs destined for Europe. According to Interpol General Secretariat, Tripoli Airport was one of the most important transit routes of couriers. In 2007, 22 couriers were arrested at Schipol Airport (The Netherlands): they were all on the same flight departing from the Libyan capital city.

## EUROPE

After the US market saturation, Europe represents the second world cocaine market. UNODC data on seizures performed in the above-mentioned areas from 1990 to 2005, highlighted on one hand, the falling demand for cocaine quantities seized in North America (from 59% of the global data in 1994 to 27% in 2005), and on the other hand, an upward trend in Europe (from 6% of the world seizures in 1990 to 14% in 2005). According to statistics, every year Europe should be the recipient of about 550 tonnes of cocaine. For this reason, the Old Continent is of paramount importance to the Colombian drug trafficking organizations finding there a vast catchment area as well as the ability of criminal syndicates that can purchase enormous quantities of cocaine.

Among them, we must at least mention the Italian networks such as the Camorra and the 'Ndrangheta.

The Colombian organizations totally managed narcotics trafficking on a large scale, following strict responsibility rules: every ring of the trafficking chain had a specific competence sector within the criminal network. Ultimately, the Colombians only used other crime groups to conduct single actions of the illicit trafficking, and always after a verification of their reliability. There are numerous routes and smuggling methods used to move huge drug consignments all over Europe. To sum up:

- as to small shipments, human couriers were almost exclusively employed: they travelled by air and smuggled variable quantities of drugs in corpore (they are known as swallowers) concealed on their body or in their luggage. In general, they did not follow direct air routes and passed through different Countries in order to disguise, as much as possible, the origin of the couriers. Moreover, European couriers, young people or women, were often recruited in order to reduce suspicions. This phenomenon was largely widespread; between January 2004 to April 2006, only in Amsterdam Airport more than 6,000 couriers were identified and 7.5 tonnes of cocaine seized. This system was mostly used by less complex crime groups, even though it was also typical of the Nigerian networks, which were able to smuggle very remarkable quantities of drugs by means of a rain of couriers, even on the same flight, in order to hinder the enforcement capacities at the border posts;
- the large drugs consignments, operated by well-established criminal syndicates, were concealed inside cover loads, vehicles or inside the containers frames. For this kind of shipments, the organization had to provide for the extraction and recovery of the substances; this phase has often required specific technical skills, as in the case of clothes soaked with diluted drugs;
- the multi-tonnes shipments were managed by the international criminal organizations. They were mainly destined for Spain, that is considered the entry point of drugs into Europe (46.9 tonnes of narcotics seized in 2006).

At international level, the strategic response to such a serious threat formulated in 2007 by Italy,

Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, Great Britain and Ireland was the establishment of an intelligence centre, the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre - Narcotics (MAOC-N), located in Lisbon (Portugal). This is a sort of intelligence barrier aimed at curbing the trafficking in cocaine reaching Europe through the Atlantic Ocean. This Centre - having jurisdiction on the Atlantic coastline (from the waters facing Great Britain to those overlooking Senegal) and on the Mediterranean Sea – started its activities in early September 2007 and has already led to the seizure of 20 tonnes of cocaine. The more effective law enforcement activities in the Atlantic Ocean resulted in the progressive shift to alternative cocaine routes through the West Africa Countries and the Atlantic waters facing them.

As we have already said above, **Spain** is the main entry point of cocaine into Europe and ranked among the first Countries in the world because of its record seizures. As to hashish, Spain holds the record of seizures worldwide and is a major market of synthetic drugs. This vulnerability was mostly due to the cultural and linguistic links with South America, to the geographical closeness to Morocco and to the numerous vacation resorts attracting especially young people. Moreover, since years, active cells of the major criminal drug trafficking organizations have strongly entrenched: they controlled the stockpiling and the distribution of enormous drugs loads. Besides the South American – in particular, Colombian – crime groups, also the Italian criminal networks were active in Spain, especially the Camorra - dealing with the most important transactions of narcotic drugs - and the 'Ndrangheta. Until October 29th, 2007 the Spanish Police Authorities seized:

- over 431 tonnes of hashish, that followed the seizure of 473 tonnes of the same substance in 2006. From 1998 to 2007, Spain totally seized 5,523 tonnes of hashish, with an annual average of more than 550 tonnes;
- over 31 tonnes of cocaine, that followed the seizure of 49.5 tonnes carried out in 2006. A large part of this quantities were seized offshore thanks to the effective maritime enforcement system performed by the Spanish Authorities.

With regard to the smuggling cocaine methods, the direct sea shipments – with the offshore

transhipment of narcotics on board speed boats mostly operated by the Galician rings– were replaced by the search for new routes, in particular through the African Route. However, Spain was the major stockpiling centre of the European illicit market for Moroccan hashish, even though the seizures of this drug were progressively decreasing. In fact, the results reached in 2006 (about 473 tonnes), and in 2007 (until October 29th, of 431 tonnes) were the lowest ever recorded since 1999, when 431 tonnes of hashish were seized. This trend was caused by the decrease in the Moroccan production and by a diversification of the supply channels, of smuggling methods and of routes, directly moving hashish to the consumption markets bypassing Spain where, in the past years, the enforcement system has been strengthened. This analysis resulted from different factors, first of all from the new Mediterranean Route originating from Libya, Tunisia and Algeria.

**Portugal**, was a limited consumption area, having strong sociocultural and linguistic links with South America (Brazil) and with some regions of West Africa (Cape Verde and Guinea Bissao). This Country was more and more used as an entry



*Intensive indoor cannabis cultivation*



point of narcotic drugs into Europe and as a valid alternative to Spain. Even in this case, the trend of seizures carried out by the local Police Forces has to be mentioned, in order to understand the global phenomenon. In 2006, 8.4 tonnes of hashish were seized (while in the three previous years at least 28 tonnes of the same substances were always seized) along with over 34 tonnes of cocaine, determining an alarming record for this Country. In fact, in the course of the previous year, remarkable quantities of cocaine (18 tonnes) were already seized.

As to **France** the cocaine and hashish trafficking situation assumed even widest proportions. The main factors of France vulnerability with respect to narco-trafficking, were to be found in the continuous search for alternative routes to the Spanish one, in the great extension of the Atlantic French coastline and in the presence of numerous communities of people coming from the source countries as well as in the presence of important international airports. Analysing seizures carried out in the last few years, it was noticed that in 2006, 68 tonnes of hashish (332 tons in 2003, with a record peak reached in 2004 with 103 tonnes), and 10 tonnes of cocaine (a record quantity for this country, whose highest seizure was recorded in 2005, amounting to 5.1 tonnes) were seized.



In 2006, remarkable cocaine seizures were also carried out in **Ireland** ranking this country in the third place in Europe.

While the cocaine trafficking is considered the Western threat and the hashish smuggling is the Southern one, another serious menace originated from **Eastern Europe**, the Afghan heroin trafficking. According to a 2005 Europol analysis, the Afghan production of heroin was estimated in 420 tonnes and out of them, 100 tonnes were destined for Europe. Although this analysis was not confirmed by the seizures and by the decreasing European market trend, the figures highlighted the level of heroin threat. In particular,

the data relating to 2007 indicated that the quantity of heroin produced in Afghanistan was equal to 820 tonnes.

These are the prevailing overland heroin smuggling routes entering Europe and passing:

- through the Northern European Countries, Ukraine and Belarus, entering Germany, Poland and the Baltic Countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania);
- through Central Europe, the Northern Balkan Route reaching Hungary and going on through Austria, Slovakia and Czech Republic;
- through Italy, from where the bulk of narcotic drugs go on to the other EU Countries, the Southern Balkan Route arriving in Slovenia.

However, also the sea shipments from Turkey were not negligible: they were mostly bound for the port of Trieste, in large quantities aboard commercial vessels and inside legitimate cover cargoes. Other consignments departed from the Balkan Peninsula coasts and reached Italy by means of human couriers, in smaller but frequent quantities. The Turkish criminal organizations were the most active in heroin trafficking: these groups traditionally dealt with heroin and were well-established in Germany and in France, along with the Albanians, who controlled the Balkan Route and played a prominent role in Italy and, progressively, in the rest of Europe.

## MIDDLE EAST, CENTRAL ASIA AND RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Middle East area and the Central Asia were the core of the world scenario of heroin production and trafficking as well as one of the most important hashish producing zones. Notwithstanding the great efforts of the International Community, in particular of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and of the local Authorities, the Afghan production of opium has progressively increased. The above-mentioned UN Office communicated that following the alarming rise recorded in 2006, when Afghanistan produced about 6,100 tonnes of opium (+49% with respect to the previous year), corresponding to 610 tonnes of heroin, another peak record was recorded in 2007. For this year, a significant increase was estimated, of about 34% of opium production, reaching the record opium harvest of 8,200 tonnes, equal to

about 820 tonnes of heroin, and outstripped global consumption by more than 30%.

According to these data, in the next two years the European cities are warned to be prepared to a new heroin flood characterised by an alleged drop in prices and by a higher purity degree: these factors might cause a new rise in the number of drug addicts and a possible increase in the overdose death toll.

According to statistics, 93% of world heroin was produced in **Afghanistan**. Also this last aspect was quite new because, in the past, the Afghan Opium was exported in its raw form and the phases of manufacture and processing, first in morphine and then in heroin, were carried out along the route to the illicit consumption markets, especially in Pakistan and Turkey. At present, about 70% of Afghan opium, equal to 5,800 tonnes, is processed inside Afghanistan. The heroin reaches the different destination Countries, in particular in Russia, Europe, China and America, fuelling the transit areas markets, which are increasingly affected by drug-addiction and HIV virus epidemic. The trafficking in precursors and essential chemicals was another important aspect: it was mainly operated along the routes originating in China. These substances are necessary to process heroin and are imported in Afghanistan along the same itineraries used to smuggle drugs. This phenomenon was particularly dangerous because:

- such a huge production of heroin needs an enormous quantity of these substances: to transform the above-mentioned 5,800 tonnes of opium into morphine and heroin, the Afghan producers needed about 10,500 tonnes of chemical substances (1,500 of acetic anhydride);
- at international level, these are controlled substances and their consequent smuggling is going to finance the criminal networks.

In this framework, the Turkish criminal syndicates, well-established in some European Countries (Germany and France), played the leading role both for their technical knowledge of the synthesis process of heroin and for their ability to create solid links with the major European drug trafficking organizations as well as for their experience gained in this specific sector. Although the opium manufacture processes have recently moved from Turkey to Afghanistan, the Turkish organizations kept their control over the sorting points of large

lots of drugs destined for Europe.

A proliferation of illicit markets and of crime groups exporting their goods beyond the borders - delivering them to international narco-trafficking networks - were clear consequences of this enormous production of opium and heroin in Afghanistan. The Afghan borders, that were scarcely controlled because of their orographic shape and of the deficiency of law enforcement capacities, were crossed by armed caravans transporting opium and heroin lots in the neighbouring Countries, with a dramatic impact for local populations, increasingly affected by drug-addiction. UNODC estimates, confirmed by DCSA Drug Experts stationed in this area, have subdivided (in percentage) the quantities of opium and heroin exported from Afghanistan to the neighbouring Countries:

- approximately 53% of these substances were introduced into Iran to fuel the increasing local trade and, above all, to reach the European illicit markets;
- about 32.5% should be destined for Pakistan where local narco-traffickers groups provided for their stocking and smuggling into China, that was both a consumption market and a transit area for shipments destined for the USA and Australia and, in the Western area, above all to Northern Europe (In particular to Great Britain) and to the USA, through air and sea consignments departing from the port of Karachi;
- the remaining 14.5% was allegedly smuggled along the Central Asian Route, passing through the Republics of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, destined for the Russian and the European markets.

The recent intelligence activities have also highlighted the opening of a land route crossing the North East border that Afghanistan shares with China (province of Xinjiang).

The Afghan provinces recording the most significant presence of opium crops, clandestine laboratories and markets were situated close to the border lines, in particular:

- the North West provinces of the Country, including the borders with Turkmenistan (especially in the provinces of Badghis and Faryab) and with Iran (first of all, the province of Farah);
- the Southern provinces: here the drugs are

introduced into Pakistan (provinces of Helmand and Kandahar);

- the North West provinces, neighbouring with Tajikistan, China and Pakistan (provinces of Badakhshan and Nangharar).

The Afghan monopoly in the opium and heroin production here coincided with the criminal interest of the so-called Warlords, who controlled the large-scale production and trafficking of opium and heroin.

The illegal drug proceeds were used to finance actual militias, through a series of taxations, going from the transit right for the vehicles used to smuggle drugs to farmers loans, from the right to run clandestine laboratories to taxes on crops and imposition of protection services.

Although the Afghan criminal organizations were not directly involved in the illicit trafficking towards Europe and only moved huge quantities of drugs beyond the border, their close ties with the Pakistani crime rings, the high trafficking profits and the opening of trade channels with Europe – especially by air – encouraged them to widen their strategies in this specific field. Nowadays, the drug production and trafficking sectors in Afghanistan are stratified rather than monopolized by well-structured crime groups.

In fact, the figures concerning opium poppy cultivation and latex extraction led us to this conclusion. We should take into account that the official estimates talked about 2.9 million people involved in this activity, that is 13% of the whole population. While it is unlikely that a so significant number of persons was subject to organized crime groups it could be easily supposed that this type of cultivation – one of the fewest possible in these barren areas – was chosen by farmers because of the very high profits (about 1,700 USD) they could derive from.

In addition, it must be pointed out that the major increase (+48%) in the size of opium poppy crops was noticed in the province of Helmand, close to Pakistan, where the UNODC recorded a concentration of the Taliban uprising hindering the adoption of effective enforcement measures.

In 2006, the Afghan police Authorities, in cooperation with the British Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) (in the framework of political initiatives to support the Afghan



Afghanistan - Field of opium poppies

Government in the reconstruction of the social status) seized: 29.4 tonnes of opium (main seizures were carried out in the provinces of Helmand and Kabul); 3.6 tonnes of heroin (main seizures were conducted in the provinces of Kabul and Nangharar, neighbouring the Northwest Frontier Province in Pakistan); 0.192 tonnes of morphine and 36.8 tonnes of hashish (main seizures were carried out in the South provinces of Nangharar and Kandahar, both neighbouring Pakistan). We specify that the United Kingdom was the leading Country of the projects regarding the drug pillar. The so-called Northern Route starts from the over 2,300 km. of land borders that Afghanistan shares with the **Central Asian Republic**. This route passing through Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus, is used to introduce the heroin consignments into the Northern Europe Countries. In addition, in the Caucasian area, the Northern Route crossed the well-known Balkan Route, that was particularly used to smuggle heroin originating from Turkey.

Moreover, new alliances were formed between different crime groups in order to ensure a better organization and more effective trafficking capacities. These ties between criminal rings also facilitated the river crossing (rivers Amu Darya and Pyanj marking the Afghan borders). These criminal organizations usually recruited women or children and made them transport small quantities of



drugs, while the larger quantities were smuggled on board all types of vehicles available, by air or overland, and on board vessels to cross the Caspian Sea from Uzbekistan to the Russian Federation.

Also the narrow Chinese border (only 76 km. in the North East area of this Country) was extremely sensitive. The Chinese market, traditionally inclined to opium consumption (the most recent estimates were dated 2004 and indicated that the number of abusers was equal to 1.7 million persons), was once supplied by the opium and heroin production originating from the "Golden Triangle" (Laos, Thailand and Myanmar). However, the recent drop in production in this region and the last socio-political events in Myanmar (that passed from 44% of world production in 1996 to 5% in 2007) have moved the traffickers' interest to Afghanistan: here, they had better prices with respect to those obtained in South East Asia, even thanks to the swap precursors/heroin.

The special orographic shape of the long borderline with **Pakistan** (2,500 km.) and the socio-cultural and ethnic factors have contributed

to give really impressive dimensions to the trafficking in drugs. Furthermore, the Afghan situation caused an almost complete lack of control over the borders that induced the major tribal groups of this area - Pakistani and Afghan ones (mainly Pashtun ethnic groups) - to turn to the most lucrative criminal businesses of growing, manufacturing and trafficking in opium poppy. Pakistan was also one of the first world hashish producing Country. It is crossed by an important smuggling route that, going from East to West and on to the Northern Route, reached the Balkan Route, and moved drugs back to China. Here, the narcotics were partly consumed and partly transported to the U.S.A. and Australia.

However, the opium flow originating from Afghanistan was mainly destined for **Iran**. The latter was placed in the middle of the main smuggling routes bound for Europe (the Silk Route and the Balkan Route) and of the Persian Gulf, that was the heroin transit point for illicit maritime shipments bound for Europe and the USA, also passing through Africa (overland) and going on to the Southern Mediterranean area



Iran - Heroin seizure

or to the Atlantic Ocean. These features have lately caused significant problems to the Iranian population. It was estimated that almost a half of opium derivatives passing through Iran - where the phenomenon of opium poppy cultivation and processing was almost inexistent – have fuelled the local market composed of a very high number of drug addicts (the Iranian Drug Control Headquarters estimated 2.5 million habitual drug addicts and 1.5 million occasional users), most of them HIV infected. The well-known drug routes entering Iran territory were:

- the Northern Route, that came from Afghanistan and crossed Turkmenistan;
- the Southern Route, the most used one, involving the Province of Sistan and Baluchistan at Afghan border;
- the Hormozgan Route, taking its name from the Southern Iranian region bordering the Persian Gulf, used for maritime shipments.

In 2006, the Iranian Authorities, in order to control this critical situation, prepared an enforcement strategy for the fight against the drugs spreading that, besides the significant actions on prevention and on harm reduction, provided for a strengthening of law enforcement efforts along the borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan where more than 60% of drugs seized were intercepted. In order to understand the seriousness of this phenomenon, these are the data provided by the Iranian Police Forces on the drugs seizures carried out in the first seven months of 2007: 9.1 tonnes of heroin; 5.6 tonnes of morphine and 215 tonnes of opium (more than 55.5 tonnes of hashish). Moreover, 170,175 persons were arrested. The enforcement activity was mostly carried out through security systems and by building a wall along the 1,900 km. border with Afghanistan and Pakistan. More than 300 km. of barrier channels were built (depth of 4 metres width 5 metres), 400 surveillance points, 659 km. of dykes and over 2,400 km. of paved roads.

However, **Turkey** was the main “bridge” for heroin between Middle East and Europe.

In 2006, the Turkish Authorities seized more than 8 tonnes of opium derivatives, of which 7.3 of heroin, 485 kg. of morphine base and 218 kg. of opium. The provinces recording major seizures were those of Istanbul and the provinces neighbouring Iran (Van, Hakkari and Bitlis), Syria (Gaziantep), the central regions (Malta and

Diyarbakir) and the province of Adana, facing the Mediterranean Sea. The main heroin smuggling routes entering the Turkish territory were the following:

- the most important route originated from Iran and was characterized by the numerous mountains that hindered an effective interdiction system. The main entry points were the border posts in the provinces of Van and Hakkari and, in the Northern area, those of Kapikoy and Gurbulak (the latter was the main entry customs point for TIR trucks coming from the East). Once introduced, drugs were sorted out and destined for the European consumption markets;
- the route originating from Syria, a valid alternative to the above-mentioned itinerary.

From Turkey, narcotics were transported along the Balkan Route to Europe, as follows:

- by land: from Istanbul and Derince, through Bulgaria and then, towards North, to Romania, Hungary, Slovak and Czech Republic to get into Germany or Austria, or to the Western region drifting its path from Romania towards the Balkan Peninsula Countries to reach Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Slovenia, from where, it then entered Italy;
- by sea: from the ports of Izmir or Istanbul to reach the Italian Adriatic ports or to Greece where it is again routed into the Balkan Route.

Another alternative was the Black Sea Northern Route that crossing the Azerbaijan border of the Turkish province of Van went on to the Northern Black Sea and passed through Georgia, Ukraine and Poland. This route was facilitated by the lack of land monitoring and by the use of the Russian language, spoken all over the Countries concerned. The most commonly used vehicles to smuggle heroin in this area were the TIR trucks and the vans, concealing large quantities of drugs. Also the private cars for limited quantities were used.

A significant rise of the following seizures was also recorded:

- cocaine, from 40 kg. in 2005 to 77 kg. in 2006, concentrated in Istanbul. This drug came by air from South America through human couriers, mainly of African nationality. The Turkish organizations also swapped cocaine with heroin with the Iranian crime syndicates;
- hashish, from 6 tonnes in 2005 to 9.8 tonnes in 2006. This substance was mainly produced in Afghanistan, Lebanon and Pakistan. The



seizures concerned were mostly carried out in the main cities (Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana and Bursa);

- captagon, (amphetamine –base stimulant) and synthetic drugs, increased by more than 70% , from 7 million doses in 2005 to 12 million doses in 2006.

According to the analysts of the Anti-smuggling Department, the terrorist Turkish organizations were involved in all phases of the narco-trafficking chain, as a source to finance their illicit activities.

The short but violent civil war that shook **Lebanon** in 2006, caused an additional decay of social conditions and a remarkable resurgence of the hashish and opium poppy production in the remote and lush Beqaa Valley, whose inhabitants had no other livelihood alternatives. This phenomenon was mostly controlled by the armed militias of Hezbollah, a Shiite radical group aiming at an Islamic State in Lebanon, like that realized by the Islamic revolution in Iran. One of the factors facilitating the increase in drug production was the lack of an effective local enforcement strategy, due to the scarcity of human and financial resources. In reality, here the Police Authorities were mainly involved in public security services and peacekeeping. The manual eradication carried out in this area saved the chemical pollution of the ground but, at the same time, requested a massive employ of human resources; however, eradication has not been practised in the last two years.

The **Russian Federation** is one of the most relevant transit Countries for drugs and precursors originating from China, as well as one of the widest consumption markets. This is mostly due to its vastness (over 17 million square km.), to its proximity to the major producing Countries of opium and hashish, to the presence of so many well-established criminal organizations and to the social conditions of its population (largely composed of indigent families and of a



*Lebanon - Destruction of hashish in the Bekaa Valley*

small minority of wealthy people). In addition, in the Russian Federation hundreds of chemical industries producing controlled substances (precursors and essential chemicals) operate. Notwithstanding the control of the Federal Service for the Control on Drugs, the diversion of these substances from the legitimate trade is particularly frequent. In 2006, the local Authorities seized over 796 tonnes of precursors (more than 16,400 in 2005 and over 486 in 2004).

The drugs trafficking was operated by criminal networks closely connected and moving an annual business turnover of 10 billion US Dollars.

The direct communication lines between Central Asia and Russia as well as the close commercial ties between these Countries, once belonging to the USSR, were the two factors facilitating the heroin trafficking towards Russia, increasing its strategic role and, above all, the drug addiction phenomenon in an alarming way. The number of drug addicts was equal to 6 millions (4% of the population), including 2 million young people aged below 24 years' old, and 1.5 million heroin drug addicts.

The Afghan heroin is introduced into the Russian Federation through the so-called Northern Route or Silk Route, crossing the Central Asian Republics, on board all vehicles available, with particular regard to private cars and coaches, but above all, in 50/400 kg. quantities concealed inside false bottoms or legitimate cargoes on board trucks. Moreover, many trucks went from Turkey to Russia on board ferry-boats crossing the Black Sea. Many consignments were smuggled through the Russian

railway network connecting all former Soviet States on to Afghanistan, Iran and China (from Moscow you could reach Kabul by train, passing through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan). However, the railway line linking Dushambé (Tajikistan capital city) with Moscow was the most used and the methods of concealment were more and more refined. Recently, liquid heroin was concealed inside drinks consignments. 85% of opium derivatives reaching the Russian territory was bound for the local market, while the remaining 15% was transported overland to North Western Europe (Scandinavian and Baltic Countries, Belarus and Poland) and to Ukraine.

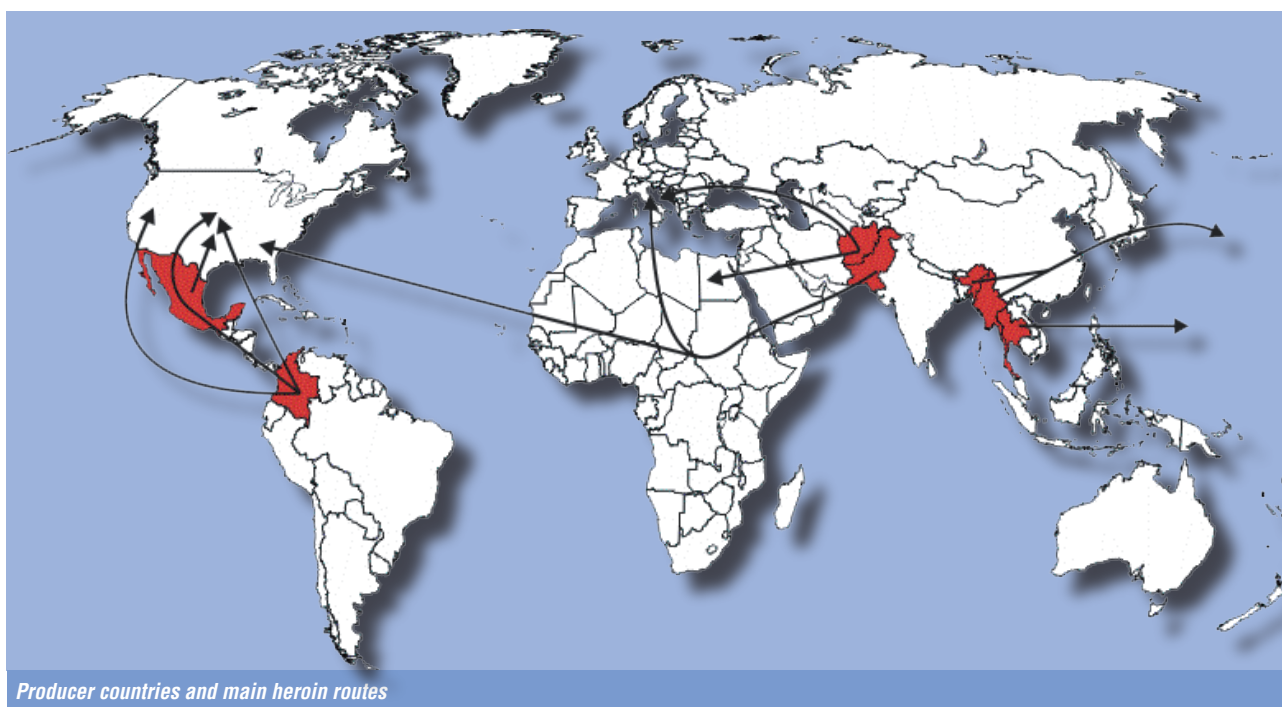
In the Caucasian regions, close to the Ural Mountains and in Siberia, small opium poppy crops were found out. This phenomenon (the cultivations accounted for 100 hectares), could represent a serious future threat considering the vastness and the favourable features of Russian territory. The criminal scenario was strongly influenced by clandestine migration, in particular of persons coming from Southern and Central regions and who formed crime groups active in drug trafficking, terrorism, arms trafficking, prostitution and financial crimes.

Most of drug couriers came from Afghanistan or Tajikistan (600,000 Tajik nationals regularly lived in Russia and 300,000 were illegal aliens). Vietnamese and Chinese nationals dealt with opium derivatives in the South East area of

Russia, near Siberia. African nationals, in particular Nigerians were active in heroin trafficking in the cities (Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Ekaterinburg) where a vast community of University students of African origin was residing. Azerbaijani, Chechen and Tajik nationals controlled the street pushing in the North Western regions.

The most important Russian criminal organizations did not deal with drug trafficking but only got a part of the illegal proceeds from the smaller crime groups. As from 1991 up to now, the number of Russian criminal networks has increased exponentially: in 1992 there were about 3,000 crime groups, in 1996 they became 8,000 and today are about 9,000, and more than 100 operate at international level, at least in 44 foreign Countries.

Also the South American cocaine trafficking had a remarkable increase: cocaine was more and more consumed in the capital city night clubs, while cannabis grew wild in the Far Eastern Countries, in the South of Siberia, in the Caucasian area and in the regions crossed by the Volga river. The cannabis spreading is also due to the size of its crops that amounted to about 1 million hectares, even in the Moscow suburbs. In July 2007, The Federal Service for the Drug Trafficking Control of the Moscow area, in the course of a single operation, completely eradicated a cannabis crop of about 51 hectares. However, the local production could not satisfy the domestic demand



Producer countries and main heroin routes

that was fuelled by the Kazakh, Afghan and Pakistani production. In addition, several cases of hashish trafficking from Morocco were also recorded.

As to the European synthetic drug abuse (from Holland, Belgium, Poland and Baltic Countries), but above all the Chinese substances (about ¼ out of the total quantity) have increasingly spread among young people. The synthetic drug trafficking was basically carried out on board vehicles or trains and was run by local crime groups having international branches. In this sector, a national manufacture of these substances was also recorded: drugs were produced with Chinese precursors smuggled along the routes used to transport Afghan heroin into China, where the consumption has seriously increased. In the last few years, hundreds of small clandestine laboratories have been dismantled: they were especially inside country cottages or inside houses in the suburbs of towns.

Also the trimethylphenetyl, known as China White, was directly produced in Russia (with only 10 ml. of this substance more than 2,000 doses can be produced).

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

The amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) manufacture, trafficking and abuse were the most serious problem in South East Asia and in the Pacific regions, whose abuse exponentially grew since mid-1990s. In the continental Countries of South East Asia (Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam) metamphetamine tablets called Yaba were very popular. In the island countries (Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore) the crystal metamphetamines were especially abused - such as metamphetamine hydrochloride - called ICE or shabu. The major Asian ATS producing Countries were China (the province of Guangdong surrounding Hong Kong and Macau, and the province of Fujian), the Philippines (the manufacture was here run by local crime groups linked with the Chinese and Taiwan criminal networks) and Myanmar (the regions of Kokang and Wa, neighbouring the Chinese province of Yunnan) where a massive manufacture of metamphetamine tablets was carried out. Also Indonesia, Malaysia and the Fiji Islands were, to a lesser extent, involved in the manufacture of these substances. The major supply source of

ephedrine and pseudoephedrine - the precursors of metamphetamines - were China and India. The drug consignments (crystal metamphetamines and yaba) were smuggled from Myanmar into Thailand and China; they were also introduced into Laos and then destined for the illicit Thai, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Indian markets. The substances produced in China - crystal metamphetamines - were on the contrary smuggled into the Hong Kong area and then moved to Japan, Australia and Guam Island. Moreover, these substances were also bound for the Filipino, Malaysian, Japanese and South Korean markets. The Filipino ATS (crystal metamphetamines) were smuggled onto the Malaysian, Japanese, Australian, Guam Island (USA) and Canadian markets.

The very remarkable Asian drug production (ATS in this area and heroin in Central Asia) was stressed by the precursors and essential chemicals trend in China. In fact, with respect to ATS production, in 2004, 2 tonnes of ephedrine were seized while in 2005, over 60 tonnes of the same substance were seized. With regard to heroin production, about 28 tonnes of acetic anhydride were seized both in 2004 and in 2005.

In East and South East Asia also ecstasy abuse has increased: this drug was manufactured on a large scale even in this region, as revealed by the operation carried out by the Indonesian police services on November 11th, 2005, when a poly-drug Super Lab for the manufacture of ice and ecstasy was discovered and consequently dismantled in Cikande, West Java (Indonesia). In the course of this operation, 17 persons were also arrested. The productive capacity was estimated in 76,600 ecstasy tablets per hour and in 200 kg. of ice per day. In some cases the Asian ecstasy was produced with ketamine (anesthetic inducing hallucinations) while the European ecstasy was mainly produced with safrole (sassafras oil) or isosafrole and PMK. For this reason, the first was called Chinese ecstasy or "fake" ecstasy. Although the opium derivatives produced in the Golden Triangle only represented 5% of the world production (in 1994 they amounted to 44% and in 1988 about 33%), in 2007 UNODC recorded a slight but significant increase (about 10%) of opium poppy crops in **Myanmar**. Although these figures did not represent a serious threat, they were all the same a signal of the serious socio-economic crisis of this Country. In fact, this new



increase in opium and heroin production should be added to the alarming situation described above for Afghanistan and as another element of destabilization in the whole area. Myanmar has consolidated its primacy as opium producing Country in the East and Southeastern Asia, and is positioned as the second largest world's opium producer.

**Laos** – the world's third largest opium producer until the mid-1990s – has recently represented only 1% of the global opium poppy crops (in 1998 they amounted to 11%). As from 1998, when 14,100 hectares were recorded, to 2006 (2,500 hectares) the cultivation dropped drastically by 93%. However, between 2005 – when this Country was declared "opium-free Country" – and 2006, a rise by 39% of opium crops was recorded. To this regard, the international strategies for the control of the opium poppy cultivations in South East Asia have reached a significant success, even paying very high socio-humanitarian prices. In fact, there was not a real development of a valid alternative economy. Attention should be paid not only to the mere crops reconversion but also to a legitimate sustainable livelihood policy (establishment of infra-structures, schools and improvement of health system). Some years ago, most of laboratories for the processing of opium into heroin were located in Myanmar, along the South border with Thailand. Heroin was then transported from Thailand to America and on to Europe, often via Hong Kong (Golden Triangle Route). Since mid-1990s, heroin production was mainly controlled by the Wa and Kokang ethnic groups, at the East border of Myanmar with the Chinese province of Yunnan. As a consequence, the smuggling route originating from the States of Shan and Kachin, and passing through the Chinese province of



Thailand - Drug seizure

Yunnan was consolidated. It was estimated that at least 60% of Burmese heroin passed through China (the provinces of Yunnan, Guangxi and Guangdong), reaching not only Hong Kong but also other ports, such as Macau, Taiwan and Xiamen and then on to the global market from ports and airports (Australia, Europe and North America). The high number of seizures carried out in China proved the existence of this Chinese route: 13.2 tonnes in 2001, over 9 tonnes in 2002 and 2003, 10 tonnes in 2004, 6.9 tonnes in 2005 and 5.7 tonnes in 2006. Moreover, all heroin seizures conducted in China, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the period 2002-2006 revealed that more than 90% of them were ascribable to the Chinese territory and, in particular, to the province of Yunnan. In 2005, in China, 5.6 tonnes of heroin out of a total of 6.9 were seized in Yunnan. In this same province, in 2005, 12,400 persons were arrested for drug-related offences (more than 10,000 types of offences) and 157 kg. of morphine, 3 tonnes of metamphetamines and 1.88 tonnes of opium were seized.

The remaining 30% of heroin produced in Shan and Kachin areas reached Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia and was then - above all on board air and maritime containers – introduced into Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Macau areas. Later on, this heroin was again sorted out



Thailand - Synthetic drugs seizure

Kong – sorting point used for other destinations – or to Laos and then to Cambodia, from the port of Sihanoukville. Here drugs were transhipped from small boats onto cargo vessels destined for the ports of Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore.

Data regarding seizures carried out in **Thailand**, revealed a reduction from 955 kg. in 2005 to 87 kg. in 2006: this confirmed the existence of alternative routes that, bypassing Thailand, led to Cambodia and Vietnam.

The distribution of heroin produced in laboratories located in several Burmese areas – such as, in Kachin (in Kokang,

“Special Region 1” where the KDA – Kachin Defense Army was operating), in Shan (controlled by the Shan State Army-South), in Wa and Lahu (where the United Wa State Army, “Special Region 2” was active) and in Akha (“Special Region 4”) – was managed by two major criminal organizations headed by Chinese leaders. The first was linked with the Kuomintang (the Chinese National Party) and called “white Chinese criminal gangs”: it mainly exported drugs to the US and was tied with Thai drug traffickers. The second criminal network was composed of different Chinese crime

towards the destination markets (Australia, Europe and North America).

Moreover, because of the tightening of control systems in Thailand and in the Chinese province of Yunnan – neighbouring the Burmese regions of Kokang and Wa, (where in April 2005 the “National People’s War on Illicit Drugs” was implemented) – the drug traffickers bypassed the Yunnan area, smuggling drugs through safer routes. In particular, heroin ( and ice) consignments passed through the Burmese regions of Kokang and Wa in Laos, then through Vietnam and on to: the Chinese province of Guangxi bound for Hong



Indonesia - Clandestine lab for drug production



groups and had contacts with Wa. These two large crime syndicates have recently had problems for the control of the area neighbouring Thailand, traditionally under the influence of the first gang.

The bulk of marijuana production in Asia originated in the **Philippines**. Small cultivations were also found in Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia. There was no hashish manufacture in South East Asia. In the whole area, marijuana was the second most abused drug and ranked first in Indonesia, Laos and New Zealand; second in Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia and Malaysia and third in Japan. The illicit production of ATS has rapidly spread over this region: in fact, drug traffickers succeeded in diverting ephedrine and pseudoephedrine

– precursors of metamphetamines – towards the illicit channels. The major ATS source countries were India (for Burmese labs) and China. This Country produced large quantities of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, both through the chemical synthesis process and from its extraction from the homonymous plant growing wild in the semi-desert provinces of Xinjiang and Mongolia. Vietnam was considered the major producer of sassafras oil all over the world ( a mixture containing safrole and 3,4 –MDP-2P, also Known as PMK (3,4-methylenedioxyphenyl-2-propane). Sassafras oil was extracted from cinnamon tree, grown in Vietnam, Laos (province of Houaphan, in the North East area of the Country, along the Vietnamese border) and in Cambodia.

