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In this issue:

**Tackling Drug Smuggling:
NATO-Russia Cooperation**

**Operation Ocean Shield:
The Zeeleeuw Surfaces**

**Riots in Tunisia Leave
Dozens Dead**

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Tackling Drug Smuggling: NATO-Russia Cooperation **By: Chelsea Plante**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) noted in its "Afghanistan Opium Survey", that Afghanistan opium production, of which 6,100 tones are produced annually, now accounts for 92% of the world's opium production. UNODC has estimated that the global retail value of Afghanistan based opium, and its heroin derivative, amount to over USD \$65 billion. The trade in opium has a toxic effect on Afghanistan, the countries through which the drugs pass and the markets in which they're sold. It undermines law and order, and makes corruption endemic.

The Chief of UNODC, Yury Fedotov, has called for international cooperation in the fight against illegal drug trafficking from Afghanistan, warning that if such cooperation is not forthcoming, the drug barons will increase the production of illegal drugs.

At this year's NATO Summit in Lisbon, Russia and the Alliance established a new strategic partnership. One of the areas of enhanced cooperation will be the training of counter-narcotics forces from Afghanistan and the central Asian countries, including Pakistan and Tajikistan. Russia suffers the blight of heroin addiction just as acutely as NATO nations do, and with one of the major transit routes for heroin running through Central Asia and on to Russia, the mutual benefit of reducing this flow of narcotics is obvious.

To the South of Moscow, lies a center which specializes in training international law enforcement personnel. This center along with another one in Turkey have trained over a thousand counter-narcotics officers from Afghanistan since 2005. An initiative of the NATO-Russia council, the courses are running in conjunction with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The syllabus covers weapons tactics, the use of sniffer dogs, and lessons on how to build legal cases against illegal smugglers. A visit to Moscow airport is also arranged to see how modern border techniques can help to detect the smuggling of Afghan narcotics.

Although there have been improvements in counter-narcotics policing, Afghanistan still lacks the forces necessary for fighting drug smugglers. If the international community can help provide the counter narcotics police with equipment, training opportunities, and new technology in airports, better results will be seen in fighting the narcotics trade and the detaining smugglers.

All aspects of the drugs trade are examined at the centre. The work is not just about seizing drugs, but also focuses on cracking down on the materials needed to produce the end product. Without certain precursor materials, for instance, it is almost impossible to turn raw opium into heroin.

The training builds up individual capability but also brings together the different nations encouraging a network of law enforcement agencies. With a renewed effort to step up this cooperation in Lisbon, a new training facility is scheduled to open near St. Petersburg, ensuring the progress made in building Central Asian capacity can continue into the future.

Further Reading: [Russia Joins Central Asia Anti-Drug Four](#), [NATO-Russia Tackle Drug Smuggling](#), [Drug Trafficking in Afghanistan](#), [Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan Agree on Anti-Drug Smuggling](#)

Operation Ocean Shield: The Zeeleeuw Surfaces

By: Chelsea Plante

Until recently, piracy was a phenomenon in decline. Twenty-first century piracy was first seen in the South China Sea and in the Malacca Straits. Between 2000 and 2004 attacks per year peaked at roughly 350 to 450, and then dropped by almost half in 2005. This reduction was attributed to efficient and coordinated international action against the pirates, including United Nations Security Council Resolutions 814 (2008), 1816 (2008), 1838 (2008), 1844 (2008), 1846 (2008), 1851 (2008), 1897 (2009), and 1918 (2010), which call on all states to criminalize piracy under their domestic laws and affirm that the failure to prosecute persons responsible for acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia undermines the anti-piracy efforts of the international community.

In 2008, however, piracy skyrocketed again due almost exclusively to the dramatic increase of piracy off the Coast of Somalia. Piracy is once again at the forefront of the international community's attention, as maritime trade is threatened and ransom payments to Somali pirates have risen by millions of dollars.

Today, the political aims of the pirates have all but been forgotten, with the true end of the attacks being the enrichment of the pirates. Drifting further and further from the Somali coast, the pirates are attacking commercial freighters, pleasure craft, and vessels bearing the food aid on which so many Somalis depend.

In 2004, the International Maritime Board warned all vessels to avoid sailing within 50 nautical miles of the Somali coast. In 2005, it increased this distance to 100 nautical miles. By 2007, some pirate attacks extended as far as 350 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia, with pirate attacks occurring in the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden and at the mouth of the Red Sea. Between 2007 and 2008, the main area of pirate activity shifted from southern Somalia and Mogadishu port to the Gulf of Aden. Since the beginning of 2009, there has been an increase in the number of attacks reported off the east coast of Somalia in the western Indian Ocean, with some attacks taking place over 1,000 nautical miles off the coast.

Zeeleeuw, a Dutch submarine, will return home this week having completed its mission off the Horn of Africa. The submarine, 68 meters long, just over 8 meters broad, and with a crew of 60, was the first submarine used by the NATO to help combat piracy. The Zeeleeuw was carefully chosen, having clear technical advantages for this task: it is able to operate for up to 6 weeks submerged and is very quiet because of its electric propulsion system.

The submarine patrolled the Somali coast gathering intelligence about pirates. The mission was part of Operation Ocean Shield, launched by NATO in August 2009 to combat piracy, particularly in the waters around the Horn of Africa – a high risk area with 60 or 70 ships passing every day. Up until now the Alliance has only used helicopters and ships for this operation.

The results of this mission were encouraging. The Zeeleeuw provided a valuable contribution to the identification of pirates and the suppression of further pirate activities. The crew of the submarine monitored the ocean 24 hours a day using radar and sonar. Hidden under the water, the submarine was able to closely approach pirate boats and hijacked ships to gather all necessary intelligence. The crew could then pass on that information to surface warships which could then take action.

The Zeeleeuw has recently surfaced and is on route back to the Netherlands. Despite the mission's success, however, NATO has not yet confirmed that there will be a submarine presence in the region in the future.

Further Reading: [Dutch Submarine Zeeleeuw Completes NATO Anti-Piracy Mission](#), [Piracy costs Global Economy \\$7-12 Billion a Year](#), [Piracy Incidents in Asia Rose 60% Last Year](#), [A Submarine to Combat Piracy](#)

Riots in Tunisia Leave Dozens Dead

By: Greg McBride

For three weeks Tunisia has been engulfed in protests and violent riots as young people take to the streets to protest extremely high rates of unemployment and oppressive government policies.

The death toll continues to mount as Government officials claim that police opened fire on protesters with live ammunition after they had burning tires and Molotov cocktails thrown at them. Hospitals report that, at the time of writing, more than 50 protesters had been killed. There were no reports of police fatalities.

The unrest has prompted the Government to call in the army to crack down on the violence in the more heavily affected areas, including the city of Kasserine. They have also closed all schools and universities indefinitely.

The demonstrations began on December 17th, when a 26 year old recent graduate set himself on fire in protest. He did this after his fruit stand, which was his sole source of income, was shut down by police. This served as a catalyst for the protestors, many of whom feel that Government policies are preventing them from gaining employment.

The dispute is not only being fought on the streets, but online as well. People are using social media outlets, such as Facebook, to plan and disseminate information about the scheduled protests and share criticisms of the government. This has prompted the Government to initiate a targeted crack down on many individual's online presence, shutting down blogs, Facebook profiles and email accounts of prominent dissenting individuals.

Additionally, the Tunisian government has gone so far as to jail many bloggers and online activists in the last few days. However, even before the recent outbreaks of violence, Tunisia has had strict filtering of the internet, very similar to the policies of Iran and China. In 2007, one blogger was beaten and jailed for his criticisms of the President.

Reacting to this systemic control of the online community, groups like *Anonymous* and *Tunisian Activists*, have begun targeting Tunisian government websites with denial of service attacks and online vandalism. Moreover, because the Tunisian Government is trying to gain passwords and usernames through covert means, Anonymous has also developed a browser add-on that helps to mask the individual's information from third parties.

In an effort to ease tensions President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali promised to subsidize certain necessities, such as food, and create 300,000 new jobs, up from the current projection of 50,000. The official unemployment rate in Tunisia is 14%; however among young people, it is much higher. The President has also stated that he will not seek reelection in the future and has fired his Minister of the Interior.

But in a country of more than ten million, it is hard to see whether those 300,000 jobs will make significant changes to the labour market, and more importantly, in the minds of the nation's youth.

Further Reading: [Tunisia President Ben Ali 'will not see new term,' Tunisia's Interior Minister Sacked](#), [Tunisia's Bitter Cyberwar](#), [Tunisian Leader Promises New Jobs](#), [Tunisian Security Forces Clash with Youths in Fresh Protests](#)



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