

## *Special Report*

### **Turkey, drugs, Faustian alliances and Sibel Edmonds**

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June 29, 2004—Taking Turkey as the focal point and with a start date of 1998, it is easy to speculate why Sibel Edmonds indicated that there was a convergence of US and foreign counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism and US national security and economic interests all of which were too preoccupied to surface critical information warning Americans of the attacks of September 11, 2001. After all, who would have believed drug runners operating in Central Asia? And besides, President Clinton was promoting Turkey, one of the world's top drug transit points, as a model for Muslim-Western cooperation and a country necessary to reshape the Middle East.

The FBI's Office of International Operations, in conjunction with the CIA and the US State Department counter-narcotics section, the United Kingdom's MI6, Israel's Mossad, Pakistan's ISI, the US DEA, Turkey's MIT, and the governments and intelligence agencies of dozens of nations, were in one way or another involved in the illicit drug trade, either trying to stop it or benefit from it. What can be surmised from the public record is that from 1998 to September 10, 2001, the "War on Drugs" kept bumping into the nascent "War on Terror" and new directions in US foreign policy.

It's easy to imagine the thousands of drug couriers, middlemen, financiers and lab technicians moving back and forth between Pakistan and Turkey, and over to Western Europe and the United States, and the tidbits of information they gleaned from their sponsors as they traveled. As information gathering assets for the intelligence agencies of the world, they must have been invaluable. And given the dozens of foreign intelligence services working in the counter-narcotics/terrorism fields, the "chatter" that just dozens of well-placed operatives may have overheard about attacks against Western targets must have found its way into the US intelligence apparatus. But, again, who could believe the audacity of non-state actors organizing a domestic attack against the supreme power of the day, the USA? Implementing a new strategic direction and business deals may have overcome the wacky warnings from the counter-narcotics folks.

Back in the late 1990s and early 2000, who would have believed the rants of a drug courier from Afghanistan saying that some guy named bin Laden was going to attack America, particularly if it involved America's newest friend, Turkey? Or that a grand design to reshape Central Asia and the Middle East with Turkey and Israel as pivot points was being pushed by the Clinton administration as a matter of national policy.

The historical record shows that the US "War on Drugs" and the nascent "War on Terror" kept colliding with not only within the US intelligence, policy and business apparatus, but also with European strategic and business interests. Turkey continues its push for entry into the European Union and the USA wants that to happen as the current meeting of NATO, and President [sic] Bush's attendance under dangerous circumstances, in Turkey demonstrates. Turkey is one of the USA's and Europe's top arms buyers and is located near what could be some of the biggest oil and natural gas fields in the world. At this point it's worth noting that the one of the FBI's tasks is to counter industrial espionage and to engage in it. Where big arms sales pit the US against its European competitors—as is the case in Turkey (particularly starting in 1998)—the FBI is busy making sure the US gets the edge over its competition. Allies are friends only so far.

Did warnings foretelling of an attack on American soil by bin Laden's crew get lost in the War on Drugs or the US national and economic interest in troublesome Turkey? It seems only Ms Edmonds knows.

### **Turkey Cold to UK and USA Concerns**

In 1998, the US Department of State (DOS) was finally forced to admit that Turkey was a major refining and transit point for the flow of heroin from Southwest Asia to Western Europe, with small quantities of the stuff finding its way to the streets of the USA. In that same year, Kendal Nezan, writing for *Le Monde Diplomatique*, reported that MIT and the Turkish National Police force were actively supporting the trade in illicit drugs not only for fun and profit, but out of desperation.

"After the Gulf War in 1991, Turkey found itself deprived of the all-important Iraqi market and, since it lacked significant oil reserves of its own, it decided to make up for the loss by turning more massively to drugs. The trafficking increased in intensity with the arrival of the hawks in power, after the death in suspicious circumstances of President Turgut Özal in April 1993. According to the minister of interior, the war in Kurdistan had cost the Turkish exchequer upwards of \$12.5 billion. According to the daily *Hürriyet*, Turkey's heroin trafficking brought in \$25 billion in 1995 and \$37.5 billion in 1996...Only criminal networks working in close cooperation with the police and the army could possibly organize trafficking on such a scale. Drug barons have stated publicly, on Turkish television and in the West, that they have been working under the protection of the Turkish government and to its financial benefit. The traffickers themselves travel on diplomatic passports. The drugs are even transported by military helicopter from the Iranian border."

Nowhere is the pain of Turkey's role in the heroin trade felt more horribly than in the United Kingdom. According to London's Letter written by a Member of Parliament, "The war against drugs and drug trafficking in Britain is huge. Turkish heroin in particular is a top priority for the MI6 and the Foreign Ministry. During his visit to the British Embassy in Ankara, the head of the Foreign Office's Turkey Department was clear about this. He reassured an English journalist that the heroin trade was more important than billions of pounds worth of trade capacity and weapons selling. When the journalist in question told me about this, I was reminded of my teacher's words at university in Ankara ten years ago. He was also working for the Turkish Foreign Ministry. The topic of a lecture discussion was about Turkey's Economy and I still remember his words today, '50 billion dollars worth of foreign debt is nothing, it is two lorry loads of heroin...'"

### **Afghanistan: Top Opiate Producer and America's Friend**

Both the DOS and the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) described in detail the transit routes and countries involved in getting the goods to Turkey. Intelligence organizations here and abroad must have sanctioned the role that they, and Turkey and Afghanistan, played in the process. "Afghanistan is the original source of most of the opiates reaching Turkey. Afghan opiates, and also hashish, are stockpiled at storage and staging areas in Pakistan, from where a ton or larger quantities are smuggled by overland vehicles to Turkey via Iran. Multi-ton quantities of opiates and hashish also are moved to coastal areas of Pakistan and Iran, where the drugs are loaded on ships waiting off-shore, which then smuggle the contraband to points in Turkey along the Mediterranean, Aegean, and/or Marmara seas. Opiates and hashish also are smuggled overland from Afghanistan via Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to Turkey.

"Turkish-based traffickers and brokers operate directly and in conjunction with narcotic suppliers, smugglers, transporters, laboratory operators, drug distributors, money collectors, and money launderers in and outside Turkey. Traffickers in Turkey illegally acquire the precursor chemical acetic anhydride, which is used in the production of heroin, from sources in Western Europe, the Balkans, and Russia. During the 27-month period from July 1, 1999, to September 30, 2001, over 56 metric tons of illicit acetic anhydride were seized in or destined for Turkey."

### **The Ankara Pact**

The Middle East Report concluded in 1998 that probably the greatest strategic move in the Clinton post-Cold War years is what could be called "The Ankara Pact"—an alliance between the US, Turkey, and Israel that essentially circumvents and bottles up the Arab countries. Earlier in 1997, Turkish Prime Minister Yilmaz visited with Bill Clinton to ensure him that Turkey would attempt to improve its human rights record by slaughtering fewer Kurds, but also mentioned that if the US pushed too hard on that subject or if the US Congress adopted an Armenian Genocide Resolution, Turkey might award a billion dollar contract for attack helicopters to the Europeans or maybe even Russia.

During this timeframe, and with approval from the USA, Turkey began to let contracts to Israel to upgrade its F-4, F-5 and F-16 aircraft. Pemra Hazbay, writing in the May 2004 issue of Peace Watch, reported that total Israeli arms sales to Turkey had exceeded \$1 billion since 2000. "In December 1996, Israel won a deal worth \$630 million to upgrade Turkey's fleet of fifty-four F-4 Phantom fighter jets. In 1998, Turkey awarded a \$75 million contract to upgrade its fleet of 48 F-5 fighter jets to Israel Aircraft Industries' Lahav division, beating out strong French competition. In 2002, Turkey ratified its largest military deal with Israel, a \$700 million contract for the renovation of Turkish tanks." But that pales in comparison to the \$20 billion in US arms exports and military aid dealt to Turkey over the last 24 years.

Then in 1999 came a news item from a publication known as the Foreign Report based in the United Kingdom. That publication indicated that "Israeli intelligence, the Mossad, had expanded its base in Turkey and opened branches in Turkey for other two departments stationed in Tel Aviv. The Mossad carried out several spy operations and plans through its elements stationed in Istanbul and Ankara, where it received support and full cooperation from the Turkish government. According to the military cooperation agreement between the Mossad and its Turkish counterpart, the MIT, signed by former Turkish Foreign Minister Hekmet Citen during his visit to Israel in 1993, the Mossad had provided Turkey with plans aiding it in closing its border with Iraq, as well as being involved in the arrest the chairman of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan." That agreement also included help with counter-narcotics.

Earlier in 1998, Israeli, Turkish and American military forces engaged in exercises in the Mediterranean, according to Reuters and Agencie France Press. "[These exercises] signal to the radical states in the region that there is a strong alliance between Israel, Turkey and the United States which they must fear,' Israeli political scientist Efraim Inbar said. Defense officials said during last month's visit to Ankara that they hoped the Jewish lobby in Washington would help Turkey offset Greek and Armenian influence on Capitol Hill. 'That's certainly part of this. They expect us to help them and we do help them a bit,' said David Ivri, an adviser who directs biannual strategy talks with Turkey.'" Reports also indicated that the CIA and Pentagon intelligence organizations had regularly chaired meetings of Turkish and Israeli officers in Tel Aviv for years.

## **DEA & FBI**

Prior to the US invasion of Afghanistan, the DEA monitored the Afghanistan drug trade from its two offices in Pakistan: The Islamabad Country Office and the Peshawar Resident Office. In addition to Pakistan and Afghanistan, the DEA Islamabad Country Office also includes in its area of responsibility Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. Asa Hutchinson, the administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, testified in October 2001 that DEA intelligence confirmed the presence of a linkage between Afghanistan's ruling Taliban and international "terrorist" Osama bin Laden.

He went on to say that although DEA had no direct evidence to confirm that bin Laden is involved in the drug trade, the relationship between the Taliban and bin Laden is believed to have flourished in large part due to the Taliban's substantial reliance on the opium trade as a source of organizational revenue. "While the activities of the two entities do not always follow the same trajectory, we know that drugs and terror frequently share the common ground of geography, money, and violence. In this respect, the very sanctuary enjoyed by bin Laden is based on the existence of the Taliban's support for the drug trade. This connection defines the deadly, symbiotic relationship between the illicit drug trade and international terrorism."

Meanwhile, back at the FBI, the Office of International Operations oversees the Legal Attaché Program operating at 46 locations around the world. The operation maintains contact with Interpol, other US federal agencies such as the CIA and military agencies such as the Defense Intelligence Agency, and foreign police and security officers. Its job is to investigate or counter threats from foreign intelligence, terrorists and criminal enterprises that threaten the national or economic security of the USA. It coordinates its activities with all US and foreign intelligence operations. In 2000, it opened offices in Ankara, Turkey, and Almaty, Kazhakstan. Since 1996, it has had offices in Islamabad, Pakistan, and Tel Aviv, Israel. In 1997 it opened one in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Combined, these offices monitor the entire Middle East, Persian Gulf and Central Asian threat areas, developing thousands of “investigative leads”.

Ms Edmonds has given the American people leads that show that they are easily sacrificed for a perceived greater good.

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