

Reports say U.S. planes transporting illicit drugs in Afghanistan



**A Lockheed C 130 Hercules of the US Air Force landing at the Kabul International Airport.
(Photo> AFP)**

Tehran, August 24 (RHC)-- A high-ranking Iranian official says the production of narcotic drugs has seen a fifty-fold increase over a span of 17 years in Afghanistan, adding that American planes as well as those belonging to the U.S.-led military alliance and NATO are engaged in transporting illicit drugs in the war-torn country.

Eskandar Momeni, director general of Iran Drug Control Headquarters, made the announcement during a video conference attended by the deputies, general secretaries and secretaries of the provincial anti-drug coordination councils in the capital, Tehran, on Monday.

"In the year 2000, the total production of narcotics in Afghanistan stood at about 200 tons, which rose to over 9,000 tons in 2017, an increase of about 50 times," Momeni was quoted by ISNA news agency as saying.

"Based on reliable information, planes operated by the NATO and the United States transport these illicit drugs in our neighboring country," the official added.

The Iranian official said necessary measures have been taken to fight drug smuggling over the past four decades, but it seems we have further miles to go in this regard. "While efforts in the areas of countering, treatment and harm reduction are being vigorously pursued, the first priority of Iran Drug Control Headquarters is in the field of preventing an outbreak and addiction," Momeni underlined.

Last month, Russia's TASS News Agency also quoted the Russian presidential envoy to Afghanistan as saying that U.S. intelligence agencies has been involved in "drug trafficking" in the war-ravaged country.

"U.S. intelligence officers... are involved in drug trafficking. Their planes from Kandahar, from Bagram [airfield near Kabul] are flying wherever they want to - to Germany, to Romania - without any inspections," Zamir Kabulov said.

Kabulov stressed that U.S. involvement in drug trafficking to Europe through uncharted planes is an open secret in Afghanistan, saying: "Every citizen of Kabul will tell you that, everyone is ready to talk about that."

The United Nations says more than 80 percent of the world's opium is produced in Afghanistan and the bulk of narcotics produced in the country are destined for European states.

The United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 shortly after the September 11 attacks. While the invasion ended the Taliban's rule in the country, it has failed to eliminate the militant group.

American forces have since remained bogged down in Afghanistan through the presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and now, Donald Trump.

About 2,400 US soldiers have been killed, along with unknown numbers of Afghan troops and Taliban militants. Over 100,000 Afghans have been killed or injured since 2009 when the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan began documenting casualties.

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