

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. Any information on the movement Khatm-e- Manshiat would be of assistance.**
- 2. Any information on the newspaper Sahar would be of assistance.**
- 3. What information is available on the “Afridi clan” and any connections with narcotics trafficking?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Any information on the movement Khatm-e- Manshiat would be of assistance.**

Information from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) indicates the organisation called Khatm-e-Manchiate does exist. It was reportedly an anti-drug organisation, formed in the mid 1980's, and based in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The pertinent extract follows in detail:

Khatm-e-Manchiate was an anti-drug organization which had a close relationship with the National Awami Party, one of the largest political parties in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Khatm-e-Manchiate was formed in the mid 1980's, however its impact on preventing drug use in the NWFP was limited. The group, although technically still in existence, is no longer operational. Both Khatm-e-Manchiate and the now defunct Tehrik-e-Surkhposhtan (an anti-colonial movement formed in NWFP before partition) had close associations with the Afghan intelligence agency, KHAD (DIMIA Country Information Service 2002, *Country Information Report No 52/02 – Khatm-e-Manchiate*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 6 March 2002), 11 March – Attachment 1).

No additional information was found in the sources consulted referring to this organisation.

2. Any information on the newspaper Sahar would be of assistance.

According to the sources consulted, *Sahar* newspaper is labelled as an “Afghan daily” with its office based in Peshawar’s old city, in the Kisa Khwani bazaar. It is published in Pashto and Dari, and according to a February 2005 report, “has a circulation between 6,000 and 10,000 copies a day”. The pertinent extract follows in detail:

Afghan Journalists in Peshawar

A visit to the office of the Afghan daily “Sahar” (dawn), in the chaotic narrow bazaar of Kisa Khwani in Peshawar’s old city, illustrates some of the problems exiled Afghan journalists face. The office is a few rented rooms in a crumbling building and the paper is put together on minimal resources using ancient equipment.

“We face severe economic problems. Sahar has been surviving on sales and advertisements since it started publishing five years ago,” Muhammad Zubair Sahfiqi, editor of Sahar, told IRIN. The newspaper, published in the native languages of Pashto and Dari, has a circulation between 6,000 to 10,000 copies a day (‘AFGHANISTAN: Focus on challenges facing Afghan journalists’ 2005, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) website, 9 February http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=19157&SelectRegion=Central_Asia – Accessed 9 February 2005 – Attachment 2).

In an article published on afghan-network website, entitled ‘Afghan Media: The Current Situation’, an overview of *Sahar*’s subject matter and affiliations is provided. The article is undated, however the content suggests it was written after 1996, but prior to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001. The author, Mati ullah Abid, states the following in relation to *Sahar*:

Currently no Afghan newspaper publishes daily under the ownership of an Afghan. Although a newspaper Daily SAHAR (Pashto-Dari) appears daily in Peshawar (Pakistan) under the editorship of Mr. Naeem Mustafa (an Afghan national) but he started the newspaper with the help of a Pakistani publisher, Arif Sheikh. Sahar having circulation of more than five thousands papers daily, contains news and articles about Afghanistan. It covers stories about different Afghan groups but the Pakistani government controls its policy. Even then, it is a good step from Pakistani authorities to allow foreigners to run a daily newspaper (Abid, M. (undated), ‘Afghan Media’, afghan-network website <http://www.afghan-network.net/Culture/mati2.html> – Accessed 7 February 2005 – Attachment 3).

On 6 May 2004, *Pakistan Press International Information Services* published an article that discussed the “Peshawar-based Pashto-Persian Daily SAHAR. At the conclusion of the article it states, “It is to mention here that Daily SAHAR is a Peshawar-based Pashto-Persian newspaper mostly staffed by Jihadic period workers of Hizb-e-Islami of Afghanistan” (‘Hekmatyar still heads Hizb-e-Islami, says Shooraa’ 2004, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 6 May – Attachment 4).

On 28 December 2001, *BBC Monitoring Central Asia* published an article, sourced from the Peshawar-based *Afghan Islamic Press news agency*, which highlights *Sahar*’s affiliations. The article states, “...Sahar is a Pashto and Dari language daily, which is published by Afghans; most of its writers were working on the Shahdat newspaper of Hezb-e Eslami of [Golboddin] Hekmatyar before 1996” (‘Afghan agency quotes Pakistani report of Bin-Ladin’s death’ 2001, *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, source: Afghan Islamic Press news agency, 28 December – Attachment 5).

On 21 December 1998, a *BBC Monitoring Service: Asia-Pacific* article, sourced from the government-sponsored IRNA news agency, Iran, reported the banning of two Pakistani newspapers into Afghanistan by the Taliban, one being *Sahar*. The action was taken following “anti-Taliban coverage of Afghan students’ demonstrations in Peshawar...” (Taliban ban two Pakistani papers from entry into country’ 1998, *BBC Monitoring Service: Asia-Pacific*, source: IRNA news agency, 21 December – Attachment 6).

3. What information is available on the “Afridi clan” and any connections with narcotics trafficking?

Information provided by the sources consulted indicates that an ethnic Pashtun tribe, commonly referred to as the “Afridi clan”, has exerted a strong influence over the Khyber Pass in NWFP for the last 100 years. The tribe has a long history of arms production and drug-smuggling from Afghanistan, through the NWFP, and on to buyers in the West. The majority of information on the Afridi clan suggests that the principal leader of the Afridi drug syndicate is Haji Ayub Afridi. Additional information which examines this individual appears below, as well as general information regarding the Afridi clan.

In a 2003 report examining opiate smuggling routes out of Afghanistan, *Jane’s Intelligence Review* provided the following overview of the situation in Pakistan’s NWFP, with reference to the Afridi clan’s influence in the area:

As the UN Drug Control Programme reported, in southern Afghanistan, where most of the opium production is concentrated (in Kandahar and Helmand provinces), **the opium market was less centralised than in the north (Nangrahar) where the Pashtun (the Shinwari tribe in Afghanistan and the Afridi in NWFP) tend to monopolise the trade [Researcher emphasis]**. In the south, Sangin in Helmand province was the biggest opium market in 2002, followed by Musa Qala, north of Sangin.

Northern Afghanistan’s regional market is dominated by the heroin trade, mainly because of the leading role taken by both the Shinwari and the Afridi in heroin conversion [Researcher emphasis]. In the south of the country, the principal trade is in opium and morphine base (converted into heroin using acetic acid anhydride), mostly conducted by Balochi and Pashtun merchants who are not members of the Afridi and Shinwari tribes.

Heroin is easily trafficked in NWFP from Afghanistan across Afridi territory and the Khyber Pass, through what has been termed a ‘drug pipeline’ [Researcher emphasis] (Chouvy, P. 2003, ‘Opiate smuggling routes from Afghanistan to Europe and Asia’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 1 March – Attachment 7).

The Afridi clan, and its connections, are discussed in a 2003 report by US-sponsored Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), which describes the indictment of 11 men in connection to an international drug-trafficking operation. Comments are provided by author, Ron Synovitz, and RFE/RL regional analyst Bill Samii as follows:

Those indicted include members of the ethnic Pashtun “Afridi” clan, which has a history of trafficking drugs from Afghanistan through Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province and on to markets in the West.

...Samii said U.S. drug-enforcement officials have known for decades about the involvement of the Afridi clan in the smuggling of heroin and other opium-based drugs from Afghanistan into Pakistan and on to destinations in Europe.

He cited the saga of Haji Ayub Afridi as an illustration of the clan's reach within the world of drug smuggling. Haji Ayub Afridi has built a \$2 million luxury home at Landi Kotal, not far from the Afghan border, in the relatively impoverished Khyber tribal agency of Pakistan.

During the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Haji Ayub Afridi served a 3 1/2-year prison sentence in the United States on charges of international drug trafficking. He also has been convicted and sentenced in Pakistan, where authorities in the 1980s once found 17 tons of hashish at one of his warehouses in Baluchistan. And he has been jailed in Pakistan in connection with a 6.5-ton shipment of hashish that was seized in Antwerp, Belgium, during the 1980s.

Samii said Haji Ayub Afridi's smuggling network has benefited from his leadership role within the Afridi clan -- a role that included a brief term of office in Pakistan's parliament during the early 1990s. He said the Afridis are well entrenched along the area on the Afghan side of the Torkham border crossing, as well as in Peshawar, Pakistan, and along the North West Frontier Province. "They've also got good connections with some of the Afghan so-called warlords who operated along the eastern side of Afghanistan," [Researcher emphasis] Samii said. "Even before current events -- i.e., during the Taliban period -- they had some connections with them. And then, especially back in the 1980s and into the early 1990s, they had connections with some of these people smuggling opium and opium products across the border."

Samii explained that the traditional clan system in the region gives tribes like the Afridis a degree of autonomy that has allowed them to have a dominant role in the drug trade. "[The Afridi clan is] an extended clan. And the clan system is very influential in that part of the world -- especially in those provinces [of southern and eastern Afghanistan and the autonomous tribal agencies of Pakistan]. In the NWFP, in fact, the Pakistani central government has no [legal] right to actually operate without the permission of local leaders. And so, whatever the clans decree is going to be the law of the land in that part of the world," he said (Synovitz, R. 2003, 'Afghanistan/Pakistan: U.S. Indicts 11 In Connection With Drug Ring', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, Global Security website, 17 September <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2003/09/sec-030917-rferl-160855.htm> – Accessed 7 February 2005 – Attachment 8).

On 4 December 2001, *Asia Times* (online edition) published an article exploring the relationship between Haji Ayub Afridi and the United States government. The article, authored by Syed Saleem Shahzad, discusses the release of Afridi in December 2003 by US authorities, "after serving just a few weeks of a seven-year sentence for the export of 6.5 tons of hashish, seized at Antwerp, Belgium, in the 1980s". This action was apparently prompted by the US and Pakistan, as "Afridi will be central in moves to bring together the shattered Afghan warlords, whom it is hoped will not only become a force to be reckoned with in any future interim set-up, they will also be able to assist in the tracking down of Osama bin Laden" (Shahzad, S. 2001, 'US turns to drug baron to rally support', *Asia Times* (online edition), 4 December <http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/CL04Df01.html> – Accessed 7 February 2005 – Attachment 9).

The most recent reference to Haji Ayub Afridi in the sources consulted is a January 2004 article by *Pakistan Press International Information Services*. The article refers to "Ayub Afridi Joint Secretary PML [Pakistan Muslim League] NWFP who is also a former provincial minister form district Abbottabad". The information suggests he may be Joint Secretary of

the Pakistan Muslim League (NWFP) ('Ayub Afridi meets governor' 2004, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 28 January – Attachment 10).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Government Information & Reports

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov>

United Nations (UN)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/teXis/vtx/home>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) <http://www.unhchr.ch>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International (AI) <http://www.amnesty.org>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) <http://www.hrw.org>

The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) <http://www.iwpr.net>

The International Crisis Group <http://www.crisisweb.org>

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au>

AltaVista search engine <http://au.altavista.com>

Online Subscription Services

Jane's Intelligence Review http://jir.janes.com/public/login/jir_regLogin.html

UNHCR *REFWORLD* UNHCR Refugee Information Online

Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. DIMIA Country Information Service 2002, *Country Information Report No 52/02 – Khatm-e-Manchiate*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 6 March 2002), 11 March. (CISNET Pakistan CX62754)
2. 'AFGHANISTAN: Focus on challenges facing Afghan journalists' 2005, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) website, 9 February. (http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=19157&SelectRegion=Central_Asia – Accessed 9 February 2005)
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