



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  
Regional Office for Central Asia

# ENHANCING BORDER CONTROL AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

UNODC PROGRAMME FOR CENTRAL ASIA





# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

<b>1</b> NO POVERTY 	<b>2</b> ZERO HUNGER 	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	<b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION 	<b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY 	<b>6</b> CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	<b>7</b> AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	<b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	<b>9</b> INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 
<b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	<b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	<b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 	<b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION 	<b>14</b> LIFE BELOW WATER 	<b>15</b> LIFE ON LAND 	<b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 	<b>17</b> PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	



Vulnerability to drugs, whether in terms of cultivation, production, or trafficking exists in different countries at different levels of development. The relationship between economic development and drug trafficking is manifested in the illicit cultivation of drug crops.



Premature death or disability due to drug use. Drug use affects people in the prime of life. Young people get drawn into a vicious circle of drug abuse and drug trafficking instead of realizing opportunities for legitimate employment and education.



Women suffering from drug addiction with HIV are more vulnerable and more exposed to stigma.



Drug addiction is a condition that affects people suffering from disorders stemming from drug use, complicating the process of recovery and social inclusion. A biased attitude of healthcare workers towards individuals who use drugs may affect the recovery process.



Illicit cultivation is often carried out in forested areas and clearing of forests leads to deforestation. Illicit drug trafficking can have a direct impact (creation of infrastructure) and indirect impact (privatization of state land to create narco-farms) on deforestation.



The reduction of the spread of violence, strengthening the rule of law and access to justice, and combating organized crime is closely associated with the world drug problem and its resolution.



Principles of international cooperation and shared responsibility are enshrined in the conventions of drug control.

# Countering transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, and preventing terrorism

The nexus of transnational organized crime and terrorism, including drug trafficking, is a concern for the Central Asian states.

On the one hand, drug trafficking and illicit financial flows emanating out of Afghanistan pose increased challenges for the region. Afghanistan alone accounted for 85 percent of the global total of opium production in 2020. Opium produced in Afghanistan supplies markets in neighboring countries and Europe, the Near and Middle East, South Asia and Africa.

On the other hand, the emergence of new psychoactive substances remains a formidable challenge and presents a potential threat to the security and development of the Central Asian region and the Caucasus.

To provide the Central Asian states with technical assistance and to connect national and regional efforts, UNODC utilizes a mechanism of an integrated response to drug-related challenges and border security issues. The organization's initiatives strengthen both national interagency coordination and regional cross-border cooperation by establishing Border Liaison Offices, Port Control Units, border outposts, and Interagency Mobile Teams in the Central Asian states. Additionally, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre serves as an information and coordination platform for combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors.

Fostering greater cross-border and interagency cooperation is the only way forward for achieving our shared vision to build a more inclusive and fairer future, to make the region safer from drugs and crime, as well as healthy for the benefit of our generation and for future generations to come.

**Ashita Mittal, UNODC Regional Representative for Central Asia**

# Innovative mechanisms for regional law enforcement interagency and cross-border cooperation

Strengthened regional law enforcement interagency and cross-border cooperation play a critical role in a more effective response to transnational organized crime, including illicit drug trafficking.

UNODC developed an integrated harmonized strategy for cross-border cooperation on drug control in the region. The UNODC Cross-Border Cooperation Project supported member countries through the creation of a platform in the region to develop a collective response of law enforcement agencies to the challenges related to illicit drug trafficking. Under the project, we created innovative mechanisms and concepts aimed at fostering cross-border communication and intelligence-sharing to detect and intercept smuggling, including narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, firearms and counterfeit goods while facilitating legitimate international trade.

One of these innovative mechanisms is the establishment of Border Liaison Offices at the key border crossing points in the region, which bring together the representatives from all law enforcement agencies so they can work in one office, collect, analyze and share information. Border Liaison Office is a mechanism that facilitates the exchange of information between law enforcement agencies of the neighboring countries through direct cross-border communication links at the operational level. The UNODC Cross-Border Cooperation Project is the first project to establish Border Liaison Offices in Central Asia.

**Yusuf Kurbonov, International Programme Coordinator, UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia**

# UNODC PROGRAMME FOR CENTRAL ASIA

## SUB-PROGRAMME 1: COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME, ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING AND PREVENTING TERRORISM

### BORDER CONTROL AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

The initiative focuses on enhancing the capacity of border crossing points and improving regional cross-border cooperation by promoting the Border Liaison Offices' concept and the development of information and communication networks for border agencies.

#### OBJECTIVES

- Establishment of Border Liaison Offices at border crossing points most susceptible to drug trafficking risks
- Fostering law enforcement cross-border cooperation and intelligence-sharing to effectively counter transnational organized crime while facilitating legitimate international trade in Central Asia.

#### BUDGET

**\$US 14,250,000**

**(2009-2021)**

#### PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES



**NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS** Border and Customs Services, Drug Control Agencies, Ministries of Internal Affairs

#### MAJOR DONORS



#### OTHER DONORS










**Kazakhstan**

**Kyrgyzstan**

**Uzbekistan**

**Tajikistan**

**Turkmenistan**

-  BLOs at road checkpoints
-  BLOs at railway checkpoints
-  Planned BLOs at road checkpoints
-  Planned BLOs at railway checkpoints
-  Strengthening the capacity of international checkpoints

# BORDER LIAISON OFFICES: A new concept for strengthening cross-border law enforcement cooperation in Central Asia

The strengthening of selected border crossing points and the establishment of a new system for improved interagency and cross-border cooperation, improved intelligence gathering and coordination on countering drug trafficking in the region, thus protecting the vulnerable territories against the trafficking of Afghan opiates, remains one of the key areas of cooperation for the UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia.

The UNODC Initiative on Enhancing the Cross-Border Law Enforcement Cooperation (Cross-Border Cooperation Project) of Sub-programme 1 of the UNODC Programme for Central Asia is designed to strengthen the capacity of border crossing points (BCPs) and improve regional cross-border cooperation by promoting the concept of Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) and developing information and communication networks for border agencies.

BLOs are established at the key border crossing points in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.





BLOs are expected to promote improved communication and cooperation between different national law enforcement agencies working along the border. They also aim to foster greater law enforcement cooperation through direct cross-border communication links at the operational level and sharing real-time information on drug traffickers to enable fast and effective intervention by law enforcement officers on both sides of the border.

***“The drug problem is a matter of common concern and can be addressed via concerted efforts. Cross-border cooperation between the states and their relevant agencies is crucial in countering illicit drug trafficking.”***

*Major General of Justice Habibullo Vohidzoda, Director of the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.*

Under this system of cooperation, UNODC has assisted with the establishment of 19 BLOs in geographically remote and potentially vulnerable border crossing points on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz (2), Uzbek-Tajik (6), Kyrgyz-Tajik (4), Kyrgyz-Uzbek (2), Uzbek-Afghan (1), Tajik-Afghan (2) and Kazakh-Uzbek (2) borders. Six BLOs are being established along the Kazakh-Kyrgyz, Tajik-Uzbek and Turkmen-Uzbek borders.

***“The main goal of strengthening cooperation between the border and collaborating agencies is to expand their partnership aimed to consolidate their efforts to counter contemporary challenges and threats in border-related matters and promote universally recognized democratic norms and principles in their work - ultimately contributing to ensuring regional and global security.”***

*Lieutenant Colonel Vepa Shanazarov, Head of the Department, State Border Service of Turkmenistan.*

Each of the participating countries has provided both premises and staff for the BLOs. UNODC is contributing to new infrastructure development and capacity-building through the provision of training courses, high-tech equipment and specialized analytical software needed to enhance database analysis and intelligence-sharing and to establish sustainable information-sharing mechanisms at the regional level. This will enable joint, proactive, and intelligence-driven drug trafficking investigations.

In 2020, the Government of Japan allocated \$US 6.8 million to support UNODC initiatives on countering illicit drug trafficking and transnational organized crime through enhancing cross-border cooperation by strengthening the capacity of BLOs in Central Asia and Interagency Mobile Teams in Uzbekistan. From these funds, over \$US 4.53 million were allocated to the Cross-Border Cooperation Project.

***“Through this project, we would like to see greater cross-border cooperation and coordination among the countries in Central Asia to jointly address the challenges of drug trafficking through enhanced border management. This is also expected to lead to an increase in the seizure of drugs and a decrease in related cross-border organized crimes.”***

*H.E. Mr. Yoshinori Fujiyama, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Republic of Uzbekistan.*

***“The BLO project is something that we have invested in for many years and continue investing. It is a project that has worked.”***

*John Dudley, Senior Law Enforcement Advisor, the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Office at the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan.*

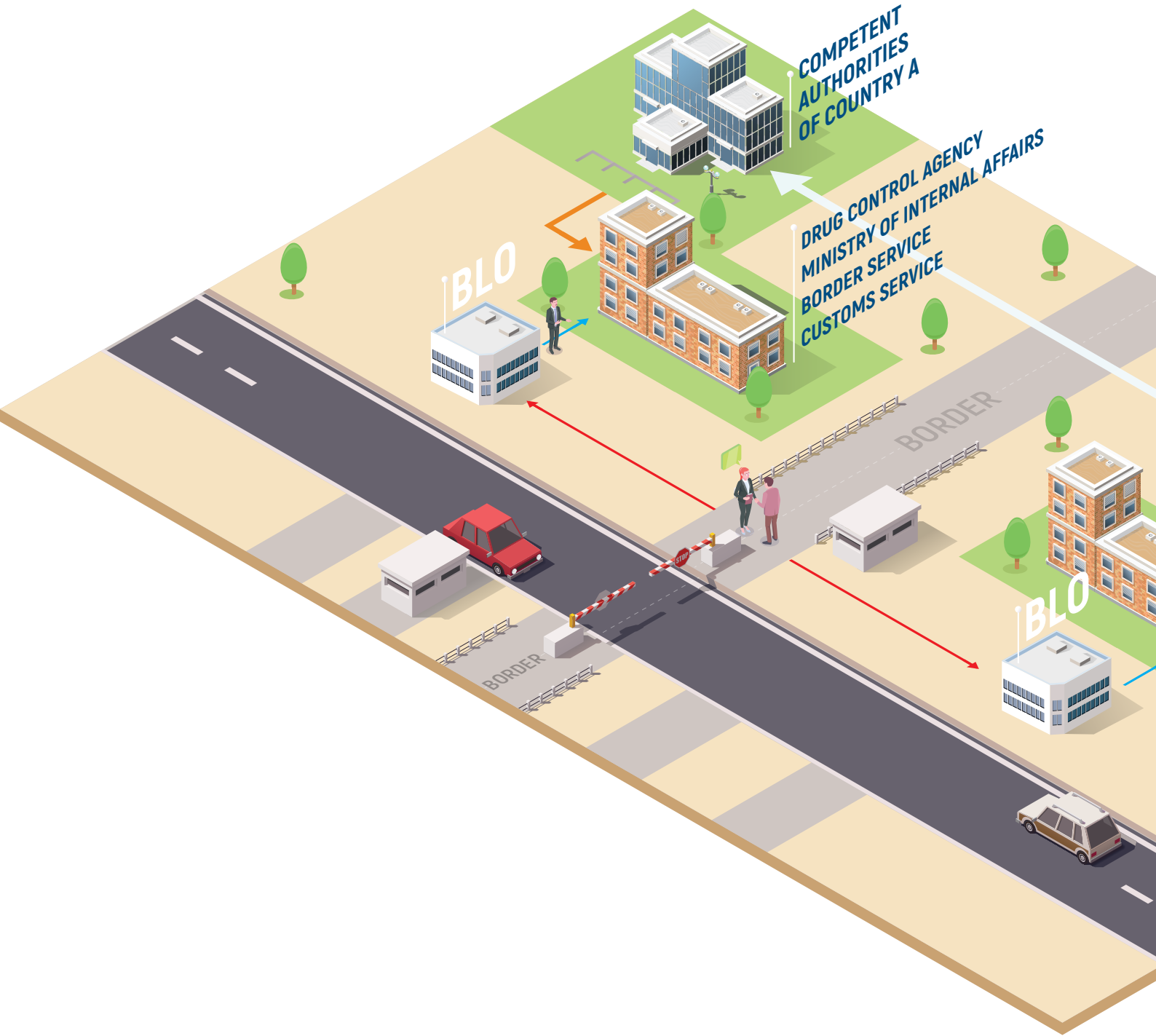
In 2020, Turkmenistan became a party to the Cross-Border Cooperation Project and was further supported by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) through the provision of additional funds in the amount of \$US 492,872.1 to support a national initiative under the project in Turkmenistan. These funds are being directed to enhance the capacities of the Farap BCP on the border between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and the Serhetabat and Imamnazar BCPs on the border between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.

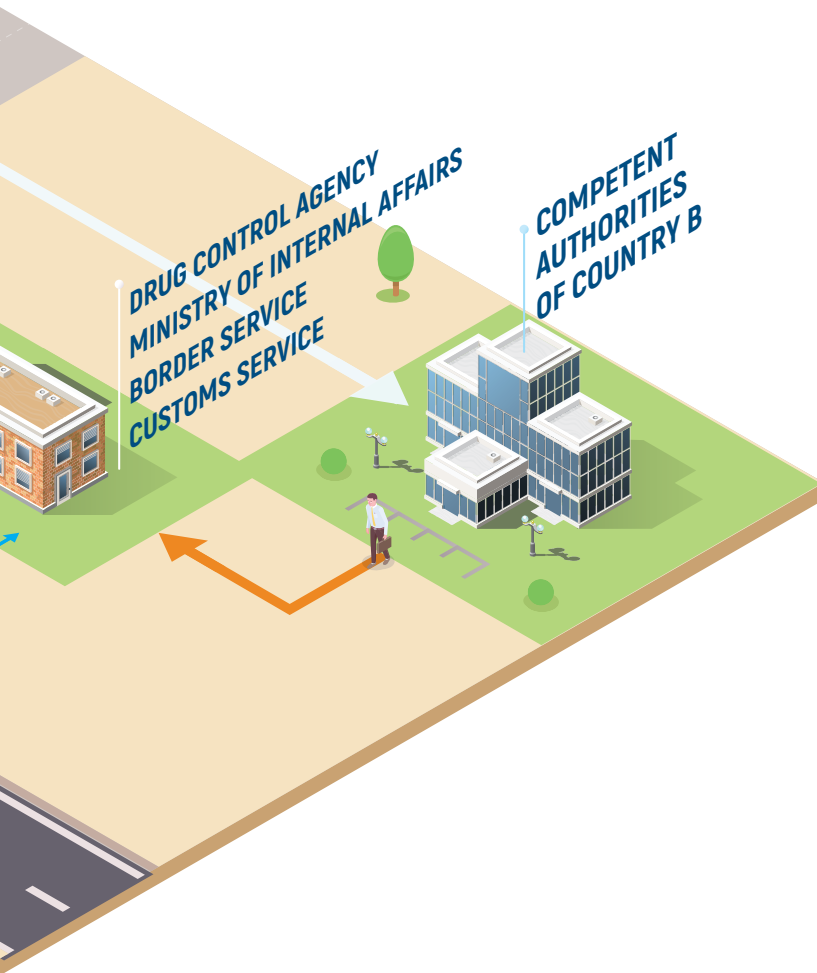
Earlier in 2019, INL had allocated \$US 708,712 for the establishment of Border Liaison Offices at the railway Pakhtaobod (Tajikistan) and Kudukli (Uzbekistan) BCPs to support the BLO Initiative.




***“The Border Liaison Offices Initiative is the outcome of successful cooperation between UNODC and law enforcement agencies in Central Asia. Technical assistance under this initiative focuses on developing a legislative and institutional framework, provision of specialized modern law enforcement equipment as well as improving the capacities of law enforcement agencies through the delivery of training courses, practical workshops, and organization of joint interagency anti-drug operations. I am sure that with timely support, the practical implementation of this initiative will contribute to the creation of the necessary obstacles on the way of the incessant flow of drugs along the northern route which will undoubtedly promote conditions that sustain peace and security in the Central Asian states, as well as the countries of the West and far abroad.”***

*Olim Narzullaev, Director of the National Information and Analytical Center on Drug Control under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.*





**BLO** BORDER LIAISON OFFICE

 INFORMATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE AUTHORITIES

 CLASSIFIED INFORMATION TRANSMISSION

 REAL-TIME INFORMATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN BLOs

 CLASSIFIED INFORMATION TRANSMISSION

# IMPLEMENTATION

Steering Committees have been established in each country, consisting of five agencies - Border and Customs Services, Drug Control Agency, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs - with the purpose of strategic decision-making in the framework of the Cross-Border Cooperation Project as well as to streamline its implementation.

The Cross-Border Cooperation Project has established institutionalized platforms to hold regular interagency and cross-border training courses at national and regional levels and standardized information-sharing and reporting mechanisms for interagency and cross-border communication at the selected BCPs.

***“Previously we had worked only with the Border Services of neighboring countries, then later on, when the UNODC project on strengthening cross-border cooperation began to gain momentum, when other agencies such as Customs Services, Counternarcotic Agencies and Interior Ministries joined as well, we began to expand interagency cooperation and saw all the benefits of this work in practice.”***

*Colonel Almaz Maksutov, Head of the Department of the Border Service of the State Committee for National Security of the Kyrgyz Republic.*

***“We want to emphasize the fruitful cooperation with the UNODC Cross-Border Cooperation Project in terms of information exchange on counterfeit documents with other respective national agencies and access to the UNODC drug monitoring platform that now allows us to analyze the overall drug situation.”***

*Colonel Igor Cherepkov, Head of the Department of the Border Service under the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan.*

Law enforcement agencies have endorsed a detailed work plan and a reporting form for BLOs which serve as the basis for improved joint operations and further enhance effective coordination between different agencies. These agreed policies enable the agencies to exchange intelligence at BLOs and feed weekly updates into their i2 system.



# ACHIEVEMENTS

## Specialized training courses

Over **100** specialized national and regional training courses were conducted since the launch of the project in 2009. **1597 (407 in 2020-2021)** law enforcement officers in the region participated in various training courses in the following areas:

- Precursor control in Central Asia
- Use of searching kits CT30
- IBM i2 Analyst's Notebook and iBase
- Application of mobile X-ray systems
- Interagency cooperation to counter customs offenses
- New types of synthetic narcotics
- IBM i2 and ArcGIS
- Managing operational activities at BCPs and border areas
- Profiling and verification of individuals crossing the border
- Research capacity-building
- Risk analysis and profiling techniques at BCPs
- Risk management and evaluation of the security of international cargo delivery systems and cargo vehicles
- Examination of cargo vehicles with the use of canine service and advanced technical means
- In-depth examination of travel documents to intercept illegal actions at BCPs

***"It is crucial that law enforcement officers serving at the border - at the forefront of efforts to counter organized crime - continue to upgrade their professional knowledge and skills. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue conducting trainings via videoconference to provide the officers with continuous learning opportunities."***

*Yusuf Kurbonov, International Programme Coordinator, UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia.*

***"We thank UNODC and TADOC for organizing and delivering this training. It was very interactive and practical. We will apply the knowledge gained during the training in our daily work. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation."***

*Askar Abishev, a representative of the Border Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Training course on crime intelligence analysis.*





- Intelligence collection, analysis and exchange using IBM i2 analytical software
- Advanced techniques of border and customs control organization for countering illegal trafficking with the use of service dogs at BCPs
- Methods of data analysis and processing using analytical software
- Enhancing information sharing and the use of Advanced Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR), biometrics and other data for border security and countering foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs)
- Application of video endoscopes EXTECH DV600
- Cargo search techniques and examination of cargo and travel documents
- Law enforcement response to the COVID-19 pandemic

***“We officers have a special mission - to train personnel. I will share the knowledge and skills I have gained during these five days of training with my colleagues and train other officers.”***

*A border officer from the Border Service of the State Committee for National Security of the Kyrgyz Republic. Regional training course on modern control techniques for vehicles, cargo and goods inspection.*



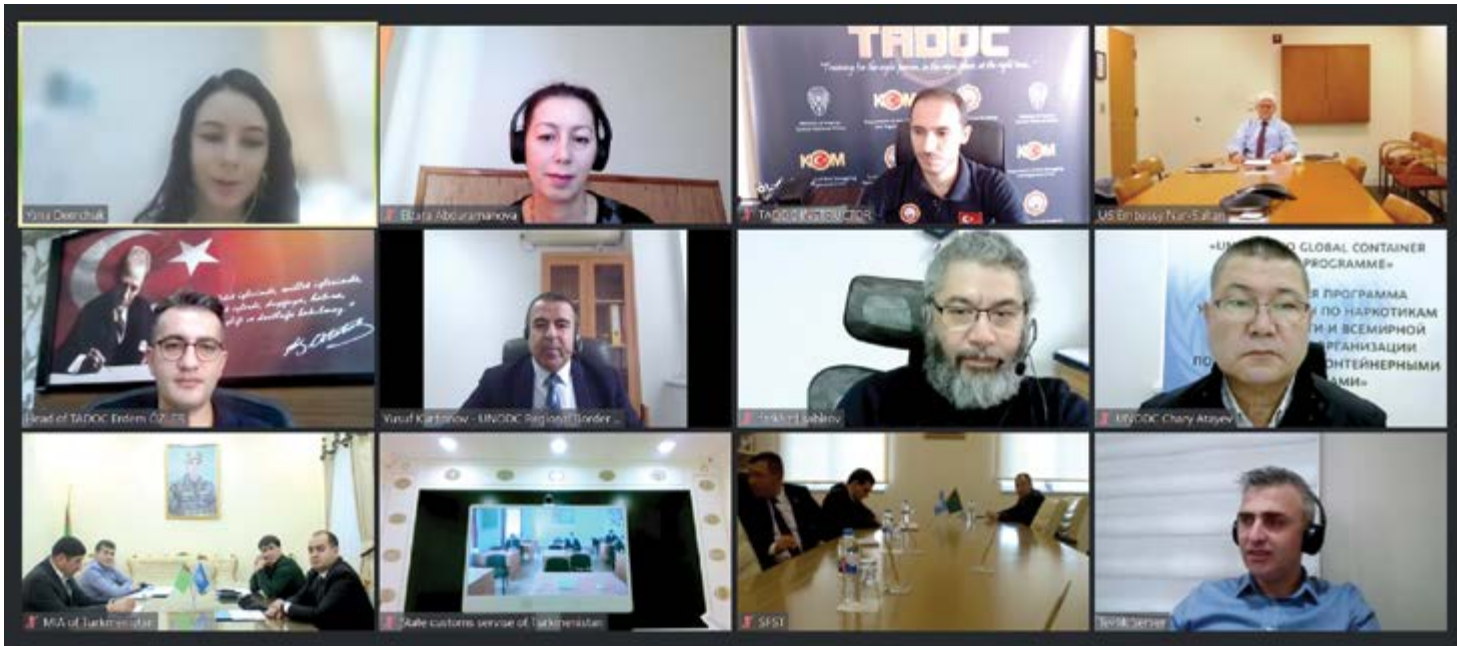
***“It is very important for me to take part in this informative and interactive training and acquire the necessary knowledge and enhance my skills in intelligence analysis. I want to thank UNODC for arranging this training.”***

*An officer from the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan. Training course on intelligence processing and analysis using IBM i2 software.*

- Crime intelligence analysis
- Gender and upholding human rights in law enforcement
- Cross-border transportation of cash and identification of cash couriers
- Modern control techniques for vehicles, cargo and goods inspection, methods of information processing and analysis
- Verification of the authenticity of travel documents.

***“The results of the training will have a positive impact on the further development of multifaceted and mutually beneficial cooperation between the border and collaborating agencies and will become a platform that will increase the efficiency of ensuring security at the borders.”***

*A participant of the training course on risk analysis and drug search techniques, Turkmenistan.*



***“It is crucial to introduce and use new technologies for effective inspection. We gained new knowledge in cover load and the use of equipment for non-intrusive inspection. I thank UNODC for conducting this highly relevant and useful training.”***

*Rustam Hasanov, an operative officer of the Alat customs post, Department of the State Customs Committee in the Bukhara region, Uzbekistan. Training course on modern control techniques for vehicles, cargo and goods inspection.*



The training courses were delivered with the involvement of international and national trainers, including the trainers from the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors (CARICC) and the Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC) – the structure within the Turkish National Police established by UNODC.

***“We would like to express our gratitude to UNODC for the assistance provided in strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies, including the organization of training events which are a crucial component of technical assistance. Since investments in human resources lead to positive results of the work of both an individual officer and the entire system.”***

*Ravshankhon Akramov, Head of International Cooperation Department of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.*

## Support in setting up situation and coordination centers within law enforcement agencies in Central Asia

In October 2017, the BLO Coordination Center was established within the State Border Service of the Kyrgyz Republic as part of the implementation of the Cross-Border Cooperation Project.

The Coordination Center ensures real-time collection, compilation, processing and analysis of data coming from the Border Liaison Offices to develop recommendations on combating transborder organized crime and take proactive measures in collaboration with authorized agencies.



In March 2021, a Situation Center was inaugurated within the Central Office of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Situation Center aims to enhance interagency coordination in the monitoring of the work of the road, railway and airport border crossing points and improves the analytical capacity of the operations units of law enforcement agencies. It facilitates the centralized collection, processing and analysis of intelligence; cooperation in information exchange based on intergovernmental and interagency agreements in countering narcotics, transnational organized crime, smuggling and violation of customs regulations.

Similar centers are currently being established within the project in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and are expected to be launched by June 2022.





## BLO computer-based training classes

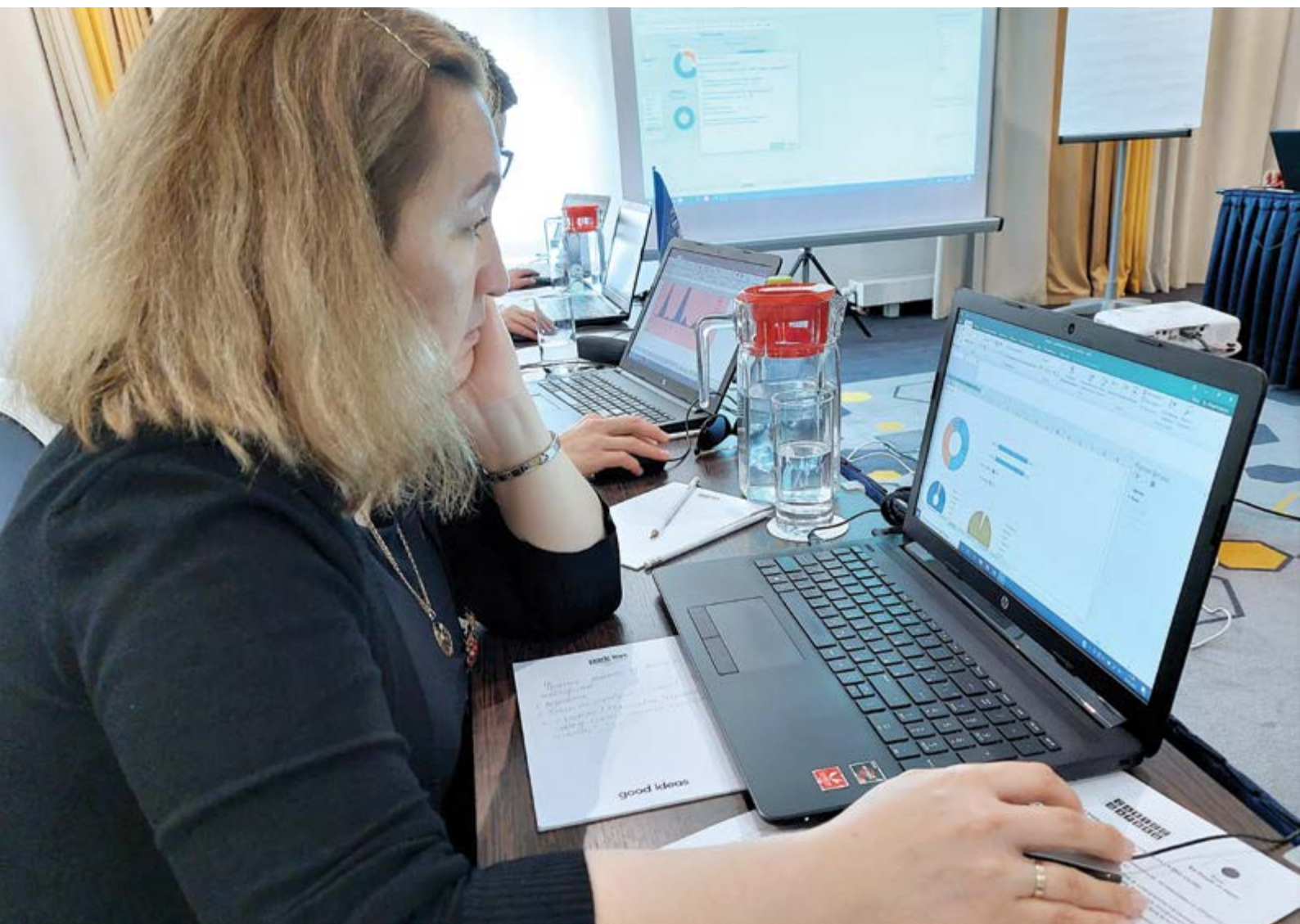
At the request of the Border Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the UNODC Cross-Border Cooperation Project has been setting up computer-based training (CBT) classes for BLOs in the country. CBT classes have an interactive multimedia training programme and have been operational at the Kordai border crossing point on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border since March 2019 and Saryagash town on the Kazakh-Uzbek border since March 2021 to provide continuous learning opportunities for law enforcement officers from all BCPs located on the Kazakh-Uzbek border. CBT classes provide law enforcement officers with comprehensive computer-based training programmes and opportunities for uninterrupted law enforcement training.

***“I am pleased that today we have inaugurated a computer-based training room in Saryagash to institutionalize training for border service officers in Kazakhstan. This is one of the most efficient ways to build the capacity of border service officers, especially during the pandemic.”***

*Ashita Mittal, UNODC Regional Representative for Central Asia.*

The training curriculum covers topics that fall within the mandate of UNODC. Since 2019, over 390 border officers enjoyed this opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CBT classes in Kordai and Saryagash have proved their immense practical value for distance learning when travel restrictions limit face-to-face trainings.

The launch of CBT classes is planned at the Syptai Batyr BCP on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border, and at the Kuryk seaport to cover Kazakh-Turkmen and Kazakh-Uzbek borders in the coming future. Based on Kazakhstan's best practices, UNODC plans to develop the concept of CBT classes at the regional level.





# New Border Liaison Offices

On 18 May 2021, UNODC, in partnership with the law enforcement agencies of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, inaugurated two BLOs at the railway border crossing points Pakhtaobod (Tajikistan) and Kudukli (Uzbekistan) on the Tajik-Uzbek border. These are the first railway BLOs in the region.

***“The opening of the Border Liaison Office at the Pakhtaobod railway border crossing point is another link in the system of ensuring reliable protection of the state border. Its activities will contribute to the further strengthening and enhancement of interagency, regional and international cooperation. We thank the Government of the United States of America and UNODC for supporting the implementation of this initiative and for cooperating in ensuring border security.”***

*Colonel Rajabzoda Nasimjon Kholmurod, First Deputy Commander of the Border Troops of the State Committee for National Security of the Republic of Tajikistan.*

***“BLOs have proven to be an effective tool in strengthening interagency and cross-border cooperation. The BLO Initiative provides a unique mechanism to counter drug trafficking. I am hopeful that these newly established offices will make a significant contribution to strengthening border security and further developing cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.”***

*Utkir Kadirov, Deputy Chairman of the Customs Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.*

***“The Border Liaison Offices programme in Central Asia’s merits extend beyond the construction of a building and equipment – it supports cross-border cooperation which is essential to successful border management. Pakhtaobod and its sister office at Kudukli in Uzbekistan, are the first railway BLOs in Central Asia. They add a new dimension to the project which will require new skills and training.”***

*Sita Farrell, Director, the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Office at the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe.*





On 30 March 2021, UNODC, in partnership with the border and customs services of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, inaugurated two BLOs at the 24-hour international land border crossing points Baurzhan Konysbaev (Kazakhstan) and Yallama (Uzbekistan).

***“Technical and infrastructural support for border crossing points and the enhancement of skills and expertise of the border staff are vital for tackling contemporary threats and the addressing of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We attach great importance to international and regional cooperation in border security and management. We thank UNODC for sustained partnership and continuous support.”***

*Colonel Kanatai Dalmatov, Deputy Director of the Border Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan.*

Six BLOs – at the Merke (Kazakhstan) and Kayindi (Kyrgyzstan) railway BCPs, the Ayvaj (Tajikistan) and Gulbahor (Uzbekistan) BCPs and the Farap (Turkmenistan) and Alat (Uzbekistan) BCPs are currently in the process of being established.

## Countering smuggling of drugs and counterfeit goods

In 2020, BLOs on the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek borders jointly conducted 12 operations; the activities of four organized criminal groups were suppressed. In 2020-2021, BLO officers seized more than 500 kilograms of drugs.

### Some facts and figures:

**21 kilograms of marijuana** were seized by BLO officers in Kazakhstan in 2020.

**100 blocks and 1000 boxes of counterfeit cigarettes** were seized by BLO officers in Tajikistan in 2020.

**172.5 kilograms of narcotic drugs, 920 boxes of cigarettes and 11,900 boxes with 238,000 psychotropic pills Sonlife (Zopiclone 7.5 mg)** were seized by BLO officers in Uzbekistan in 2020.

Around **100 kilograms of heroin and 162 kilograms of hashish** were seized by BLO officers in Uzbekistan in 2021.



## COVID-19 RESPONSE

Law enforcement agencies are often the first responders to many social crises, even when those crises, such as the current COVID-19 emergency, may not fall under their mandates. The Cross-Border Cooperation Project supported law enforcement agencies from the onset of the pandemic and helped them to protect themselves from COVID-19, to better serve the community and carry out their duties during the emergency. Personal protective equipment and medical devices for border liaison officers in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to a total amount of around \$US 114,000 were procured and handed over to ensure the safety and security of law enforcement officers and the communities they serve, and to support law enforcement agencies in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



***“Providing security and law and order is a continuous process, and law enforcement agencies must continue to perform their service regardless of the circumstances. We thank the UNODC Cross-Border Cooperation Project for the support to Tajikistan’s law enforcement agencies to perform their duties during the COVID-19 pandemic.”***

*Khurshed Abdullozoda, Head of International Cooperation Department of the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.*

**Equipment worth over \$US 3.5 million** was handed over between 2009 and 2021, including x-ray scanners, closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems, IT equipment, LED monitors, patrol vehicles, passport readers, specialized search and inspection equipment for customs and border control, drug identification kits, among others.

In 2020-2021, the Cross-Border Cooperation Project has provided equipment, furniture and reconstruction services for interactive classes in Kazakhstan, coordination and situation centers in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and the BCPs of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Some procurement activities are in progress for Turkmenistan. UNODC also finalized the procurement of vehicles for BLOs in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, totaling \$US 180,000.



## STORIES FROM OUR PARTNERS

### “From sky-high flyovers to the security of Kyrgyzstan’s borders”



“My father was a Derby winner and a Kyrgyz equestrian sports champion in Soviet times. To participate in various equestrian sports competitions anywhere, my father often traveled by train and plane, and my mother accompanied him everywhere. From the very first days of my life, I was accustomed to flying by plane, and that’s probably why I later became a military pilot,” says Colonel Almaz Maksutov. “I learned to drive a car professionally much later, only at the age of 40.

In school, I was a good student. I was fond of history and geography. Mathematics was easy for me, and I was skilled in drawing and physics. My mathematics teacher persuaded me to enter the physics and mathematics department, as I often used to find unusual solutions in algebra and participated in school competitions.

It is possible that my analytical mindset began to find its expression at school, was developed in military school, and found realization later on, in the course of my duties. I wanted to be a lawyer - if not a lawyer, then at least a pilot or a space engineer. In 1986, I entered Balashov Higher Military Aviation School and flew in L-410s, An-24s, An-26s and studied Il-76s. I started working in military transport aviation in Siberia, applied for the cosmonauts' squadron and underwent preliminary training. I felt in my element while in the sky. If in 1992 I had not been suddenly called back home by the Kyrgyz Defense Ministry, maybe I would have stayed in the Russian Armed Forces and become a cosmonaut," says Almaz Maksutov with a smile.

Almaz Maksutov is today the Head of the Department of the Border Service of the State Committee for National Security of the Kyrgyz Republic, a government agency that is one of the main partners implementing a regional project on strengthening cross-border cooperation. Colonel Maksutov has contributed to the project and cooperation between partners from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, UNODC Programme Office in Kyrgyzstan and its Regional Office for Central Asia, as well as other agencies.

Upon his return to independent Kyrgyzstan, young Almaz Maksutov served in the Ministry of Defense forces and engaged with information reviews and analytical work. In 1995, he started studying terrorist threats and prepared an analytical review on the activities of the Taliban movement. Since 2004, his job was to cooperate with international organizations, engaging in measures to strengthen border cooperation with Central Asian countries, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Selected to work in the State Service on Drug Control, he has always been successful in using his analytical skills and putting forward proposals. According to Almaz Maksutov, not all of his initiatives used to get approved the first time around, but since cooperation with UNODC began, many of them have been applied, yielded results, and strengthened the partnership.

"Having read about the UNODC XAC/K22 project on 'Enhancing the capacity of border crossing points and improving regional cross-border cooperation by promoting the Border Liaison Offices' concept and the development of information and communication networks for border agencies', I approached the management with a proposal to create a team to coordinate the work of national agencies with UNODC. I began to coordinate these activities while in the State Service on Drug Control and later in the Border Service. In the past, at the very beginning of the cooperation with UNODC, I also approached representatives of CARICC about opening a branch in Osh, given the



need to pay increased attention to the so-called 'Osh Hub' of drug trafficking. In 2014, as part of the development of the Department of Mobile Operative Teams, I developed the concept of developing mobile operative groups, but it was not fully considered. However, a year later, on the same basis, a concept to develop this service was approved and started with the support of UNODC."

"We have well-established and fruitful cooperation with the UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia. One of the first and important outcomes of our joint work in the past has been establishing cooperation with the Drug Control Agency in Tajikistan and its subdivisions in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast," says Almaz Maksutov. "This work has been implemented with the direct support of Yusuf Kurbonov. He is the UNODC International Coordinator for the project on strengthening cross-border

cooperation in Central Asia between the law enforcement agencies of the countries in the region responsible for combating drug trafficking and border protection. He has made an important contribution not only to the development and implementation of UNODC projects in the region but also to establishing warm relations with our colleagues from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and introduced us to many experts and specialists in these areas from the US, European countries, Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Previously we had worked only with the Border Services of neighboring countries, then later on, when the UNODC project on strengthening cross-border cooperation began to gain momentum, when other agencies such as Customs Services, Counternarcotic Agencies and Interior Ministries joined as well, we began to expand interagency cooperation and saw all the benefits of this work in practice."

Almaz Maksutov speaks warmly about his experience of working with the UNODC regional project on strengthening cross-border cooperation in Central Asia:

"I can only give positive feedback on our cooperation. What I am particularly impressed by is the openness to our ideas, proposals and projects, as well as the promptness and real support in promoting and implementing these ideas. We have never been restricted to any limiting frames. This is probably why the cooperation results we have are very good since both parties are eager to cooperate."

***"We have well-established and fruitful cooperation with the UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia. I can only give positive feedback on our cooperation. What I am particularly impressed by is the openness to our ideas, proposals and projects, as well as the promptness and real support in promoting and implementing these ideas. We have never been restricted to any limiting frames. This is probably why the cooperation results we have are very good since both parties are eager to cooperate."***

Almaz Maksutov always welcomes the opportunity to cooperate and is eager to support various UNODC initiatives.

“The opening of the Center for the Coordination of the Activities of Border Liaison Offices at the Border Service Headquarters in Bishkek in 2017 under the above-mentioned UNODC project was probably one of the most important milestones. Our initiative was really appreciated by all parties, including donors and colleagues from other countries in the region. This was the beginning of development in this area. We have plans to open an operational management unit at the center in the city of Osh.”

The purpose of the center is to ensure real-time collection, compilation, processing and analysis of data coming from the Border Liaison Offices to plan and develop recommendations on combating transborder organized crime in the areas of drugs, weapons and ammunition trafficking; international terrorism and extremism at borders; and to promptly take proactive and preventive measures. Specialized analytical software products, such as IBM i2 and iBase, IBM i2 Analyst's Notebook, ArcGIS geoinformation system are used in the center's daily activities.

At present, there are five Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) operating in Kyrgyzstan: Bor-Dobo Road and Karamyk Road at the Kyrgyz-Tajik section, Dostuk Road at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek section, Akzhol Road at the Kyrgyz-Kazakh section of the state border, as well as Manas Airport. These offices operate at checkpoints with the highest rates of passenger and cargo flow. In the near future, there are plans to open at least two more BLOs, including at the railway border crossing point.

“Employees who have undergone training courses within the project, including the study of law enforcement based on intelligence collected using specialized software, are able to apply their knowledge and skills in a targeted and efficient manner. These software products have made it possible for us to assess risks and predict at what time of year a challenging situation may emerge at the border. This greatly helps the service to plan joint actions and increases the efficiency of border cooperation. It is based on this data that we develop interaction and work plans on information exchange with colleagues from other agencies and neighboring countries. Examples of this cooperation include cases of detaining individuals involved in drug trafficking, members of terrorist groups and internationally wanted persons at the border,” says Colonel Maksutov.

## **“Women in law enforcement are better at defusing tensions and easily gain the trust of the communities with whom they work”**

Zarina Abrorova is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Customs Service. She is Chief Inspector of the Department of Countering Customs Offences under the Customs Service of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and has been working at the customs service for over 20 years.

“The work is challenging and it’s not always easy,” says Ms. Abrorova. “Sometimes, when I reflect on what brought me into the service, I realize that my choice of profession was initially spontaneous, but that, over the years, through gaining more experience and seeing the great importance of this work for society, I discovered that I have a feeling for it, that I belong here, and most of all, here I can be useful to people. Today I cannot imagine being without my work and our amazing team.”



In Zarina’s opinion, it is absolutely critical to have women working in law enforcement, including the customs service.

“It is important that women officers work with women who have been subjected to violence. Communication with women officers will be easier for these women, they will feel much more comfortable sharing their concerns and

problems. It can prevent even greater psychological trauma from being inflicted on them. In any situation, women often feel more at ease with women officers and prefer to communicate with them," she explains, adding, "we are not any different in our professional competencies from men, and we are equally successful in our work."

From Zarina's observations, women in law enforcement often tend to be patient, persistent and dedicated which helps them creatively and effectively fulfill their official duties. As a rule, they are more inclined to adopt a peaceful approach, they are better at defusing tensions and thereby preventing conflicts. They easily gain the trust of the communities with whom they work.

***"The Customs Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has been cooperating with UNODC for many years. We have participated in many events and training courses under the Cross-Border Cooperation Project, including the Border Liaison Offices' Initiative. Under this project, we have strengthened interagency and transborder cooperation and intelligence-sharing with the neighboring countries that help us ensure border security effectively, conduct joint operations, and take proactive measures to prevent crime. Even during the pandemic, we took part in a number of trainings conducted by UNODC via videoconferencing in which experienced trainers and experts participated. The project encourages and promotes the meaningful participation of women officers in all its activities, contributing to their empowerment."***

"During the pandemic," remembers Zarina, "due to border closures, the decrease in passenger and cargo movements did not lower our workload but rather required us to stay vigilant. We conducted an extensive awareness-raising campaign to prevent the spread of the disease among the population."

"The Customs Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has been cooperating with UNODC for many years," says Zarina. "We have participated in many events and training courses under the Cross-Border Cooperation Project, including the Border Liaison Offices' Initiative. Under this project, we have strengthened interagency and transborder cooperation and intelligence-sharing with the neighboring countries that help us ensure border security effectively, conduct joint operations, and take proactive measures to prevent crime. Even during the pandemic, we took part in a number of trainings conducted by UNODC via videoconferencing in which experienced trainers and experts participated. The project encourages and promotes the meaningful participation of women officers in all its activities, contributing to their empowerment."

Zarina says that in Tajikistan many women work in the country's customs service making their contribution to ensuring the further socio-economic development and security of the state. For her personally, it is gratifying to see that, every year, more and more women are joining the customs service.

# “International cooperation enhances border security”

*We spoke to Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandr Belov, the representative of the State Border Service of Turkmenistan (SBST), about his work, collaboration with UNODC and role of international cooperation in strengthening border security.*



## **Can you tell us about yourself?**

I graduated from the Border Department of the Military Institute under the Ministry of Defense of Turkmenistan. I have been serving in the State Border Service of Turkmenistan in various capacities for over 20 years. Currently, I am an officer at the Headquarters of the Central Office of the SBST.

## **Why did you choose this profession?**

I got interested in this profession when I was a child. In my childhood, I lived near the border unit and used to watch the work of the border guards with my friends. We admired their courage and how they handled service animals, like horses and dogs. An elderly man living next door was a border guard veteran, a colonel. We often gathered in his backyard, and he used to share with us stories about his service on the border which I really liked. In high school, I decided that I would become a border officer, so I prepared to enter the Border Department of the Military Institute and successfully passed the entrance exams. After graduation, I began military service at the SBST. I served throughout Turkmenistan, including on the border.

## **What is the importance of your profession?**

At the core of my and all my colleagues' profession is the defense of the native land. For any state, the most important tasks are border protection and the protection of national security interests. The Border Service's mandate is to solve these tasks effectively. As part of our activities, we provide appropriate control to prevent any illegal intervention or entry into the country, both at the outposts and border checkpoints.

## **How does your agency address contemporary challenges and threats? What is the role of the UNODC Cross-Border Cooperation Project?**

One of the main threats we face is attempts of illegal border crossing and illicit import and export of certain goods. In this regard, it is very important to ensure uninterrupted effective border control. The project provides us with

significant support in this matter, including via creating a platform for the exchange of best practices in operational work with colleagues from other countries, conducting advanced training for military personnel, among others. Participation in training courses increases the capacity of our employees in combating organized crime, drug trafficking, and preventing international terrorism. We apply the acquired knowledge and skills in our daily work.

### **What impact did the COVID-19 pandemic have on your work? Were there any challenges?**

During the pandemic, we continued our work in a normal mode, taking into account and controlling the situation according to the recommendations and requirements of the Emergency Situations Commission. Thanks to timely comprehensive and epidemic control measures adopted by the decision of H.E. Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan, our employees did not face any challenges in the control of the movement of persons and goods across the border. It is worth mentioning that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a decrease in cargo and passenger traffic across the border, but at the same time control and verification procedures have become longer in terms of time.

### **In your opinion, what can contribute to the enhancement of border security in the current context?**

At present, it is necessary to introduce relevant innovations and the use of nanotechnology into the work process of checkpoints more widely, to strengthen border security. It is also necessary to conduct training courses on a regular basis, enhance the knowledge and skills of employees, and upgrade equipment and resources on the ground.

### **How do you see further international cooperation?**

We look forward to continuing effective cooperation with UNODC and other international organizations contributing to the enhancement of border security, in the professional development of our employees, exchange of best practices, and consultations on organizational, technical and other issues.

***“It is very important to ensure uninterrupted effective border control. The project provides us with significant support in this matter, including via creating a platform for the exchange of best practices in operational work with colleagues from other countries, conducting advanced training for military personnel, among others.”***



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