

## UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform Brief:

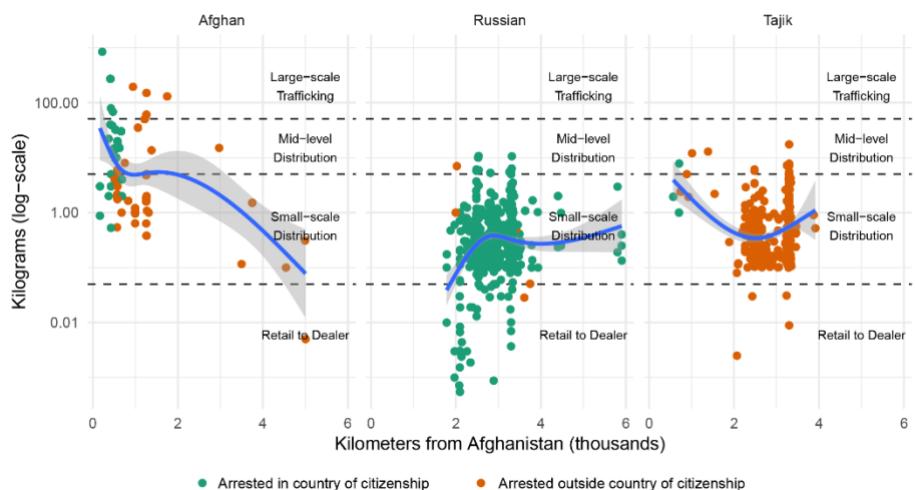
The reach of nationally linked trafficking groups  
across Afghan opiate trafficking routes

September 2021

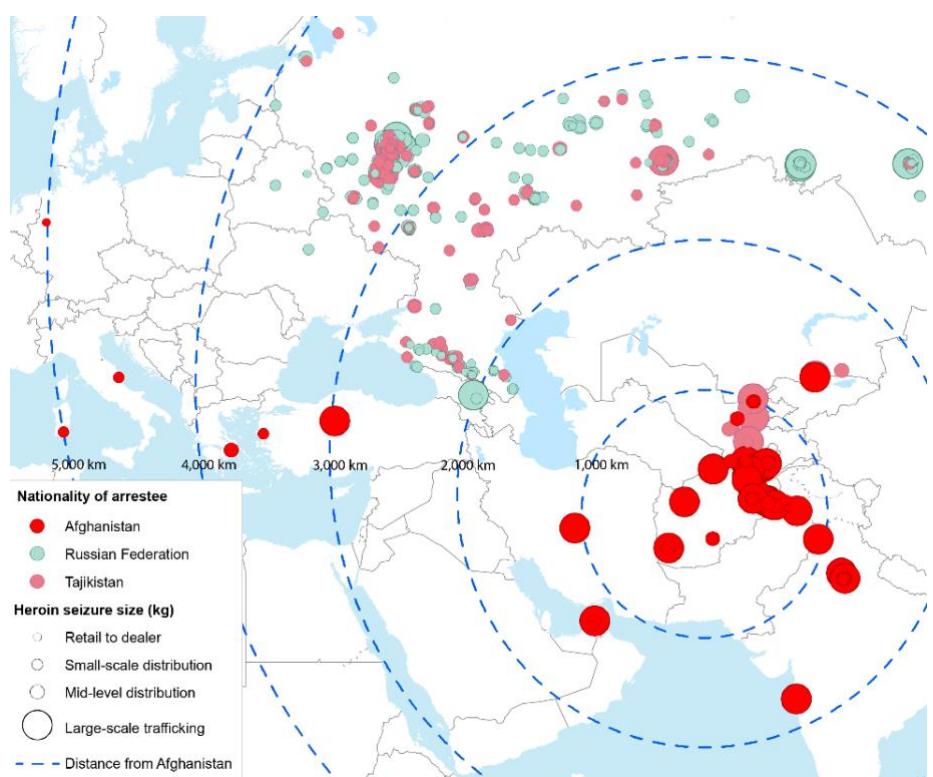
The majority of traffickers<sup>1</sup> operate within their own national borders or in neighboring countries, but some nationality groups stretch much further.

Afghan traffickers are largely detected within Afghanistan or neighboring countries. Tajik traffickers are largely detected for small and mid-level trafficking outside of their country of citizenship but still within the region.

### MOST COMMON TRAFFICKERS BY NATIONALITY INVOLVED IN INDIVIDUAL HEROIN SEIZURES CLOSEST TO AFGHANISTAN ACCORDING TO DISTANCE AND LEVEL OF SUPPLY, JANUARY 2018 - MARCH 2021



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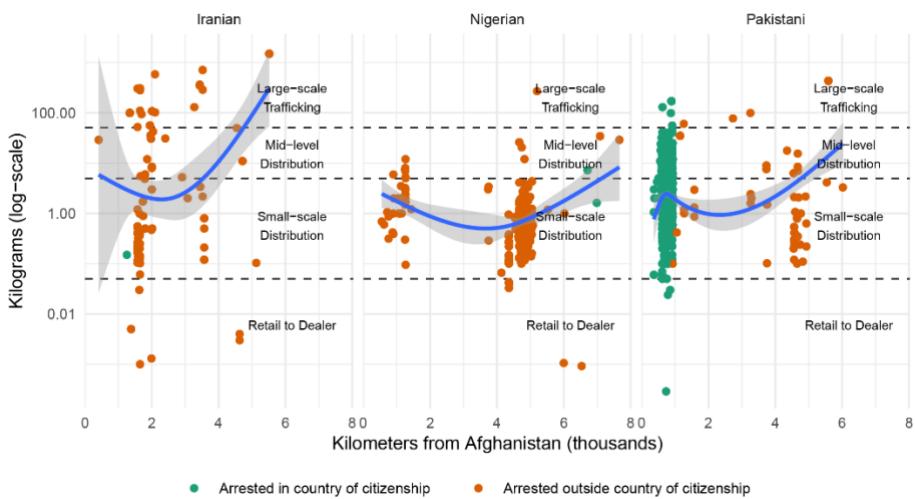
*The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.*

Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

<sup>1</sup> "Groups of traffickers" refers to instances when more than one trafficker was arrested/apprehended within the context of a drug seizure.

A small proportion of groups are detected a great distance from their country of origin. Iranian groups reach as far as East Africa and South-Eastern Europe, Pakistani groups to East Africa and Western and Central Europe, and Nigerian groups are involved across multiple continents.

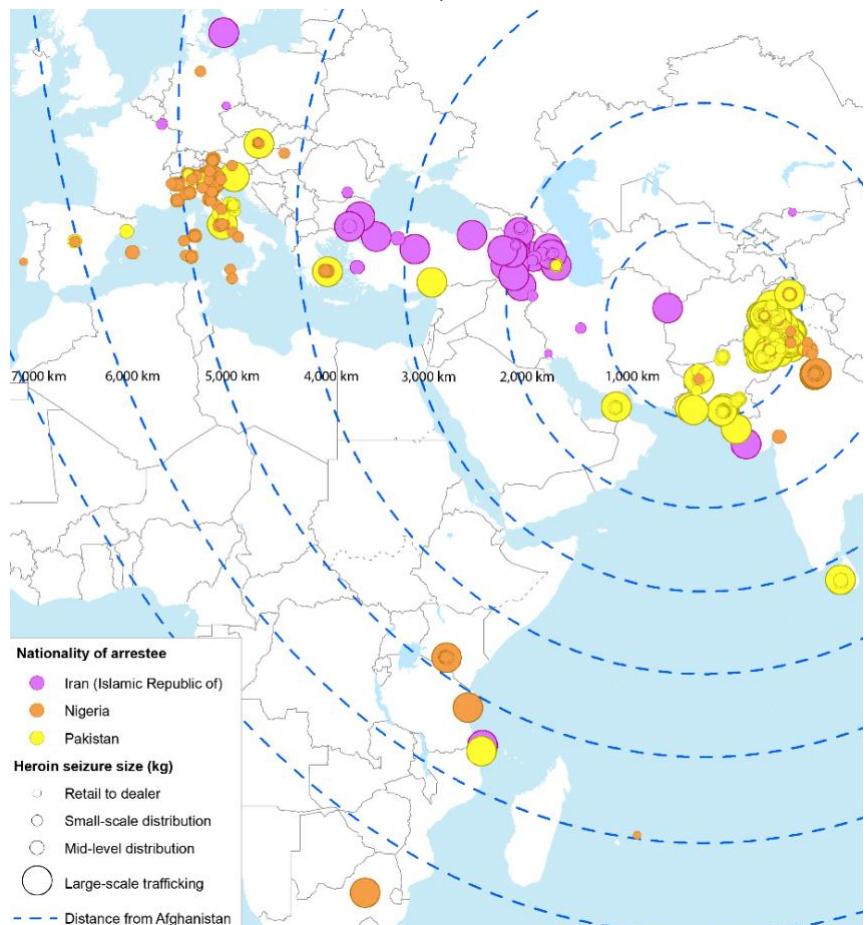
### MOST COMMON TRAFFICKERS BY NATIONALITY INVOLVED IN INDIVIDUAL HEROIN SEIZURES RELATED TO LONG-DISTANCE TRAFFICKING FROM AFGHANISTAN ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF SUPPLY, JANUARY 2018 - MARCH 2021



Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

Note: Fitted lines are smoothed to the data using a cubic polynomial. Standard errors are plotted in the shaded area. Based on seizure events involving Iranians, Nigerians and Pakistanis as recorded in the DMP.

### MOST COMMON TRAFFICKERS BY NATIONALITY INVOLVED IN INDIVIDUAL HEROIN SEIZURES RELATED TO LONG-DISTANCE TRAFFICKING FROM AFGHANISTAN ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF SUPPLY, JANUARY 2018 - MARCH 2021

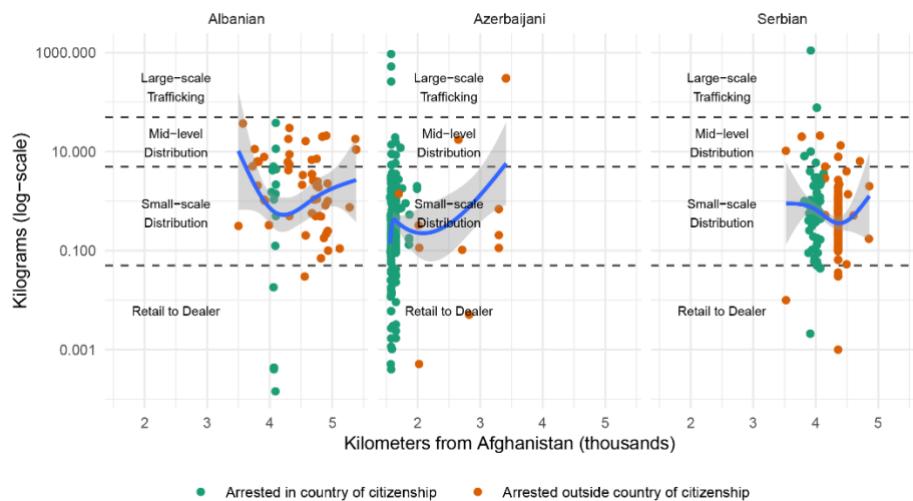


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Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

Some nationals were detected for involvement in large-scale heroin trafficking, namely Afghans near to Afghanistan, and Iranians and Pakistanis across a larger stretch of territory. Azerbaijani traffickers have also been involved in large-scale trafficking together with small and mid-scale distribution but are concentrated close to Azerbaijan and neighboring countries. Albanian and Serbian groups emerge as foreign traffickers in Europe and appear to be predominantly involved in mid-level to small-scale distribution.

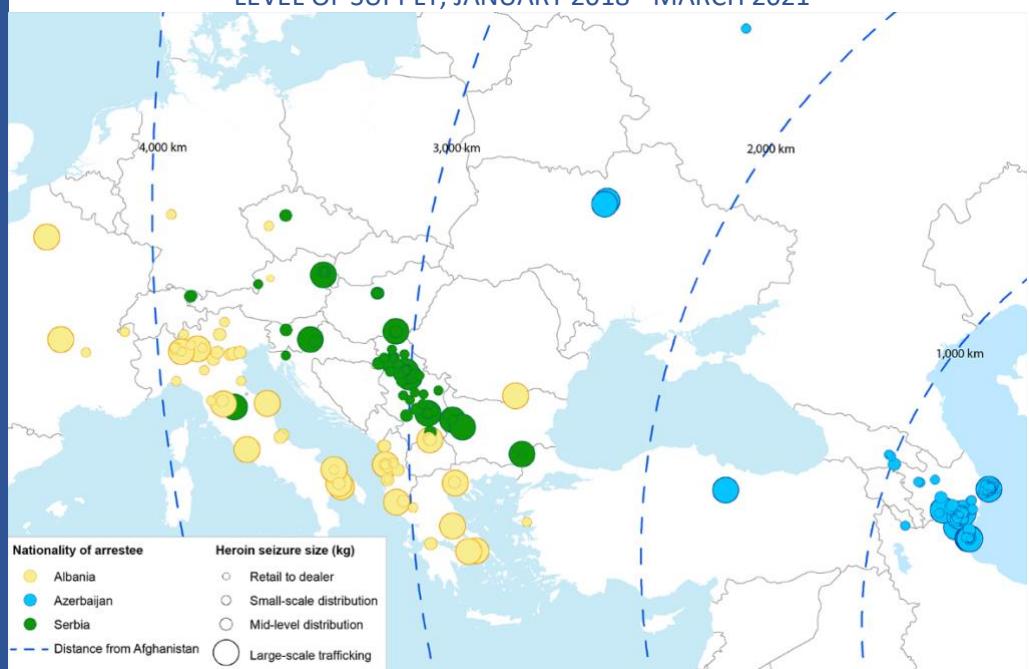
### MOST COMMON TRAFFICKERS BY NATIONALITY INVOLVED IN HEROIN SEIZURES ALONG THE BALKAN ROUTE ACCORDING TO DISTANCE FROM AFGHANISTAN AND LEVEL OF SUPPLY, JANUARY 2018 - MARCH 2021



Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

Fitted lines are smoothed to the data using a cubic polynomial. Standard errors are plotted in the shaded area. Based on seizure events involving Albanians, Azerbaijanis and Serbians as recorded in the DMP.

### MOST COMMON TRAFFICKERS BY NATIONALITY INVOLVED IN HEROIN SEIZURES ALONG THE BALKAN ROUTE ACCORDING TO DISTANCE FROM AFGHANISTAN AND LEVEL OF SUPPLY, JANUARY 2018 - MARCH 2021

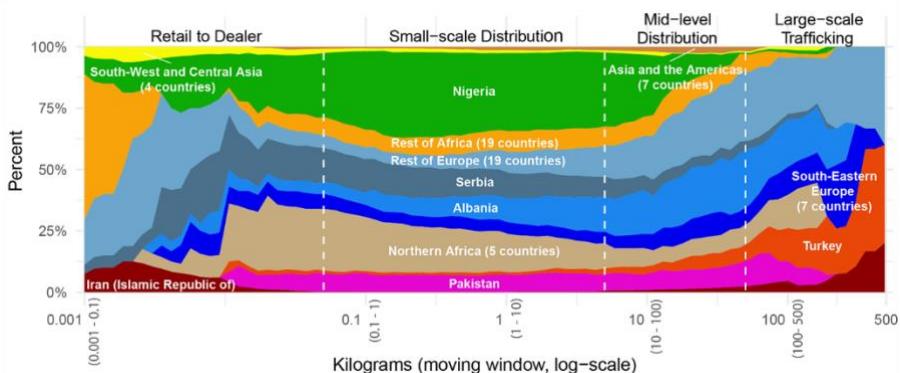


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Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

A diverse range of groups appear to play important distribution roles in the European heroin market. Traffickers engaged in large-scale trafficking originate from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, South-Eastern and Western and Central Europe, while those from North and West Africa are involved in small-scale and retail trafficking.

## DISTRIBUTION OF FOREIGN NATIONALS ARRESTED IN WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE IN CONNECTION WITH INDIVIDUAL HEROIN SEIZURES, BY NATIONALITY, ACCORDING TO SIZE OF SEIZURE, JANUARY 2018 - MARCH 2021



Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

Note: The distribution at a given quantity is determined by considering all relevant cases in which the quantity seized was within a factor of 10 of the nominal value indicated on the axis (the moving window is indicated as a range in brackets). Since the largest seizure occurring in this universe was of 4.5 tons, for nominal values larger than 450 kg the moving window is effectively biased to the left.

The information for retail to dealer for the category Rest of Africa represents a nominal number of detections of individuals from Cabo Verde that took place in Portugal.

## Introduction

This brief examines additional dimensions of seizure event data producing knowledge that can support law enforcement, other operational activities and policymakers.

This brief builds on earlier efforts of the UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform<sup>2</sup> by exploring new uses of seizure data, which include analysis of trafficking groups using country of nationality of traffickers arrested in Afghan opiate-related seizure events.

This analysis is based on select countries situated along the southern route in East and South-East

Africa and the Balkan, Caucasus and northern routes<sup>3</sup> with the specific intention of reflecting the platform's attributes by focusing on trafficking in opiates from Afghanistan as it makes its way to developed and emerging markets. The analysis contained herein is based on a continually updated set of individual drug seizure data captured by the Drugs Monitoring Platform. The Drugs Monitoring Platform and its analytical outputs aim to provide knowledge based on a constantly evolving and expanding dataset, bearing in mind several data caveats (see Scope and limitations of the data used in the analysis).

## UNODC ACKNOWLEDGES THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THIS BRIEF

To read more, please visit <https://dmp.unodc.org/>

<sup>2</sup> The UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform is a multi-source system for collecting, visualizing and sharing drug data aimed at providing access to near real-time data on drug trafficking trends, delivering data using interactive visualizations adapted to user-specific needs and improving drug threat knowledge for law enforcement and analysts. The Drugs Monitoring Platform provides additional geographical insight on current drug trafficking trends, with over 460,000 geo-coded drug seizure data points obtained from countries around the world. At present, an estimated 8,000 real-time data points, collected within the previous six months, are entered into the Drugs Monitoring Platform annually. UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform. Available at <https://dmp.unodc.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> Principal heroin trafficking routes are: the Balkan route, which takes heroin from Afghanistan to markets in Western and Central Europe via the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey and the Balkan countries; the northern route, along which heroin destined for the Russian Federation transits Central Asia; the Caucasus route, which has been described as “the northern branch” of the Balkan route, involves the trafficking of heroin through countries in the southern and northern Caucasus and into the Balkan and northern routes, to supply markets in the Russian Federation and other countries in Europe; and the southern route, which consists of southerly flows of heroin trafficked from Afghanistan through Pakistan and India onto maritime routes via Africa to Europe (UNODC, World Drug Report 2020; UNODC, Afghan Opiate Trade Project, Afghan Opiate Trafficking through the Southern Route (Vienna, 2015) and UNODC, “Global AOTP Update Volume 2” (Vienna, August 2019)).