

# Afghan Heroin Took Million Lives Last Decade: Russia

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MOSCOW — Heroin trafficked from war-torn Afghanistan has killed more than a million people worldwide in the past decade, the head of Russia's federal narcotics control agency said on Monday.

"In the first 10 years of this millenium, more than a million people have died because of Afghan narcotics," Russian news agencies quoted Viktor Ivanov as saying. "More than 16 million have been affected, physically and mentally."

Moscow says 30,000 Russians died last year from using Afghan heroin.

The Russian authorities have repeatedly voiced alarm at the growth in drug trafficking from Afghanistan, blaming current US policies in the country which focus on netting traffickers rather than producers.

US President Barack Obama made a major policy shift in Afghanistan by ending a military drive to destroy poppies, believing it alienated the poorest populations who grew the crops to make money.

Obama's administration has largely avoided crop eradication in favour of seeking to convince farmers to abandon poppies in favour of other crops.

War-ravaged Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of heroin. In 2009 the potential gross export value of opium from the country was 2.8 billion dollars, according to the UN drugs agency.

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