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Kam Air smuggling bulk opium from Afghanistan

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Afghanistan's largest private airline has been blacklisted by US military after military officials accused the airline for smuggling "bulk" quantities of opium on civilian flights to Tajikistan, the main corridor through which the drugs reach the rest of the world.

Kam Air is the first major Afghan Airline company to be penalized by the US military over drug allegations, The Wall Street Journal reported.

According to US military officials, Kam Air was barred this month from receiving U.S. military contracts by U.S. Central Command chief Marine Gen. James Mattis.

"The U.S. will not do business with those who fund and support illicit activities," U.S. Army Maj.-Gen. Richard Longo, the commander of Task Force 2010, a coalition anticorruption unit quoted by Wall Street Journal said in an interview. "Kam Air is too large of a company not to know what has been going on within its organization."

However Kam Air officials denied the allegations but still it is not clear how much U.S. military business the company stands to lose.

Kam Air president and founder Zamari Kamgar said, "I totally deny the allegations." He said, it would be impossible to fly drugs out of the country as the airline is subject to thorough security checks at Afghan airports.

Mr. Kamgar also added that the allegations were likely a conspiracy perpetrated by his competitors and said he expects the Kam Air-Ariana deal to go through and that his management

team would take over the combined entity, which he said would plan to open direct routes to U.S. and European airports.

In the meantime a spokesman for Afghanistan's Transportation Ministry, which runs Ariana, said he was "not aware of the smuggling of drugs by Kam Air" and wasn't aware of the U.S. investigation.

The U.N. estimates that Afghan opiates kill 10,000 people a year in the U.S. and other NATO countries, compared with some 400 coalition soldiers killed last year by the Taliban.

Kam Air operates a fleet of some 16 planes, including Boeing 767 and 747 aircraft and Antonov cargo planes. The task force believes that domestic passenger routes have been used to ferry opium around the country, according to a U.S. official in Kabul. But the investigation is focused on Central Asia, the official said. "Kam Air is flying out bulk quantities of opium," the official said.