

UK Faces Threat from Terror-Linked Captagon Drug Trade

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A growing international narcotics network linked to Middle Eastern terror groups could soon flood British streets with a dangerous amphetamine-based drug known as captagon, security sources have warned.

The highly addictive stimulant, dubbed “Jihadi speed”, is being produced on an industrial scale in Syria and trafficked through established smuggling routes into Europe. Intelligence

reports indicate that networks tied to Hezbollah, Islamic State and al-Qaeda affiliates are profiting from the trade to finance their operations.

Originally developed under the regime of former Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, Captagon became a lucrative export for the country, supplying both militant fighters and high-end party scenes in parts of the Gulf. Following Assad's removal from power last year, production has shifted to areas controlled by former rebels and Iranian-backed militias, making containment even more difficult.

Recent intelligence suggests the trade is worth billions annually, with millions of pills leaving Syria through Turkey, Lebanon, and other transit points. Prices average around £10 per pill on the street, but bulk shipments can be worth millions.

A Turkish security operation near the Syrian border recently intercepted 200,000 captagon tablets, along with assault rifles, with an estimated street value of £2 million. In Lebanon, Hezbollah-linked smugglers were caught with 500,000 pills destined for Mediterranean shipping routes, valued at £5 million.

The scale of trafficking has alarmed European security agencies. Seizures have been reported in the Netherlands, a known gateway for drugs entering the UK. Sources warn that established smuggling corridors from mainland Europe into Britain could be exploited, leading to a rapid spread of the drug among British users.

Captagon is particularly valued by militant groups for its ability to keep fighters awake and alert for extended periods, making it a battlefield drug. Intelligence indicates that proceeds from its sale are being used to purchase weapons, fund operations, and strengthen the financial bases of extremist organisations.

“Amid rising sectarian conflict, there is credible risk intelligence that opposition groups have turned to the opium trade to finance their campaigns against the central government, including direction from Iranian/Shia proxies.”

The report highlights the involvement of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hezbollah, and other armed groups in distributing the drug across the Middle East and into Europe.

British counter-terrorism and organised crime units are now on alert. Experts warn that if the drug reaches UK markets, it could fuel addiction, increase crime rates, and provide further

resources for terrorist activity.

“It will reach the UK. This market is extremely lucrative, and the risks are significant from rising addiction to the destabilising effect it could have on communities.”

The same source added that there are concerns about domestic production. Intelligence suggests criminal networks in Europe may already be experimenting with manufacturing the drug locally to make it more potent and less dependent on overseas supply chains.

Captagon, a brand name for the synthetic stimulant fenethylamine, was originally prescribed in the 1960s for conditions such as attention deficit disorder and narcolepsy. Banned in most countries by the 1980s due to its addictive properties, it has since re-emerged as an illicit drug.

In the Middle East, Captagon has developed a dual market, as both a combat aid for militants and a recreational drug for affluent users. Its continued popularity in Gulf states, despite law enforcement crackdowns, provides a steady revenue stream for those controlling its production and distribution.

The report links the expansion of the trade to ongoing instability in southern Syria, where ungoverned areas provide cover for covert manufacturing sites. Factories often operate under the guise of legitimate businesses, hiding production within warehouses or embedding it in larger commercial shipments.

Before Assad's fall, the drug's export market was used as a tool of influence, with flows adjusted depending on political and diplomatic goals. That system has now fragmented, with numerous groups competing for a share of the profits.

With high demand, elevated prices, and well-established smuggling routes, security officials warn that the threat to the UK is real and growing. Law enforcement agencies across Europe are increasing cooperation to intercept shipments before they cross into Britain.

However, intelligence assessments caution that the adaptability of these networks, combined with the profitability of the trade, makes complete eradication unlikely in the near term.