

[New EMCDDA Paper explores the illicit captagon market](#)

What is captagon? Where is it used and produced? Can it be linked to terrorist attacks in Europe? These are some of the questions explored in the latest edition in the EMCDDA Papers series launched today [Captagon: understanding today's illicit market](#). The report provides an overview of what is currently known about the captagon phenomenon in order to assist those working in the illicit drugs field who may need to respond to the issue.

Captagon® was originally the brand name for a medicinal product containing fenetylline produced since the 1960s and serving licit markets in Europe and the Middle East. Sold in tablet form, with a characteristic logo comprising two half-moons, it was prescribed as a treatment for conditions such as attention deficit disorder and narcolepsy. Today, it is no longer produced or used for therapeutic purposes.

After fenetylline was placed under international control in 1986, traffickers sometimes based in eastern Europe started producing tablets containing other substances, especially amphetamine, which were then sold as 'captagon' on markets for stimulants in the Middle East.

Captagon use as we know it today

The report reviews what is known about current use, production and supply of captagon. It describes how recent reports of captagon use no longer refer to the diverted medicinal product Captagon® but to clandestinely produced tablets commonly containing amphetamine and often caffeine (but which still bear a logo similar to original Captagon® tablets).

Where is captagon used?

Captagon is reported to be a commonly used stimulant in the Middle East. While little information is available on the captagon consumer markets in these countries, anecdotal and expert reports, as well as insights from supply-side information, suggest that, in many countries, the use of captagon may be significant.

Interviews with law enforcement officers suggest that, since 2014, captagon seizures have been increasing in a number of Middle East countries (particularly Israel, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates). Tens of millions of tablets, most of which carried the captagon logo, were also seized between 2010 and 2014 in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. These countries were usually assumed to be transit or production territories for captagon, and not large consumer markets, but recent data suggest that use in this area may be also on the rise (particularly in Syria).

Where is captagon produced?

While illicit captagon was originally sourced mainly from eastern Europe,

production appears to have shifted into the Middle East, the drug's main consumer market. Production methods used there show many similarities with those used in Europe, suggesting that European organised crime groups may be involved in Middle East amphetamine production. The report also describes how amphetamine produced in Europe may be shipped to the Middle East in bulk or in the form of captagon tablets.

Can captagon be linked to terrorist attacks in Europe?

Some media reports have linked captagon use to the perpetrators of terrorist acts in Europe or terrorist groups based in areas of conflict in the Middle East. Forensic pathology findings did not detect the use of 'illicit drugs or alcohol' by the terrorists involved in the attack in the Bataclan venue (Paris) on 13 November 2015. Nor has captagon use been directly implicated in attacks in other European countries.

The report concludes that the suggested links between terrorism and captagon use featuring in media reports appear to have been overstated. As is the case for other types of drug, some terrorist groups may exploit the captagon market to finance their activities and some terrorists may at times use drugs, but the evidence available does not indicate any particular association between captagon and terrorism within the EU.

This report is based on a report in French [Captagon: déconstruction d'un mythe](#), published in July 2017 by the *Observatoire français des drogues et des toxicomanies* (the French national focal point in the Reitox network) and the EMCDDA.