

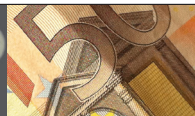
Drugs, International Challenges



OBSERVATOIRE
FRANÇAIS DES
DROGUES ET DES
TOXICOMANIES



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction



CAPTAGON: DECONSTRUCTING THE MYTH

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The terrorist attacks in Île-de-France on 13 November 2015 gave rise to sudden interest in an illicit drug, known as "captagon" for thirty or so years, and which several media outlets hastily described as "the drug of terrorists" [1]. Relatively little information is available on illicit captagon, hence the emergence of more or less unreliable theories which are often difficult to prove or invalidate. In fact, obtaining knowledge on this phenomenon is quite difficult due to a lack of data originating from the major markets where this substance is used, the largest of which appear to be in the Persian Gulf. However, a set of reliable information exists, which allows a series of hypotheses relative to the supply structure for this substance and the changes in its production to be formulated¹.

In the beginning was Captagon®

Captagon® was originally the name of a psychoactive medicine marketed, from the early 1960s, by the German firm Degussa Pharma Gruppe in the form of whitish tablets engraved with a characteristic logo comprising two half moons. Captagon® was then

mainly prescribed in the treatment of attention deficit disorder, narcolepsy, and as a psychostimulant. Its two major markets appear to have been (Western and Eastern) Europe and the Middle East.

Captagon® contains a synthetic drug called fenethylamine, each tablet containing 50 mg. Its effects, although less potent, are similar to those of amphetamine, the sulphate form of which is commonly sold on European illicit drug markets as "speed". The fenethylamine molecule is a chemical combination of amphetamine and theophylline. The latter is a natural alkaloid, which is a bronchodilator and mild stimulant belonging to the same class as caffeine². Theophylline is not under international control and can thus be procured without much difficulty. Fenethylamine is a pro-

1. This article is a summary of a full report, published in French by the OFDT and EMCDDA, available for download at the following link: <https://www.ofdt.fr/index.php?cID=940>. It is notably based on the review of scientific and media sources, on dozens of interviews with law enforcement professionals as part of missions carried out in Lebanon and with various European Union institutions, such as Europol and the European Police College (CEPOL). All of the methodological reference points can be found in the full report.

2. Theophylline is notably found in coffee, tea and cocoa.

INTRODUCTION

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) has been closely associated with *Drugs, international challenges* since its launch by the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in 2011, for instance by joining the publication's editorial board. By analysing the supply of illicit drugs and its consequences in the field of security the European agency and its French focal point fulfil their mandates of offering sound and up-to-date information to professionals, decision-makers and the public at large.

Issue n° 10 of *Drugs, international challenges* was prepared by an EMCDDA specialist of drug supply issues, reflecting both organisations' common objective of putting the available evidence into perspective so as to shed light on little known or misconstrued problems.

This issue of *Drugs, international challenges* and the full report that accompanies it, deal with a sensitive issue: captagon, a drug that has made big headlines in France and in many other countries since the terrorist attacks of November 2015.

What is captagon? Do the jihadists of the Islamic State use captagon before perpetrating acts of terrorism? What are the connections between the captagon currently available on the drug markets of the Arabian Peninsula and Captagon®, the psychotropic medicine placed under international control in the 1980s? How is the supply chain of the illicit captagon drug structured? And what criminal groups are involved?

Based on important field work in Lebanon and on the analysis of a large body of literature, this issue offers reliable answers to some questions and suggests directions for further research on aspects where evidence is lacking, all the while steering well clear of fanciful speculation.

The present issue of *Drugs, international challenges* thus puts the so-called "terrorist drug" to the test, and offers a sensible, dispassionate overview resulting in a reasoned analysis of an ill-understood phenomenon at the source of much confusion.

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drug³; it is metabolised by the body into amphetamine and theophylline, to such an extent that it is very difficult to evidence fenethylamine use in a subject using forensic tests.

Fenethylamine was listed in Schedule II of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances in 1986⁴. According to the data published each year by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), the UN body responsible for ensuring compliance with the international conventions on narcotics and psychoactive substances, no countries have manufactured fenethylamine since 2009. The minute quantities still used for medical or research purposes throughout the world apparently originate from remaining legal stock [3]. In 2017, the medicinal product with the brand name Captagon[®] is now only used in very small quantities for medical or research purposes throughout the world; its active ingredient, fenethylamine, is no longer manufactured and worldwide stocks of this substance have almost been depleted.

From Captagon[®] to "captagon"

The available information indicates that the millions of tablets in circulation are counterfeits of the

original medicinal product, which are manufactured illegally and do not contain fenethylamine. In fact, sporadic reports over a period of more than twenty years (1992 to 2013), describing forensic tests on captagon seized in Saudi Arabia, Bulgaria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Serbia, Turkey and Yemen, indicate that the illicit drug most frequently used as the active ingredient in captagon tablets is amphetamine, in combination with other substances⁵. All of these analyses show that fenethylamine is completely absent in the captagon seized, and thus demonstrate that the tablets are counterfeits with a similar appearance and logo to the original Captagon[®]. These elements therefore debunk and expose captagon's true and banal nature: "speed pills" often cut with caffeine.

The demand for captagon: the great mystery

The most recent assessments concerning the use of amphetamine (hence, illicit captagon) and methamphetamine were issued by UNODC. These indicate that the annual general population (15-64 years) prevalence of ATS (amphetamine-type stimulant) use was 0.27% in Kuwait in 2005 and 0.40% in Saudi Arabia in

Captagon tablets



Photograph: Department of Identification and Forensic Science, Israel Police

2006, the only countries for which these assessments exist. According to the UNODC, these estimates seem too low compared to seizure figures, as the quantities of amphetamine intercepted in the Arabian Peninsula since 2008 account for over 50% of total seizures worldwide. UNODC concludes that the prevalence of amphetamine/captagon use in this region is most likely underestimated [4].

Extrapolation from seizures

The cumulative quantities of substances specifically described as "captagon", seized in 5 Gulf States (Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Yemen) between 2010 and 2014, amount to 4.87 million tablets and 1.43 tonnes. Over the same period, Saudi Arabia was the country with, by far, the largest amphetamine seizures, amounting to over 325 million tablets, with more than 100 million reported in 2014 alone. Although not specifically stated by the Saudi authorities, it is reasonable to believe that the vast majority of tablets seized in the country were captagon. Tens of millions of tablets, for the most part identified as "captagon", were,

Captagon[®] in France

Further to the decree of 25 October 1995, the manufacture and sale of Captagon[®] and any other preparations containing fenethylamine, a substance included in the list of controlled substances of 22 February 1990, were prohibited in France. However, France was one of five countries in the world (along with Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) to report the medical use of fenethylamine until the 2010s. As from 2003 and up to 2010, the French National Agency for Medicines and Health Products Safety (ANSM) issued nominative temporary authorisations for use [2] (ATUn) of Captagon[®], probably for small quantities (not communicated), for a few patients suffering from narcolepsy. From 2010, the ANSM no longer issued any ATUs, except for only one patient, until stock ran out in 2013. The ANSM states that no further patients are currently being treated and that no hospital pharmacies carry the substance. Captagon[®] was apparently subject to abuse in France over the 1970-1990 period, particularly in sports (cycling and rugby) where it was used as a doping substance owing to its psychostimulant properties.

3. A prodrug is a medicinal product, which is administered in an inactive form. After administration, the prodrug is metabolised *in vivo* into an active metabolite.

4. For the purposes of the 1971 Convention the chemical name of fenethylamine is «7-(2-((α-methylphenethyl)amino)ethyl)theophylline», and that of amphetamine is «(±)-α-methylphenethylamine».

5. The list of the analytical reports mentioned herein is shown in the full version of the report.

moreover, seized between 2010 and 2014 in Near-Eastern countries, i.e. Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. These countries are thought to be captagon transit or production zones, rather than significant user markets, although recent information suggests growing use, particularly in Syria [5]. Since 2014, captagon seizures seem to have increased continuously in various Gulf and Near Eastern countries (Emirates, Israel and Jordan in particular). More recent statistics for Lebanon indicate the seizure of over 15 million tablets in 2015, i.e. half of the previous year which was a record year [6].

Shifts in transnational production

The production of captagon destined for user markets in the Gulf States has always been a transnational phenomenon. Two major stages can be distinguished since the mid-1990s.

The Bulgarian-Turkish connection (1990-2005)

Initially, the markets were mainly supplied by Balkan countries and Turkey. Amphetamine synthesis, usually from BMK (a precursor essential to the manufacture of amphetamine, but which can also be used in the production of detergents), and tablet production took place in countries such as Slovenia, Serbia and, above all, Bulgaria. Part of the amphetamine produced in Bulgaria was sent to Turkey, where it was used to make captagon tablets, sometimes in well-established pharmaceutical companies. However, Bulgarian dealers produced and exported tablets at the same time, often via neighbouring Turkey. Amphetamine was also synthesized in Turkey, particularly in Istanbul, and in the provinces of Gaziantep and Hatay (Antioch), bordering Syria [8]. From Turkey, the tablets were transported to the Arabian Peninsula by road via Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, but also via Caucasus countries, such as Georgia

and Armenia. The maritime route was also used. It is also likely that air transit was used, although no sources confirming this have been identified. The Bulgarian-Turkish connection is thus said to have dominated captagon trafficking up to the mid-2000s.

The clampdown by the police in Bulgaria and Turkey from 2002, although not completely suppressing the captagon "business" in these countries, nonetheless seems to have rearranged the map in terms of supply, from the mid-2000. On the one hand, amphetamine and tablet production was partly transferred to the Near East, close to the main user markets. On the other hand, new sources of amphetamine supply started to emerge. At the same time, captagon trafficking routes became more diverse as a consequence of globalisation and the expansion of the containerized trade in goods. Lastly, although limited evidence on this subject is available, it is likely that part of the captagon supply became connected to the logic of war process arising from the Syrian conflict starting in 2011.

Relocation to the Near East (from 2005)

There is relatively little data confirming the partial relocation of captagon production to the Near East, except for Lebanon. The first indicator is the enormous quantities of BMK officially imported into Jordan and Iraq between 2008 and 2011. Hence, the INCB reported that more than 75% (i.e. nearly 19 tonnes) of legal global BMK trade in 2008 was destined for "two countries in Western Asia"⁶, in which the authorities had authorised import for the manufacture of cleaning and disinfectant products [9]. The INCB report for 2010 was more explicit. It specifically described Jordan as importing nearly 9 tonnes of BMK destined for re-export to Iraq, i.e. more than 60% of the legal global trade in the precursor

Captagon supply: a clearly defined division of labour

In the same way as the illicit production of other drugs sold in tablet form, captagon production may be split into two distinct phases: chemical synthesis of the illicit active substance, in this case, amphetamine; then production of the tablets. In Europe, and seemingly in other regions where captagon is produced, although these two phases can be carried out within the same premises, they often take place in various facilities or, indeed, countries, sometimes involving various trafficking organisations [7]. Owing to their infrastructure and expertise in terms of acquiring and storing tonnes of controlled chemical substances, purchasing or building the necessary equipment (reaction vessels, etc.) as well as the technical and logistical production capacity for drugs and/or precursors, criminal organisations who master the synthesis of amphetamine in large quantities have a prime position on the captagon market. These «wholesalers» can evidently manufacture tablets themselves, but are also in a position to sell «bulk» amphetamine to third parties, who will solely take charge of blending it with other substances (cutting agents and excipients) and manufacturing the tablets. As a result of this fragmented structure, the supply of the captagon is difficult to define and fight effectively. Another major consequence, for those attempting to decipher the captagon supply chain, is the priority task of determining the source of amphetamine.

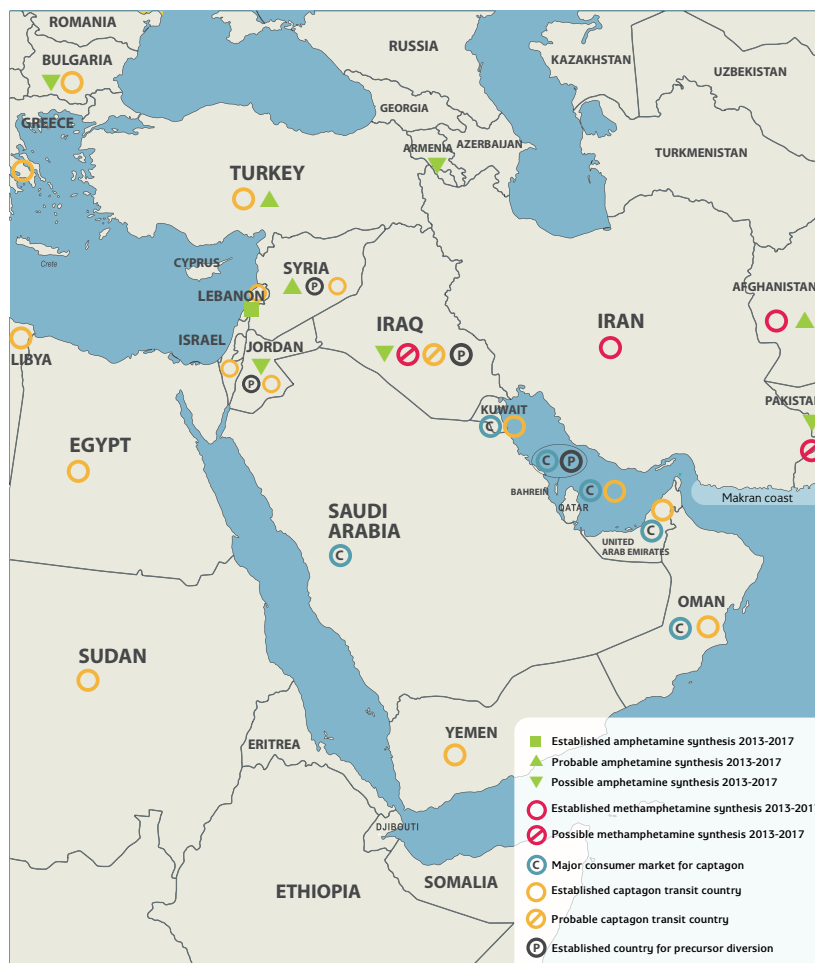
6. In the INCB reports, this collective name denotes a vast region covering countries in the Near East, the Arabian Peninsula, the Caucasus and Central Asia, notably including Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

for the year, while questioning the "legitimacy" of BMK imports into Jordan and Iraq, bearing in mind that numerous other chemical substances which are not drug precursors could be used to manufacture household products. A year later, when the civil war had begun in Syria, the INCB confirmed that tests confirmed that the BMK content in the household products was 50% lower than that declared by the Iraqi manufacturer⁷. However, these facts did not prevent the Hashemite Kingdom from re-authorising, in 2011, the import of approximately 50 tonnes of BMK, i.e. more than 50% of total global trade that year, again for the manufacture, in Iraq, of what the INCB henceforth referred to as "alleged cleaning products" [10]. The importation of BMK was finally prohibited by the Jordanian government in 2012.

Therefore, a total of 98 tonnes of BMK were imported into Jordan with the authorisation of the Jordanian authorities in order to be re-exported to Iraq between 2008 and 2011, i.e. more than two-thirds of global BMK trade during this period in the immediate run-up to the outbreak of the Syrian War in March–April 2011. This is the minimum known quantity of BMK available in the Near East during this period, bearing in mind that additional shipments may have entered the region undetected or mis-declared. These 98 tonnes of precursor would theoretically allow between 55 and 65 tonnes of amphetamine to be synthesized, i.e. enough to manufacture approximately 4 billion captagon tablets containing 15 milligrams of amphetamine each.

However, it is difficult to conclude that this quantity of amphetamine was actually synthesized in Jordan, Iraq or in neighbouring countries, as some may have been used to manufacture household products in Iraq. It is equally possible that a proportion was re-exported to other regions where amphetamine is produced illegally, for instance, Europe. INCB reports show that, since the mid-1990s at least, Arab countries – particularly Iraq, Jordan and Syria – were involved in

Amphetamines, precursors, captagon: production, trafficking and use



Source: Laurent Laniel/OFD T production

numerous attempts to divert drug precursors, such as acetic anhydride (heroin), ephedrine and pseudoephedrine (methamphetamine), PMK (MDMA) and potassium permanganate (cocaine), most of which were probably not destined for use in the Near East [11].

Nevertheless it is likely that an unspecified proportion of the BMK that entered Jordan between 2008 and 2011 was used to synthesize amphetamine for the manufacture of captagon in the Near East. UNODC statistics for the 2006–2012 period show that only three illicit amphetamine synthesis laboratories were dismantled in Lebanon in 2011, but do not contain any indication as to their production capacity [12]. It was only in 2015 that a new large-scale amphetamine synthesis laboratory was seized, again in Lebanon (see below), the only Near-Eastern country

reporting the dismantling of amphetamine synthesis laboratories in over fifteen years (see map).

European "experts" present in Lebanon

The established presence of European specialists in illicit amphetamine synthesis in the region is the second indicator for the relocation of probably a large proportion of the production of the active ingredient of captagon to the Near East. Hence, in addition to Bulgarians, several Belgian and Dutch "experts" have been identified in the region⁸. This was apparent in February 2016,

7. This would mean that, in the best-case scenario, only half of the BMK imported would have been used to manufacture the cleaning products in question. However, the Board does not put forward any clear hypotheses for the use of the remaining 50%...

8. Communication by law enforcement officers, 2016.

when Belgian citizen Gert "De Lange" Loenders, one of the leaders of a multinational MDMA production ring operating in Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland and Turkey, was arrested in Lebanon, before being deported to his home country.

The synthesis of MDMA requires equipment and processes very similar to that used for amphetamine, only different precursors. Hence, in Belgium and the Netherlands, which together represent one of the largest areas of illicit amphetamine and MDMA production in the world, the two drugs are frequently synthesized using the same equipment by the same criminal organisations. A further indicator, again originating from Lebanon, suggests that European experts are involved in illicit amphetamine synthesis in the Near East. On 29 December 2015, the Lebanese Army's Special Forces discovered two captagon production sites in Dar Al-Ouassa, a Shiite village in the Beqaa region. One was dedicated to amphetamine synthesis (and possibly the production of BMK) and the other to tablet production. It is reasonable to suspect that Loenders may have been managing the production sites in Dar Al-Ouassa, in partnership with, or on behalf of members of the Shiite Jaafar clan, notorious drug dealers who owned the premises housing the laboratories⁹, particularly since this village, like Beqaa more generally, traditionally serves as a refuge for individuals sought by the Lebanese authorities. Beqaa is also an electoral stronghold of Hezbollah, an influential political player in Lebanon, where it has government representation and militias fighting in Syria alongside Damascus regime troops [13]. It is thus an established fact that amphetamine and captagon tablets are produced in the Near East, clearly in Lebanon, and, in at least one case, probably in collusion with European synthetic drug producers. Furthermore, UNODC states that, along with Lebanon, Syria is believed to be a source of captagon tablets seized in the Near East and in the Persian Gulf. Amphetamine may well have been or still be synthesized in Syria, but this is difficult to confirm.

Production in Syria?

The theory for the production of amphetamine in Syria is described in detail in a report by the NGO Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime published in November 2016 [14]. The report asserts that a number of laboratories have been discovered in Syria, particularly in zones under governmental control and in other regions controlled by the jihadi group (Jabhat) Fateh Al-Cham Front (formerly known as Al-Nusra Front and officially affiliated with Al-Qaeda until 2016), without, however, citing its sources. Neither does it specify whether these are synthesis or tableting sites¹⁰. However, the NGO concludes that Islamic State (IS) is unlikely to be involved in captagon production or trafficking. Also of interest, Global Initiative has pointed out that the political and trade links between Communist Bulgaria and Ba'ath party Syria led to the emergence of alliances between Syrian and Bulgarian criminal organisations back in the 1980s. The outbreak of civil war in 2011 apparently attracted the creation of laboratories in Syria initially, before having the opposite effect, as the development of fighting between the various warring factions threatened the security of the laboratories and forced manufacturers to relocate to Lebanon (and possibly Turkey).

In 2011, the Syrian authorities reported to UNODC eight individual seizures of captagon, amounting to 80 kilograms and 77,000 tablets, and stated that the captagon had been produced in Syria. However, it is possible that only the tablets were produced in Syria, from amphetamine imported from Lebanon or elsewhere. Aside from a small seizure of captagon in Aleppo, in September 2010, Syria is no longer mentioned as a producer country, whether by its own or other authorities, over the period covered by UNODC (2010-2015) [15]. While there are strong suspicions, mainly based on indicators relating to precursors (3 shipments of several tonnes stopped between 2010 and 2015, and a seizure of BMK in Syria in 2012),

there is no evidence of synthesis or tableting laboratories, since none have been officially reported as dismantled in Syria [16]. Owing to the war raging in the country, the interception of precursors and large seizures of captagon at its borders, it is easy to understand why amphetamine is suspected to be produced in Syria¹¹. Syria is currently the subject of economic and financial sanctions imposed by the United States, the Arab League, Turkey and the European Union. This increases the likelihood that the protagonists involved in the Syrian conflict would resort to smuggling of goods and to illegal sources of funds, including the production and export of captagon.

Production in Iraq or Jordan?

It is hard to conceive that none of the sources consulted here has offered any hypothesis for the fate of the almost 100 tonnes of BMK – i.e. a potential 4 billion captagon tablets – that were officially imported into Jordan and Iraq for four years in the run-up to the war in Syria, at least part of which was probably used to synthesize amphetamine. Despite repeated whistle-blowing by INCB and UNODC, no inquiries appear to

9. The arrest of a member of the Saudi royal family, Prince Abdel Mohsen ben Walid ben Abdelaziz, and 4 other Saudi citizens at Beirut airport, as they were about to board a private jet destined for Riyadh, carrying over 2 tonnes of captagon (and an unspecified amount of cocaine), on 26 October 2015, was widely covered by the media. In addition to the 5 persons arrested, another 4 individuals were on the run and being searched for in connection with this case. According to information obtained in Beirut in May 2016, one of these individuals was said to be a member of the Jaafar clan who, despite multiple arrest warrants, went in person to Rafic Hariri airport to deliver the seized cargo of captagon. It is difficult to judge the veracity of this information, while so many rumours abound on this case, for which very few details are communicated by the Lebanese authorities.

10. Furthermore, the NGO misinterpreted the data on precursor seizures and only appeared to have very briefly looked at the INCB reports mentioned above.

11. This is particularly the case since the recent history of the country, like neighbouring Lebanon, has numerous examples of the connection between drug production and trafficking (opium, heroin, hashish) and private or governmental stakeholders. However, the propaganda element of these suspicions cannot be ruled out. The Syrian regimen, formerly allied with the Soviet Bloc and now Russia, Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah, is not well thought of in the West, Arab countries or in Turkey.

have been conducted on this subject in Jordan or Iraq. It would thus seem that a hundred or so tonnes of the precursor of the illicit active ingredient of captagon imported into the Near East have simply disappeared. As already stated, the precursor may have been re-exported illegally from either of these countries to Lebanon, Syria, Turkey or Europe, for instance. However, it is also possible that it could have been used to synthesize amphetamine in Jordan and/or Iraq.

Iraq, particularly in the north of the country, on the borders of Iran, Turkey and Syria, has been the source of several attempts to divert chemical precursors other than BMK, particularly vast quantities of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine (methamphetamine), together with acetic anhydride (heroin)¹². Furthermore, the country's pseudoephedrine requirements, as assessed each year by the Iraqi authorities, increased ten-fold between 2007 and 2010, which, according to INCB, greatly exceeds the legitimate annual requirements per inhabitant. INCB also reports that its numerous requests for information on the Iraqi firms involved in trafficking precursors did not receive any response from the Iraqi government [17]. Lastly, the latest data on captagon seizures available for Iraq indicate that no less than 1.5 tonnes of the substance were intercepted there in 2010 (<https://data.unodc.org>). Hence, as is the case for Syria, although no amphetamine, methamphetamine or heroin laboratories have been seized in Iraq since 2001, it can be speculated whether the country may have become an international trafficking hub for precursors and a production site for various narcotics, including captagon.

It thus appears that, while hundreds of millions of captagon tablets are seized each year in the Arab world and enormous quantities of amphetamine precursors have been imported into the Near East, only four amphetamine synthesis laboratories have been officially dismantled in the region since 2010. The synthesis of the active ingredient thus seems to have been barely affected by law

enforcement, with Lebanon being the only country to report some results in this respect. Should it be concluded that amphetamine laboratories exist in other countries where law enforcement would, for whatever reason, be less effective than their Lebanese counterparts?

■ Captagon use and jihadi terrorism

Since 13 November 2015, it has become difficult to read a press article or watch a televised documentary on captagon without the substance being automatically associated with the war in Syria and terrorist attacks, in Europe or elsewhere, claimed by Islamic State (IS, "Daesh"). Captagon is particularly alleged to have been consumed by the perpetrators of terrorist attacks claimed by IS and, more widely, by fighters in jihadi groups operating in Syria. The use of stimulant drugs, particularly amphetamine, in the context of military operations has long been known and documented. As a result, this claim regarding captagon takes on certain likelihood, it is credible, becomes plausible... and soon there is no longer any shadow of a doubt. But what evidence is there for this recurring link between captagon and jihadi terrorism?

Captagon®/captagon and the terrorist attacks of 13 November 2015 in Île-de-France

Following the publication in the press of the declaration by a witness stating that the perpetrators of the terrorist attack on the Bataclan (Paris), on 13 November 2015, claimed by IS, looked like "zombies" and appeared to be under the influence of drugs, several physicians and scientists¹³ have talked to the media about the effects of fenethylamine, the active ingredient of Captagon®. Nevertheless, at the beginning of January 2016, the French authorities stated that post-mortem examination of the bodies of the terrorists of 13 November showed that they had

consumed "no illicit drugs or alcohol" before carrying out the attacks [17]¹⁴. These results did not put an end to the allegations on the pretext that traces of fenethylamine are eliminated from the body very rapidly and may not have been detected by forensic scientists. While it is, in fact, very difficult to evidence intake of fenethylamine using forensic tests (see above), this is not where the problem lies since captagon does not in any case contain fenethylamine. Even so, fenethylamine is metabolised by the body into theophylline and amphetamine, such that metabolites of amphetamine, an illicit drug, would have been detected during post-mortem examination. In short, numerous "specialists" confused the medicine and the counterfeit product [18]. While it has been established that the perpetrators of 13 November 2015 had not consumed any "illicit drugs or alcohol" before carrying out the attacks, likewise, no alleged captagon use was suggested regarding the terrorists in the Brussels underground and airport attacks on 22 March 2016, who belonged to the same IS cell as the perpetrators in Île-de-France. Furthermore, captagon was not implicated in the various other terrorist attacks occurring in the European Union since 2015 in France, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden¹⁵. As regards the terrorist attack in Tunisia on 26 June 2015, the presence of a "drug" was mentioned in the findings of a British coroner's inquest in early 2017, but without specifying the exact nature of the substance¹⁶.

12. According to INCB, 659 tonnes of acetic anhydride in total are said to have been diverted, and destined for Iraq between 2007 and 2011.

13. See *Sciences et Avenir* of 17 November 2015.

14. These results were confirmed on 19 July 2016 by the French Antiterrorism Coordination Unit (UCLAT) in an email sent to the OFDT.

15. The post-mortem examination of the body of the perpetrator of the Orly attack on 18 March 2017 is reported to have detected traces of alcohol, cannabis and cocaine.

16. See full report for more detailed explanations.

Conclusion

The captagon tablets currently available on user markets, which are almost exclusively located in the Arabian Peninsula, no longer bear any resemblance to the medicinal product of the same name apart from their physical appearance.

Captagon, in the overwhelming majority of cases, aside from the classic "fakes", is now simply another "street name" for amphetamine or

speed. This relatively commonplace substance was, until the 2000s, manufactured by Balkan, Bulgarian and Turkish networks, specialising in the synthesis of amphetamine and its transformation into tablets. Owing to law enforcement actions, part of production appears to have relocated closer to consumer markets in the Persian Gulf, and to Lebanon in particular, as shown by combined seizures of precursors, amphetamine and captagon tablets. This must be understood in the context of armed violence in the Middle East, with the

outbreak of the Syrian Civil War and the break-up of Iraq, notably due to the activities of the jihadi armies. These combined events have helped sustain a series of rumours and allegations. The one often rehearsed in the media, that "commonplace" captagon is the "jihadi drug", the substance preferred by Daesh terrorists, especially in France, has been refuted by objective findings, and will remain mere speculation until proven otherwise.

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