

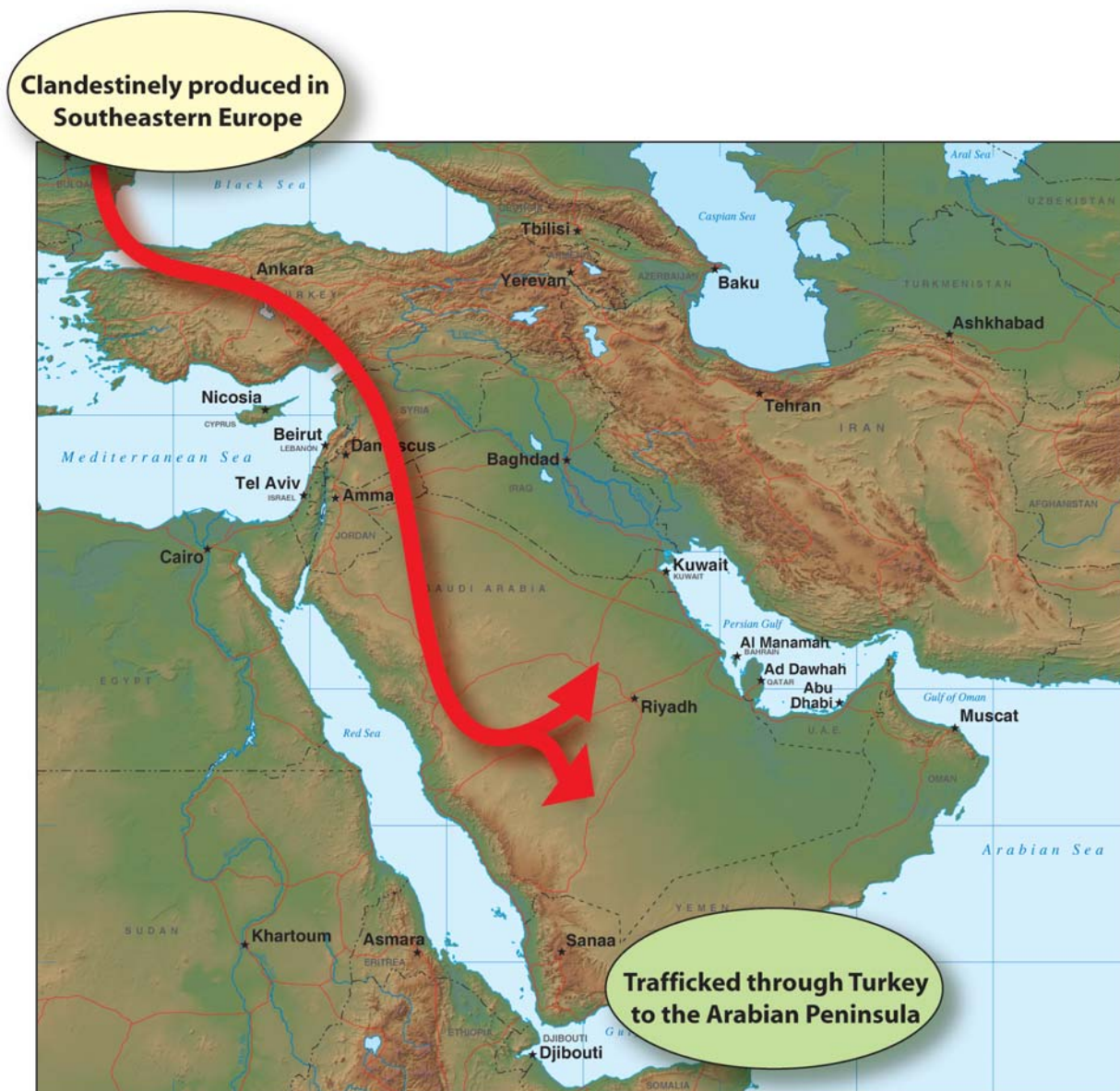
Drug Intelligence Brief



DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION
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FENETHYLLINE AND THE MIDDLE EAST: A BRIEF SUMMARY



Fenethylamine, commonly known by the trademark name Captagon, is one of the most popular drugs of abuse among the young affluent populations of the Middle East. Since the cessation of legal production of Captagon, this synthetic amphetamine-type stimulant has been clandestinely produced in southern Europe and trafficked through Turkey to the consumer markets on the Arabian Peninsula.¹

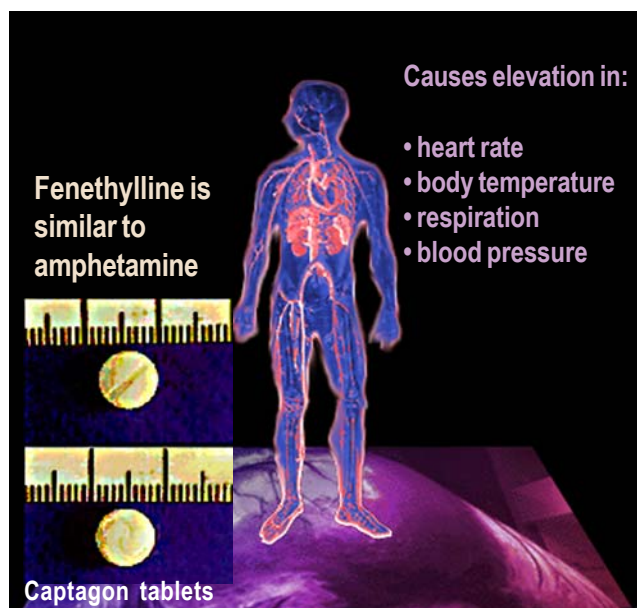
¹ The terms fenethylamine and Captagon will be used interchangeably throughout this Brief.

Schedule

Fenethylamine has been a controlled substance on Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act since 1981. Fenethylamine does not have an accepted medical use in the United States, and is not approved for distribution.

Physiological Effects

Fenethylamine is a central nervous system stimulant with effects similar to amphetamine. In small to moderate doses, amphetamine causes elevations in heart rate, body temperature, respiration, and blood pressure. In addition, a user initially experiences a dilation of bronchial vessels, extra energy, and appetite suppression. Over the long-term, however, amphetamine use can have a number of side effects, including, but not limited to, extreme depression, lethargy, sleep deprivation, heart and blood vessel toxicity, and malnutrition.²



Abuse

The primary market for clandestinely manufactured fenethylamine has traditionally been the Arabian Peninsula. According to the United Nations (U.N.), it is the primary amphetamine-type stimulant consumed in the region. Authorities in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar, report that use is prevalent among their younger, affluent citizens.

Production and Trafficking

In response to frequent diversion in the 1980s, fenethylamine was placed under international control midway through the decade. According to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), Captagon has not been legally produced since 1986. Despite the cessation of legal production, demand for Captagon has remained strong. The U.N. maintains that illegal stockpiling and clandestine fenethylamine production has continued unabated, primarily in southern Europe and Turkey, for consumption in the Middle East.

Traditionally, clandestine production of Captagon has been reported in southeastern Europe. Over the past few years, the International Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the INCB

² Inaba, Darryl S. and Cohen, William E. *Uppers, Downers, All Arounders: Physical and Mental Effects of Psychoactive Drugs*. Ashland: CNS Publications, Inc., 2000, p.102-103.

have reported the seizure of clandestine laboratories in several countries, including Bulgaria and Slovenia. Recently, suspected Captagon laboratories were also seized in Serbia-Montenegro and Turkey. The laboratories vary in production capacity: some produce small quantities, while others are large, sophisticated operations with professional-grade equipment capable of producing large quantities.

Captagon is smuggled along a variety of routes from the primary production areas in southern Europe through Syria and Jordan to the Arabian Peninsula. To date, clandestine production has not been reported in Syria or Jordan.

Sizable seizures of fenethylamine tablets are frequently effected en route to the Arabian Peninsula. In September 2002, according to INTERPOL, more than 1.4 million tablets were seized in Syria, while en route to Saudi Arabia. Other examples include 107.5 kilograms seized in Turkey in March 2002, and two separate seizures in Bulgaria in March 2003 of 75.03 and 39.7 kilograms, respectively.³

Emerging Trends—Counterfeit Captagon

Counterfeit synthetic drugs are commonly sold on the illicit market. Throughout Europe and the United States, tablets containing a variety of compounds are regularly sold as MDMA, or Ecstasy (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), at rave events, night clubs, and other venues. Though the physical appearance of these tablets, emblazoned with logos, etc., resembles Ecstasy, the chemical composition may differ significantly. With dwindling stocks of diverted fenethylamine and fluctuations in the availability of precursor chemicals for clandestine production, counterfeit Captagon tablets are appearing in the primary consumption markets.

According to open source reporting, counterfeit Captagon tablets have been reported in Saudi Arabia since the late 1980s. The majority of these tablets contained mixtures of drugs capable of inducing effects similar to those of fenethylamine.

Counterfeit Captagon tablets have also emerged in Europe and Turkey. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Testing and Research Laboratory, analysis of counterfeit Captagon tablets seized in Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, have demonstrated the presence of amphetamine, caffeine, quinine, theophylline, and other substances—and the absence of fenethylamine.

Clandestine production of counterfeit Captagon tablets is not a new phenomenon; however, several recent examples have been discovered in Serbia-Montenegro and Turkey. While Turkish authorities have traditionally seized Captagon tablets transiting their country en route to the Arabian Peninsula, evidence of production was not detected until July 2002, when Turkish authorities seized the first clandestine laboratory suspected of the production of Captagon (mentioned above). Several million tablets marked with the Captagon logo were also seized at the laboratory site. In January 2003, Turkish authorities seized two additional

³ According to the DEA Special Testing and Research Laboratory, 1 kilogram of Captagon is equivalent to approximately 5,500 tablets.

operational laboratories in Istanbul suspected of Captagon production. Following further scientific analysis of the three production sites and tablets seized, no evidence of fenethylamine was found. Rather, amphetamine and amphetamine derivatives were being produced, pressed into tablet form, and marked with the Captagon logo.

Outlook

Fenethylamine is likely to remain popular among the young affluent populations in the Arabian Peninsula States. However, as available stocks of diverted fenethylamine are depleted, and the availability of chemicals for the clandestine production of the drug fluctuate, increasing amounts of counterfeit Captagon will continue to emerge.

In the near term, other synthetic drugs, such as amphetamine and Ecstasy, may begin to enter the market as trafficking patterns are altered to exploit the increased Western presence in the Persian Gulf region.

This report was prepared by the Europe, Asia, Africa Strategic Intelligence Unit of the Office of Strategic Intelligence. This report reflects information received through May 2003. Comments and requests for copies are welcome and may be faxed to the Intelligence Production Unit, Intelligence Division, DEA Headquarters, at (202) 307-8726.