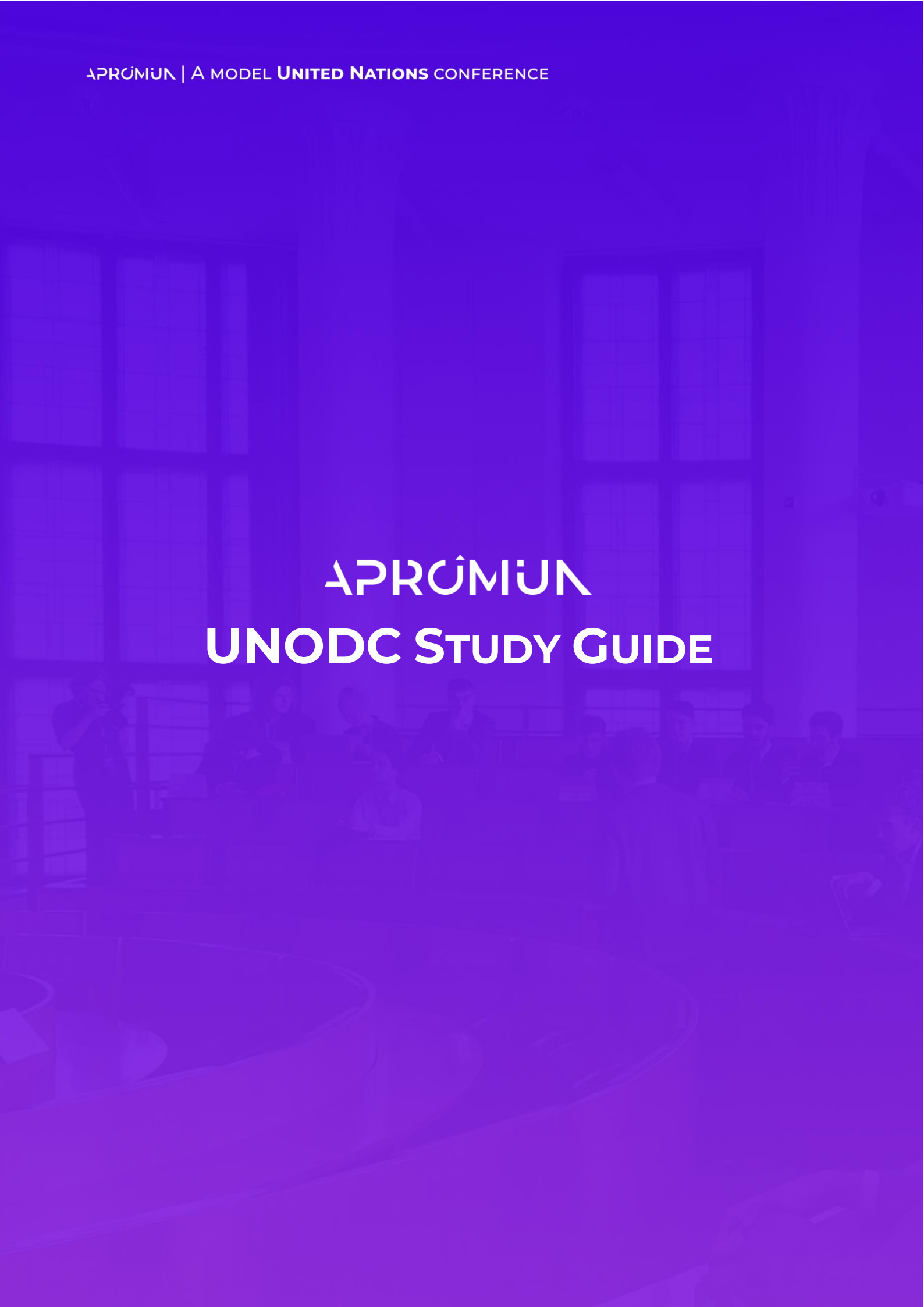


APRŪMŪN UNODC STUDY GUIDE



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II. Letters from the Chairs

Esteemed delegates,

It is with great delight to receive and welcome you all to this year's edition of the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** of **Aprogen Model United Nations 2023**. We have worked tenaciously to bring you a stirring issue that seems to be going unnoticed by the masses, despite heavily affecting the Middle East, the European continent likewise. We have great expectations for this committee, given the numerous potential ends there are to be unravelled, we rely on you to open many provocative debates throughout the duration of our committee.

Last year's **UNODC** committee was a blast, and therefore much is expected of this year's reissue. By creating discourse, we hope to inform and educate ourselves and find real solutions to real-world problems. What is prepared is a captivating topic concerning an illicit substance that, behind the curtains, has a major effect on the geopolitical situation of the Middle East. We deem our committee capable of providing a **platform for constructive discussions**, exploration of diverse approaches to these issues, and the opportunity to **voice your opinions** while also attentively listening to fellow delegates. Ultimately however, our main objective is to craft a resolution that reflects the **exceptional qualities** each of you brings to **Bratislava**.

This study guide aims to give you an instructive push-start concerning the illicit obstacle we face in captagon. Dear delegates, please make sure you understand the given topics well and take your time to thoroughly work out an informative **Position Paper**.

If you have any questions regarding anything, be sure to hit us up on **Discord**, **Facebook**, or **Instagram**. We will be more than happy to assist you with your needs. Best of luck, cannot wait to meet you all in Bratislava!

Dávid (@david_patoprsty)

and **Viktor** (@vici_vasko)

III. Introduction to the Committee

The **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime, in addition to being responsible for implementing the United Nations lead programme on terrorism. Established in 1997, UNODC has approximately 500 staff members worldwide. Its headquarters are in Vienna, and it operates 20 field offices, as well as liaison offices in New York and Brussels.

For two decades, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been helping make the world safer from drugs, organized crime, corruption and terrorism. We are committed to achieving health, security and justice for all by tackling these threats and promoting peace and sustainable well-being as deterrents to them.

Because the scale of these problems is often too great for states to confront alone, UNODC offers practical assistance and encourages transnational approaches to action. We do this in all regions of the world through our global programmes and network of field offices.

UNODC works to educate people throughout the world about the dangers of drug abuse and to strengthen international action against illicit drug production and trafficking and drug-related crime. To achieve those aims, UNODC has launched a range of initiatives, including alternatives in the area of illicit drug crop cultivation, monitoring of illicit crops and the implementation of projects against money laundering.

UNODC also works to improve crime prevention and assist with criminal justice reform in order to strengthen the rule of law, promote stable and viable criminal justice systems and combat the growing threats of transnational organized crime and corruption. It has 20 field offices covering over 150 countries. By working directly with Governments and non-governmental organizations, UNODC field staff develop and implement drug control and crime prevention programmes tailored to countries' particular needs.

IV. Captagon

Fenethylline is a codrug of amphetamine and theophylline. The drug was marketed for use as a psychostimulant under the brand names captagon, Biocapton, and Fitton, hence why it is commonly referred to as captagon. Today, it is illegal in most countries and is produced primarily for illicit use. Its stimulus effects on the nervous system have made it a great threat to society, comparable to substances as “crack” cocaine. “It gives you a kind of euphoria. You’re talkative, you don’t sleep, you don’t eat, you’re energetic.” After its invention in the early 60s in West Germany, it was prescribed as a medication for conditions such as ADHD, narcolepsy, or depression.



Figure 1: Captagon tablets

During the 1980s, the misuse and illicit production of this drug skyrocketed, particularly in impoverished states of the Middle East. Small manufacturers, producing up to 600,000 pills a day, and smugglers in the Middle East have long cultivated hashish, but captagon has become the poor man's cocaine. Due to its stimulating effects, its increase in popularity in these regions was caused by the instant soar of alertness and stamina.

Captagon became associated with conflict zones, notably during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). It was widely used by combatants on both sides of the conflict, as it provided a sense of invincibility and increased aggression, as with Berserkers of the old Norse mythology.

In some cases, the profits from illicit captagon production were used to fund armed groups. It is for these reasons that international sanctions and bans were put on captagon. It was classified as a controlled substance under the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances in 1986. This classification was aimed at restricting its production and distribution.

V. Captagon and Syria

Syria has become a major amphetamines exporter and consumer as the trauma of the country's brutal civil war fuels demand and the breakdown in order creates opportunity for producers. Drugs experts, traders and local activists say Syrian production of the most popular of the stimulants, known by its former brand name Captagon, accelerated in 2013, outpacing production in other countries in the region such as Lebanon.

Reports of seizures and interviews with people connected to the trade suggest it generates hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenues in Syria, potentially providing funding for weapons, while the drug itself helps combatants dig in for long, gruelling battles. Most other economic activity in Syria has ground to a halt in the past two years due to the violence, shortages, and international sanctions. Sitting at a crossroads in the Middle East, Syria has long been a transit point for drugs coming from Europe, Turkey and Lebanon and destined for Jordan, Iraq, and the Gulf.

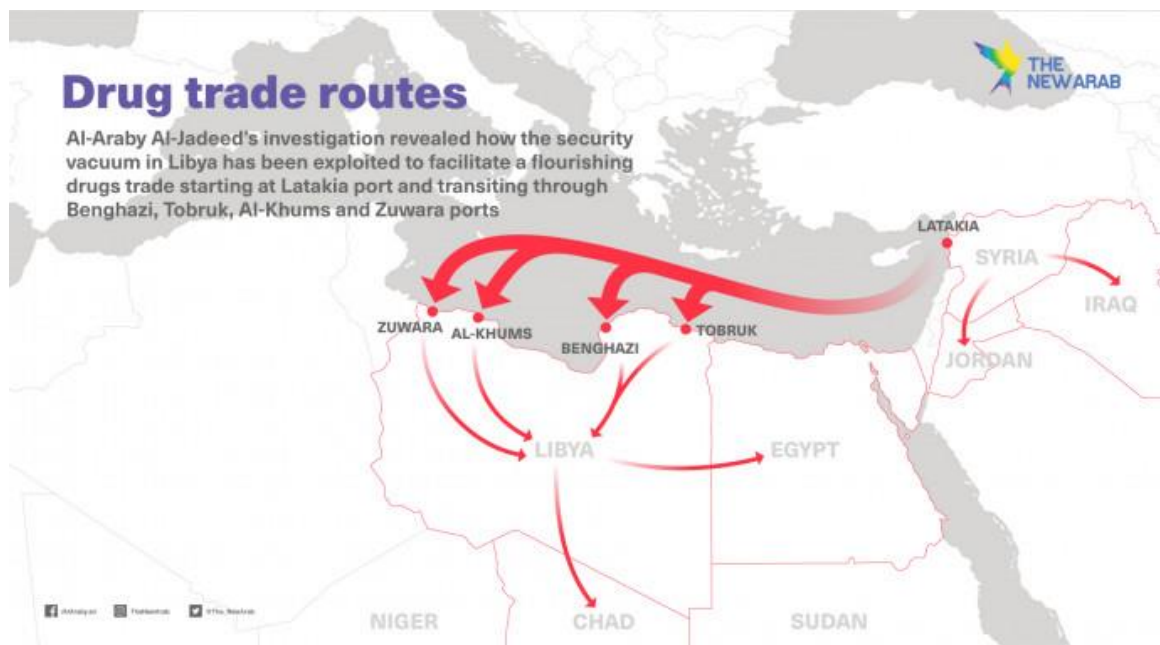


Figure 2: Overview of the drug trade routes

The breakdown of state infrastructure, weakening of borders and proliferation of armed groups during the nearly three-year battle for control of Syria has transformed the country from a stopover into a major production site. Syrian government forces and rebel groups each say the other uses captagon to endure protracted engagements without sleep, while clinicians say ordinary Syrians are increasingly experimenting with the pills, which sell for between \$5 and \$20. Official figures show Lebanon seized more than 12.3 million captagon pills in 2013. It has been reported that most of that came from a few large busts in the Bekaa Valley, which borders Syria. One seizure of 5.3 million pills implicated a Syrian family that he said has been smuggling drugs for 10 years.

Opposition activist Ammar said consumption was limited to government supporters and fighters who use the cover of the revolution to pursue lucrative criminal activities. He said the government exaggerated the drug's prevalence among opponents but added that it was likely both the Shabiha and rebel Free Syrian Army were users, "especially when they are assigned night duty or other long missions".

VI. Captagon Smuggling

1. Causes of Smuggling

Conveniently for Syrian producers, captagon has become the drug of choice for the Gulf countries, and the Middle East in general. Since 2010, numerous raids and seizures have been reported every year, with the intensity only increasing since Assad's consolidation of Syria.

The causes for this popularity are speculative, but experts agree that captagon, due to its history, is perceived as a medical drug, and users claim the use of it is therefore allowed in the Muslim religion. Koran, the Holy Book of Islam, prohibits the use of illicit substances, so followers of the religion flock to alternate ways to achieve the feeling caused by these goods. A grey area of the interpretation of the Koran, is in the use of medical substances to get the desired effects, and this is exactly why the most used drugs in the Middle East are opium, cannabis, and now captagon.

The other argued cause of its popularity is its effectivity in battle, as it is reported multiple military organizations distribute captagon amongst their soldiers to invoke unlimited energy and focus. Some even claim the drug can desensitize its users to the point where they don't feel empathy towards other human beings. This is however a very contentious point that has not been confirmed.

The drug is especially popular among truck drivers or other jobs with long undisturbed shifts to stay awake during monotone tasks, or students preparing for exams. It is also becoming used by regular citizens to deal with the unfortunate tragic situation they often find themselves in in these war-torn countries. But captagon has found its way even into the highest echelons of society. In 2015, Prince Abdel Mohsen Bin Walid Bin Abdulaziz of the Saudi royal family was detained at the Beirut airport after security found 2 tons of captagon pills on his private jet ready to depart for Riyadh.

Turkish authorities have also identified a rise in Captagon production in Syria. In May, they seized 7 million pills en route to Saudi Arabia, according to Saudi media. The head of Turkey's anti-drug-trafficking directorate said the pills were made in

Syria with materials from Lebanon, but he could not confirm a connection to rebels there.

2. Captagon Destinations

The Middle East has been the centre of captagon use since the 1990s. These, however, were only small-scale operations mainly stemming from Bulgaria and Turkey. Still, UNODC estimates that in 2010, one third of all captagon supply was directed to Saudi Arabia. A year later, in 2011, the Syrian Civil war began, and with it the use spiked. All the military groups involved in the conflict began using it to gain a combat advantage over their foes. It has also become a valuable income flow for many sides in the conflict, be it anti-Assad rebels, the group Hezbollah, and even Assad's government and his allies.

The increased supply of the drug helped cover the demand that was always present in the rich Gulf countries. It has become more widespread than ever. With Assad's consolidation of Syria since 2018, his regime has become the leading producer of captagon in the world. The frequency of raids and seizures has been rising ever since.

The biggest seizures include 33 million pills found on a ship headed to Greece in 2019, 35 million pills in a shipment of electric cables from Syria to Jebel Ali in 2020, and 44 million pills seized by Saudi Arabia the same year. As a response, the Saudis banned the import of fruits and vegetables from Lebanon, which is in the middle of the smuggling path from Syria.

The biggest seizure to date happened in December of 2020, with Italian authorities finding 85 million pills on way to Lebanon, with an estimated worth of over \$1 billion. The biggest drug seizure in the history of the Saudi Arabian kingdom happened in August 2022, when 46 million pills were discovered in a shipment of flour.

3. Diplomatic Impact

In the aftermath of Assad's brutal suppression of protestors in 2011, Syria was suspended from the Arab League, along with being sanctioned by many of its members. It was signalled to Assad that unless the government changes its

policy and guarantees a relative political reconciliation and stability, it would not be welcome in the Arab community.

Recently though, multiple countries expressed a desire to normalize the ties with Syria. The most vocal actor was Saudi Arabia, the biggest market for captagon. At a meeting on the 1st of May, Jordan and Saudi officials stated that a complete stop of captagon production and smuggling needed to be guaranteed before Assad can hope to rejoin the Arab league. On the 7th, foreign ministers of Arab countries voted for Syria to rejoin the League. A day later, a suspected drug dealer by the name of Marai al-Ramthan was killed in a raid along with his entire family in an attack contributed to Jordan. Al-Ramthan was considered the most prominent drug kingpin of the region, and the biggest smuggler of captagon to Jordan.

Ultimately, because of a plethora of reasons, some of which related to captagon, Syria is back in the Arab League looking to gain a powerful position in the Arab community.

VII. Research

Please keep in mind that this document is only a guide to your research of the topic, which should direct you to what is being discussed. The majority of the research, however, should be done by you. When researching, make sure you keep in mind these recommendations:

- Make sure you know basic information about your assigned country/group – leader, population, political system, foreign relations (especially with other members of the committee), etc.
- Check your country's policies and approach to drug trafficking, how it tries to stop it, or does not try to stop it. Find out how effective these measures have proven.
- Find out how the topic specifically affects your country. Does it provide supply or demand? Is your country on the trafficking path?
- It is recommended to familiarize yourself with the policies of other countries in the committee.

VIII. Position Paper

The position paper should be at least a half-page document, but one page is the standard, outlining your country's involvement and stance on the topic. It should cover these points:

- Present your country's approach to the agenda topic.
- Describe your country's past and present actions undertaken regarding the agenda topic, highlighting their effectiveness or lack of it.
- Introduce ideas for the resolution.
- Make sure your position paper, as well as your statements during the debates, correspond with the country's policy.
- Including factual knowledge, such as charts and statistics is highly recommended.

IX. Further Reading and Useful Resources

For a scientific report on link between Assad's regime and Captagon

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230519102454/https://coar-global.org/2021/04/27/the-syrian-economy-at-war-captagon-hashish-and-the-syrian-narco-state/>

An article focused on the development in the Middle East

<https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-captagon-problem-in-saudi-arabia-and-other-gulf-states/>

The effects of Captagon on combat

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/11/19/the-tiny-pill-fueling-syrias-war-and-turning-fighters-into-super-human-soldiers/>

A recent article explaining the effect of Captagon on regional diplomacy

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/9/what-is-captagon-the-addictive-drug-mass-produced-in-syria>

A summary of the whole situation

<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/88109>

The horrific impact of Captagon on European culture

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7Nb7PvRGFo&ab_channel=Vanessa

A very quick video summary of the problem

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndXFIb7gf3w&ab_channel=CNN

X. Additional Images

Middle East Captagon Seizures (2021 and 2022)

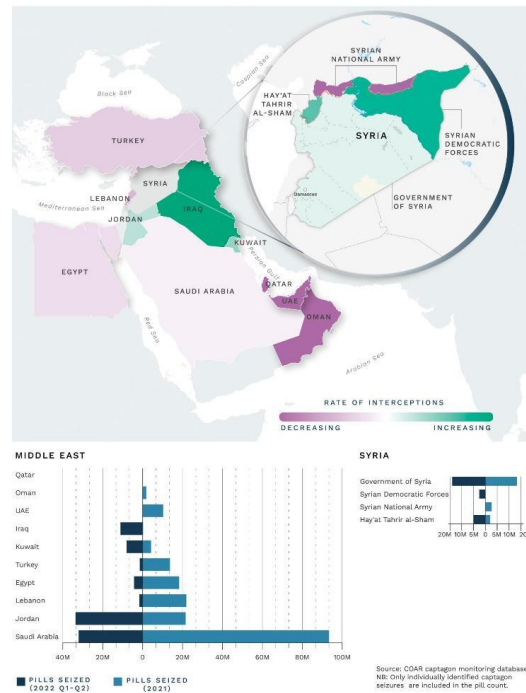


Figure 3: Captagon seizures in years 2021 and 2022

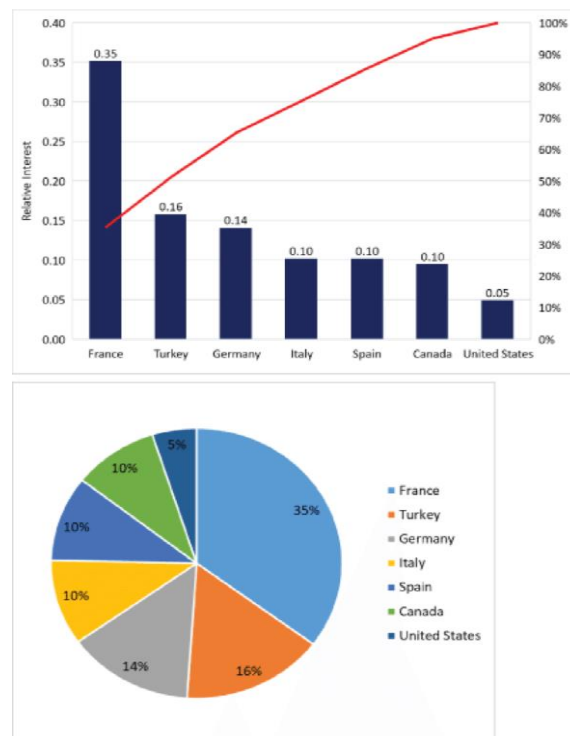


Figure 4: Captagon use compared to other drugs (top) and share of captagon use in European countries