

## **Increased Captagon tablets seizures in Saudi Arabia**

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**Abstract.** Captagon tablets are an addictive amphetamine stimulant that can cause anxiety, high blood pressure, and rapid heart rate. For these reasons, it was banned in 1986. However, there have been an increasing number of attempts to smuggle these drugs into Saudi Arabia in large quantities. Thus, the smuggling of Captagon tablets has become a significant source of income among the youth, and Captagon consumption has increased in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This article focuses on the issue of Captagon smuggling to Saudi Arabia, which increased between 2009 and 2015, according to recent statistics.

**Method:** Seven years of data (2009–2015) related to the smuggling of Captagon tablets into Saudi Arabia were analyzed. The data were obtained by Saudi Customs and other governmental entities responsible for monitoring the smuggling of drugs.

**Results:** The smuggling of Captagon tablets has increased in Saudi Arabia since 2009. Indeed, among all other drugs that have been smuggled into Saudi Arabia since 1999, Captagon tablets are the most smuggled narcotic.

**Conclusion:** Statistically, the number of Captagon tablets seized in drug cases has grown annually. Moreover, Alhadetha Port is the most vulnerable to the smuggling of Captagon tablets. As such, intervention programs are needed to address the problem of Captagon tablets' smuggling. In addition, awareness among the youth needs to be increased through cooperation between public education and higher education.

**Key Words.** Captagon – smuggling of Captagon tablets - promotion of Captagon tablets

## 1. Introduction

Globally, the consumption of illicit drugs is increasing daily. Among these, Captagon tablets have become very popular among the youth in the Middle East and Gulf States. Captagon was manufactured in Germany in 1961 by Degussa in the form of a salt called Fenethylline hydrochloride, which gives it its white color. According to UNODC data, the number of Captagon drug users is greater than cocaine and heroin users. Countries located on the Arabian Peninsula, like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, are major users of Captagon. However, Captagon has been banned in Saudi Arabia since 1986. Regardless, the youth continue to use it as a psychoactive drug. Many students believe that it can help them perform better academically, even though the opposite is true [1-4].

Captagon tablets are a combination of two chemicals: theophylline and amphetamine. The theophylline is covalently linked to the amphetamine via an alkyl chain (Figure 1). The scientific name for this compound is Fenethylline; Captagon is simply its trade name. The drug is classified as a stimulant and affects the central nervous system. In 1985, the World Health Organization (WHO) categorized Fenethylline (Captagon) as a drug of abuse that can lead to psychological dependence. Historically, amphetamines were used during the Second World War to improve soldiers' performance, enhance vigilance, and reduce the effects of fatigue. Moreover, it has been used as a treatment for mental dispersion and hyperactivity in children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It directly affects the neurotransmission of serotonin.

Some side effects of the drug include the inability to sleep for long periods, anxiety, distraction, attention deficit, high blood pressure, rapid heart rate, respiratory depression, convulsions, introversion, isolation, and loss of appetite. The consumption of such a drug can endanger users' health. Thus, it is necessary to collect analytical data about this drug to help the authorities combat its widespread use and create public awareness of the risks associated with its consumption [5-8].

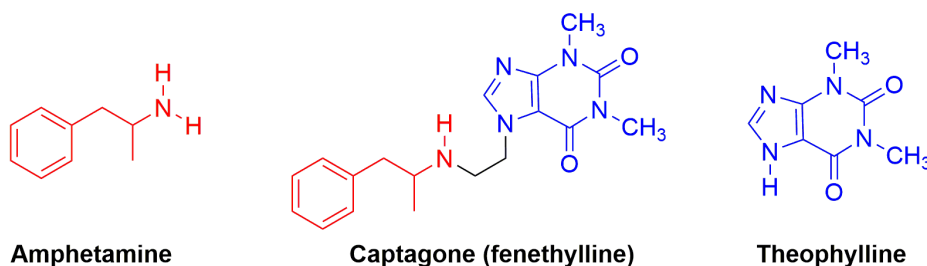


Figure 1: Chemical composition of Captagon and its comparison with amphetamine and theophylline

## 2. Methods:

It is important to analyze data on the seizure of illicit Captagon-based drugs, as their use has grown tremendously among the youth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To conduct research on the problem of Captagon use in Saudi Arabia, we performed an analysis of data collected over

the course of seven years (2009–2015). The data were obtained from Saudi Customs and other government entities responsible for preventing the promotion and smuggling of drugs. Namely, the data reflected the known amount of Captagon seized and smuggled into Saudi Arabia.

### 3. Result and discussion

The quantity of Captagon seized in 1999 was approximately seven million tablets. However, this number has increased significantly over the years (to about 105 million). This represents a growth rate of 1347.1% in comparison to the base year. In the seven years between 2009 and 2015, a sharp increase in the number of seizures of Captagon has increased, jumping from 51 million tablets (2009) to 105 million tablets (2015). An organization targeting the Kingdom and specialized in the field of stimulants as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Annual growth rates of Captagon from 1999 until the end of 2015.

Year	Number of tablets	Annual growth rate	Growth rate compared to base year (1999)
1999	7236219	-	-
2009	51763231	16.5%	615.3%
2010	67366522	30.1%	831.0%
2011	48589285	-27.9%	571.5%
2012	57091321	17.5%	689.0%
2013	100326883	75.7%	1286.5%
2014	63087602	-37.12%	1286.45%
2015	104713133	65.98%	1347.07%
Total number of Captagon tablets during the period (2009–2015) = 492937977 Pills			

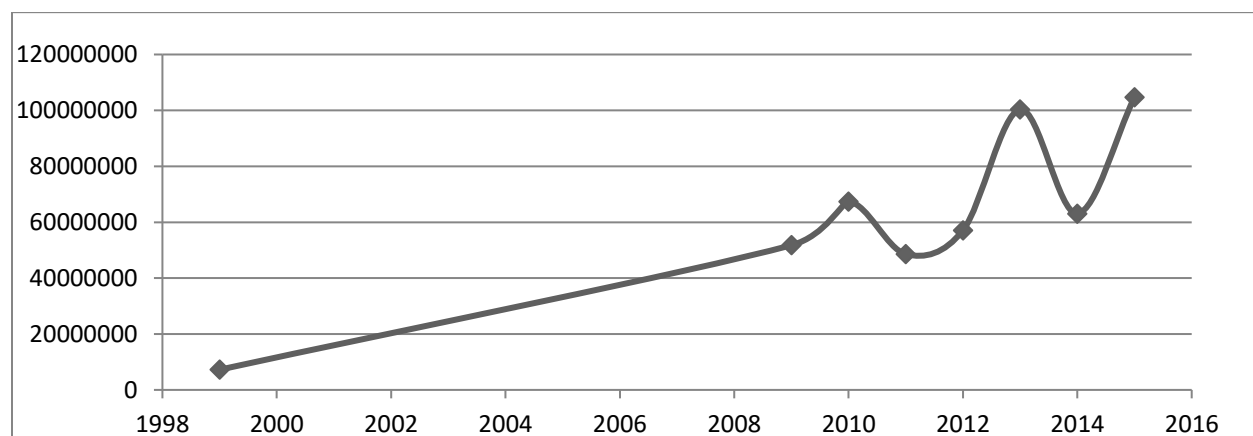


Figure 2: Annual growth rates of Captagon from 1999 until the end of 2015

Figure 2 depicts the significant increase in seizures of Captagon annually over the last seven years. This increase indicates a growing drug trade specifically targeting Saudi Arabia, where the total number of Captagon tablets seized between 2009 and 2015 was more than 492 million.

### 3.1. Seizures according to customs ports

Based on the data presented in Table 2 and Figure 3, Alhadetha port is where the majority (59.7%) of Captagon tablets being smuggled into the country were seized between 2009 and 2015. This is followed by Ammar port (13.2%), Dubba port (9.5%), Djamrak Al-Durra port (6.8%), and King Khaled International Airport (2%). It is worth mentioning that there are customs outlets that of smuggling the Captagon for the past seven years, such as King Abdul Aziz International Airport, Al Khafji Customs and King Fahd International Airport.

Table 2: Seizures of Captagon tablets by port from 2009 to 2015.

Port name	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total	% of total
Alhadetha Port	16,825,949	44,537,526	30,408,805	17,108,508	32057563	19706604	9997998	170,642,953	59.7%
Halat Ammar	7,020,499	6,607,585	8,308,069	7,069,285	3586154	2495078	2644769	37,731,439	13.2%
Durra Border Crossing	9,447,991	1,248,449	1,022,558	6,457,111	13	913218	299147	19,388,487	6.8%
(Dubai) King Abdullah Port	2,141	51,202	143,277	2,020,833		4445943	20527333	27,190,729	9.5%
King Khalid International Airport	220,137	493,212	538,937	166,146	50357	3595702	507358	5,571,849	2.0%
Customs Riyadh Dry Port	0	0	986,770	0				986770	0.3%
King Abdulaziz International Airport	268,658	75,246	141,467	267,013	60823	27885	217018	1,058,110	0.4%
Khafji	0	0	779	180	584824	33	38	585854	0.2%
Al Batha	43,009	0	13,610	512,021		4664501	910267	6,143,408	2.2%

Jeddah Islamic Seaport	0	0	0	517,738		108000 0	514937 8	6747116	2.4 %
King Fahad International Airport	85,656	211,239	2	154,430			158	451,485	0.2 %
Taif Airport	0	197	133,180	0			50669	184046	0.1 %
Al-Raqi	17	0	41	110,042		2040	76	112216	0.0 %
Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Airport	0	0	56,900	5,912				62812	0.0 %
Deposit the Saudi port side	5	30,975	0	0			62	31042	0.0 %
King Khalid International Airport (Riyadh Post)	0	26,730	1,020	1,684		0		29434	0.0 %
Al Tuwal Land Port	273,5	15,291	716	11,727		268138		295872	0.1 %
Yanbu Airport	0	6,337	4,877	4,092			64165	79471	0.0 %
Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Airport	2,301	7,712	4,271	0				14,284	0.0 %
King Fahd Causeway Bridge	1,009	9,084	17	49		113	40013	50,285	0.0 %
King Abdulaziz Sea Port	5,585	0	0	0			594379 0	5,949,375	2.1 %

Green Customs	0	4000	0	0			0	4000	0.0 %
King Fahd International Airport (Central Post Office)	0	0	934	0				934	0.0 %
Yanbu port	0	872	57	0				929	0.0 %
King Fahad International Airport (Express Mail)	0	0	300	0				300	0.0 %
Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Airport (central   Post Office)	0	0	210	0			0	210	0.0 %
Salwa	0	0	113	41		2400034	7403	2407591	0.8 %
Jazan Port	0	0	1	0			0	1	0.0 %
Saudi port of Warcraft	0	0	0	0			0	0	0.0 %
King Abdulaziz International Airport (Jeddah Post)	0	0	0	0			0	0	0.0 %
Total	33,922,957	53325657	41,766,911	34,406,812	36,339,734	39599289	46359642	285,721,002	100 %

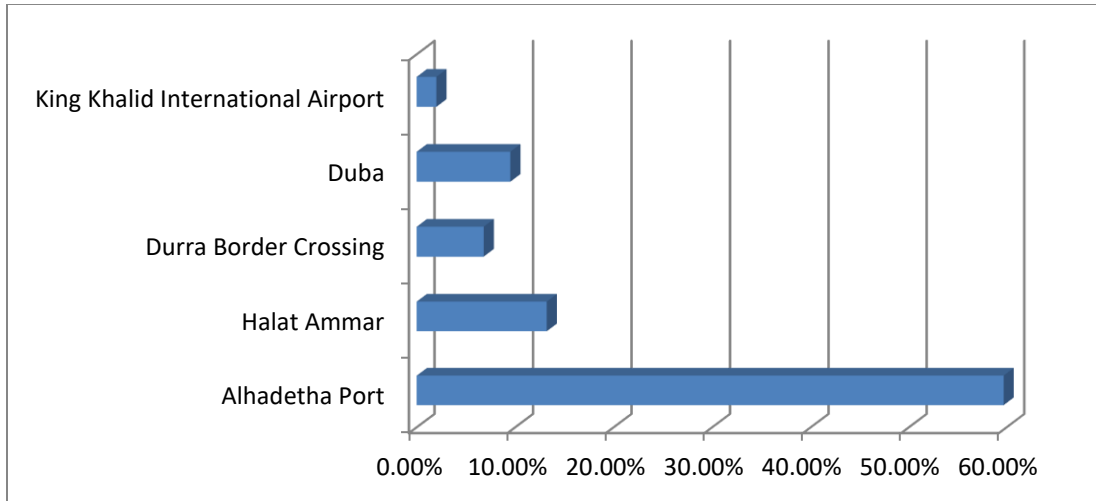


Figure 3: The most important customs ports for smuggling Captagon.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the large quantities of Captagon that were seized after being smuggled into Saudi Arabia, it is clear that Captagon is a commonly smuggled narcotic. Thus, this study will help law enforcement agencies increase awareness of this dangerous substance and devise plans to prevent it from being successfully smuggled into the country. Moreover, this study will create awareness among people and discourage them to use such drugs.

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