AFMUN

UNODC

UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL
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ACADEMIC ASSISTANT
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AFMUN'26

UNODC STUDY GUIDE

UNODC

Agenda Item: Ceasing the activities of terrorist organizations involved in drug trafficking in mena 2026

Under Secretary General: Fadime Begüm Şahin
Academic Assistant: Nehir Doğu

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1) Letter from the Secretary General

Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to AFMUN'26. As the Secretaries-General, we are truly pleased to see this conference once again bring together so many bright and motivated young individuals who believe in dialogue, diplomacy, and cooperation.

First and foremost, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to our academic and organization teams. This conference would not have been possible without their dedication and commitment, and we are deeply grateful for the effort they have put in.

We are living in a time where it is almost impossible to ignore what is happening around the world. Many of us often find ourselves thinking that certain situations could have been handled differently, or questioning the decisions that were made. However, AFMUN is not only a place for reflection, but also a platform for initiative. Through our committees, you will have the opportunity to express your ideas, challenge perspectives, and engage in meaningful discussions. As young people in today's world, your voice is truly important.

We hope this conference will be both inspiring and memorable for all of you.

And as we say, a realm cannot endure without its sovereign.
Yours truly,

Kaan MUŞTU & Ömer Talha Demirel

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2) Letter from the Committee Academy

2.1) Letter from the Under Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

As your Under-Secretary-General, it is an honour to welcome you to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) committee at AFMUN’26. Crafting the welcoming letter once the study guide is fully finalized is always a rewarding milestone as it is the moment our vision for this committee truly comes to life.

First of all, I’d like to sincerely thank our Executive Team, their tireless dedication behind the scenes has been the backbone of this conference. Special thanks also to my hard-working Academic Assistant, whose effort and insight were indispensable in constructing this study guide and building this committee with me.

In this guide, we have mapped out the primary layers of the issue thoroughly for you to have a well-rounded foundation. This paper provides a necessary starting point, but I urge you all to go beyond these pages and do your own research, in depth and tailored to the foreign policy of your assigned delegation. Active debate, preparation and diplomatic collaboration will be essential to achieving meaningful resolutions. If you have any questions about the committee mechanics, research directions, or general conference procedures, please feel free to contact me at the address below.

I wish you all the very best with your preparations and I look forward to leading inspiring high level debates with you at AFMUN'26.

Best Regards,
Fadime Begüm Şahin
fbegumsahin.s@gmail.com

2.2) Letter from the Academic Assistant

Dear Delegates,

It is with great delight that I, the Academic Assistant of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Committee, welcome you all to AFMUN'26. Writing the letter after finishing the guides has always been a pleasure and joy for me. So I would like to thank the people who have made this committee and this letter possible for me: the Executive Team; their efforts and hard work are indescribably precious and important. I would also like to thank my incredible Under Secretary General Fadime Begüm Şahin for her ideas and help throughout the journey.

Our committee has a crucial agenda and a major problem for a lot of countries. Throughout this guide, we explored and dived deep into its core to address the issue from different perspectives. Reading the guide is essential for understanding and affiliating the topics.

Although we tried to include everything here, there is a lot more to it, and you should also do your own research regarding your allocated country. I wish you all the best and can't wait to bring this committee to life with you all.

If you do have any questions regarding the agenda, procedure, or MUN in general, feel free to contact me through the Email address or my phone number, which I have placed below.

Sincerely,
Nehir Doğu

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0501 036 5809

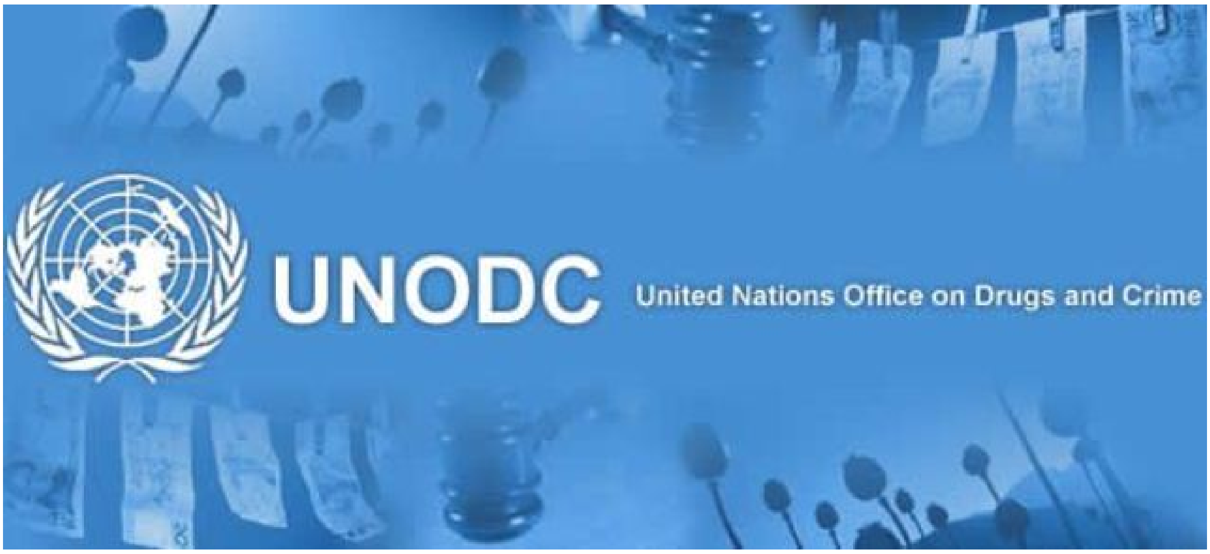
3) Introduction to the Committee

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. Established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, UNODC operates in all regions of the world through an extensive network of field offices.

UNODC has two governing bodies, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). Intergovernmental bodies bring together practitioners, policymakers, and other experts from all over the world on the issues of drugs and crime and thus offer Member States a platform for exchanging expertise, experience, and information in these areas. As such, the intergovernmental bodies play a key role in fostering international cooperation and take concrete action through resolutions and decisions. UNODC acts as the secretariat to these bodies and provides them with substantive and technical support.

In terms of normative and policy support, UNODC serves as guardian of several international conventions and other legal instruments and is the secretariat to global policy bodies on drug control, organized crime, terrorism, and corruption. As the guardian of UN standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice, UNODC also provides normative support to Member States for ratification and implementation of new instruments. UNODC supports the development of domestic legislation and provides services to intergovernmental policymaking bodies. This support extends to strengthening legal, strategic, and policy frameworks, including the involvement of civil society, and supporting an impartial and evidence-based justice system approach based on a strengthened chain of custody and judicial governance.

UNODC strives to build shared knowledge on drugs and crime, based on reliable and impartial evidence, to make people safer globally and locally. Its work on analysis, research, and generating evidence includes strengthening States' and regional capacities in disaggregated data collection and analysis to monitor trends in the field of drugs and crime, but also to measure Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators. The promotion of inter-agency collaboration and communication on multifaceted challenges is a key component, and in collaboration with national governments, UNODC produces authoritative research products, analysis, and reports. UNODC publications include survey reports in the field of illicit drug cultivation and production, drug trafficking and use, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons, and firearms trafficking among other transnational organized crimes, victimization and corruption, comparative regional and international analysis of disaggregated data related to crime and drugs, as well as methodological tools and standards in the field of drug and crime statistics. Elevated support in these areas will also enable a better understanding of the interlinkages between crime, drugs, terrorism, and other phenomena, including conflict, fragility, stability, and socio-economic development.



a. Working Areas of UNODC

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) operates through three main pillars: normative support, technical assistance, and research. They are able to address the rather chaotic realm of transnational threats in a way that truly feels coordinated by establishing a balance between these three areas.

The Legal Framework (Normative Support)

One of UNODC's biggest jobs is helping Member States navigate international law. They assist countries in ratifying and implementing major treaties like the conventions against organized crime and corruption. It's not just about signing papers; it's about making sure national laws actually align with global standards so there aren't any "weak links" in the international legal chain.

With its strong field network, it builds influential partnerships. UNODC works with a broad range of partners, including governments, non-governmental organisations and other UN agencies, and can work with government entities to which others do not have access. It uses these partnerships to good effect, sharing its expertise and developing capacity. UNODC's partnership with the Colombian government in support of the peace process, funded up to 90% by Colombian funds, is one example of a lasting relationship

Technical Assistance

UNODC combines its normative and programmatic roles in mutually reinforcing ways where it is properly resourced and where planning is integrated across technical areas. Beyond the legal side, they provide versatile, practical support through:

- Training programs for law enforcement and border control.
- Strengthening judicial systems and prison management.
- Developing strategies to combat modern issues like cybercrime and money laundering.
- Public health support, specifically for drug treatment and rehabilitation.

Data and Insights (Research and Analysis)

They serve as a significant center for research as well. UNODC is in charge of maintaining the World Drug Report, if you are familiar with it. They monitor everything from new criminal patterns to trafficking routes. This is, in fact, one of their most important roles since it guarantees that policymakers are making decisions based on solid data rather than conjecture.

b. Services provided by UNODC

Related to its subprogrammes, UNODC offers member states a "menu of services". It identifies these as:

Organised crime and trafficking: UNODC helps governments prevent and counter the challenges posed by crimes like the smuggling of migrants and the illicit trafficking of drugs, firearms, human beings, natural resources, and counterfeit goods. It also addresses evolving forms of crime, such as cybercrime, trafficking in cultural artefacts and environmental crime, and other forms of serious crime as defined under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Corruption: UNODC partners with the public and private sectors, as well as with civil society, to combat corruption and to help states strengthen their prevention frameworks. In recent years, the Office has stepped up its efforts to assist states in recovering assets stolen by corrupt officials.

Crime prevention and criminal justice reform: UNODC promotes using training manuals and adopting codes of conduct and standards and norms that aim to guarantee that the accused, the guilty and the victims can rely on a fair criminal justice system that is grounded on human rights values.

Drug abuse prevention and health: Through educational campaigns and its research-based approach, UNODC works to reduce the use of drugs among youth, encouraging drug-dependent people to seek treatment. It also seeks to help governments address drug use as a health problem, not a crime. Through its Alternative Development programme, UNODC uses a development-oriented drug control approach to address illicit crop cultivation. UNODC works with poor and marginalised farming communities to provide licit sustainable livelihood alternatives.

Terrorism prevention: UNODC responds to requests from member states to provide normative and capacity-building support to prevent terrorism and violent extremism by, among other things, developing co-operation frameworks with member states at the national, regional and global levels.

4) Introduction to the Agenda Item

a. Key Terms

1. **Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) :**

Virtually all serious, profit-motivated criminal actions of an international nature where more than one country is involved, encompassing drug trafficking, money laundering, and illicit arms smuggling.

For a crime to be considered "transnational," it must be committed in more than one state, or have substantial effects in another state. In the MENA region, TOC operates like a

multinational corporation, taking advantage of weak judicial systems and loose border controls.
**Delegates should discuss how the UNTOC (United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime) can be enforced in areas where state authority is heavily compromised.

2. **Alternative Development:**

An international drug control approach aimed at reducing the socio-economic vulnerabilities that lead communities to involvement in illicit crop cultivation, giving farmers economically viable and legal livelihood options.
Terrorist and insurgent groups in the MENA region often force or incentivize impoverished farmers to grow illicit substances (like cannabis or poppy) because the local economy offers no other survival options. Alternative development offers farmers infrastructure, seeds, and access to legitimate markets for valuable agricultural products in addition to eradicating illicit crops. This prevents local people from being used as cheap labor by terrorist organizations.

3. **Synthetic Drugs :**

Illicit substances manufactured entirely through chemical processes using strategic precursor chemicals, rather than extracted from natural agricultural crops. Their highly dynamic and adaptable nature presents unique challenges for global law enforcement.
Unlike heroin or cocaine, which require vast agricultural fields that are easily visible by satellite, synthetic drugs can be mass-produced inside hidden, mobile laboratories using industrial chemicals. This makes them incredibly cheap to produce and nearly impossible to track via traditional aerial surveillance. Terrorist groups prefer synthetic drugs because they offer an almost instant, high-margin profit return.

4. **Narcoterrorism :**

The operational alliance where terrorist networks participate directly in the production, trafficking, and distribution of illicit drugs to accumulate capital and fund militant operations against sovereign states. Originally generated to describe South American cartels in the 1980s, narcoterrorism perfectly describes the current reality in the MENA region. Ideological groups use the drug trade as a purely pragmatic financing mechanism to buy high-grade weaponry, pay combatants, and maintain territorial control. This forces nations to look at narcoterrorism not just as a domestic police issue, but as a severe threat to regional military stability.

5. **Captagon:**

A phenethylamine-based synthetic amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) produced and trafficked extensively within the MENA region, serving as a primary revenue generator for state-linked actors and armed non-state factions.
Captagon is the undisputed centerpiece of the MENA drug crisis. It has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar shadow economy, particularly centered around the Levant (Syria and Lebanon) and trafficked heavily into the wealthy Gulf states. Militant factions use it for two distinct reasons: they sell it globally to fund their operations, and they distribute it to their own fighters to induce artificial courage, alertness, and numbed empathy during active combat.

6. **Money Laundering:**

The process of concealing the origins of illegally obtained money, typically by passing it through a complex sequence of banking transfers or commercial transactions.

7. **Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs):**

The illegal cross-border movement, generation, transfer, and laundering of capital linked to hidden financial networks that sustain international criminal markets and finance terrorist infrastructure.

8. **The Balkan and Southern Routes**

Main geographic transit corridors mapped internationally to track the illegal movement of illicit opiates and regional synthetic substances moving outward from Southwest Asia and the Levant towards European and Gulf markets.

b. UNODC's terminology for funding streams

Regular budget: assessed contributions under the authority of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly, received from the UN biennial programme budget.

Extrabudgetary resources:

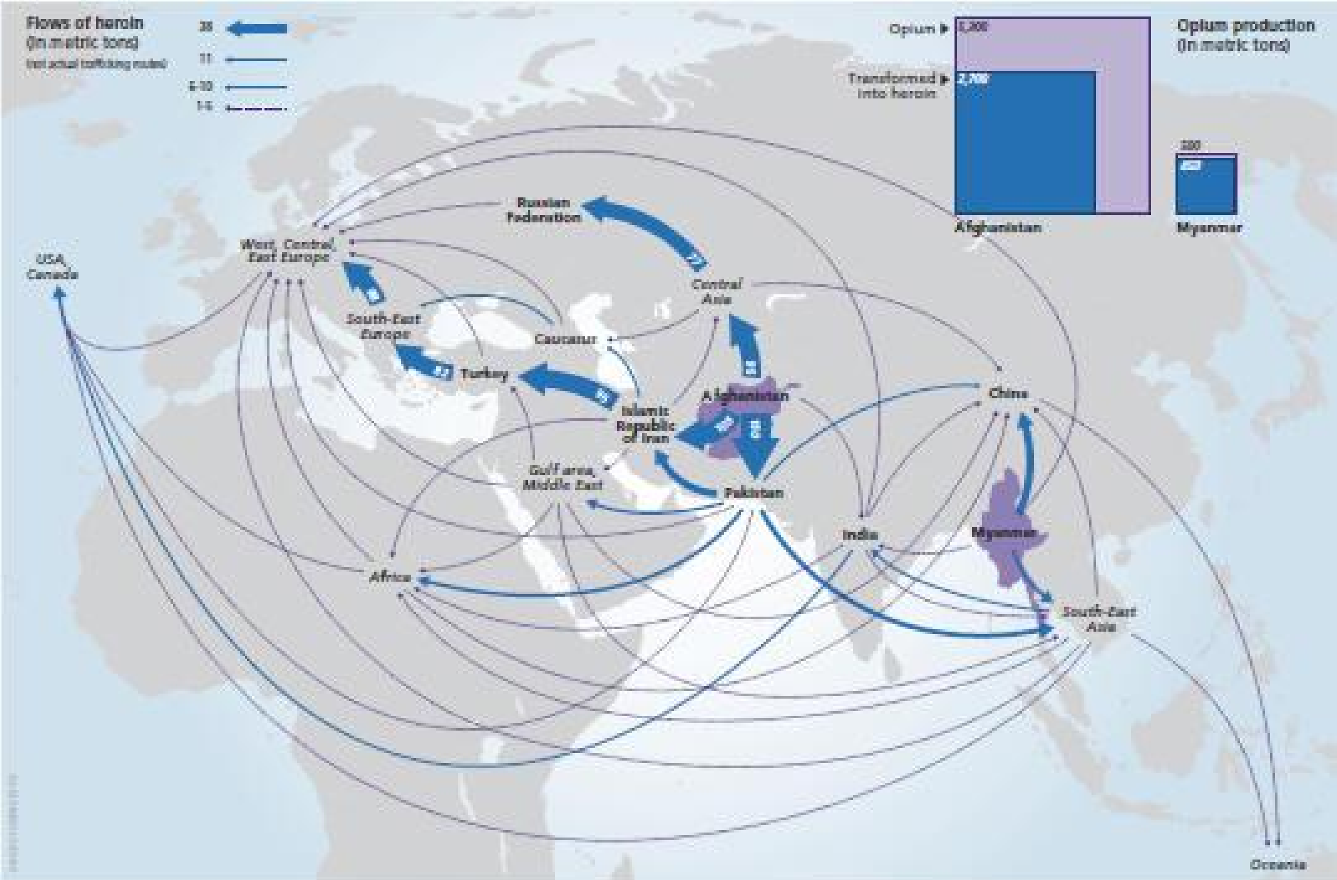
- **Special purpose funds:** earmarked voluntary contributions for technical co-operation projects in the field or headquarters.
- **Programme support cost funds:** overhead charge made against special purpose funds to cover costs that cannot be directly attributed to activities financed by voluntary contributions. Programme support costs recovered from voluntary contributions are set at 13% for most donors. The majority is used to support central services, under the Division for Management.
- **General purpose funds:** unearmarked voluntary contributions to finance core programmatic activities that are not funded by the regular budget (e.g. normative work, research).

5) **Background of the Issue**

5.2) The Geographical and Political Context

Serious and organized crime is an ever-evolving transnational challenge, which is directly linked to other forms of crime such as terrorism and corruption and threatens peace, safety, security and stability in every Arab country. Conflict-afflicted and fragile countries as well as contexts of political instability are even more vulnerable and more likely to experience weak border control combined with a lack of capacity among law enforcement, as well as within the justice and security sector, to prevent and counter serious and organized crime.

Serious and organized crime types in the region are largely cross-cutting, cross-border, and interlinked. They include, but are not limited to, trafficking in drugs, persons, firearms, counterfeit goods, cultural property, and crimes against the environment. Illegal arms trafficking is especially prevalent in the MENA region, partly in response to conflict and unstable situations. From 2016 to 2020, Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Qatar, and Tunisia reported the seizure of 11,010 arms. Firearms trafficking is a lucrative business, which enables and fuels armed conflict and terrorism in the region and facilitates other forms of serious and organized crime such as trafficking in persons and drug trafficking by increasing the potential violence level of criminal groups.



Even more profitable is counterfeit goods trafficking. By feeding counterfeit products into supply chains, this form of trafficking impedes anti-money laundering efforts while endangering users who may not receive quality goods. Since the Arab States present a rich collection of antiquities and cultural artifacts, the region is particularly prone to cultural property trafficking, and several sites are targets for looting, theft, smuggling, and illicit trade.

The Arab states are also both destination and origin countries for wildlife trafficking. Major airports in the region are among the main wildlife trafficking hubs in the world, with Middle Eastern airports being prominent for trafficking in ivory, rhinoceros horns, and pangolins. Given its highly lucrative nature, illicit trafficking in all the above-mentioned goods is often associated with other criminal activities as organized criminal and terrorist groups heavily rely on such trafficking to finance their other illegal activities. Linking global regions for trade, transport, and travel, several major airports in the region act as key transnational trafficking hubs. Porous land borders and weak maritime border management offer criminals and traffickers easier opportunities to traffic illicit goods. Accordingly, effective border control and cross-border cooperation across the region at sea, land, and air borders are key elements in countering transnational organized crime. Cybercrime is a complex and fast-changing form of transnational crime as criminal networks use information technology to access and create new online criminal markets and facilitate their offline serious and organized crime activities. Most countries in the region lack the capacity to investigate cases of cybercrime.

The threat of terrorism in the Arab region remains high and is jeopardizing development efforts, the legitimacy of national institutions, democracy, and governance. Over the past two decades, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (hereafter 'Da'esh ') and associated individuals and groups were considered the deadliest terrorist group in the region. Despite the defeat of its so-called 'caliphate' in 2019 and despite significant losses at the leadership level, Da'esh continues to exploit security gaps and any vulnerabilities conducive to the spread of violent and extremist ideologies. This leaves conflict situations and neighbouring countries particularly vulnerable to the threat posed by Da'esh. Notwithstanding, Da'esh also poses direct threats to non-conflict countries as it encourages attacks on such territories.

The terrorist group established its main organizational structures in Iraq and Syria from where it manages its networks operating globally, including branches in Libya, which covers parts of North Africa and the Sahel, and in Yemen, which covers the Arabian Peninsula. Terrorist groups continue to exploit the Internet and increasingly use digital space to radicalize, recruit, and train subjects, spread hateful content and call for violence, move and manage funds, coordinate operations, and plan attacks. New technologies and the ongoing emergence of tools and forms of online communication continue to challenge effective counter-terrorism efforts. Furthermore, these groups took advantage of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the increased use of hybrid and virtual formats, and further intensified their efforts to recruit, radicalize, and organize via online platforms.

The pandemic also gave way to heightened vulnerabilities to terrorism by causing deteriorated socio-economic conditions and increasing political tension. Growing disparities, grievances with the State, and rising poverty left victims exposed and enabled terrorists to gain new recruits, including women, children, and youth. Through their persuasive use of propaganda, terrorist organizations recruit individuals to fight for them. These foreign terrorist fighters include men, as well as women, children, and youth, and can pose a serious threat to national and regional security on their return to their country of origin or relocation. Terrorism in the region remains linked to the returning fighters. In fact, an estimated 15,000 people, of whom 35 percent were women and children, travelled to Iraq or Syria from the MENA region between 2012 and 2017. Individuals facing economic and social difficulties and/or marginalization make up a significant share of foreign terrorist fighters, especially young males. Furthermore, women and girls are particularly at risk of experiencing violence from terrorist and extremist groups.

5.3.) Key Historical Events

With the region's history and ongoing conflicts, this part covers the present-day related cases, but we advise you to do your own research too if you wish to expand your knowledge since you can find a lot related to this topic.

Iraq War

In 2002 the new U.S. president, George W. Bush, argued that the vulnerability of the United States following the September 11 attacks of 2001, combined with Iraq's alleged continued possession and manufacture of weapons of mass destruction (an accusation that was later proved erroneous) and its support for terrorist groups—which, according to the Bush administration, included al-Qaeda, the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks—made disarming Iraq a renewed priority. UN Security Council Resolution 1441, passed on November 8, 2002, demanded that Iraq readmit inspectors and that it comply with all previous resolutions. Iraq appeared to comply with the resolution, but in early 2003 President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair declared that Iraq was actually continuing to hinder UN inspections and that it still retained proscribed weapons. Other world leaders, such as French Pres. Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, citing what they believed to be increased Iraqi cooperation, sought to extend inspections and give Iraq more time to comply with them. However, on March 17, seeking no further UN resolutions and deeming further diplomatic efforts by the Security Council futile, Bush declared an end to diplomacy and issued an ultimatum to Saddam, giving the Iraqi president 48 hours to leave Iraq. The leaders of France, Germany, Russia, and other countries objected to this buildup toward war.

When Saddam refused to leave Iraq, U.S. and allied forces launched an attack on the morning of March 20; it began when U.S. aircraft dropped several precision-guided bombs on a bunker complex in which the Iraqi president was believed to be meeting with senior staff. This was followed by a series of air strikes directed against government and military installations, and within days U.S. forces had invaded Iraq from Kuwait in the south (U.S. Special Forces had previously been deployed to Kurdish-controlled areas in the north). Despite fears that Iraqi forces would engage in a scorched-earth policy—destroying bridges and dams and setting fire to Iraq's southern oil wells—little damage was done by retreating Iraqi forces; in fact, large numbers of Iraqi troops simply chose not to resist the advance of coalition forces. In southern Iraq, the greatest resistance to U.S. forces as they advanced northward was from irregular groups of Baʿath Party supporters, known as Saddam's

Fedayeen. British forces—which had deployed around the southern city of Basra—faced similar resistance from paramilitary and irregular fighters.

In central Iraq, units of the Republican Guard—a heavily armed paramilitary group connected with the ruling party—were deployed to defend the capital of Baghdad. As U.S. Army and Marine forces advanced northwestward up the Tigris-Euphrates river valley, they bypassed many populated areas where Fedayeen resistance was strongest and were slowed only on March 25 when inclement weather and an extended supply line briefly forced them to halt their advance within 95 km of Baghdad. During the pause, U.S. aircraft inflicted heavy damage on Republican Guard units around the capital. U.S. forces resumed their advance within a week, and on April 4 they took control of Baghdad's international airport. Iraqi resistance, though at times vigorous, was highly disorganized, and over the next several days army and Marine Corps units staged raids into the heart of the city. On April 9, resistance in Baghdad collapsed, and U.S. soldiers took control of the city.

On that same day, Basra was finally secured by British forces, which had entered the city several days earlier. In the north, however, plans to open up another major front had been frustrated when the Turkish government refused to allow mechanized and armored U.S. Army units to pass through Turkey to deploy in northern Iraq. Regardless, a regiment of American paratroopers did drop into the area, and U.S. Special Forces soldiers joined with Kurdish peshmerga fighters to seize the northern cities of Kirkuk on April 10 and Mosul on April 11. Saddam's hometown of Tikrīt, the last major stronghold of the regime, fell with little resistance on April 13. Isolated groups of regime loyalists continued to fight on subsequent days, but the U.S. president declared an end to major combat on May 1. Iraqi leaders fled into hiding and were the object of an intense search by U.S. forces.

Saddam Hussein was captured on December 13, 2003, five months after his two sons, Uday and Qusay Hussein, who were central figures in their father's brutal 24-year rule, had been killed in a shoot-out with American troops after the brothers had been found hiding in a private residence. Saddam was subsequently convicted of crimes against humanity and was executed on December 30, 2006.

Following the collapse of the Ba'athist regime, Iraq's major cities erupted in a wave of looting that was directed mostly at government offices and other public institutions, and there were severe outbreaks of violence. Restoring law and order was one of the most arduous tasks for the occupying forces, one that was exacerbated by continued attacks against occupying troops that soon developed into full-scale guerrilla warfare; increasingly, the conflict came to be identified as a civil war.
After 35 years of Ba'athist rule that included three major wars and a dozen years of economic sanctions, the economy was in shambles and only slowly began to recover. Moreover, the country remained saddled with a ponderous debt that vastly exceeded its annual gross domestic product, and oil production-the country's single greatest source of revenue- was badly hobbled. The continuing guerrilla assaults on occupying forces and leaders of the new Iraqi government in the years after the war only compounded the difficulty of rebuilding Iraq.

The Arab Spring

The first demonstrations took place in central Tunisia in December 2010, catalyzed by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old street vendor protesting his treatment by local officials. A protest movement, dubbed the "Jasmine Revolution" in the media, quickly spread through the country. The Tunisian government attempted to end the unrest by using violence against street demonstrations and by offering political and economic concessions. However, protests soon overwhelmed the country's security forces, compelling President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali to step down and flee the country on January 14, 2011. In October 2011, Tunisians participated in a free election to choose members of a council tasked with drafting a new constitution. A democratically chosen president and prime minister took office in December 2011, and a new constitution was promulgated in January 2014. In

October–November 2019, Tunisia became the first country of the Arab Spring protests to undergo a peaceful transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another.

Inspired by Ben Ali's ouster in Tunisia, similar protests were quickly organized among young Egyptians through social media, bringing out massive crowds across Egypt on January 25. The Egyptian government also tried and failed to control protests by offering concessions while cracking down violently against protesters. After several days of massive demonstrations and clashes between protesters and security forces in Cairo and around the country, a turning point came at the end of the month when the Egyptian army announced that it would refuse to use force against protesters calling for the removal of President Hosni Mubarak. Having lost the support of the military, Mubarak left office on February 11 after nearly 30 years, ceding power to a council of senior military officers. The military enjoyed high public approval in the interim before a new government, but its apparent prioritization of stability over democratic transition at times dampened optimism.

Encouraged by protesters' rapid successes in Tunisia and Egypt, protest movements took hold in Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria in late January, February, and March 2011. Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, however, the outpouring of popular discontent in these countries led to bloody and often protracted struggles between opposition groups and ruling regimes.

In Yemen, where the first protests appeared in late January 2011, Pres. Ali Abdullah Saleh's base of support was damaged when a number of the country's most powerful tribal and military leaders aligned themselves with the pro-democracy protesters calling for him to step down. When negotiations to remove Saleh from power failed, loyalist and opposition fighters clashed in Sanaa. Saleh left Yemen in June to receive medical treatment after he was injured in a bomb attack, raising hopes among the opposition that a transition would begin. Saleh returned to the country unexpectedly four months later, however, adding to the uncertainty and confusion about Yemen's political future. In November 2011 Saleh signed an internationally mediated agreement calling for a phased transfer of power to the vice president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. In accordance with the agreement, Hadi took over governing responsibility immediately and formally assumed the presidency after standing as the sole candidate in a presidential election in February 2012. Unable to improve conditions or maintain stability, however, Hadi's government faced armed confrontation and rebellion that in 2014 devolved into a civil war.

Mass protests demanding political and economic reforms erupted in Bahrain too. In mid-February 2011, led by Bahraini human rights activists and members of Bahrain's marginalized Shiʿi majority. Protests were violently suppressed by Bahraini security forces, aided by a Gulf Cooperation Council security force (composed of about 1,000 soldiers from Saudi Arabia and 500 police officers from the United Arab Emirates) that entered the country in March. By the end of the month, the mass protest movement had been stifled. In the aftermath of the protests, dozens of accused protest leaders were convicted of antigovernment activity and imprisoned, hundreds of Shiʿi workers suspected of supporting the protests were fired, and dozens of Shiʿi mosques were demolished by the government. In November 2011 an independent investigation into the uprising, commissioned by the Bahraini government, concluded that the government had used excessive force and torture against protesters. The government carried out some of the commission's recommendations for reform but clamped down further on opposition groups in the years that followed.

In Libya, protests against the regime of Muammar al-Qaddafi in mid-February 2011 quickly escalated into an armed revolt. When the rebel forces appeared to be on the verge of defeat in March, an international coalition led by NATO launched a campaign of air strikes targeting

Qaddafi's forces. Although NATO intervention ultimately shifted the military balance in favour of the rebel forces, Qaddafi was able to cling to power in the capital, Tripoli, for several more months. He was forced from power in August 2011 after rebel forces took control of Tripoli. After evading capture for several weeks, Qaddafi was killed in Sirte in October 2011 as rebel forces took control of the city. A Transitional National Council, set up by rebel forces and recognized internationally, took power, but its struggle to exert authority over the country precipitated the outbreak of civil war in 2014.

In Syria, protests calling for the resignation of Pres. Bashar al-Assad broke out in southern Syria in mid-March 2011 and spread through the country. The Assad regime responded with a brutal crackdown against protesters, drawing condemnation from international leaders and human rights groups. A leadership council for the Syrian opposition formed in Istanbul in August, and opposition militias began to launch attacks on government forces. In spite of the upheaval, Assad's hold on power appeared strong, as he was able to retain the support of critical military units composed largely of members of Syria's ʿAlawite minority, to which Assad also belonged.

Meanwhile, divisions in the international community made it unlikely that international military intervention, which had proved decisive in Libya, would be possible in Syria. Russia and China vetoed UN Security Council resolutions meant to pressure the Assad regime in October 2011 and February 2012 and vowed to oppose any measure that would lead to foreign intervention in Syria or Assad's removal from power. The arrival of a delegation of peace monitors from the Arab League in December 2011 did little to reduce violence. The escalation of violence, fed by funding and arms from several rival countries interested in the outcome of the situation, culminated in a devastating civil war and a massive refugee crisis affecting millions.

The effects of the Arab Spring were felt throughout the Middle East and North Africa, as many countries in the region experienced at least minor pro-democracy protests. In Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Oman, rulers offered a variety of concessions, ranging from the dismissal of unpopular officials to constitutional changes, to head off the spread of protest movements in their countries.

6) Links Between Terrorism and Drug Trafficking

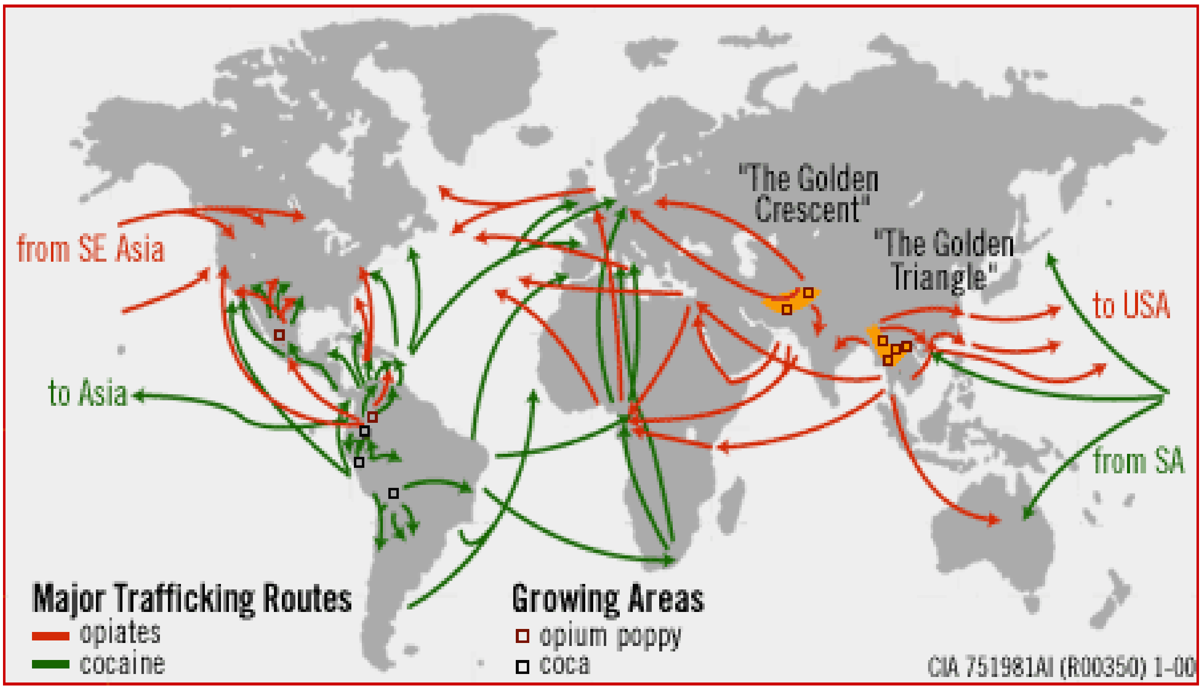
2017 figures available point to the fact that the annual value of the trade in illicit drugs is estimated to be between $426 and $652 billion, and the proceeds derived from it generate approximately between one fifth and one third of the global revenues of transnational organized criminal groups.

Illicit drugs and their trafficking could contribute to terrorism in at least five distinct ways in source, transit and consumer countries. First of all, it supplies cash for terrorism. Second, it creates chaos in countries where drugs are produced, through which they pass, or in which they are sold at retail and consumed. Sometimes chaos is deliberately cultivated by drug traffickers and terrorists and organized crime groups to provide an environment conducive to their illegal activities. Third, it generates corruption in law enforcement, military, and other governmental and civil institutions in some ways, such as building public support for terrorist-linked groups or weakening the capacity of the society to combat terrorist organizations and actions. Fourth, it provides services which are useful for terrorist actions and movements of terrorist personnel and material, and also it supports a common infrastructure, such as smuggling capabilities, illicit arms acquisition, money laundering, or the production of false identification or other documents, capable of serving both drug-trafficking and terrorism purposes. The latter is competing for law enforcement and intelligence attention.

For the Taliban and other non-state actors in Afghanistan, taxing opium production, processing, and trafficking raised around $150 million in 2016. In the MENA, evidence of a wide drug-terror nexus varies, however. Take the example of Hizbullah: the group is an influential actor in, and draws support from, the Beqaa Valley, but its budget is almost completely dependent on funding from Iran (estimates vary from $200-$800 million annually). However, it has been alleged that Hizbullah has links through the Lebanese diaspora in the tri-border area of South America, from which it receives funding through narcotics smuggling. Individuals with a history of petty crime records and/or substance abuse are well-known to constitute a key pool of recruits for Daesh both in Europe and in the MENA; the group's founding father, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, had been arrested for, among other things, drug possession. Daesh has been associated with the rise in the consumption and production of Captagon (fenethylline) in Syria: its fighters are said to be using the drug as a form of performance enhancer, and the group is accused of running production labs.

Yet reports about Captagon's proliferation in Middle Eastern markets, especially in Saudi Arabia, vastly predate the emergence of Daesh, the Arab Spring or the Iraqi civil war; its growing consumption in the Middle East was first mentioned in 2003 by the UNODC. While dwarfed by other sources of income, the proceeds from drug trafficking are not negligible. In 2015, the Syrian government seized more than 24.5 million ATS tablets – at the Saudi black market retail price of $12 a tablet, the seizure could be worth $294 million in 2015 prices.

Assuming a mere 1% had made it across the border, and 30% of that sale was net income, the seller would have pocketed more than $882,000; twice the cost of the 9/11 attacks to mount. Following the territorial defeat of Daesh in 2019 and the loss of a population to tax will once more bring to the fore the importance of racketeering and trafficking as illicit sources of funds; addressing the causal factors of the various illicit market routes crisscrossing the region will therefore become key to counter-insurgency efforts. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and le Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) have been closely associated with the drug-terror nexus.



Operating along a key smuggling route of various illicit products, Islamist Sahelian terror groups have been used as high-profile examples of how drug trafficking contributes to financing terrorism. On the one hand, it coexists alongside other more lucrative activities such as kidnapping. On the other hand, drug trafficking appears to be a source of funding for all types of destabilising, armed non-state actors. Moreover, for loosely integrated groups, it is difficult to differentiate between group doctrine and livelihood strategies of individuals or sub-groups.

7) Impact on Regional Stability and Security

At present, headlines about the Middle East and North African region are focused on the security threat posed by extremist militant organizations. However, the growth of transnational organized crime networks in the region is also significantly threatening national and regional security. The current political instability across the region caused by armed conflict in several countries has led to a deterioration of the capacity of several Arab States to exert effective control over their borders. These circumstances, combined with weak economies with reduced employment opportunities and youth often traumatized by conflict, as well as the geographic proximity to lucrative European black markets, provide fertile ground for criminal groups and networks to prosper. Of major concern to the region is that some organized criminal groups have changed their modus operandi in relation to extremist militant organizations, with apparent symbiotic or outright cooperative dynamics between them resulting in significant amounts of funding for terrorist groups who benefit from illicit trafficking by acting as protectors or facilitators.

The MENA region continues to face conflicts and instability, undermining peace, security, and sustainable development. Weak governance and porous borders enable criminal networks to exploit illicit trafficking, organized crime, and terrorism. Positioned along major trafficking routes, the region faces rising drug-related threats, including the production and trade of *captagon* (an amphetamine type stimulant) and synthetic opioids. Meanwhile, ongoing conflicts have displaced millions, leaving refugees and migrants highly vulnerable to trafficking, smuggling, and exploitation.

Conflicts and instability in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Palestine, as well as in East Africa, are driving an increasing number of asylum seekers to leave their countries and seek international protection in Europe, using North African countries as embarkation points, alongside migrants on the move for economic motives from West, Central and East Africa. The activity of organized crime networks involved in smuggling operations along the routes leading to the shores of the Mediterranean and onwards has resulted in an unprecedented number of deaths. In Libya and Syria, the lack of law enforcement capacity allows smuggling networks to operate freely, including in areas controlled by local militia or terrorist organizations. Limited protection mechanisms further exacerbate these risks.

***The following section provides an overview of the drugs, organized crime, and terrorism related threats in the region*:**

- **Weak Rule of Law and Criminal Justice Systems**
- **Corruption**
- **Money Laundering**
- **Poor Prison Conditions**
- **Violence and Discrimination against Women**
- **Violence against Children**
- **Drug Consumption and HIV Prevalence**

Counterfeit Products and Goods and Fraudulent Medicine

The flow of counterfeit goods and fraudulent medicine across the world has increased dramatically over recent years, and the Arab region is no exception. Media reports indicate that up to 56 percent of goods traded in the Arab markets may not be genuine. Most of the world’s counterfeit products can be traced back to East Asia in general, and China in particular. Counterfeit goods often pass through free trade zones in the United Arab Emirates on their way to Europe. Saudi Arabia seized 125 million counterfeit units in 2013, an increase of 127 per cent compared to 2012.
The Moroccan National Committee for Industrial Property and Anti-Counterfeiting reported seizing more than 3.3 million counterfeit items in 2013, triple the amount of counterfeit goods seized in 2012. Of particular concern are fraudulent medicines and the illegal re-importation (parallel trade) of medicines, as they can have serious or fatal public health consequences.
Falsified medicines may contain no active pharmaceutical ingredient, an incorrect dosage, or the wrong active pharmaceutical ingredient, and can thus lead to serious health damage. Laboratories have confirmed the presence of various groups of chemicals, including pesticides, rat poison, brick dust, leaded paint, cartridge ink, and floor polish, in counterfeit medicines. Estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that as much as 35 per cent of the entire pharmaceutical market in the Middle East may be illicit, and reaches all levels of the industry, from common antibiotics and painkillers to medicines for the treatment of schizophrenia and cancer. In particular, Iraq’s healthcare system is struggling with unregulated pharmaceuticals as unsecured borders and the collapse of the existing regulatory regime have meant that such counterfeits are regularly smuggled into the country and are pervasive in the domestic supply. Several organized criminal networks specialized in fraudulent medicines have been dismantled in the past few years. However, the phenomenon is still widespread given the volatile security situation and the lack of access to medicines.

An aggravating element is the fact that most of the Arab countries suffer from serious economic and socio-political problems resulting in high levels of unemployment and poverty. Perceived lack of security has negatively impacted tourism and foreign direct investment, two major economic pillars for several Member States in the region. Weak social infrastructure, such as education, health care and social security systems, is a common problem in many of the countries in the region, further undermining stability. At present, the region is facing several challenges in the political, economic, social, religious and energy sectors which are key to its future and the future of

wider regional and international security. Security challenges and the spread of terrorism appear to be the most imminent threats to many Member States. A comprehensive and well-integrated programme, at both national and regional levels, to improve security, justice and human rights as well as human security is the most promising approach for sustainable security, stability, peace and development in the region.

8) Past International Efforts on the Case

As international borders become increasingly porous, global abuse and accessibility to drugs have become increasingly widespread. Drug trafficking represents a global threat, providing a constant source of funding for other criminal activities and threats such as terrorism. International cooperation as well as improved knowledge of criminals' concealment methods and modus operandi is therefore vital to enabling police officials and customs worldwide to secure borders and safeguard communities.

- ***United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)***
- ***International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999)***
- ***UNODC Regional Programme for the Arab States (2016-2021)***
- ***UNODC Regional Framework for the Arab States (2023-2028)***
- ***INTERPOL Response Against Illicit Drugs (I-RAID)***
- ***Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP)***

  The AIRCOP project is a joint endeavour of INTERPOL, UNODC, and the World Customs Organization (WCO). The project aims to strengthen the capacities of international airports across the globe to detect and intercept drugs, other illicit drugs, and high-risk passengers in origin, transit, and destination countries.
  As international borders become increasingly porous, global abuse and accessibility to drugs have become increasingly widespread. Drug trafficking represents a global threat, providing a constant source of funding for other criminal activities and even threats such as terrorism.

  International cooperation as well as improved knowledge of criminals' concealment methods and modus operandi is therefore vital to enabling police officials and customs worldwide to secure borders and safeguard communities.

- ***MAYAG***

MAYAG targets the production, trafficking and use of synthetic drugs, and the illegal proceeds of criminal organizations operating around the globe. The project is funded by the Republic of Korea and involves collaboration with partners such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations Chiefs of Police (ASEANAPOL), the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL), the Police Community of the Americas (AMERIPOL), the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC).

- ***United Nations Security Council Resolutions***
  UNSCR-2195
  UNSCR-2253
  UNSCR-2462
  UNSCR-2482

9) Questions to be Addressed

1) How do ongoing conflicts exacerbate narco-terrorism?
2) What factors contribute to the involvement of terrorist organizations in drug trafficking?
3) What measures can be implemented to reduce the impact on regional stability and security?
4) What international actions can be taken by UNODC and further channels of action, and how can existing efforts be improved?
5) How can governments effectively tackle the link between drug trafficking and terrorism?

6) How can terrorist organizations be prevented from generating revenue through drug trafficking?
7) How can trade routes be monitored and border controls be strengthened without interfering with the legal systems of other countries?

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