

The Captagon Map: How Drug Networks Move Between Syria, Jordan, and Iraq



In recent weeks, the confrontation with Captagon trafficking networks has no longer been limited to isolated incidents along the Jordanian-Syrian border; developments have revealed a broader map.

This became especially clear after Jordanian aircraft targeted sites in the Suwayda countryside, major seizures were made at the joint Jaber/Nassib crossing between Damascus and Amman, and security coordination took shape through Syria and Iraq.

So where does the network begin, where are the goods stored, through which borders do they move, and who is pursuing them? What do we know about the Captagon map between Syria, Jordan, and Iraq?

Hotspots on the map

Recent operations show that Captagon networks operate at multiple points across several countries, but they function through active hubs, most notably:

Suwayda countryside: It was announced on May 3, 2026, that the “Jordanian Deterrence Operation” had destroyed factories, workshops, and warehouses suspected of being used to launch drug-smuggling operations in villages in this area of southern Syria.

Local Syrian reports point to places such as Shahba, Malah, Busan, Imtan, al-Kafr, Arman, and al-Anat, making the Suwayda countryside a major hotspot for drug smuggling.

Jaber/Nassib crossing: On April 9, 2026, a joint operation between Damascus and Amman foiled the smuggling of 943 kilograms of Captagon paste hidden inside a truck, an amount sufficient to produce around 5.5 million pills.

This seizure shows that the official crossing is not merely an entry point for tourists and goods, but also a hub exploited for smuggling.

Damascus countryside and Homs: A Syrian-Iraqi operation on April 26, 2026, led to the seizure of 1.73 million Captagon pills and the arrest of eight people in the Damascus countryside and Homs. These areas appear on the map as network centers that produce and store the drug and are linked by lines of cooperation with Iraq.

Jordan's northern border: Jordanian forces warn that smugglers exploit the length and rugged terrain of the northern border and prefer to infiltrate during bad weather. This front stretches between desert and mountains, forming an unofficial transit hub that authorities are trying to monitor.

The Syrian-Iraqi axis: Research by XCEPT (a British international organization specializing in conflict and border economies) confirms that Iraqi militias control crossings with Syria and facilitate the movement of Captagon into Iraq and then onward to the Gulf.

Umm Qasr port/Gulf-bound route: Estimates by the same organization suggest that part of the Captagon may pass through Iraq to the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr and then to Gulf countries.

Captagon trafficking routes

The Captagon route is not a continuous line from one point to another; the reality is more complex, with multiple fronts, most notably:

The Jordanian front

The most commonly discussed route begins in southern Syria, where small workshops and warehouses are spread across the countryside of Suwayda and Daraa. From there, shipments head south toward the Jordanian border through the desert or along rough dirt roads.

Some operations target trucks that pass through the Jaber/Nassib crossing carrying Captagon paste in concealed compartments, while other reports reveal that smugglers use electronically guided balloons or plastic projectiles to drop drugs inside Jordan.

After crossing the border, the shipments are regrouped and sent either to Jordanian markets or onward to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, particularly through the Omari crossing or via alternative routes.

The Iraqi front

The second front is fundamentally different. The available data do not point to smuggling from Syria through Iraq into Jordan, but rather to networks operating between the Damascus countryside, Homs, and Iraqi collaborators.

The joint April 2026 operations between Damascus and Baghdad show that Iraq is no longer merely a potential transit route, but a partner in dismantling cross-border networks.

Research by XCEPT warns that some factions control Syrian-Iraqi crossings and exploit them to smuggle Captagon to the Gulf, calling for greater transparency in Iraq so that the border becomes a theater of cooperation rather than smuggling.

The dilemma lies in the fact that smugglers constantly change their routes, alternating between desert infiltration, the use of crossings and trucks, and other means, while states develop deterrence and surveillance mechanisms.

From border control to deterrence and coordination

What changed during 2025 and 2026 was not only the scale of smuggling, but also the shape of the confrontation. Jordan no longer limits itself to thwarting infiltration at the border; it has shifted to proactive deterrence, while coordination with Damascus and Baghdad has taken on a clearer form through joint operations and simultaneous seizures.

This shift began to emerge after the fall of the former regime in Damascus in late 2024, with intensified surveillance and cross-border operations.

Reports in January 2025 indicated that Jordan had begun building a border fence, intensifying aerial surveillance, and carrying out strikes on smugglers' homes in Suwayda as part of a new strategy.

In October 2025, a joint Jordanian-Syrian statement announced the foiling of seven smuggling attempts and the seizure of around one million Captagon pills. The joint operation at the Jaber/Nassib crossing also reinforced the image of direct coordination between Damascus and Amman.

The operation "Jordanian Deterrence" targeted factories, workshops, and warehouses in the Suwayda countryside, and Jordanian forces said it relied on intelligence information and destroyed the infrastructure of smuggling.

This coordination represents a turning point. For the first time, Damascus and Amman have announced a joint operation of this scale since the fall of the

regime, reflecting intelligence-sharing and gains on the ground.

Iraq, for its part, is trying to move beyond being accused of serving as an easy transit route and instead become a partner in dismantling Captagon networks, even as accusations persist that militias control some crossings and vital points there.

On April 26, 2026, the Syrian-Iraqi operation in the Damascus countryside and Homs showed that Baghdad had become cooperative in the pursuit. The Iraqi side confirmed that it had arrested four suspects, indicating clear intelligence coordination.

Syrian authorities are also making efforts to dismantle internal networks and destroy laboratories. Official data from 2025 showed the dismantling of 15 industrial laboratories and 13 storage facilities, while joint operations with Jordan and Iraq are also being carried out.

Ultimately, the Captagon map does not reveal a single fixed route, but rather a flexible network moving between production and storage areas, official crossings, rugged borders, and potential transit routes.

For that reason, the confrontation is no longer decided at the border berm alone. It now begins in the Suwayda countryside, passes through Jaber/Nassib, reaches dismantling operations in the Damascus countryside and Homs, and then extends to broader coordination with Baghdad. In this sense, the border has shifted from a line separating states into a shared space of pursuit.