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Drug Trafficking Routes Through Pakistan and National Security

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Abstract

Drug trafficking has become a serious national security threat in Pakistan Moreover, it has become a complicated issue which possesses strategic ramifications; including national stability, regional security and international standing. Pakistan's geographic position in the region, the fact that Afghanistan has become the world's leading producer of illicit opiates, the porous border in the west, the long coastal stretch on the Arabian Sea, and the emerging trade and transit infrastructures has put Pakistan on important international drug smuggling routes. (UNODC, UNODC World Drug Report 2025, 2025).

South-West Asia is a key location for heroin trafficking in the world. New developments include the arrival of synthetic drugs, like methamphetamine, as much as this region is an opiate-dominant area. According to the seizure statistics between 2019 and 2023, there is a steady trend in heroin seizures while metham-phetamine seizures are on the rise in the region. The study derives its analytical framework developed by drawing on the UNODC World Drug Report datasets, Anti-Narcotics Force seizure statistics and literature on transnational organized crimes. The route-based framework associates geography with trafficking by institutions responsible for such. The research identifies that Pakistan is involved in four major trafficking domains: (1) Land routes in the west which passes through Afghanistan; (2) Internal routes which passes through the country from the border to the logistics areas; (3) Maritime trafficking which passes through the Makran coast and Arabian Sea; and (4) Air routes which are used for transporting synthetic drugs.

The findings are Narcotics trafficking undermines internal stability, creates economic security challenges, and damages international reputation. The financial flows generated by drug trade fuel organized crime, corruption, and possible support for violent non-state actors. The linkages between narcotics trafficking networks and trade systems, as well as maritime trade networks, reveal vulnerabilities in Pakistan's trade systems, maritime trade networks, and financial systems. The interdiction capabilities of Pakistan, as led by Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and assisted by Pakistan Customs, Pakistan Coast Guards, Maritime Security Agency, and Provincial law enforcement agencies, have shown improvement. However, narcotics trafficking networks are robust, adaptive, and increasingly integrated into trade systems, maritime networks, and trade logistics. (Ministry Of Narcotics Control, 2024) ((WCO), 2024)

The research concludes that drug trafficking through Pakistan needs to be addressed as a strategic national security concern rather than an enforcement challenge. A comprehensive national strategy is required to counter drug trafficking.

Keywords: Drug Trafficking Routes, Pakistan, National Security

INTRODUCTION

The issue of drug trafficking has been identified as one of the most complex non-traditional security threats to modern states in the international system. While most security threats are local in their impact, drug trafficking is a transnational issue that takes full advantage of borders, markets, governments, and financial systems. Drug trafficking is a threat to national security through the promotion of international terrorism, criminal organizations, corruption, and the weakening of governments. For Pakistan, drug trafficking is not just another issue; it is a deeply embedded structural problem that is influenced by geography, regional instability, and the evolution of international drug markets. (Mandaville, 2009) (Sajid, 2024).

The threat of drug trafficking to Pakistan is mainly related to its geography. Pakistan shares a porous 2,400 kilometers of international boundary with Afghanistan, the world's largest producer of illicit opiates. Pakistan is at the center of the Golden Crescent, a region that has been historically responsible for producing a dominant share of the world's total opium and heroin. For decades, the Golden Crescent has been the source of most of the world's total illicit opium/heroin. Since the late 1970s, the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan has created a situation that is most conducive for the large-scale cultivation of opium poppy. In this regard, narcotics have become a critical component of the international drug trade in the region. Historically, Afghanistan has been responsible for the overwhelming majority of the world's total illicit opium cultivation. Opium trends and trafficking are well documented in the UNODC World Drug Report 2025. Pakistan is not a major producer of opiates; however, it has become a critical transit country for international drug markets in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia. (Aftab, 2014) (Sajid, 2024).

During the decades, the routes of drug trafficking in Pakistan have changed considerably. In the initial stages, the routes were quite simple, with the involvement of cross-border smuggling operations, where traditional routes were used. However, with the increase in law enforcement activities, the routes have changed, with the involvement of sophisticated means of drug trafficking, where organized groups have played a key role in this regard. Today, the routes of drug trafficking in Pakistan involve the use of transit routes, maritime routes in the Arabian Sea, air routes, containerization, and trade routes, etc. The evolution in drug trafficking in Pakistan is a result of the resilience shown by the drug trade in the wake of counter-state measures. ((DEA), 1994) (National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), 2022).

The impact of drug trafficking on national security in Pakistan is quite serious. The first impact is related to the financial gains being made by the drug trade, which is quite substantial and has the potential to be used to fund terrorist activities, insurgency, and violent extremism, etc. In the context of conflict zones, the impact of the drug trade on militancy is quite serious, where the involvement of organized groups in the drug trade has provided a financial lifeline to non-state armed groups. The impact on national security is related to the weakening of border control, where the exploitation of trade routes has undermined economic security by allowing trade-based money laundering to take place. (Mandaville, 2009) (Khurram, 2026).

In terms of other effects, there are governance issues associated with drug trafficking. This arises mainly because of the substantial revenues that are generated by the trafficking of drugs. This, therefore, creates an environment that fosters corruption within government institutions, such as law enforcement agencies. This affects the government since it acts as a barrier to the rule of law. At the social level, the existence of drugs results in social dislocation. This, therefore, affects the government. These various effects of drug trafficking are the reasons why it qualifies to be categorized under the issue of national security.

The response of Pakistan to the issue of drug trafficking has been shaped by an understanding of the threats that it poses. The Anti-Narcotics Force of Pakistan acts as the lead agency of the country in the issue of narcotics control. The role of the Anti-Narcotics Force of Pakistan is to carry out intelligence-

led interdiction, investigation, prosecution, and international cooperation. The role of the Anti-Narcotics Force of Pakistan is critical in the process of eliminating the issue of drug trafficking. The changing nature of the issue of drug trafficking, characterized by an increasing reliance on the use of trade, transit, and maritime routes, has given other institutions of Pakistan greater importance within the context of the country's security and governance architecture.

In this context, the role of Pakistan Customs becomes critical within the context of the country's response to the issue of narcotics control. The role of Pakistan Customs becomes critical given that it regulates and monitors international trade, ports, airports, dry ports, and transit. These are gateways that are increasingly being used by the perpetrators of the issue of drug trafficking. The use of narcotics within the context of container cargo, air cargo, courier services, and other cargo places the role of Customs at the forefront of efforts to control the issue of narcotics. The role of the Pakistan Coast Guards becomes critical within the context of interdiction carried out within the context of the coastal belt. The role of the provincial police and excise department becomes critical within the context of controlling the internal movement of narcotics. (UNODC, Illicit drug trends in Pakistan., 2008) ((WCO), 2024).

The involvement of numerous actors in counter-narcotics law enforcement underscores the importance of integration and coordination. This is because the flow of drug trafficking routes does not acknowledge administrative and jurisdictional boundaries. Therefore, fragmented institutional responses undermine the efficiency and efficacy of counter-narcotics law enforcement. The development of a comprehensive approach to national security also requires clear roles and responsibilities, sharing of intelligence information, joint law enforcement efforts, and integration between federal and provincial law enforcement agencies. International best practices also underscore the importance of developing successful anti-drug strategies based on layered law enforcement approaches that involve specialized agencies, border control agencies, law enforcement agencies, and financial intelligence agencies.

In this context, this research aims to examine the drug trafficking routes in Pakistan and their implications on national security. This research also aims to analyze the factors that make Pakistan susceptible to drug trafficking. This research also aims to evaluate the role of the ANF as the specialized agency in counter-narcotics law enforcement in Pakistan. This research also aims to evaluate the role of Pakistan Customs and Pakistan Coast Guards in counter-narcotics law enforcement in Pakistan. Another objective of this study is to assess the involvement of provincial law enforcement agencies in Pakistan's counter-narcotics law enforcement. The drug trafficking is also going to be looked at through the lens of national security. The study also explores the drug trafficking impacts on national security of Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

In the face of Pakistan's persistent counter-narcotics efforts, drug trafficking through the country continues to be a reality, the nature and scale of which are changing and which has serious national security implications. Despite the efforts of Pakistan to put together policy frameworks, special institutions and enforcement practices for combating narcotics but due to the nature, flexibility and sophistication of drug trafficking, it appears that the present-day counter-narcotics practices of Pakistan are unable to address the drug issue at the strategic level. The continued presence of drug trafficking routes through Pakistan is a manifestation of a complex interplay between geographical, institutional, and regional factors, which require a deeper policy analysis. (Ministry Of Narcotics Control, 2024) (Sajid, 2024).

One of the important aspects of drug trafficking in Pakistan is its geographical and geopolitical position. Being a country which has a porous border with Afghanistan, which is the largest producer of illicit opiates in the world, Pakistan is structurally vulnerable to drug trafficking from sources which it cannot control. In spite of the improvements in border management, drug traffickers continue to use

the difficult geography and facilitation of the local population in their favor. In addition, the unstable geopolitical environment in the region also does not help in addressing the issue of drug trafficking in Pakistan. These factors, therefore, suggest that drug trafficking is an external shock which has serious implications for the governance of Pakistan (UNODC, UNODC World Drug Report 2025, 2025) (Aftab, 2014).

Yet another important factor in this issue is the changing nature of drug trafficking routes and methods. In recent times, traditional land routes are being supplemented or replaced by maritime routes, air routes, and trade-based routes. This is because drug traffickers are using containers, courier services, fishing boats, and trade to hide illicit drugs in legitimate economic activities. This has further added to the complexities in drug interdiction because law enforcement agencies are required to strike a balance between security needs and facilitating trade and movement. The increasing use of synthetic drugs is also posing a challenge to law enforcement agencies because they are easier to transport and hide compared to opiates ((DEA), 1994) (National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), 2022).

Institutionally, Pakistan's drug control efforts are also affected by several factors. In Pakistan, drug control is in the hands of the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), which is the lead agency in drug control. However, in recent times, drug interdiction is also dependent upon several other agencies. Pakistan Customs play an important role in controlling drug trade at trade routes and corridors. Pakistan Coast Guards are also actively involved in drug interdiction in Pakistan's coastal belt. Similarly, provincial agencies are also actively involved in drug interdiction. However, coordination among these agencies is not institutionalized but based on personal relationships. The lack of an integrated intelligence network among these agencies further adds to the challenges in drug interdiction because drug traffickers take advantage of these gaps (UNODC, Illicit drug trends in Pakistan., 2008) (Sajid, 2024).

Yet another facet of this issue pertains to the financial and economic challenges. In this regard, it is important to note that drug trade involves considerable illicit funds that are laundered through trade-based money laundering schemes, informal value transfer systems, and poorly regulated economic systems. While it is possible for enforcement agencies to successfully intercept physical shipments of illicit drugs, the lack of attention to investigating the financial systems allows drug trade to flourish. Due to Pakistan's strategic location in the global context concerning anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regimes, the drug trade should be addressed by trade and transit states.

These challenges pose significant risks to national security. Terrorism and organized crime financing, border and maritime security vulnerabilities, corruption facilitation, as well as government authority undermining are all attributable to drug trafficking issues. Drugs cause addiction and health problems at the societal level. Also, they can create unrest. The Pakistani state is affected quite significantly by all these factors. Though these issues are serious criminal activities, together they endanger the internal security and stability of Pakistan.

Due to these enormous threats to the internal security of Pakistan, analysts generally interpret the problem of drug trafficking in Pakistan through a mainly enforcement-centered framework. Interdiction is one part of an effective counter-narcotics strategy; it is insufficient by itself. Another problem is the absence of thorough routinized analysis on national security impacts regarding strategic roads. Ultimately, a lack of recognition of the role that federal and provincial agencies play in the trade and transit space in general, and Pakistan Customs in particular, limits the level of analysis.

In view of these aspects, the specific issue addressed by this research is the existence of an absence of a comprehensive route-based analysis of the drug trafficking routes through Pakistan with reference to national security issue. We need to move on from primarily an enforcement-led model to a more well-rounded model that tackles the institutional challenges and balances what the federal and provincial agencies will do in the space.

Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative desk-based approach to explore the drug trafficking routes through Pakistan and the implications for security. Due to the clandestine and transnational nature of drug trafficking, gathering primary data using interviews or fieldwork was impractical and inappropriate. The study uses a systematic review of secondary data from credible national and international sources as per the National School of Public Policy guidelines instead of collecting primary data.

Research Design

The study takes on an exploratory and analytical approach. The study aims to analyze operational aspects of drug trafficking routes in Pakistan, and their evolution along with mapping drug trafficking with national security in Pakistan. Instead of making estimates of the total volume of drugs trafficked, which is difficult to do given the covert nature of the trade, the study is about patterns, routes and role of institutions along with policy gaps.

A framework based on route connects geography to institutional roles and security results. This allows the research to analyze trafficking as something that happens in stages, namely entering the border, internal movement and exiting via port, airport or ocean.

Sources of Data

The investigation uses a set of well-established and veritable authorities. These consists:

- Make use of UNODC publications, especially the World Drug Reports, for insights into global and regional trends in drug production and trafficking.
- Refer to the World Customs Organization (WCO) reports and the Illicit Trade Report 2024 for data on seizures, etc.
- The Yearbooks of the Anti-Narcotics Force, ANF contain national statistics of seizure arrest and enforcement.
- Documents from the Government of Pakistan, such as National Anti-Drugs Policy.
- Reports by FATF about money laundering and terrorist financing is drug-related.
- The WCO has guidelines outlining the role for customs in counter narcotics.
- Scholarly journals and research papers on organized crime, national security and drug control.

Referring to multiple sources is effective as it cross-checks validity and not being reliant on one dataset.

Methods of Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is key to the study. The review of important reports and documents resulted in the identification of themes like.

- Trafficking scene of drugs in Pakistan
- Changes in trafficking methods
- Roles of different institutions
- National security implications
- Policy and coordination gaps

A comparative approach is utilized to analyze international counter-narcotics models. Research was conducted in selected countries to probe into practices that would be of useful relevance for Pakistan contextualized for difference in the spheres of context and capacity.

Institutional and Jurisdictional Analysis

A significant methodology part is the breakdown of the roles of institutions. As the principal agency for drug control in Pakistan, the ANF (Anti-Narcotics Force) is adopted as the study framework. In this context.

- Pakistan Customs is going to be accessed in the context of its role at ports, airports, dry ports, and trade routes.
- The roles of Pakistan Coast Guards and Maritime Security Agency in coastal and maritime enforcement are assessed.
- The role of police and excise departments in internal enforcement was examined.

Through this layered approach it is possible to see how these institutions fit together or overlap and where coordination gaps exist.

Limitations of the Study

The research admits a few limitations. The data on seizures may not indicate the various ways how trafficking is happening. Dependence on secondary data hinders access to real-time operational data. Variances in standards make comparison difficult across agencies and bodies. The research will more focus on changes, patterns, and implications on policy, rather than exact numbers addressing these limitations, which makes it a suitable fit for national security.

Ethical Considerations

The information utilized in this research is completely public and officially published. It does not include human participants or classified data. All sources are acknowledged, and there is no academic misconduct in all work done.

The research methodology of this study is qualitative and purely desk based to expose drug trafficking routes through Pakistan and their impact on national security. Due to the illegal and cross-border nature of the drug trade, as well as operational and ethical limitations, the collection of primary data through field interviews or participant observation was deemed unviable. In place of the conventional method of conducting case studies, the research is dependent on systematic analysis of secondary data of credible national and international sources as per the research guidelines of the National School of Public Policy.

Literature Review

Drug Trafficking as a Transnational Phenomenon

There is increasing academic and policy research looking at drug trafficking through a transnational lens rather than just the criminal courts. Earlier efforts focused on controlling supply, reducing demand and enforcing the law within national boundaries. Yet, drug trafficking is now a cross-border enterprise due to globalization, improvement in transport and communication and the growth of organized crime. Recent literature points out that traffickers are exploiting global trade systems, porous borders, financial networks and weak governance systems. Thus, it would be difficult to tackle the issue at a domestic level. (Mandaville, 2009) (Khurram, 2026).

The UNODC reiterates that drug markets are adaptive, highly resilient and capable of withstanding any major shift in global policies. The reports suggest that trafficking networks quickly respond to enforcement pressure by changing routes, enhancing concealment methods and expanding the variety of drugs they carry. This flexibility serves as an effective rebuttal to governments' territorial orthodox responses and redoubles the need for international cooperation and intelligence-led measures. Consequently, experts read drug trafficking activities more broadly as transnational organized crime than as an isolated criminal activity.

Drug Trafficking and National Security

The connection between drug trafficking and security issues is now well-documented through research. According to experts, in some places, the money that comes from drugs is sometimes more than what the state makes from taxes. This can allow groups to take on the state, especially where the state is weak and ineffective or in conflict. (Mandaville, 2009) (Politeia Research Foundation, 2023).

Drug trafficking is non-traditional threat to security. It creates instability in a long run and weakness the institution from within and operate in secrecy, unlike the normal military threats. A number of studies present a "crime-terror nexus", where terrorist and militant groups undertake or tax drug

trafficking to fund their activities. In South and Central Asia parts of the world where conflict persisted for decades and when there is weak governance this link is especially strong.
The broader drug trafficking may undermine border, economic and governance. The efficiency of a state is compromised by corruption, money laundering and a reduced enforcement capacity. As a result, the modern security perspective advocates for the inclusion of counter-narcotics initiatives within national security and counter-terrorism efforts.

The Golden Crescent and Regional Drug Dynamics

The drug literature of the region has extensively dealt with Golden Crescent which consists of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. The key message of the Afghan opium production is that UNODC has been reporting for years that Afghanistan is responsible for most of the illicit opium cultivation and the heroin production. The persistency of illicit crop production owing to conflict, poverty, weak governance and bigger profits of illicit crops. (UNODC, UNODC World Drug Report 2025, 2025) ((DEA), 1994).
In this regional context, Pakistan is typically viewed as a transit rather than a producer country. Afghanistan has a long and tough border with Pakistan, which along with governance deficiencies in border areas, has facilitated smuggling. Iran is often referred to as a transit and consuming country. However, trafficking has shifted to Pakistan since enforcement there has become more stringent.
Also, literature confirms that the routes used for trafficking changed. Hitherto, stronger enforcement has driven traffickers towards sea and air routes because land routes were dominant earlier. Research delves into drug trafficking, as fishing vessels and container ships are now being used to smuggle drugs away to Africa, Middle East and Europe. The most recent development is why maritime security matters for Pakistan.

Emergence of Synthetic Drugs

Research into synthetic drugs and their effects on drug control is an area of increasing interest. In contrast to opium and cannabis, which are derived from plants, synthetic drugs are produced anywhere and not dependent on agricultural reproduction cycles. Methamphetamine has become more prevalent because it is highly profitable, easy to transport and a much sought-after commodity globally. (UNODC, UNODC World Drug Report 2025, 2025) (Sajid, 2024).
Reports from the US Office on Drugs and Crime show that synthetic drugs are becoming common in South Asia, including Pakistan. According to some studies, Pakistan is no longer merely a transit country for opiates, but is now facing threats pertaining to synthetic drugs, both trafficking and use. Smaller shipments of these drugs are often made via postal services, courier services, and commercial supply chains making it more difficult to detect them which increases the importance of customs and regulatory controls.

Pakistan's Counter-Narcotics Framework in Literature

The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) is the lead agency over drug control in Pakistan, shows research. It can investigate, interdict, and prosecute. It can carry out intelligence and cooperate internationally. Publications of ANF display vital data on seizures, arrests and prosecution. And continuous studies emphasize a result-oriented role in the execution of international drug control commitments. (Ministry Of Narcotics Control, 2024) (UNODC, Illicit drug trends in Pakistan., 2008).
Yet the literature also notes that a specialized agency alone is no longer enough. The rise of trade, transit, and maritime routes for trafficking requires strategies that are broader spectrum and multi-agency.

Role of Customs Administrations in Counter-Narcotics

According to international studies, customs are now necessary in narcotic fight. According to the World Customs Organization (WCO), customs authorities are in a strong position to discover drugs that are

hidden in legitimate trade flows, including container shipments, air cargo and courier parcels. ((WCO), 2024) (UNODC, Illicit drug trends in Pakistan., 2008).
In Pakistan, research highlights the growing importance of Pakistan Customs at ports and airports and at dry ports. International support has enabled the establishment of Port Control Units (PCUs), which have enhanced risk profiling, intelligence-based targeting and coordination.
At this same time, however, the gap remains limited consolidated seizure data of customs and linkages of customs enforcement with intelligence and financial investigations. This study seeks to fill these gaps by looking at the role of Pakistan Customs in an ANF-led framework.

Maritime Enforcement and Coastal Security
A further key area of research is maritime trafficking and coastal security. Research shows that illegal activities have a thriving business in long coastlines and busy shipping routes. It is hard to detect due to fishing boats and commercial vessels and a large amount of vessel traffic. (UNODC, Misuse of licit trade for opiate trafficking in Western and Central Asia, 2020).
There is a limited amount of academic work in Pakistan on the role of Pakistan Coast Guards but policy studies highlight their importance for coastal interdiction. Considering the convergence of drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking at sea, enhancing maritime surveillance and coordination is deemed essential.

Federal–Provincial Dimensions in Drug Control
Coordination between federal and provincial agencies is vital, researched by governance experts. Provincial police and the excise department play a vital role in interdicting drugs on the internal frontier and before they enter the supply chain. Federal authorities, meanwhile, place the focus on the border and other international entry points.
Nevertheless, studies show that coordination is often inconsistent and ineffective because of where agencies lie. To improve effectiveness, global best practice calls for formal cooperation mechanisms and forms task forces and shared intelligence.

International Comparative Perspectives
The effective control of drugs is linked with orderliness in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. These specialized agencies, customs and border authorities, maritime forces, local police, and financial intelligence units. Successful initiatives to tackle trafficking focus on the combination of action along trafficking routes, networks and the money flows.

Synthesis and Research Gap
In general, the literature points out that drug trafficking is transnational, adaptable, and security-related. Despite a lot of research on global drug markets, Afghanistan's opium economy and Pakistan as a transit state, there are still no integrated analyses that connect trafficking routes, institutional roles and national security outcomes.
Agencies like Pakistan Customs, Pakistan Coast Guards, the Maritime Security Agency, and the provincial governments operate within a system led by the ANF, but so far limited information has been available on this. To fill this gap, the research presents a route-based and institutional plus security-centric analysis of drug trafficking in Pakistan with a view to facilitate better policy and strategy making.

SECTION - I
DRUG TRAFFICKING ROUTES THROUGH PAKISTAN
Pakistan is strategically placed in regional and global drug trafficking networks due to the position of the countries, trade connection, and accessibility to Afghanistan. Despite the fact that illicit drugs are

not produced in large quantities, it acts as a major transit point of narcotics produced in Afghanistan and directed to foreign markets. Trafficking via Pakistan is a dynamic pattern and thus the pattern is always changing, where traffickers are re-adjusting their paths and strategies according to the enforcement strategies. On a large scale, these routes may be categorized into western land routes, internal transit corridors and maritime and air exit routes, each of which has its own operational and operational security implication. (UNODC, UNODC World Drug Report 2025, 2025) (Khurram, 2026).

Western Land Routes: Afghanistan–Pakistan Border

Narcotics enter Pakistan mainly through its border with Afghanistan. Spanning the rugged mountains, desert, and waterless land of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the border. Outdated infrastructure and porous border controls facilitated traffickers using informal crossings, tribal pathways and traditional smuggling routes in the past. For a long time, large amounts of opium, heroin, and hashish has moved on these routes with the help of the local.

Traffickers have continued to use the borders for smuggling despite the improvement in border management by Pakistan through fencing and enhanced security. Drug traffickers are adapting to stricter controls. They rely more on using smaller shipments, nighttime movement, and human couriers. The routes remain particularly sensitive from a security perspective as they are located in proximity to conflict zones and are likely to be connected to militant and criminal groups.

At this stage, operations are led by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) with provincial law enforcement supporting them in border areas. Yet, because of the cross-border character of trafficking, success depends more on intelligence and collaboration than on barriers.

Transit Corridors Within Pakistan

Drugs are transported via internal corridors connecting the border areas of Pakistan to the major cities of Quetta, Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi. Key cities are designated for storage, redistribution or export. Drug traffickers often exploit road infrastructure and commercial vehicles and informal logistics mechanisms to transport drugs across provinces. (Sajid, 2024) (National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), 2022).

Traffickers often conceal narcotics in legitimate agricultural items, construction materials, consumer items etc to evade detection of law enforcement. Without intelligent targeting, this is hard to detect. Consequently, provincial police and excise departments are in a better position to intercept drugs as they move within the country.

These internal routes create larger risks too. They facilitate the movement of narcotics throughout the nation, fuel addiction within the country, and provide criminal syndicates with the chance to set up supply centers in large urban areas. The border cannot alone deliver the end result. The need for strong internal enforcement is needed too.

Maritime Routes and the Makran Coast

Over the last few years, trafficking by sea has become one of the most serious and huge problems in Pakistan. With its long stretch of coast, less dense population, and low surveillance, the Makran coast in Balochistan has become an important route. Drug traffickers use fishing boats, small ships and dhows to ferry drugs to international waters where they are transferred to larger containers. (UNODC, Misuse of licit trade for opiate trafficking in Western and Central Asia, 2020) (Aftab, 2014).

The drug traffickers can now ship large amounts of drugs via the sea routes. By using sea routes, there is also reduced chances of detection. The markets of Africa and the Middle East may be accessed easily. In addition to that, there is the European market as well. However, arms smuggling and human trafficking and other criminal actions are also practiced through the same corridors.

Security wise, due to the lack of a good maritime surveillance, there might be vulnerabilities in the facilities along the coast as well as the ports hence the economic interests of Pakistan with regard to

the maritime trade. Pakistan Customs is responsible of the control of the port operational activities and the goods. In the case of coastal interdiction, maritime Security Agency and Pakistan Coast Guards will be significant. The historical information of UNODC has also recorded trends in the movement of drugs through the sea.

Ports and Containerized Cargo Routes

The exit points for narcotics from Pakistan are major ports including but not limited to Karachi Port, Port Qasim, Gwadar. As containerized trade has grown in leaps and bounds, it has allowed traffickers to hide drugs in legitimate shipments. Containers are large and complex and sometimes anonymous making doubt verification impractical without interrupting the flow of trade. (UNODC, UNODC World Drug Report 2025, 2025) ((WCO), 2024).

Drugs are usually hidden in industrial goods, agricultural exports, machinery or the package. Gaps and mis-declarations also exploited by traffickers. This puts Pakistan Custom in the driving seat, as the entity responsible for risk assessment, targeting and inspection. The ports abuse. It hampers trade credibility, harms Pakistan's global standing, and may impact economic ties. Consequently, port control is a law enforcement priority and a wider strategic necessity.

Air Routes and Courier Services

The air transport and courier service is another important mode of transport especially for small and high-value cargoes. Illicit drugs are brought in via air cargo, luggage, and postal or courier parcels. The compact size and high profitability of synthetic drugs render them particularly well-suited to these routes. (UNODC, Illicit drug trends in Pakistan., 2008) ((WCO), 2024).

Traffickers use the fast speeds and high volume of air travel, as well as advanced hiding techniques and forged documents. Pakistan Customs is active at airports and intercepting suspicious shipments. Even though the volumes moved by air are smaller than those moved by sea, these routes are important strategically because of their global reach and connection to international criminal networks.

Evolution and Adaptability of Routes

Drug trafficking in Pakistan is an ever-evolving phenomenon. Traffickers constantly watching law enforcement and changing tactics quickly The intensity of activity through land routes has led to a tilt towards maritime and air routes. Further, port authorities are exerting stricter controls. As a result, freight operators have increased frequencies of using courier systems. They are using new methods to hide the cargo from detection.

The challenge of this adaptability is it means that success in one area simply shifts the problem, rather than eliminating it altogether. To tackle trafficking, focus on not just the routes, but also the networks, financial arms and agency coordination.

Implications for National Security

Increasing diversity and flexibility of such routes enhances the effect on national security. These systems facilitate the influx of illicit funds, undermine border and maritime sovereignty, and highlight vulnerabilities in trade and transport networks. The organized crime has worked with insurgent, terrorist and states actors this causes risks of instability in sensitive areas.

Effective policy-making requires a clear understanding of these routes. The examination of routes allows for investigations in key locations where implementation is paramount, as well as for arrests of real-time offenders.

SECTION - II
INSTITUTIONAL ROLES AND INTERDICTION PERFORMANCE

Countering drug trafficking in Pakistan is a joint venture of different institutions at federal and provincial level. As trafficking methods have evolved, especially along trade-based, maritime and internal routes, it is apparent that no one agency can tackle the problems alone. This is a layered approach with the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) operating at its helm with Pakistan Customs, Pakistan Coast Guards and provincial law enforcement agencies. This part of the paper is essentially dedicated to the performance review of the institutions and their overall effectiveness within the national security structure. (Ministry Of Narcotics Control, 2024) (Sajid, 2024).

Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF): Specialized Lead Agency

Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) is the primary drug control agency in Pakistan. It was created to fulfill the countries international duties and has the mandate of conducting interdiction, investigations, prosecutions, prevention, and international cooperation in intelligence. ANF has a national nationwide presence and is the main working contact with foreign partners such as the UNODC.

The difference between ANF and other nurse facilities is that it is specialized. It carries out specific actions according to intelligence, tries to destroy trafficking rings, and pursues cases in the courts. Its yearly reports offer a countrywide information on seizures, arrests and prosecutions thus being at the center of it all.

Year	**Quantity Seized (MT)**
2020	118.4
2021	78.7
2022	69.7
2023	153.3

(*Source: Ministry of Narcotics Control, Annual Reports)*

ANF plays a vital role in outsmarting those involved in drugs, crimes and terrorism from national security perspective. Focusing on networks instead of single shipments help engineers results that weaken the financial and operational capacity of criminals and militant groups. However, as trafficking expands into new areas, the efficacy of ANF increasingly hinges upon the support it receives from other agencies.

Pakistan Customs: Trade, Transit, and Gateway Interdiction

Pakistan Customs is important because it supervises ports airport dry port and trade corridor area which are heavily used by traffickers now. For suspicious containers, cargo, and courier shipments, failed drug smuggling attempts to Europe and the US is only the tip of the iceberg. (UNODC, Illicit drug trends in Pakistan., 2008) ((WCO), 2024).

Instead of random checks, Customs dwells on risk profiling, intelligence, and targeted checks. The establishment of Port Control Unit (PCUs) that in many instances have international assistance has enhanced its capacity to detect suspicious cargo. Seizures of ports and airports of huge sizes demonstrate the role significance.

Customs also addresses the monetary aspect of trafficking, particularly trade based money laundering. Such practices as mis-declaring and misuse of the transit trade systems provide the traffickers with an avenue to transfer illicit funds. Through overcoming them, Customs plays a direct role in the national security and also assists Pakistan to satisfy international standards of financial compliance. Although

ANF takes the lead in the enforcement, Customs serves as a critical force multiplier in a system where it is likely to see trafficking more deeply embedded in the flows of global trade.

Pakistan Coast Guards: Coastal and Near-Shore Interdiction

Maritime trafficking has become more significant than ever, and this has increased the value of the Pakistan Coast Guards (PCG). They patrol the Makran coast and control smuggling and illegal activity in the coastal areas. (UNODC, Misuse of licit trade for opiate trafficking in Western and Central Asia, 2020) (National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC), 2022).

Interception of drug ships in the sea is a hard task because of the huge sea space and the difficulty of knowing the legitimate and suspicious ships. In spite of this, PCG is involved in the major role by patrol, surveillance and coordination with other maritime agencies.

Their significance extends beyond the control of the drugs. Arms smuggling and human trafficking also frequently travel through the same paths and by enhancing the coastal defense, the selected strategy will additionally contribute to better overall sea security and will safeguard the strategic and economic interests of Pakistan.

Provincial Police and Excise Authorities: Internal and Last-Mile Enforcement

Whereas, the federal agencies are concerned with borders and points of entry, the provincial police and excise services deal with drug trafficking in the country. They are commissioned with the role of seizing drugs on the internal transit and being a hindrance to local distribution channels. (UNODC, Illicit drug trends in Pakistan., 2008) (Sajid, 2024).

The major advantage of these agencies is the local knowledge. The fact that they are present in the communities enables them to identify the signs of trafficking at its inception and other local facilitators. Another role is played by the excise departments who implement drug laws on the consumer level. Their contribution is critical towards ensuring that drugs do not proliferate in the society. Nevertheless, even though they are significant, their role is usually not given due weight in discourse at the national level.

Inter-Agency Coordination and Performance Challenges

Coordination is a significant problem even among the several able institutions. There is a tendency to share information between ANF, Customs, Coast Guards and provincial agencies, which is not always consistent, and in some cases formalized by informal relationships. This is the absence of integration, giving the traffickers opportunities to capitalize on.

Another issue is data. Although ANF offers consolidated national statistics, other agencies also do not necessarily have completely incorporated data which curtails strategic analysis and policymaking.

Performance is also influenced by resource constraints particularly in such areas as maritime surveillance, state-of-the-art inspection technology. These issues show that there is a need of a more coordinated and policy-oriented effort as opposed to an isolated success.

Comparative Assessment and National Security Implications

These institutions are all parts of a complete package, with ANF offering leadership and specialization, Customs guaranteeing trade routes, Coast Guards patrolling coastal waters and provincial agencies committing to internal enforcement.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness is determined by the level of interaction of these parts. Drug trafficking rings are taking place in different arenas and therefore the responses should also be well coordinated. Enhanced intelligence sharing, combined efforts, and combined planning is critical in transforming enforcement into sustainable security benefits..

Synthesis of Institutional Performance

The country of Pakistan has a strong institutionalized counter-narcotics enforcement structure and capacity building, particularly in ANF and Customs has improved clearly. Nevertheless, the fact that trafficking continues to exist indicates that such a system is not yet optimized to the full.

To work efficiently, there should be more coordination between agencies, and more attention should be paid to financial inquiries and investigations. This change is required to make drug trafficking a strategic national security concern instead of a law enforcement concern.

UNODC-Reported Seizure Trends Relevant to Pakistan

The report of seizures of heroin (United Nations ODC World Drug Report 2025 (20192023 data)) shows that South-West Asia is one of the key regions where the drug is confiscated, and Pakistan is one of the countries most involved in transit.

Key trends include:

- Continued high levels of heroin seizures.
- Statement of increasing seizures of methamphetamine 20192023.
- Continued smuggling of cannabis resin by land.

Seizure data does not capture the overall volumes of trafficking, but it indicates the level of trafficking activity, as well as the level of enforcement activity. The level of seizures has been high, indicating that the trafficking channels in Pakistan are still operational even with the current enforcement.

NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING THROUGH PAKISTAN

The drug trafficking channels in Pakistan have extensive implications to the national security that goes way beyond the conventional law enforcement issues. Narcotics trafficking being a highly lucrative transnational business undermines state power, harms system of governance, results in violence, and leads to economic and social instability. Through the prism of national security, one can easily realize the fact that drug trafficking is not a one-dimensional problem, but a comprehensive threat to internal security, border and maritime security, economic well-being, institutional stability and social integrity. (Mandaville, 2009) (Khurram, 2026) (Politeia Research Foundation, 2023).

A major concern is its facilitation of terrorism and organized crime, which is one of the most serious. Drug trade results in lots of money that are normally spent by militants, criminal groups and insurgent organizations in or around Pakistan. The connection between drugs, crime, and militancy is particularly intense in the regions that are already at war. This money is used to fund recruitment, weaponry purchases and operational activities directly weakening the process of counter-terrorism in Pakistan and further increasing instability.

Border and territorial security is also challenged a significant problem due to drug trafficking. Continued smuggling along the western borders as well as the sea routes decreases the control of the states in these areas. Border management is compromised with the use of challenging terrain, porous borders, and extensive coastline which creates an opening to other illicit practices, such as smuggling of arms and human trafficking. This makes the security within the company complicated as well as strategic weaker.

Economically, drug trafficking is harmful to financial stability since it distorts trade and facilitates illegal flow of finances. The narcotics profit is usually laundered using methods such as over- and under-invoicing, deceptive statements and abuse of transit trade systems. These operations will enable the criminal networks to assimilate the illicit income into the formal economy as it undermines the reliability and transparency of the trade system in Pakistan. This, on its part, impacts on revenue collection and international financial standards.

Governance and institutional integrity are also affected by drug trafficking. The sheer amount of profits entails very high motivation to practice corruption, especially in agencies meant to control the border,

law enforcement and trade regulation. Corruption undermines the rule of law, lacks citizen trust, and constrains the efficiency of security and counter-narcotics policies. Such erosion may over time greatly undermine the overall capacity and legitimacy of the state.

On the social level, the effect is also grave. Increased access to drugs translates to increased addiction levels, health and criminal behavior. This puts a strain on healthcare systems, families, and communities in the long term. Its resultant social dysfunction impacts on human development and diminishes social cohesion thus lowering national resilience.

This is further complicated by the overlapping of various kinds of drugs in the area like heroin, methamphetamine and pharmaceutical opioids. This, together with exposures in maritime regions, containerised trade and financial infrastructure, poses a compound and multifaceted security dilemma. The increasing trend of the shift towards synthetic drugs also demonstrates that the trafficking networks are changing instead of fading.

The solution to this problem should be holistic and not just conventional enforcement. The effective policy should be integrated with the interdiction, intelligence sharing, financial tracking, and regional cooperation to adapt to the changing threats. On the whole, drug trafficking with the help of Pakistan must be viewed as a large-scale challenge to national security, and it is necessary to address it with combined and long-term strategy development, and not with uncoordinated enforcement initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The drug trafficking matters in Pakistan still remain a major and dynamic issue to national security. The geographic position of the country, conflicts in the region, and increasing participation in international commerce and transit have caused the country to become a major route in international narcotics trafficking. Despite our commendable efforts to reverse this issue, the dynamism and resilience of trafficking networks demonstrates that piecemeal, enforcement-only strategies cannot be used to successfully reverse the issue.

This paper demonstrates that drug trafficking needs an inter-governmental and inter-societal approach when addressing. The Anti-Narcotics Force must continue to be the lead specialized agency, assisted by the Pakistan Customs on the trade and transit frontiers, the Pakistan Coast Guards and Maritime Security Agency on the coastal and maritime frontiers and the provincial police and excise departments within the country. Enhancing coordination, intelligence sharing, and emphasis on financial investigations can help transform the enforcement activities into long-term security results.

Finally, a more effective and strategic course is to consider drug trafficking as a more national security problem, not as some discontinued criminal behavior. Such a course of action and the suggested measures will enable Pakistan to enhance its power to dismantle trafficking networks and improve its security, governance, and socio-economic stability in an ever more complicated world.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings lead to the following suggestions to ensure an effective response to drug trafficking as a national security issue in Pakistan.

Strengthen ANF's Strategic Leadership

ANF is to be organized further as the hub of counter-narcotics. It can also improve its intelligence, analytical, and investigative abilities to shift the focus, not just on the seizure of the goods, but the dismantling of the whole trafficking network. More timely and effective decision-making can be facilitated by increased interaction with foreign colleagues and neighbors and enhanced intelligence sharing.

Enhance Pakistan Customs Role at Ports and Transit Routes

The Pakistani Customs is recommended to keep enhancing its risk management infrastructure and adopting superior inspection technologies and increased reliance on intelligence-driven targeting at ports, airports, and dry ports. Special focus is to be paid to detecting trade-related money laundering associated with drug trafficking. Pakistan Customs as a participant of the world customs organization (WCO) can gain access to good international intelligence and upcoming trends in trafficking. The International cooperation has to be intensified by using more effective mechanisms like the WCO network and Regional Intelligence Liaison offices (RILO).

Strengthen Maritime and Coastal Security

The agencies like the Pakistan Coast Guards (PCG), Pakistan Customs, and Maritime Security Agency (MSA) should also be more invested in in terms of coastal surveillance, maritime intelligence, and coordination. This will be necessary against the growing exploitation of sea routes by traffickers.

Institutionalize Federal–Provincial Coordination

It needs to formulate formal coordination structures to unite ANF, Pakistan Customs, Pakistan Coast Guards, provincial police, and excise departments. The common intelligence systems, joint task forces and standardized procedures can greatly enhance the overall performance and minimize gaps in operations.

Integrate Financial Intelligence with Enforcement

The law enforcement agencies and financial intelligence have to work closer to each other so that they can attack the financial chains of drug trafficking. Interfering with such financial flow can help reduce the capacity of traffickers to continue and reconstruct their operations.

Learn from International Best Practices

Pakistan must implement the effective aspects of the successful international models that are applied in other countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia but they should be adjusted to the local conditions. Intelligence integration, inter-agency coordination and financial disruption should be given high emphasis in order to enhance overall effectiveness..

Strategic Policy Matrix: Countering Drug Trafficking Through Pakistan

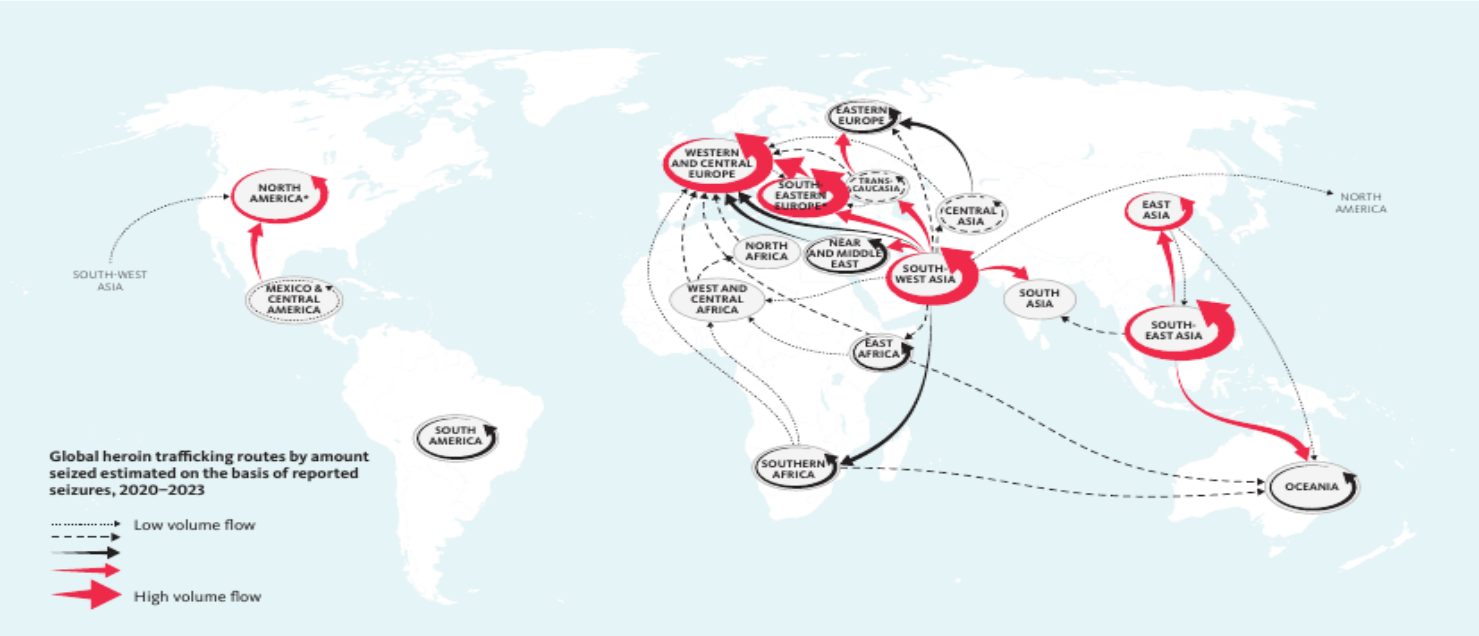
Strategic Domain	**Key Threat Dimension**	**Lead Agency**	**Strategic Policy Action**	**National Security Outcome**
Interdiction	Land & Maritime Routes	ANF / Customs / PCG	Intelligence-led targeting, maritime surveillance expansion	Route disruption & reduced transit vulnerability
Financial Disruption	Trade-Based Money Laundering	Customs / FMU / FIA	Integrated AML-CFT investigations, suspicious trade analytics	Network financial incapacitation
Regional Cooperation	Cross-border trafficking	ANF / Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Bilateral intelligence sharing, UNODC coordination	Reduced cross-border flow
Demand Reduction	Domestic abuse & distribution	Provincial Police / Health	Rehabilitation programs, supply-demand balance	Social stability & reduced internal market

Strategic Domain	Key Threat Dimension	Lead Agency	Strategic Policy Action	National Security Outcome
Maritime Security	Makran coast exploitation	Coast Guards / Navy/Customs	Coastal radar integration, joint maritime task forces	Enhanced coastal control

UNODC WORLD DRUG REPORT 2025 – INTEGRATED MAPS

Figure - I

7.4.1 Main heroin trafficking flows as described in reported seizures, 2020–2023



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

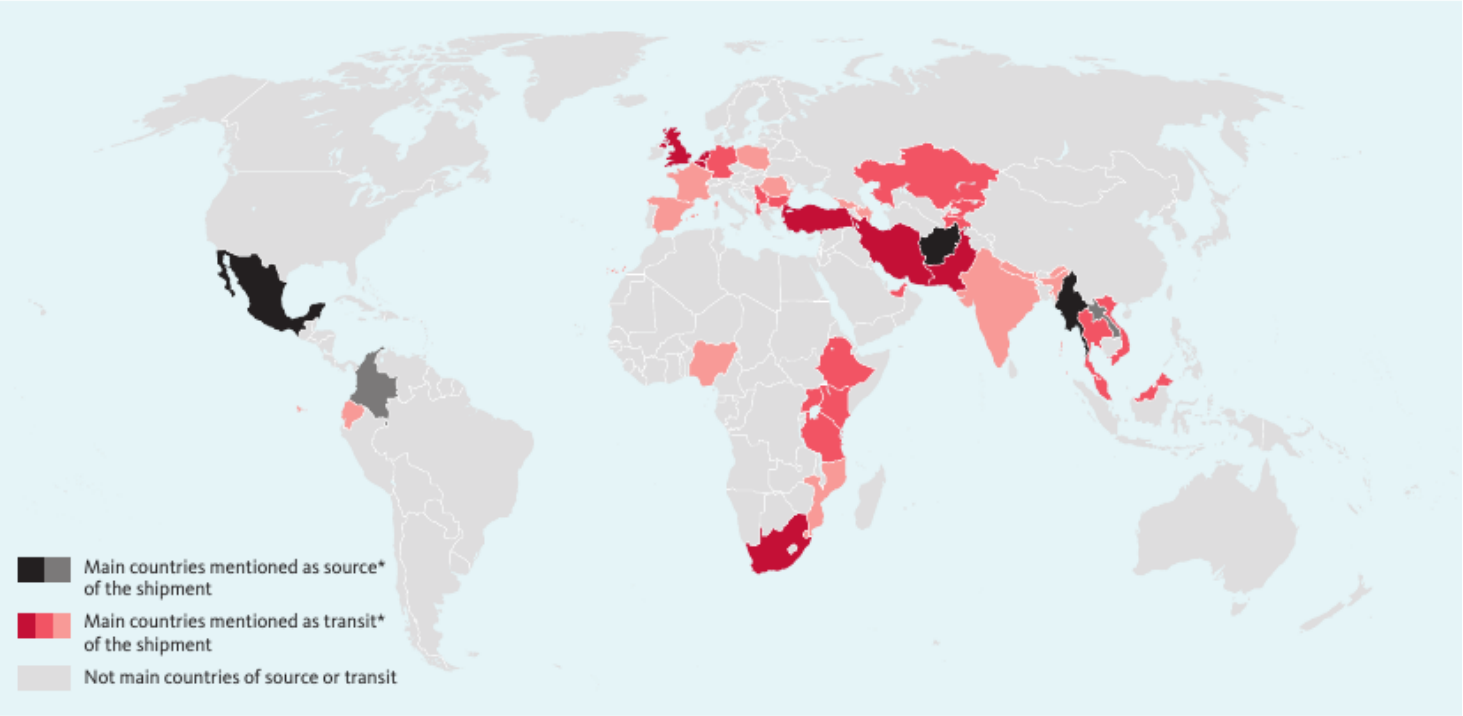
The size of the route is based on the total amount seized on that route, according to the information on trafficking routes provided by Member States in the annual report questionnaire, individual drug seizures and other official documents, over the 2020–2023 period. The routes are determined on the basis of reported country of departure/transit and destination in these sources. As such, they need to be considered as broadly indicative of existing trafficking routes while several secondary routes may not be reflected. Route arrows represent the direction of trafficking: origins of the arrows indicate either the area of departure or the one of last provenance, end points of arrows indicate either the area of consumption or the one of next destination of trafficking. Therefore, the trafficking origin may not reflect the country in which the substance was produced. Please see the Methodology section of this document.

** North America excluding Mexico. South-Eastern Europe including Türkiye.*

Sources: UNODC.

Figure - II

7.2.2 Main departure or transit countries of heroin shipments as described in reported seizures, 2020–2023



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.
Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.
A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

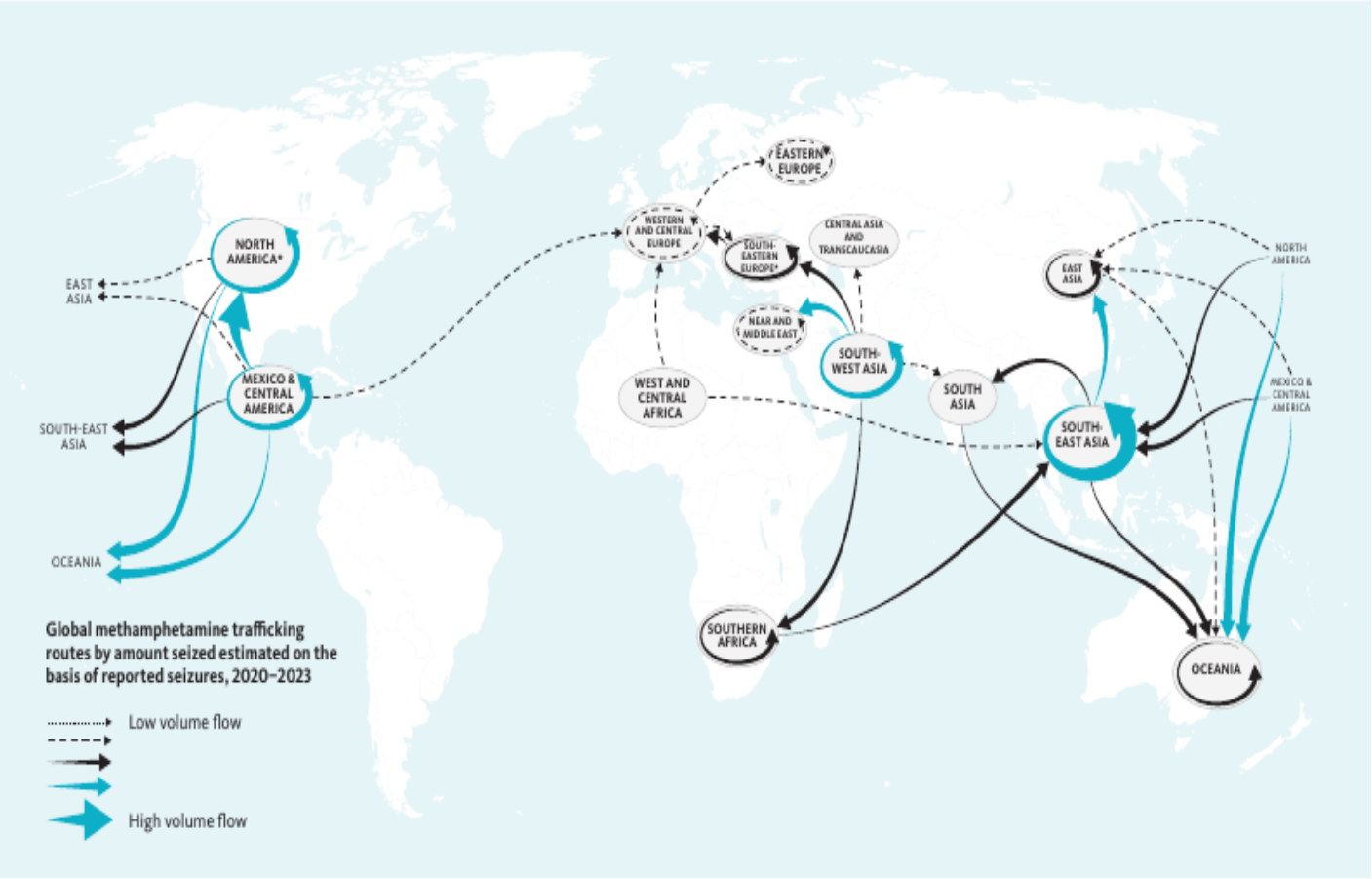
** A darker shade indicates a larger amount of heroin being seized with the country as source/transit of the shipment, according to the information on trafficking routes provided by Member States in the annual report questionnaire, individual drug seizures and other official documents, over the 2020–2023 period. The source may not reflect the country in which the substance was produced. The main countries mentioned as source or transit were identified on the basis of both the number of times they were identified by other Member States as departure/transit of seizures, and the annual average amount that these seizures represent during the 2020–2023 period. For more details on the criteria used, please see the Methodology section of this document.*

Note: Data on amounts seized and countries of departure, transit and/or destination reported by Member States are used in the identification of countries and territories highlighted on this map. As such, there are limitations to the end results hereby presented. These limitations include: (a) lack of reporting from certain regions may have an impact on the results; (b) seizure data only provide a partial view of all drug flows; and (c) drug consumption and use data are not used directly in the identification of these countries.

Sources: UNODC.

Figure - III

7.2.1 Main methamphetamine trafficking flows as described in reported seizures, 2020–2023



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

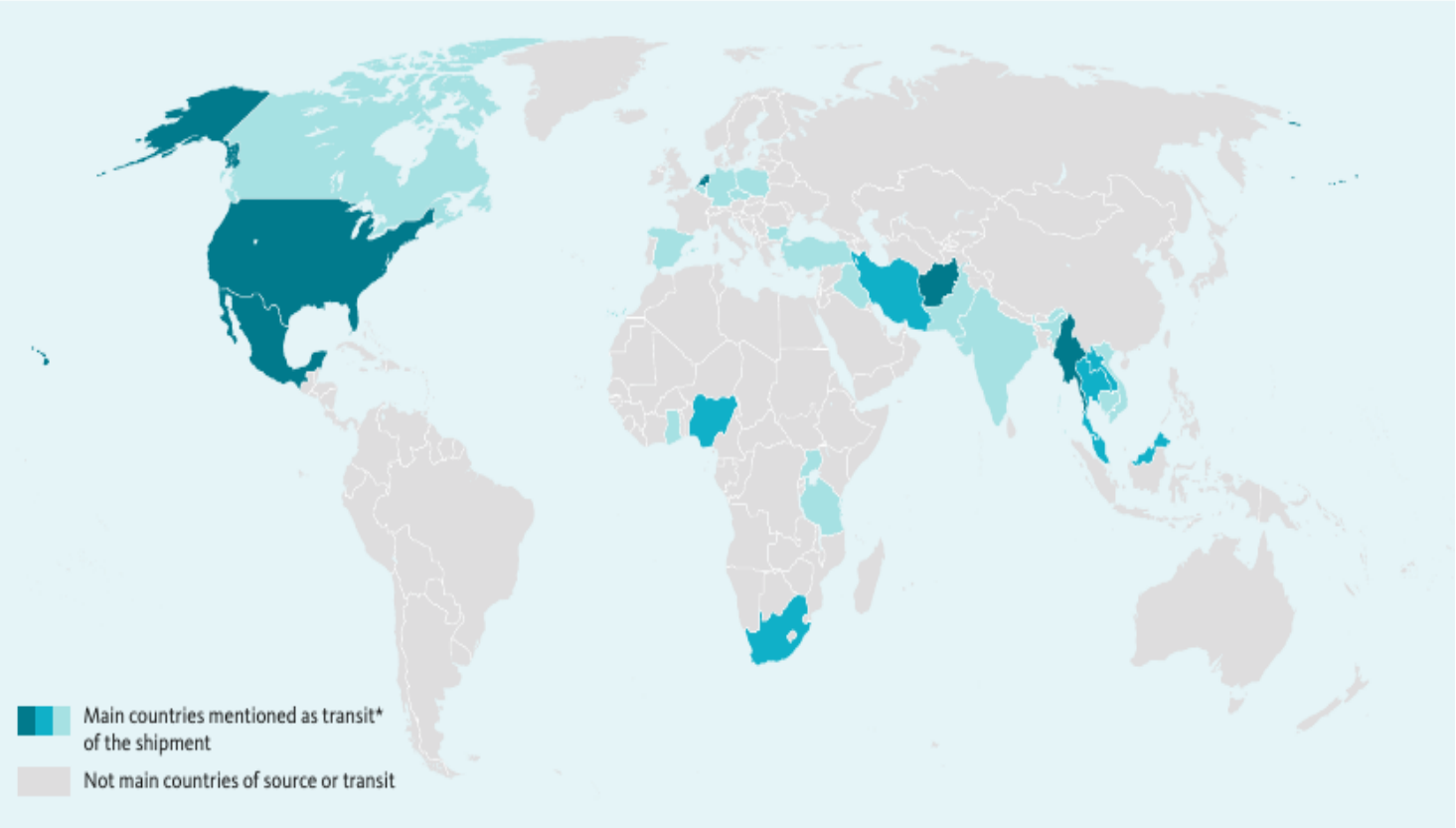
The size of the route is based on the total amount seized on that route, according to the information on trafficking routes provided by Member States in the annual report questionnaire, individual drug seizures and other official documents, over the 2020–2023 period. The routes are determined on the basis of reported country of departure/transit and destination in these sources. As such, they need to be considered as broadly indicative of existing trafficking routes while several secondary routes may not be reflected. Route arrows represent the direction of trafficking: origins of the arrows indicate either the area of departure or the one of last provenance, end points of arrows indicate either the area of consumption or the one of next destination of trafficking. Therefore, the trafficking origin may not reflect the country in which the substance was produced. Please see the Methodology section of this document.

** North America excluding Mexico. South-Eastern Europe including Türkiye.*

Sources: UNODC.

Figure - IV

7.2.8 Main departure or transit countries of methamphetamine shipments as described in reported seizures, 2020–2023



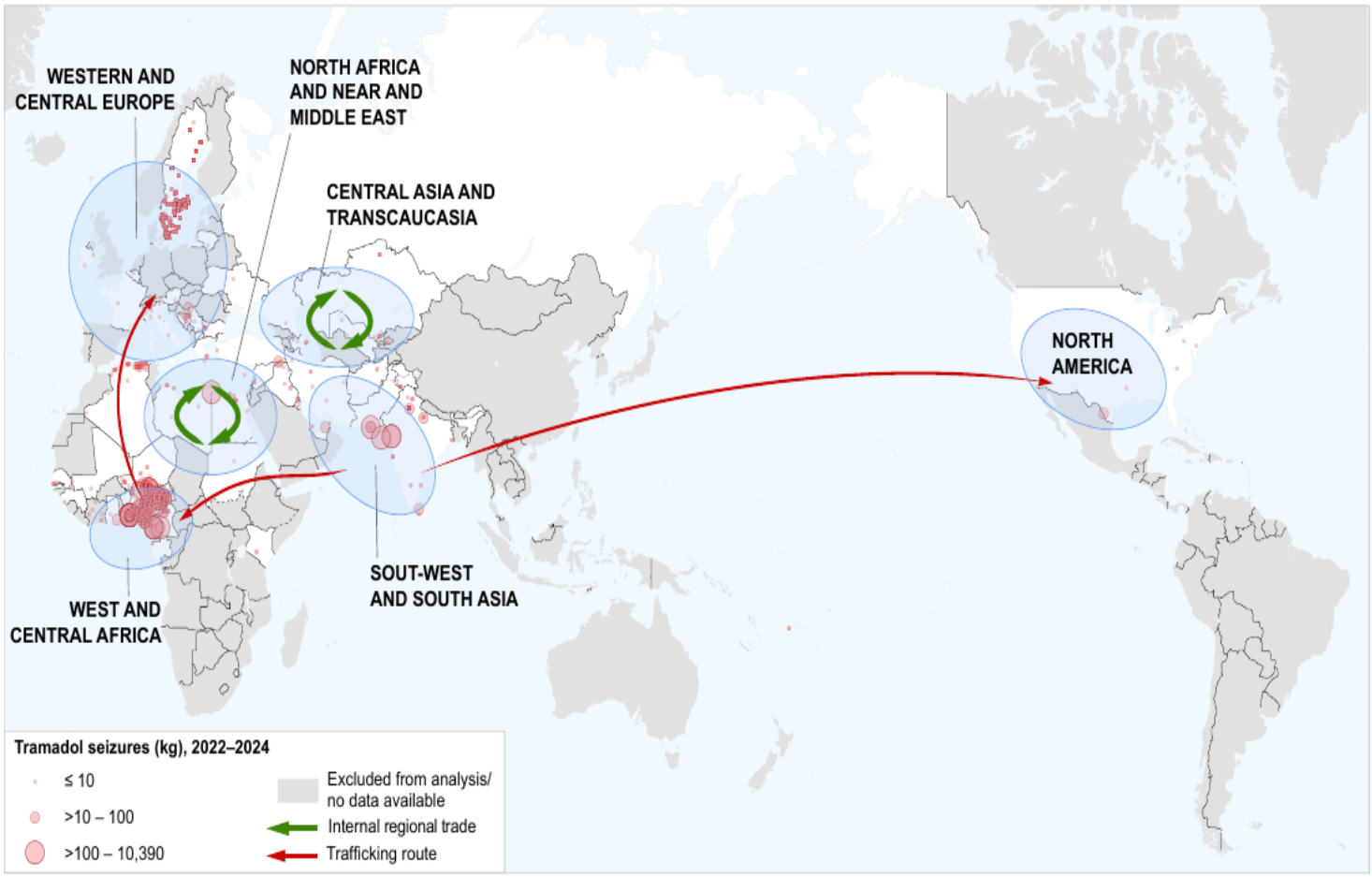
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.
Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.
** A darker shade indicates a larger amount of methamphetamine being seized with the country as departure or transit of the shipment, according to the information on trafficking routes provided by Member States in the annual report questionnaire, individual drug seizures and other official documents, over the 2020–2023 period. The departure or transit may not reflect the country in which the substance was produced. The main countries mentioned as departure or transit were identified on the basis of both the number of times they were identified by other Member States as departure/transit of seizures, and the annual average amount that these seizures represent during the 2020–2023 period. For more details on the criteria used, please see the Methodology section of this document.*

Note: Data on amounts seized and countries of departure, transit and/or destination reported by Member States are used in the identification of countries and territories highlighted on this map. As such, there are limitations to the end results hereby presented. These limitations include: (a) lack of reporting from certain regions may have an impact on the results; (b) seizure data only provide a partial view of all drug flows; and (c) drug consumption and use data are not used directly in the identification of these countries.

Sources: UNODC.

Figure 5

MAP 9. SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL SEIZURES OF TRAMADOL AND MAIN TRAFFICKING ROUTES, 2022-2024

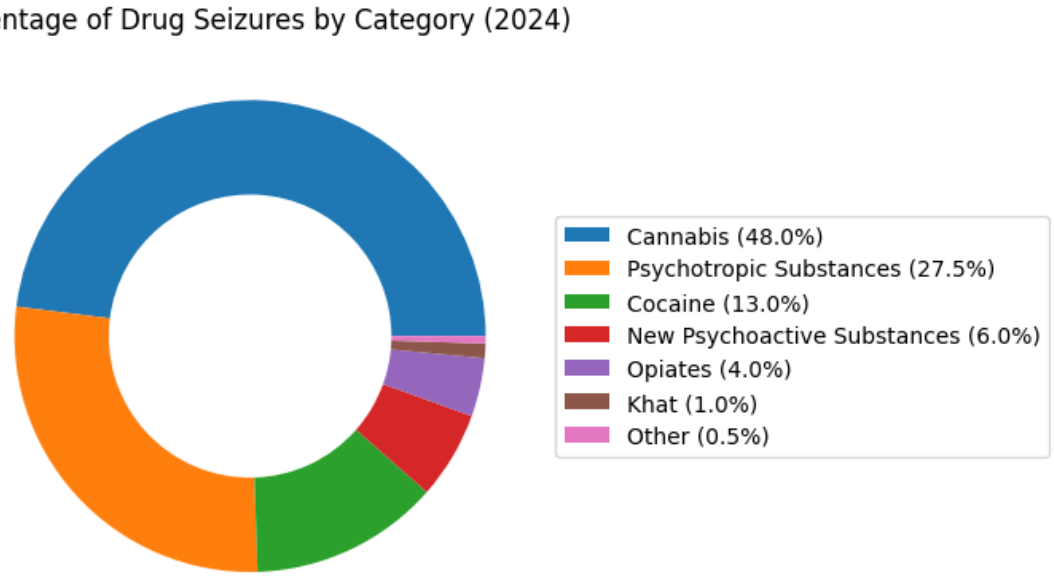


The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
The final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.
Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

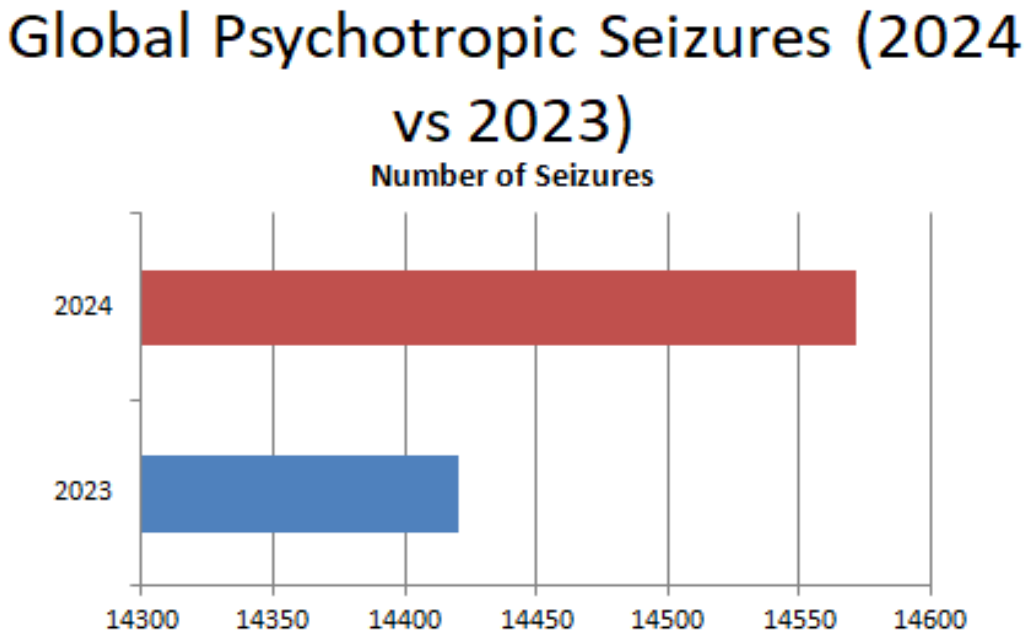
Source: UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform

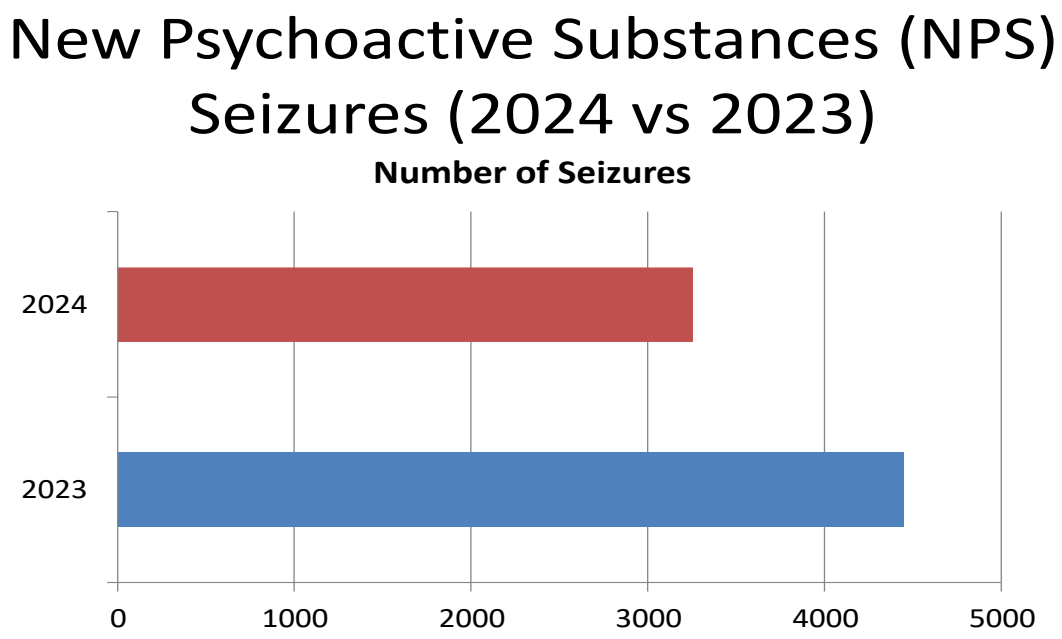
WCO –ILLICIT TRADE REORT 2024

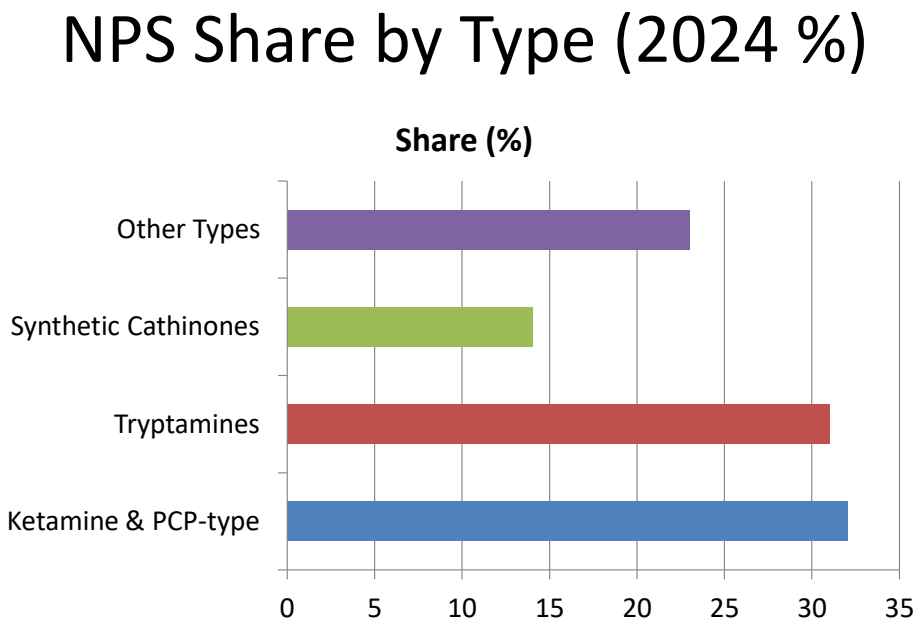
Percentage of Drug Seizures by Category (2024)



GLOBAL PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES




New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) Seizures (2024 vs 2023)
Number of Seizures
2024
2023
0
1000
2000
3000
4000
5000


NPS Share by Type (2024 %)
Share (%)
Other Types
Synthetic Cathinones
Tryptamines
Ketamine & PCP-type
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35

ADDITIONAL ANALYTICAL FIGURES

Figure 1. Afghanistan Opium Production Trend (adapted from UNODC World Drug Report data patterns).

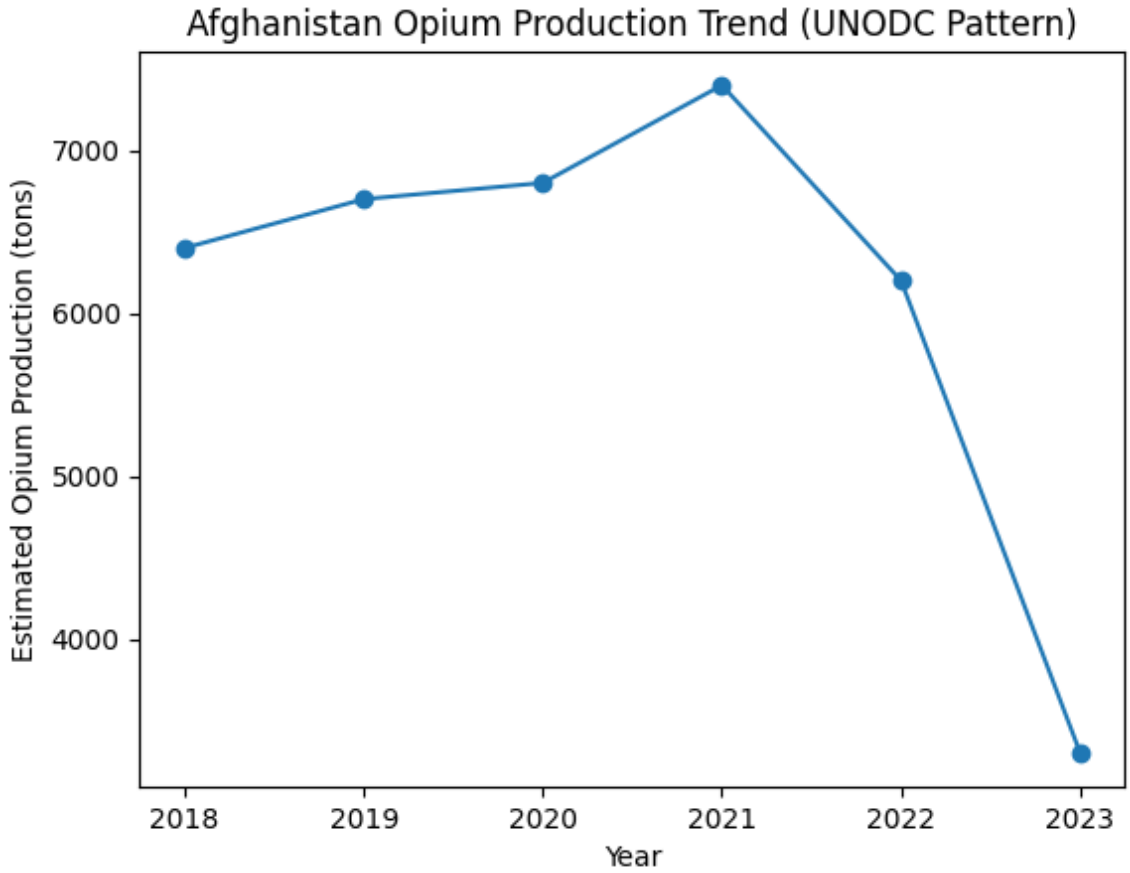
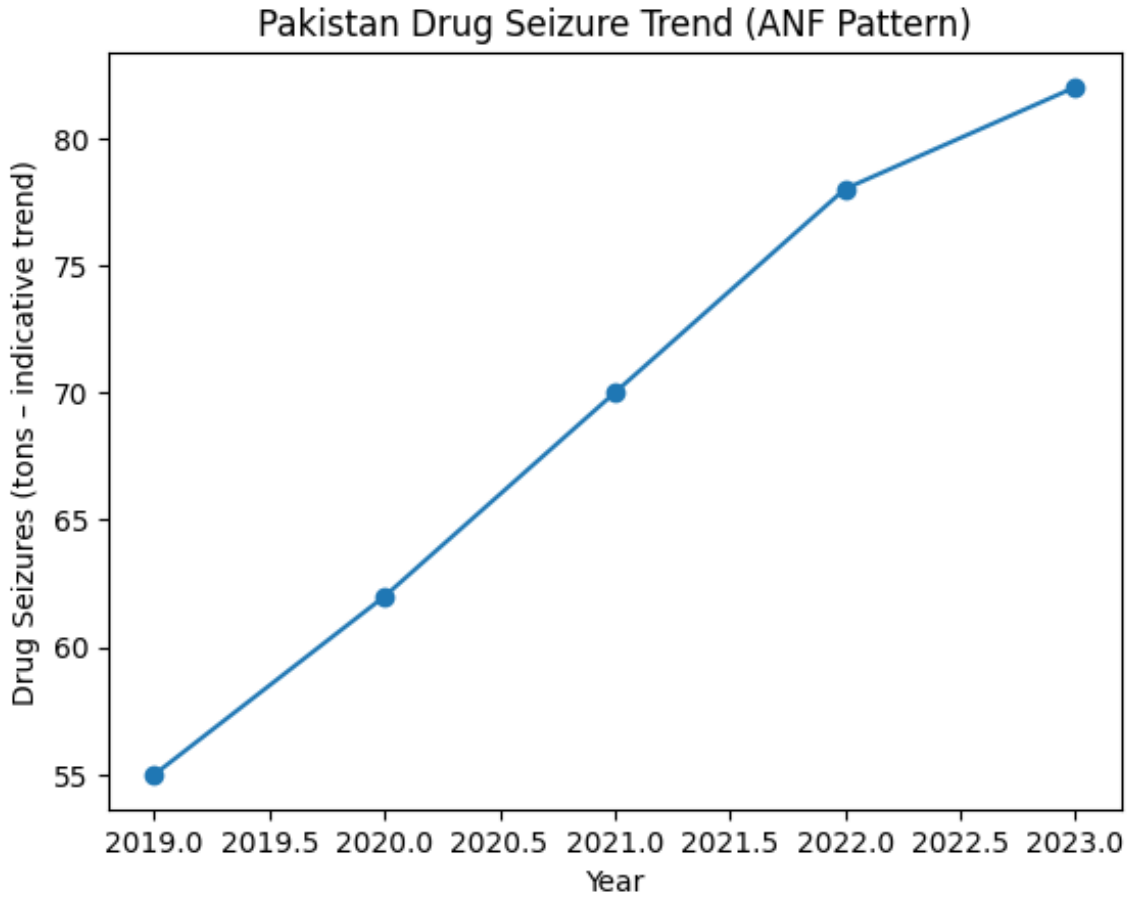


Figure 2. Pakistan Drug Seizure Trend reflecting ANF interdiction patterns.


Pakistan Drug Seizure Trend (ANF Pattern)
Drug Seizures (tons – indicative trend)
80
75
70
65
60
55
2019.0
2019.5
2020.0
2020.5
2021.0
2021.5
2022.0
2022.5
2023.0
Year

B. Figures and maps integrated from uploaded sources

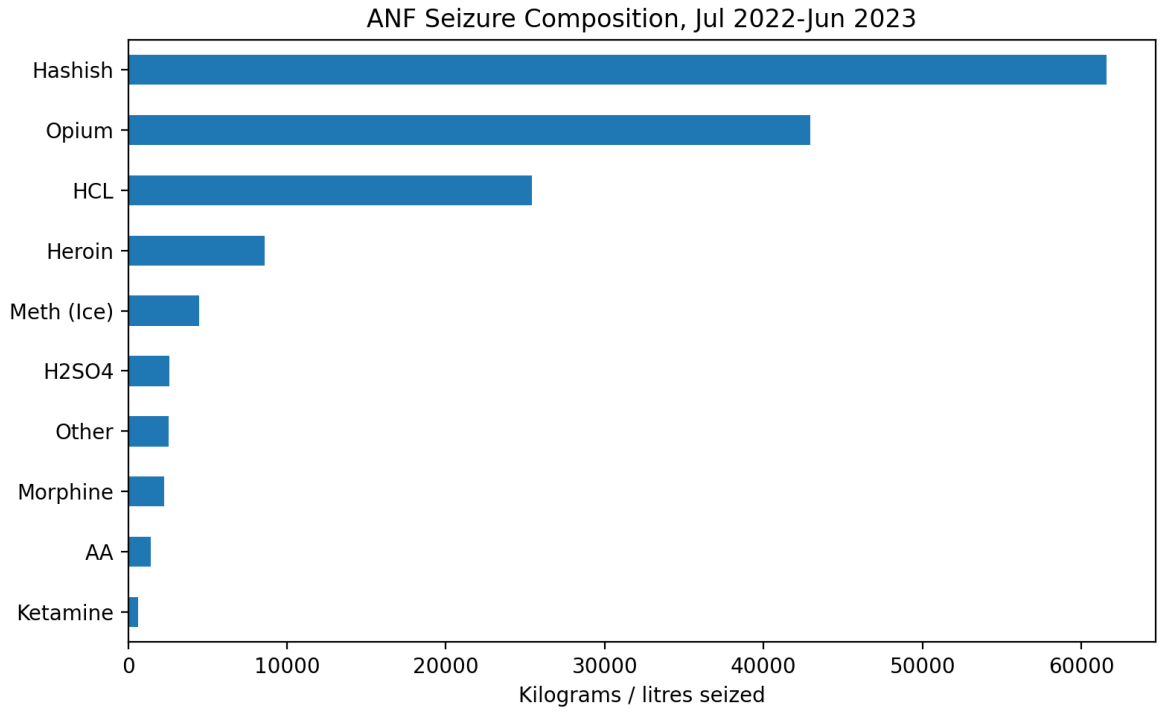


Figure A1. ANF seizure composition, Jul 2022-Jun 2023.
Source: Ministry of Narcotics Control, Year Book 2022-23.

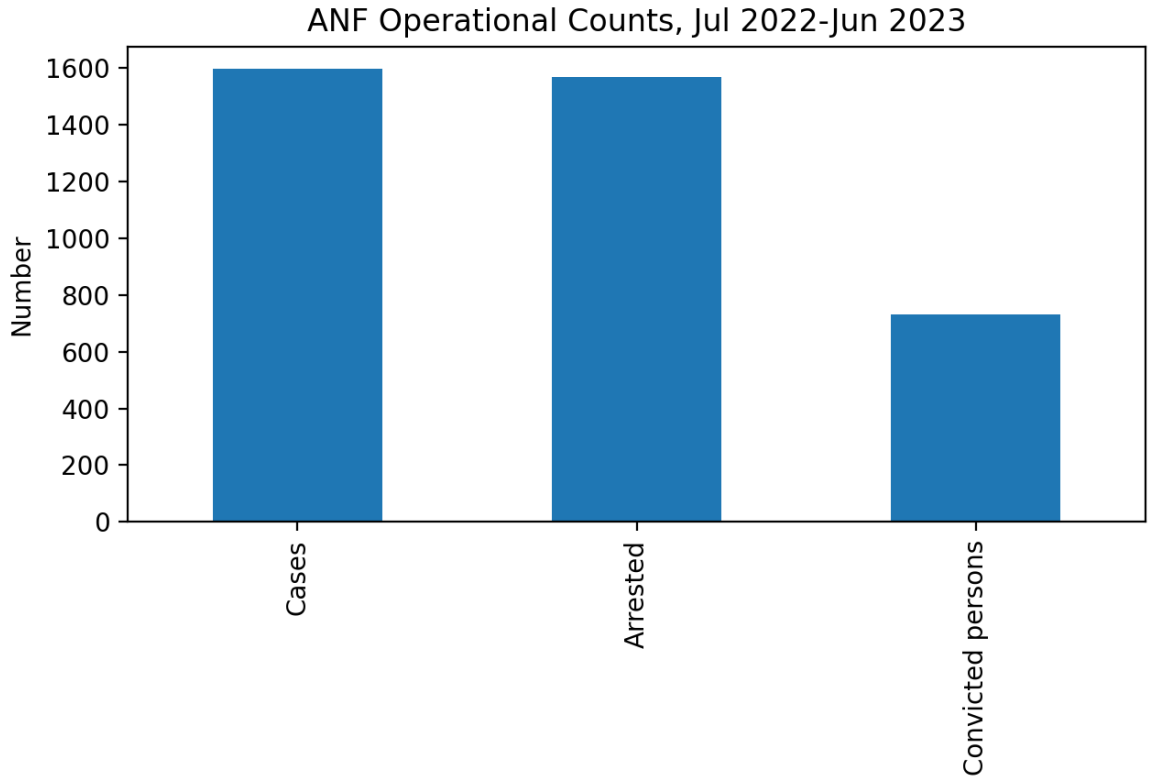


Figure A2. ANF operational counts, Jul 2022-Jun 2023.
Source: Ministry of Narcotics Control, Year Book 2022-23.

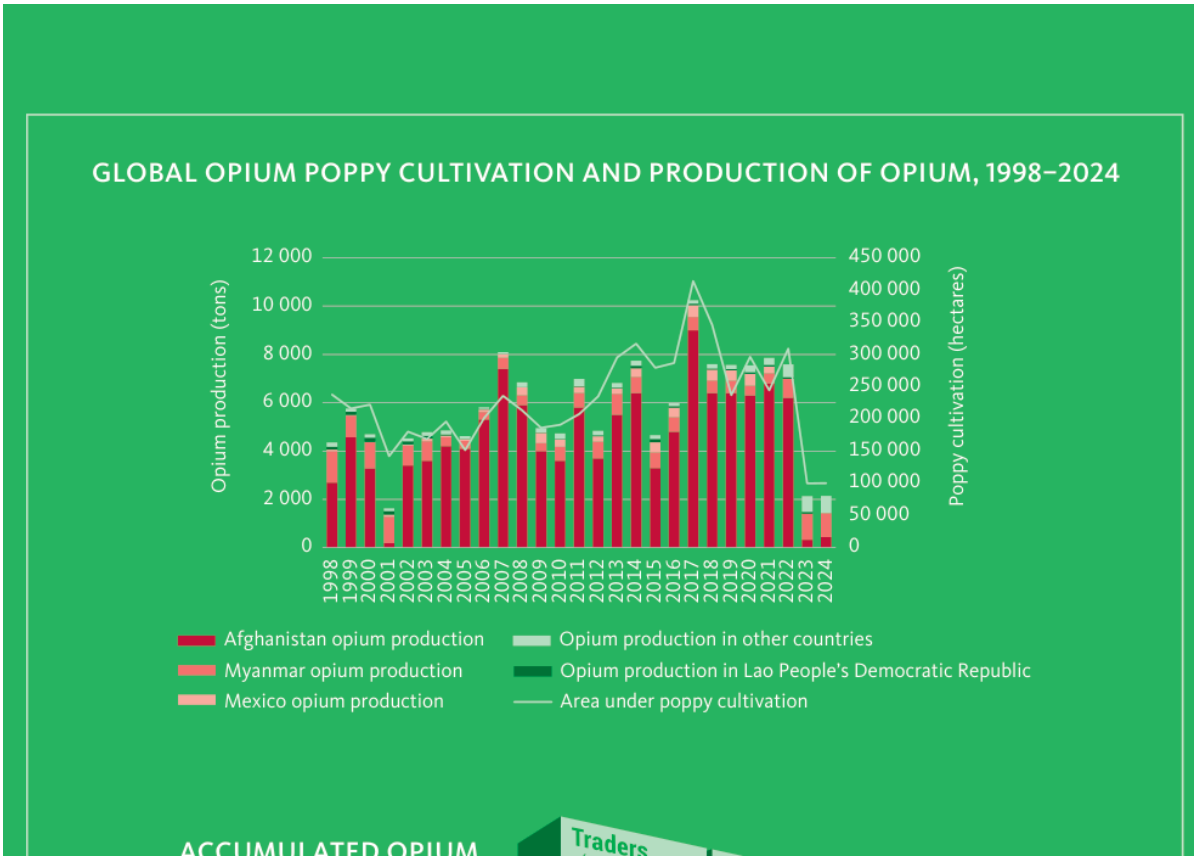


Figure A3. Global opium poppy cultivation and production of opium, 1998-2024.
Source: UNODC, World Drug Report 2025, key findings.

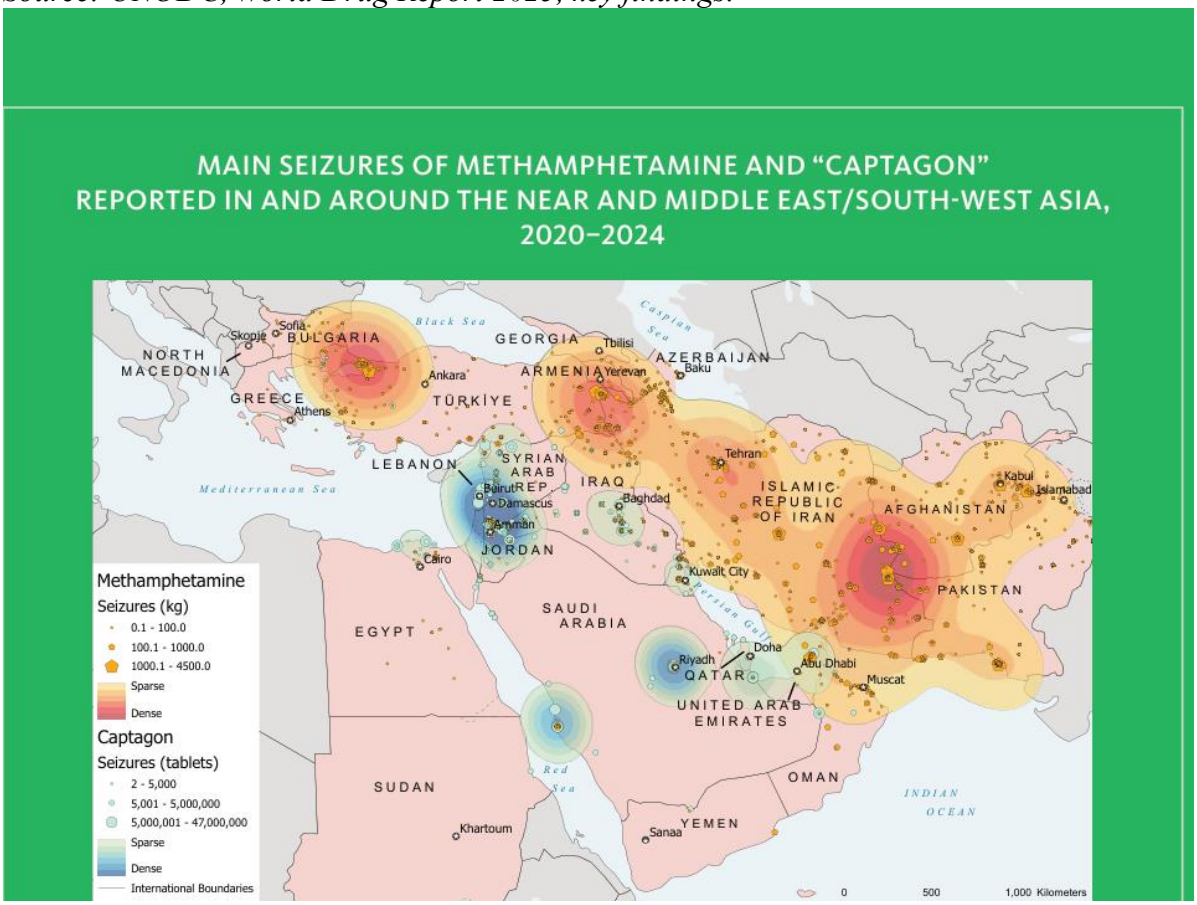
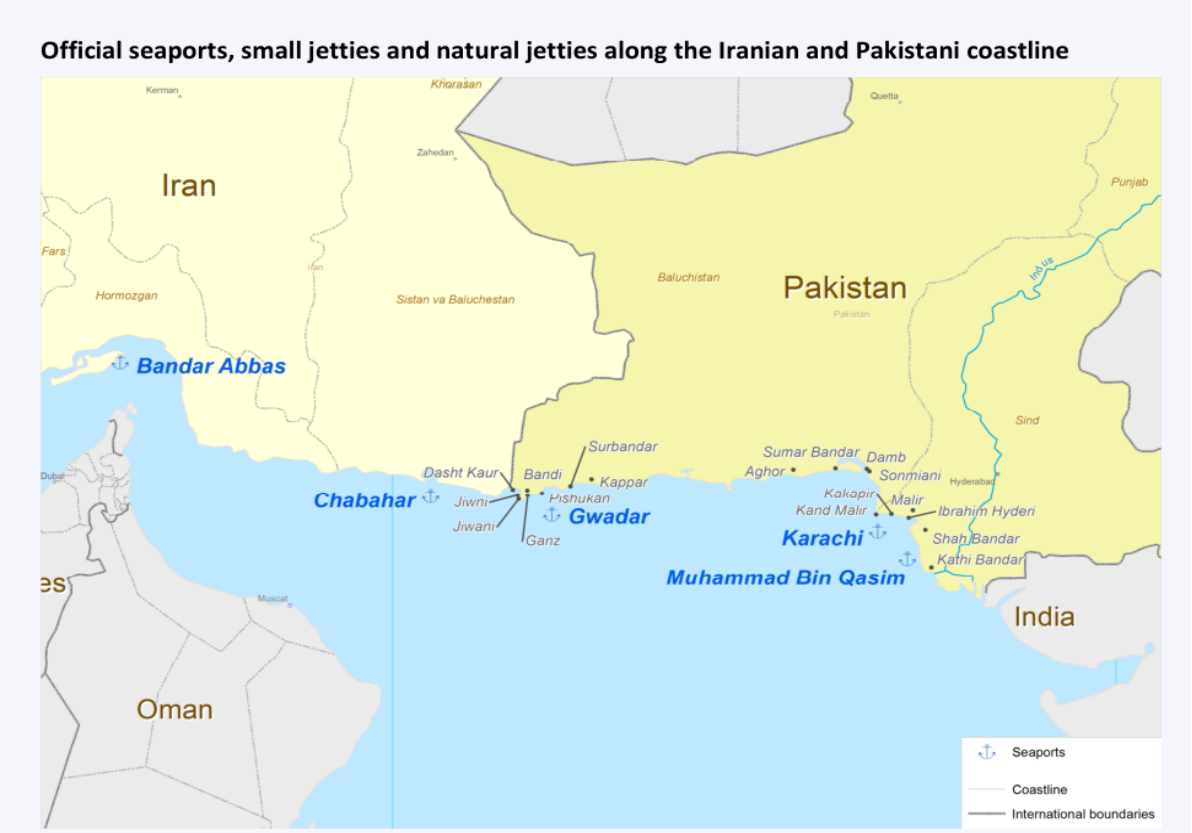


Figure A4. Main seizures of methamphetamine and "captagon" reported in and around the Near and Middle East / South-West Asia, 2020-2024.
Source: UNODC, World Drug Report 2025, key findings.

Figure 1. Entry and Exit Points of Narcotic Smuggling in Pakistan

Source: Author's Construct

Figure A5. Entry and exit points of narcotic smuggling in Pakistan.
Source: uploaded transition-space presentation (author's construct).

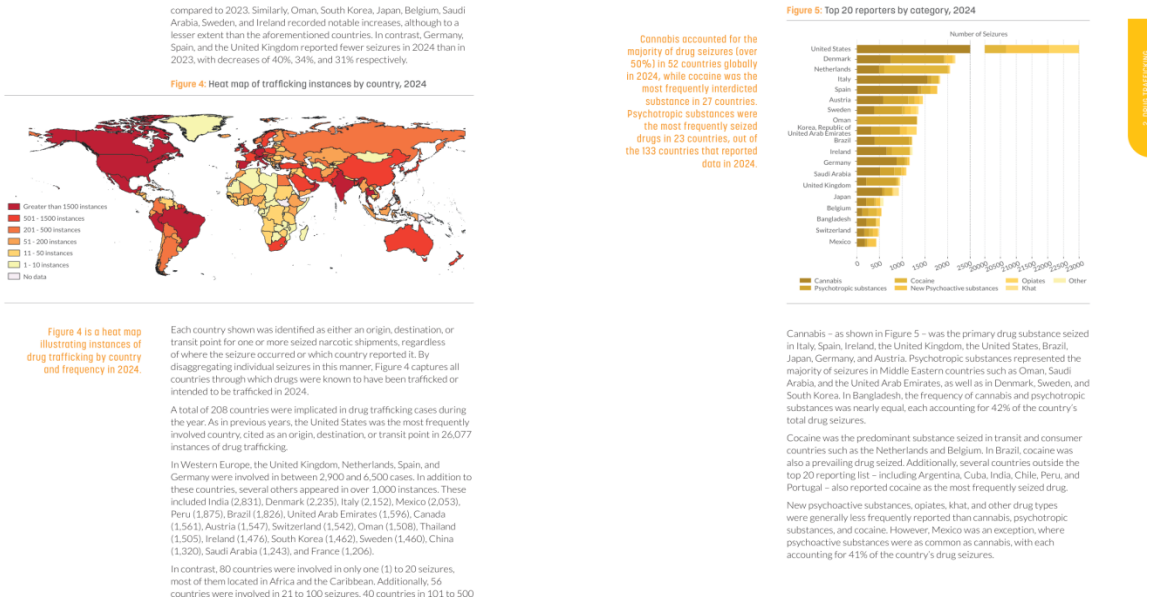


Source: AOTP, Paris Pact, online seizure database http://heroin2011.dbroca.uz/. Note: The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Around 90 per cent of all Pakistan's imports and exports transit at Karachi seaport and port Qasim,

Figure A6. Official seaports, small jetties and natural jetties along the Iranian and Pakistani coastline.

Source: UNODC draft on misuse of licit trade for opiate trafficking in Western and Central Asia.



compared to 2023. Similarly, Oman, South Korea, Japan, Belgium, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, and Ireland recorded notable increases, although to a lesser extent than the aforementioned countries. In contrast, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom reported fewer seizures in 2024 than in 2023, with decreases of 40%, 34%, and 31% respectively.

Figure 4: Heat map of trafficking instances by country, 2024

Figure 4 is a heat map illustrating instances of drug trafficking by country and frequency in 2024.

Each country shown was identified as either an origin, destination, or transit point for one or more seized narcotic shipments, regardless of where the seizure occurred or which country reported it. By disaggregating individual seizures in this manner, Figure 4 captures all countries through which drugs were known to have been trafficked or intended to be trafficked in 2024.

A total of 208 countries were implicated in drug trafficking cases during the year. As in previous years, the United States was the most frequently involved country, cited as an origin, destination, or transit point in 26,077 instances of drug trafficking.

In Western Europe, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Spain, and Germany were involved in between 2,900 and 6,500 cases. In addition to these countries, several others appeared in over 1,000 instances. These included India (2,831), Denmark (2,235), Italy (2,152), Mexico (2,053), Peru (1,875), Brazil (1,826), United Arab Emirates (1,596), Canada (1,561), Austria (1,547), Switzerland (1,542), Oman (1,508), Thailand (1,505), Ireland (1,476), South Korea (1,462), Sweden (1,460), China (1,320), Saudi Arabia (1,243), and France (1,206).

In contrast, 80 countries were involved in only one (1) to 20 seizures, most of them located in Africa and the Caribbean. Additionally, 56 countries were involved in 21 to 100 seizures, 40 countries in 101 to 500

Cannabis accounted for the majority of drug seizures (over 50%) in 52 countries globally in 2024, while cocaine was the most frequently interdicted substance in 27 countries. Psychotropic substances were the most frequently seized drugs in 23 countries, out of the 133 countries that reported data in 2024.

Figure 5: Top 20 reporters by category, 2024

Cannabis – as shown in Figure 5 – was the primary drug substance seized in Italy, Spain, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, Japan, Germany, and Austria. Psychotropic substances represented the majority of seizures in Middle Eastern countries such as Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as in Denmark, Sweden, and South Korea. In Bangladesh, the frequency of cannabis and psychotropic substances was nearly equal, each accounting for 42% of the country's total drug seizures.

Cocaine was the predominant substance seized in transit and consumer countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium. In Brazil, cocaine was also a prevailing drug seized. Additionally, several countries outside the top 20 reporting list – including Argentina, Cuba, India, Chile, Peru, and Portugal – also reported cocaine as the most frequently seized drug.

New psychoactive substances, opiates, khat, and other drug types were generally less frequently reported than cannabis, psychotropic substances, and cocaine. However, Mexico was an exception, where psychoactive substances were as common as cannabis, with each accounting for 41% of the country's drug seizures.

Figure A7. WCO customs-led visual evidence on global trafficking instances and top reporting categories, 2024.

Source: World Customs Organization, Illicit Trade Report 2024.

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