

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 15, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
Department of State

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to respectfully request that your administration review and determine whether Syria meets the criteria of a “major illicit drug producing country” or “major drug-transit country” as defined in sections 481(e)(2) and 481(e)(5) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. §2291(e)(2) and §2291(e)(5)).

Elements of the Assad regime and regime-affiliated networks have reportedly engaged in state-sponsored amphetamine production and trafficking. We have seen a troubling increase in Captagon exports from Assad regime-affiliated networks relying on a robust pharmaceutical sector and smuggling routes between Syria and neighboring countries. This uptick has also coincided with increased Assad-affiliated Captagon seizures globally.

Not only is this trade a potential source of revenue for elements of the Assad regime and its affiliates, but the industrial-scale amphetamine production represents a security threat to the region itself, particularly as Captagon production can become methamphetamine with a few changes to the production process. In response, the House of Representatives designed an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022 to encourage your administration to develop a multi-agency strategy to disrupt and dismantle these networks. The Joint Explanatory Statement for the FY2022 NDAA noted that “the Captagon trade is a cause of instability in the Middle East that has negative implications for the national security of the United States and its allies and partners. We support development of a strategy to guide appropriate action against narcotics production and trafficking and affiliated networks linked to the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.”

As you know, section 706 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (P.L. 107-228) requires that the President submit an annual report no later than September 15 of each year that identifies each country determined by the President to be a major drug transit country or major illicit drug-producing country. In its most recent report, the White House did not list Syria among the 22 countries identified as major drug transit or major illicit drug producing countries.<sup>1</sup> If a country is designated as having “failed demonstrably” in its counternarcotics commitments, the United States must cease providing certain categories of foreign assistance (as defined in section 481(e)(4) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961; 22 U.S.C. §2291(e)(4)) to such country unless the President determines that the provision of such assistance is vital to U.S. national interests or that the country, at any time after the President’s initial report to Congress, has made “substantial efforts” to comply with the counternarcotics conditions in the legislation. This prohibition does not affect narcotics-related assistance and humanitarian assistance (i.e., disaster relief assistance, assistance involving the provision of food or medicine, and assistance for refugees).

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<sup>1</sup> A Memorandum for the Secretary of State on Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2022. September 15, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/09/15/a-memorandum-for-the-secretary-of-state-on-presidential-determination-on-major-drug-transit-or-major-illicit-drug-producing-countries-for-fiscal-year-2022/>

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We, therefore, request that you determine whether the Government of Syria meets the criteria for designation as a major drug transit country or major illicit drug-producing country.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to receiving your expeditious response.

Sincerely,



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Roger Marshall  
United States Senator



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French Hill  
Member of Congress



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Brendan Boyle  
Member of Congress