

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, Hamas has not only shown complete disregard for the Palestinian people. It has also used them as human shields as an intentional war tactic. It is unconscionable and in clear violation of international law, contributing to the deaths of innocent non-combatants.

This measure updates and extends the Sanctioning the Use of Civilians as Defenseless Shields Act by adding additional terrorist entities, bolstering congressional oversight and reporting requirements, and extending its sunset provisions.

The strengthening of this existing statute is timely, important, and necessary, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 5917.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for his support. This is a really important bipartisan piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to do all that we can to address the crimes committed by Hamas and other Iran-backed terrorist groups. The use of civilians as human shields in conflict is abhorrent and immoral.

Congress must do everything in its power to hold Hamas and other terrorist groups accountable for these crimes. We have a responsibility to protect innocent civilians around the world who are used as human shields.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MORAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5917.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### ILLICIT CAPTAGON TRAFFICKING SUPPRESSION ACT OF 2023

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4681) to provide for the imposition of sanctions with respect to illicit captagon trafficking, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4681

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Illicit Captagon Trafficking Suppression Act of 2023”.

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Industrial scale production of the amphetamine-type stimulant also known as captagon, and the illicit production of precursor chemicals, in territories held by the regime of President Bashar al Assad in Syria are becoming more sophisticated and pose a severe challenge to regional and international security.

(2) Elements of the Government of Syria are key drivers of illicit trafficking in captagon, with ministerial-level complicity in production and smuggling, using other armed groups such as Hizballah for technical and logistical support in captagon production and trafficking.

(3) As affiliates of the Government of Syria and other actors seek to export captagon, they undermine regional security by empowering a broad range of criminal networks, militant groups, mafia syndicates, and autocratic governments.

#### SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to target individuals, entities, and networks associated with the Government of Syria to dismantle and degrade the transnational criminal organizations, including narcotics trafficking networks, associated with the regime of President Bashar al Assad in Syria and Hizballah.

#### SEC. 4. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO ILLICIT CAPTAGON TRAFFICKING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The sanctions described in subsection (b) shall be imposed with respect to any foreign person the President determines, on or after the date of enactment of this Act—

(1) engages in, or attempts to engage in, activities or transactions that have materially contributed to, or pose a significant risk of materially contributing to, the illicit production and international illicit proliferation of captagon; or

(2) knowingly receives any property or interest in property that the foreign person knows—

(A) constitutes or is derived from proceeds of activities or transactions that have materially contributed to, or pose a significant risk of materially contributing to, the illicit production and international illicit proliferation of captagon; or

(B) was used or intended to be used to commit or to facilitate activities or transactions that have materially contributed to, or pose a significant risk of materially contributing to, the illicit production and international illicit proliferation of captagon.

(b) SANCTIONS DESCRIBED.—The sanctions described in this subsection are the following:

(1) BLOCKING OF PROPERTY.—The President shall exercise all authorities granted under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) to the extent necessary to block and prohibit all transactions in property and interests in property of the foreign person if such property and interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

(2) INELIGIBILITY FOR VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.—

(A) VISAS, ADMISSION, OR PAROLE.—An alien described in subsection (a) shall be—

(i) inadmissible to the United States;

(ii) ineligible to receive a visa or other documentation to enter the United States; and

(iii) otherwise ineligible to be admitted or paroled into the United States or to receive any other benefit under the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.).

(B) CURRENT VISAS REVOKED.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The visa or other entry documentation of any alien described in subsection (a) is subject to revocation regardless of the issue date of the visa or other entry documentation.

(ii) IMMEDIATE EFFECT.—A revocation under clause (i) shall, in accordance with section 221(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1201(i))—

(I) take effect immediately; and

(II) cancel any other valid visa or entry documentation that is in the possession of the alien.

(c) PENALTIES.—Any person that violates, or attempts to violate, subsection (b) or any regulation, license, or order issued pursuant to that subsection, shall be subject to the penalties set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 206 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1705) to the same extent as a person that commits an unlawful act described in subsection (a) of that section.

(d) WAIVER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President may waive the application of sanctions under this section with respect to a foreign person only if, not later than 15 days prior to the date on which the waiver is to take effect, the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees a written determination and justification that the waiver is important to the national security interests of the United States.

(2) BRIEFING.—Not later than 60 days after the issuance of a waiver under paragraph (1), and every 180 days thereafter while the waiver remains in effect, the President shall brief the appropriate congressional committees on the reasons for the waiver.

(e) HUMANITARIAN WAIVER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President may waive, for renewable periods not to exceed 2 years, the application of sanctions with respect to a nongovernmental organization providing humanitarian assistance if the President certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that such a waiver is important to address a humanitarian need and is consistent with the national security interests of the United States.

(2) BRIEFING.—Not later than 90 days after the issuance of a waiver under paragraph (1), and every 180 days thereafter while the waiver remains in effect, the President shall brief the appropriate congressional committees on the reasons for the waiver.

(f) IMPLEMENTATION.—The President may exercise all authorities provided under sections 203 and 205 of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1702 and 1704) to carry out this section.

(g) REGULATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President shall, not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, promulgate regulations as necessary for the implementation of this section.

(2) NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 10 days before the promulgation of regulations under this subsection, the President shall notify the appropriate congressional committees of the proposed regulations and the provisions of this section that the regulations are implementing.

(h) EXCEPTIONS.—

(1) EXCEPTION FOR INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions under this section shall not apply to any activity subject to the reporting requirements under title V of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3091 et seq.) or any authorized intelligence activities of the United States.

(2) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions under this section shall not apply with respect to an alien if admitting or paroling the alien into the United States is necessary—

(A) to permit the United States to comply with the Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force November 21, 1947, between the United Nations and the United States, or other applicable international obligations; or

(B) to carry out or assist authorized law enforcement activity in the United States.

(i) EXCEPTION RELATING TO THE IMPORTATION OF GOODS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The authorities and requirements under this section shall not include the authority or a requirement to impose sanctions on the importation of goods.

(2) GOOD DEFINED.—In this section, the term “good” means any article, natural or manmade substance, material, supply, or manufactured product, including inspection and test equipment, and excluding technical data.

#### SEC. 5. DETERMINATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA, HIZBALLAH, AND NETWORKS AFFILIATED WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA OR HIZBALLAH.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall—

(1) determine whether each foreign person described in subsection (b) meets the criteria for sanctions under this Act; and

(2) submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report containing—

(A) a list of all foreign persons described in subsection (b) that meet the criteria for imposition of sanctions under this Act;

(B) for each foreign person identified pursuant to subparagraph (A), a statement of whether sanctions have been imposed or will be imposed within 30 days of the submission of the report; and

(C) with respect to any person identified pursuant to subparagraph (A) for whom sanctions have not been imposed and will not be imposed within 30 days of the submission of the report, the specific authority under which otherwise applicable sanctions are being waived, have otherwise been determined not to apply, or are not being imposed and a complete justification of the decision to waive or otherwise not apply such sanctions.

(b) FOREIGN PERSONS DESCRIBED.—The foreign persons described in this subsection are the following:

- (1) Maher Al Assad.
- (2) Imad Abu Zureiq.
- (3) Amer Taysir Khiti.
- (4) Taher al-Kayyali.
- (5) Raji Falhout.
- (6) Mohammed Asif Issa Shalish.
- (7) Abdellatif Hamid.
- (8) Mustafa Al Masalmeh.

#### SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives; and

(B) the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate.

(2) CAPTAGON.—The term “captagon” means any compound, mixture, or preparation which contains any quantity of a stimulant in schedule I or II of section 202 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812), including—

(A) amphetamine, methamphetamine, and fenethylamine;

(B) any immediate precursor or controlled substance analogue of such a stimulant, as defined in section 102 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 802); and

(C) any isomers, esters, ethers, salts, and salts of isomers, esters, and ethers of such a stimulant, whenever the existence of such isomers, esters, ethers, and salts is possible within the specific chemical designation.

(3) FOREIGN PERSON.—The term “foreign person” —

(A) means an individual or entity that is not a United States person; and

(B) includes a foreign state (as such term is defined in section 1603 of title 28, United States Code).

(4) ILLICIT PROLIFERATION.—The term “illicit proliferation” refers to any illicit activity to produce, manufacture, distribute, sell, or knowingly finance or transport.

(5) KNOWINGLY.—The term “knowingly” has the meaning given that term in section 14 of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note).

(6) UNITED STATES PERSON.—The term “United States person” means—

(A) a United States citizen;

(B) a permanent resident alien of the United States;

(C) an entity organized under the laws of the United States or of any jurisdiction within the United States, including a foreign branch of such an entity; or

(D) a person in the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MORAN) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MEEKS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this important bipartisan legislation to combat the illicit captagon trade, and I thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL) for introducing it.

In recent years, captagon, a highly addictive amphetamine-type stimulant drug, has flooded the Middle East. Captagon makes its users aggressive and dangerous, increasing their capacity to commit crimes and acts of violence.

In recent years, we have seen a sudden, drastic rise in captagon smuggling and usage throughout the Middle East. The brutal Iran-backed Assad regime in Syria is one of the main producers of captagon in the region. These war criminals are using narcotrafficking to evade global sanctions and fund their atrocities.

Since 2011, hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians have died because of the Assad regime's unrelenting brutality. This is a regime that, with the support of Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah, tortures men, women, and children on an unthinkable scale. The Assad regime has repeatedly used chemical weapons against the Syrian people.

In response to these crimes, the United States and many of our part-

ners imposed overwhelming sanctions on the Assad regime, but the Assad regime found a workaround in the illicit drug trade. They are further destabilizing the Middle East by flooding our partner countries with drugs, and they are using the profits to stay afloat, despite our existing sanctions.

That is why the legislation we are considering today is so important. It provides updated sanctions authorities to make sure we are cutting off all forms of financing used by the Assad regime and its criminal associates.

This legislation would impose sanctions on anyone engaged in the production or proliferation of captagon, and it requires a report on whether Syrian and Hezbollah leaders should be sanctioned under this bill.

We must act now to cut off the financial lifeline that the illicit production of captagon provides the Assad regime.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,

Washington, DC, March 20, 2024.

Hon. MICHAEL MCCAUL,

Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,  
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN MCCAUL: I write regarding H.R. 4681, the Illicit Captagon Trafficking Suppression Act of 2023. Provisions of this bill fall within the Judiciary Committee's Rule X jurisdiction, and I appreciate that you consulted with us on those provisions. The Judiciary Committee agrees that it shall be discharged from further consideration of the bill so that it may proceed expeditiously to the House floor.

The Committee takes this action with the understanding that forgoing further consideration of this measure does not in any way alter the Committee's jurisdiction or waive any future jurisdictional claim over these provisions or their subject matter. We also reserve the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees in the event of a conference with the Senate involving this measure or similar legislation.

I ask that you please include this letter in your committee's report to accompany this legislation or insert this letter in the Congressional Record during consideration of H.R. 4681 on the House floor. I appreciate the cooperative manner in which our committees have worked on this matter, and I look forward to working collaboratively in the future on matters of shared jurisdiction. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

JIM JORDAN,

Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

COMMITTEE ON THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS,

Washington, DC, April 3, 2024.

Hon. JIM JORDAN,

Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you for consulting with the Foreign Affairs Committee and agreeing to be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4681, the Illicit Captagon Trafficking Suppression Act of 2023, so that the measure may proceed expeditiously to the House floor.

I agree that your forgoing further action on this measure does not in any way diminish or alter the jurisdiction of your committee, or prejudice its jurisdictional prerogatives on this measure or similar legislation in the future. I would support your effort to

seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees from your committee to any House-Senate conference on this legislation.

I will seek to place our letters on this bill into the Congressional Record during floor consideration. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation and look forward to continuing to work together as this measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL T. MCCAUL,  
*Chairman.*

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4681, and I thank my friend and colleague, Congressman FRENCH HILL, for introducing this measure.

For years, the Assad regime has fueled its brutal and oppressive campaign against the Syrian people through the revenue of a drug trafficking network estimated to be worth billions of dollars.

Syria remains the largest producer of captagon, a dangerous and highly addictive amphetamine popular in the Middle East, and Assad's regime, affiliates, and criminal networks have used that trade to enrich themselves and fuel their war machine.

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The Biden administration has taken significant steps to improve our coordination with allies and partners to interdict and disrupt the illicit network responsible for distributing captagon, but more can be done.

This measure builds on previous efforts to mandate sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for captagon trafficking as well as congressional reporting mandates to inform this body on what steps the United States is taking to counter these criminal efforts.

Disrupting Syria's narcotics trade is key to eliminating Assad's remaining financial lifeline, and this legislation is critical to that effort.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all my colleagues to join me in supporting this measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL), vice chairman of the Financial Services Committee, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and the author of this bill.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas, and I certainly thank my good friend from New York, the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, for his collaboration on this bill, H.R. 4681, the Illicit Captagon Trafficking Suppression Act.

I appreciate Mr. MOSKOWITZ, my partner and collaborator in drafting this measure. With the help of Mr. MCCAUL from Texas and Mr. MEEKS from New York, this bill passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee 44-0. It is a key follow-up to my CAPTAGON Act of 2022, which was enacted into law as a part of the National Defense Authorization Act of that year.

This measure would further press the Assad regime in Syria by imposing new sanctions to directly target individuals and networks associated with the production and trafficking of this dangerous drug, captagon, and the resulting illicit finance.

This illegal drug trafficking is being orchestrated by Assad's relatives, leaders in his security forces, and those affiliated with Iran-backed terror group Hezbollah. These sanctions and a successful U.S.-led captagon strategy are necessary in order to disrupt the illicit funds to the Assad regime and Hezbollah.

Mr. Speaker, this drug is exiting Syria by way of Lebanon and the Syrian ports to the Mediterranean. It has been found in Europe. It has been found manufactured in Europe. Most of it passes across the land border in Jordan and finds its way to the Gulf, where it is addicting citizens in Jordan, it is addicting citizens in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and that illicit money is fueling terrorism in the region.

For 12 years, Assad, with his terror partners, Iran and Russia, have murdered and imprisoned Syrians, bombed hospitals, and gassed his own citizens. Since 2018, narcotic production and trafficking in Syria have turned Syria and the Assad regime from simply a broken, failed state of mass murder to a narco-state, with Assad's crimes against his own citizens expanding to drug trafficking.

If we fail to stop captagon's trade, then the Assad regime will continue to drive the ongoing conflict in his country, provide a lifeline to extremist groups, and permit our adversaries such as Iran, Russia, and China to strengthen their engagement in Syria, posing a larger threat to Israel and other allies in the region.

To enhance greater stability in the Middle East, the U.S. Government must continue to work with our allies and partners in the region and in Europe to increase pressure on stopping the proliferation of this drug.

In 2023, following the State Department's initiation of the U.S. captagon strategy, I traveled to the region. I visited the area three times, and captagon was an essential topic on each trip. Everybody I visited with, from a diplomatic point of view, wanted to talk about the impact of captagon.

Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq directly have seen captagon trade infiltrate their borders. Egypt, Israel, and Turkey all express concern about the money fueling terrorism.

While I commend the Biden Treasury Department and the United Kingdom jointly for using Caesar sanctions last spring to sanction individuals for captagon, it is important we step up our efforts and add specific targeted sanctions like those contained in this bill for the production and trafficking of this drug.

This bill is an important component in pushing back against diplomatic normalization with the Assad regime,

pushing back on the intense terror leadership of Iran in every aspect and conflict in the region, and standing in full support of our ally Israel.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation. I thank my colleagues on the House Financial Services Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee for helping bring this bill to the House floor.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

Under the Assad regime, Syria has turned into a narco-state, utilizing the proceeds from the illicit captagon drug network to fuel its brutal war on the Syrian people.

This legislation builds on the Biden administration's efforts to coordinate with our allies and partners to dismantle the captagon trade network, mandating additional sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for captagon trafficking, and requires reporting requirements to the United States Congress on the administration's efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 4681, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

Mr. Speaker, the captagon threat is new to many of us, but the speed at which this drug trade has grown in the last few years is alarming.

Creating new sanctions, specific to this drug trade, is necessary to stem this threat before it can grow even more dangerous. It is also essential to stopping the cash flow to the Assad regime.

This bipartisan legislation is a key tool in our efforts to counter the Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian backers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MORAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4681, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Byrd, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 3858. An act to establish within the Office of Land and Emergency Management of the Environmental Protection Agency the Office of Mountains, Deserts, and Plains, and for other purposes.