ANALYSIS OF

OPIATE STAMPS

SEIZED IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

2017-2021
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Source: EU Naval Force Somalia (EUNAVFOR)
INTRODUCTION

The continued global demand for opiates, and the conditions that sustain opiate production in Afghanistan, pose a threat to public health, governance, and security at regional and global level. This is likely to continue following the change of regime in Afghanistan in August 2021. Afghan opiates are trafficked to almost every continent worldwide. In 2021, the income from opiates in Afghanistan amounted to some USD 1.8–2.7 billion: however, much larger sums are accrued by international Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) along illicit drug supply chains outside Afghanistan. While most opiates trafficked from Afghanistan are trafficked by land methods, a proportion of the opiates produced in South-West Asia are also trafficked by maritime methods to global destinations.
ANALYSIS OF OPIATE STAMPS SEIZED IN THE INDIAN OCEAN 2017-2021

Source: EU Naval Force Somalia (EUNAVFOR)
Some of the opiates produced in Afghanistan and South-West Asia are trafficked via the southern route by maritime means. Seizures of opiates – and methamphetamine – have been increasing in the Indian Ocean, the result of sustained interdictions by national authorities and international maritime coalitions including the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and the EU Naval Force – Somalia (EUNAVFOR).

Drug packages seized in the Indian Ocean are marked with a wide range of stamps including hand pressed and hand-written markings. These stamps are made up of several elements consisting of sequential and non-sequential numbers, names, locations, and different objects. The stamps can provide some detail on the manufacturers and traffickers involved in the production and transport of drugs to international markets.

Stamps can often be used for branding purposes in a similar way to brand logos used with legitimate goods or can be used to identify or alternatively conceal the producers of a batch of heroin. The number of different stamps marked on a package of heroin can be an indicator of how many producers or traffickers were involved with that package.

Stamps are chosen by individual Drug Trafficking Organisations (DTOs). They appear to be well known amongst DTOs and usually can not be copied by other traffickers. However, in some cases a “franchising” process is possible, with smaller traffickers purchasing the right to use stamps associated with larger DTOs.

Dates printed on heroin packages generally indicate the production year. However, there is less clarity when two dates are stamped on a package. In some cases, the second year may indicate when heroin manufacture continued by the same lab, or alternatively can be the expiry date of the heroin or the date when the package was distributed to international markets. Printed dates can also be updated by hand-written markings.

Sequential and non-sequential numbers stamped on heroin packages are generally seen as being coded communications between heroin manufacturers and traffickers, although the specific messages are not known. Sequential numbers (for example 555 or 777) have been found in both the Indian Ocean between 2017 and 2021, and in Central Asia and the Russian Federation in 2012. By comparison, non-sequential numbers (for example 355 or 787) seized in the Indian Ocean are not seen in Central Asia and are only infrequently seized in the Indian Ocean. It is possible that sequential numbers may be associated with relative purity of the heroin contained in the packages stamped with these numbers.

Words stamped on heroin packages appear to be an indicator of where the heroin was produced. Heroin produced in southern Afghanistan is reportedly stamped with Pashto words, while heroin produced in northern Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran is more likely to be stamped with Farsi words. Heroin produced in eastern and western Afghanistan often has words in English, Farsi and Pashto, while heroin produced in Pakistan is labelled with words in English and Urdu.

Heroin and methamphetamine manufactured and trafficked by the same DTO may be stamped with the same or very similar stamps. In some cases, heroin packages are stamped with images of animals which may be an indicator of relative purity of the heroin or an indicator of the location of the manufacturer.

Although some conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of heroin stamps seized in the Indian Ocean, there is still a lack of clarity on the meaning and purpose of some stamps – even among the drug traffickers interviewed in Afghanistan. Further analysis is required, including the analysis of drug stamps seized in locations outside of the Indian Ocean. It would be advantageous to develop a database of the different markings of heroin stamps to aid such analysis.
OPIATE TRAFFICKING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Illicit drug packages traded in wholesale and retail markets often have distinctive stamps and markings hand-pressed or printed on them. There is little published data or analysis on drug stamps and markings, with existing literature tending to focus on retail drug markets. Data about the stamps, logos, and other markings pressed, printed, or hand-written on wholesale heroin packages is limited and there has been little detailed investigation of the stamps, their shape, design, colour, size, and signs, symbols, names, and numbers. In some cases national authorities may have databases of stamps and markings, but they are often not revealed to the public. In 2012, UNODC made some initial analysis of heroin stamps seized in Central Asia in conjunction with CARICC.1 This report is a continuation of the analysis on this topic and reviews and analyzes the stamps and markings discovered on wholesale heroin packages seized by respective authorities in the Indian Ocean over the period 2017-2021. This report contributes to filling a knowledge gap, to help policymakers, criminal justice practitioners, and law enforcement agencies better understand the messages conveyed by stamps and signs used on wholesale heroin packages.

This report also seeks to examine the relationships between the features used on the stamps found on opiate packages and the modus operandi of Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs), to assist national and cross-border illicit drug trafficking investigations. Documentation of typologies of stamps used in wholesale illicit drug markets will help assist drug enforcement agencies to dismantling clandestine laboratories, curb production and disrupt the supply chain and cross-border drug trafficking. The analysis sheds light on several research questions for example:

- Is stamping purely a branding matter?
- Why do illicit drug traffickers (DTOs) use diverse symbols, insignia, numbers, names, and colours on stamps?
- What is the meaning of the sequential numbers used on the stamps?
- Why are stamps in different languages?
- Why is there more than one stamp (hand) pressed or printed on heroin packages?
- Does the name of locations referenced on stamps refer to the (final) destination of heroin packages?

Opiate trafficking along the southern route

The southern route is one of the main opiate trafficking routes from Afghanistan and South-West Asia, along with the Balkan and northern routes. Although the Balkan route continues to be the main trafficking route by which heroin is supplied from Afghanistan to Europe,2 the southern route, may have grown in importance as a means of avoiding stricter border

1 CARICC/UNODC. Handbook on Stamps and Other Markings of Heroin Bags. Almaty, 2012. The UNODC CARICC Handbook was developed through consultation with limited number of law enforcement experts from Afghanistan and Central Asian member States. Therefore, the findings reflect the view and opinions of law enforcement officers. In this present study key informants (illicit drug traffickers’) views and understanding about the stamps contributed to the findings of the study.

2 Based on the mentioned countries of origin, departure, and transit by countries in Western and Central Europe, over 70 per cent of the heroin in Western and Central Europe appears to have transited the Balkan route in 2015–2019, whereas around 18 per cent transited the southern route and another 7 per cent the northern route, whilst around 3 per cent may have originated in South-East Asia; UNODC. World Drug Report 2021, Booklet 3.
controls occurring along the Balkan route. While most opiates are trafficked by land from Afghanistan along the Balkan route, and to a lesser extent the northern route, a proportion are trafficked via maritime methods via the southern route.

The maritime portion of the southern route encompasses a web of smaller trafficking branches across the Indian Ocean departing from seaports in South-West Asia. Overall, there appear to be a number of broad maritime heroin trafficking routes across the Indian Ocean: one route leads from the Arabian Sea to the Arabian Sea to India and Sri Lanka and then on to the Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles; and a route from the Arabian Sea directly to Seychelles. Other routes include crossing the Arabian Sea to Kenya and Tanzania, and from the Arabian Sea through the Red Sea towards the Mediterranean. More broadly there are indications that opiates are trafficked by maritime means further afield around the African continent to Europe, from South-West Asia to South-East Asia and Oceania, or to a lesser extent, North America.

Evidence suggests that heroin trafficking to Europe along maritime routes from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan may be increasing. Over the

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4 Although a significant portion of the Southern route is maritime based, there are also land and air components.
7 ENACT “The heroin coast: a political economy along the East African seaboard.” 2018
Indicative heroin trafficking routes along the southern route

* 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 elaboration, based on seizure data from Individual Drug Seizures (IDS) and Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ), supplemented by national government reports and other official reports.

Opiate seizures along the southern route

Overall, heroin and morphine seizures reported by countries along the southern route (excluding Pakistan) have increased from 3 per cent in 2015 to 5 per cent in 2020. This increase of opiate seizures along the southern route might be due to growing opiate shipments from South-West Asia to South Asia.

In Europe, the countries reported to have seized the largest quantities of heroin trafficked along the southern route in the period 2017–2021, included Belgium and Italy. Heroin was reportedly trafficked to Belgium, predominantly by maritime methods, with the transit countries including Kenya and South Africa. In 2021, Nigeria and South Africa were the second and third most frequently detected countries of origin for heroin being seized in Italy. Thus, the southern route might serve as an important alternative route to the land based Balkan route with large quantities of heroin trafficked by sea to the African continent and then onwards to Europe.

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10 UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire 2017-2022.
13 UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire 2017-2022.
14 UNODC, response to the annual report questionnaire 2021.
In September 2020, the United Kingdom reported having seized 1.1 tons of heroin linked to trafficking along the southern route, found in a container on a ship docked at the port of Felixstowe. The shipment had been enroute to Antwerp, in Belgium, with its final destination in the Hague, in the Netherlands. Previously, in September 2019, another seizure of 1.3 tons of heroin had occurred in Felixstowe, discovered in a container on a ship from Pakistan that was destined for Rotterdam, in the Netherlands.

In recent years, large maritime shipments of heroin seized at the Port of Antwerp in Belgium were found to have been trafficked, possibly along the southern route, from the Islamic Republic of Iran. In 2018, Belgian authorities were reported to have seized 4.3 tons of heroin at the Port of Antwerp and another 1.9 tons of heroin at the same seaport in early 2019, both of which had been shipped from seaports in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In 2019, Belgium reported to UNODC that 98 per cent of heroin seized in the country had arrived by sea, primarily from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The port of Antwerp, similarly to the port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, acts as a major trafficking hub for heroin and other drugs, most notably cocaine, which is then redistributed to major consumer markets in Western and Central Europe.

Sources:
BBC News, “Heroin worth £120m found at Felixstowe in "UK’s biggest haul””, 4 September 2019.
UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire.
EUROPOL, 3rd Annual Conference on Fight against Drugs, 04-05 December 2019, Belgium’s Representation, The Hague/Holland.
Why are opiates being trafficked via the Indian Ocean?

The Indian Ocean provides a major conduit for international trade between some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, supplying goods that run along several maritime trade routes. However, the Indian Ocean also lies along a major opiate trafficking route that supplies international markets with opiates produced in South-West Asia. The southern route leading across the Indian Ocean provides an important means of supplying potentially large opiate consumer markets in South Asia and Africa. Data on the prevalence of the use of opiates indicates that the largest number of opiate users in the world may be located in South Asia. India is one of the world’s single largest opiate markets in terms of users, with 2.1 per cent of the country’s population using opioids including opium, heroin and variety of pharmaceutical opioids. Moreover, the prevalence of opiate use in India may have strongly increased over the past two decades. In 2019, India also reported a strong increase in heroin shipments from South-West Asia trafficked by sea, rising by 157 per cent from the previous year. The same year, India also reported that 40 per cent of the total quantity of heroin seized in the country had been trafficked from South-West Asia.

In addition to being a transit point for heroin trafficked from South-West Asia to Europe, Africa has also become an increasingly important end-user destination for heroin. Heroin trafficking via Africa may have had a spill-over effect, resulting in an increase of heroin use in the region. Data on opioid use in Africa also show a significant increase in prevalence, and drug treatment figures indicate that heroin is among the main substances used by people seeking drug treatment in West and Central Africa. According to public sources, there are also high and increasing levels of heroin use in Mauritius and Seychelles, with markets supplied by heroin from South-West Asia.

Some other factors also make maritime trafficking across the Indian Ocean particularly attractive to opiate traffickers. For instance, traffickers commonly employ unregistered vessels to ship heroin across the Indian Ocean, so there is only a limited potential for prosecution of crews when such vessels carrying opiates are intercepted by law enforcement officials. When an unregistered vessel carrying opiates is intercepted, the name or registration details of the vessel cannot be ascertained without additional information from the national authorities intercepting the dhows. Also, law enforcement officers might be unable to discover well-concealed opiates on board large ships, dhows, and other vessels without specific intelligence, tools, and/or training. Moreover, the increasing use of multiple transhipment points for containers along the southern route makes it more difficult for authorities to intercept cargo.

How are opiates trafficked across the Indian Ocean?

Heroin trafficking across the Indian Ocean involves several different types of vessels and numerous transhipment points. Over the years, traditional sailing vessels known as dhows have been identified trafficking heroin and other drugs from South-West Asia to countries across the Indian Ocean (see text box below). However, since 2017, there have been

15 UNODC, World Drug Reports 2020 and 2022
17 Ibid.
19 UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire.
20 Among opioids, heroin has the highest prevalence of use in India, at a past-year prevalence of 1.1 per cent among people aged 10–75, followed by the non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids at almost 1 per cent, and opium at around 0.5 per cent; Atul Ambekar and others, Magnitude of Substance Use in India 2019, New Delhi, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2019.
22 In 2019, around 1.2 per cent of the population in Africa had used opioids in the past year, which was comparable to the global average in that same year. From 2010–2019, there was a fourfold increase in the estimated number of past-year opioid users in Africa and a threefold increase in the prevalence of opioid use; UNODC, World Drug Report 2021, Booklet 3.
23 In West and Central Africa, opioids (heroin and tramadol) were the second most common drug type, after cannabis, for people accessing drug treatment services in 2014–2017; UNODC, World Drug Report 2020, Booklet 2.
26 Ibid.
THE ROLE OF DHOWS IN MARITIME OPIATE TRAFFICKING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Dhows include various types of traditional sailing vessels that are employed in the licit trade to transport goods in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Small dhows are employed for local coastal trade, whereas large offshore dhows are used on transnational routes. However, dhows also play an important role in illicit drug trafficking, as they are among the key forms of transportation used to traffic heroin from South-West Asia to the East African coast. In addition to heroin, dhows have also been found to be a means for smuggling cannabis, methamphetamine, and weapons. Motorised wooden dhows of around 15 to 23 meters in length are often employed to ship heroin along the East African coast. Their size enables them to travel at sea whilst at the same time being small enough to evade detection by satellite technology or patrol vessels.

Large amounts of heroin are frequently discovered on dhows in the Indian Ocean. On June 6, 2021, a French Marine Nationale ship assigned to the Combined Task Force (CTF) reportedly seized 409 kg of heroin on a dhow in the Indian Ocean. Earlier, on April 23, 2021, the Canadian-led CTF-150 made the largest heroin seizure ever reported by the CTF of almost 1.3 tons, discovered on a dhow off the coast of Oman. Another 275 kg of heroin were seized on a dhow in the international waters of the North Arabian Sea on January 30, 2021. By the end of 2021, the CMF reported a record year of drug seizures, mostly from dhows, with 6,550 kg of heroin, 4,025 kg of methamphetamine, and 56,834 kg of hashish reportedly being seized in that year.

Increasing reports of heroin shipments being transferred from dhows to smaller vessels at sea. Frequently, heroin has been seized on small vessels and fishing boats in the Indian Ocean, and in some cases, seizures occurred whilst traffickers were in the process of offloading heroin from a dhow onto a fishing boat, a speedboat or skiff. Cargo containers are also an established method of trafficking heroin, although they generally follow different routes than those taken by dhows. For example, in 2021, almost three tonnes of heroin were seized from a container ship at the Mundra port in Gujarat, which had crossed the Indian Ocean – the largest narcotics seizure in the country, according to Indian authorities. The United Kingdom reported large heroin seizures of 1.3 and 1.1 tons of heroin seized from container ships in 2019 and 2020, respectively. The heroin in both United Kingdom cases had been trafficked via the southern route.

Along the East African coast, dhows ship heroin to countries including northern Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania by anchoring in international waters 20 to 100 km off the African coast, from where heroin shipments are transferred to several small fishing boats that ship the heroin to various beaches, coves, islands, or small commercial harbours. On occasion heroin is transferred to

Sources:
31 A light rowing or sailing boat commonly used by only one person.
33 India, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, https://www.dri.nic.
35 UK National Crime Agency (NCA), retrieved from https://twitter.com/nca_uk/status/1306887267697463301, accessed on 18 January 2022
FIG. 2  Heroin Seizures made by Combined Maritime Forces, 2012-2022

![Heroin Seizures](chart)


FIG. 3  Drug types and quantities (kgs) seized by EUNAVFOR, March-April 2022

![Drug Types](chart)

Source: EUNAVFOR
other traffickers along East African and South Asian coastlines by attaching submerged caches of the drug to buoys or placing them on remote beaches. However, to evade prosecution and interception by law enforcement authorities, drug traffickers smuggling heroin have also scuttled vessels at sea or burned their dhows, which has often resulted in casualties.

According to reports by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and states bordering the Indian Ocean, heroin seizures made in the Indian Ocean increased from 5.7 tons in 2017 to more than 13.1 tons in 2018. Moreover, heroin seizures reported by the CMF and national navies and coastguards in the western Indian Ocean, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Gulf, totalled 3.1 tons in 2017, 15 tons in 2018, and 4.6 tons in 2019. Over the period 2017 to 2019, the largest share of heroin seizures were reported by national navies and coastguards totaling 14.6 tons, whereas the CMF seized 8 tons of heroin over the same period.

The EU Naval Force – Somalia (EUNAVFOR) also seized significant quantities of drugs in the Indian Ocean between March and April 2022, including heroin and methamphetamine.

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37 An anchored float that serves as a navigational mark to indicate a channel or a reef or other hazards under the water.
39 Ibid.
40 It should be noted that the monsoon periods have frequently impeded drug traffickers from shipping opiates across the Indian Ocean as well as law enforcement officials from apprehending these trafficked opiates; Global Maritime Crime Programme, UNODC. Compendium of Drug Seizures at Sea (Indian Ocean Region). October 2018.
41 Ibid. Dhow Trafficking Patterns in the Arabian Gulf, Western Indian Ocean Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea.” August 2020.
42 Ibid.
What insights can drug stamps provide?

Stamps and markings can potentially provide information about the wholesale customers of Afghan heroin, the manufacturers of the drug, or further details on trafficking routes employed to transport heroin to international destinations.43 Regarding other drugs, stamps have also been widely employed over the years to mark hashish and cocaine packages.44 For instance, in South America, the documentation of stamps has facilitated the identification of specific drug organisations and trafficking routes.45

Earlier documentation of stamps on original wholesale bags with heroin from Afghanistan has been employed to gain insights into heroin trafficking along the northern route from Afghanistan across Central Asia to the Russian Federation.46 The findings of this analysis showed that in the case of heroin stamps and other markings discovered in South-West Asia and Central Asia, it is unclear whether they serve to identify different criminal groups responsible for trafficking and/or manufacturing the heroin or whether they serve as a form of branding to guarantee the quality of the heroin.47

Heroin stamps and other markings on one-kilo bags can be difficult to decipher. But even if the meaning behind the use of specific names of physical and legal persons, geographic locations, images, or sequences of digits like “777” on these stamps is never uncovered, consideration of these stamps in drug cases can enhance the work of national law enforcement agencies and spur regional and global cooperation among them. A simple visual match of the stamp found on one heroin bag can connect an individual seizure to the drug trade in other parts of the world and lead to the identification of the networks of criminals involved in the production, transportation, and distribution of Afghan opiates across the globe.

The following analysis is based on the examination of a total of eighty-seven cases of heroin bags that carry various markings and covers an overall number of thirty-two seizures made by the CMF in the Indian Ocean from 2017-2021. Moreover, the study collected the views and opinions of nine illicit drug traffickers located in Afghanistan on various hand-pressed and printed stamps, handwriting, and signs used on the seized packages. The report further focuses on fifty-nine unique records of hand-pressed stamps found on the heroin bags. Photographic evidence related to heroin seizures made in the Indian Ocean in 2017-2021 confirms that the seized drug packages are one-kilo wholesale bags in their original, undisturbed, and unadulterated form as produced by manufacturers in Afghanistan or South-West Asia. Thus, the below analysis is related to stamps, and markings of wholesale heroin packages, which shall not be confused with “logo-branding” of small retail packs of heroin (containing several grams) seized primarily in consumption markets.

44 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
MAP. 3  CMF Heroin seizures reported in the Indian Ocean and along coastlines of the Indian Ocean, January 2017-June 2021

Markings on heroin bags

One-kilo wholesale bags are usually marked with: (1) hand-pressed stamps, (2) handwriting; (3) cut-out holes (more rarely – only two seizures among the cases examined in this study had cut out holes on the packaging), and (4) machine-pressed stamps. Nine key informants in Afghanistan were asked to share their opinions and observations as to why the wholesale heroin packages were stamped (single or multiple times) and other markings were written or pressed. Diverse opinions were expressed by drug traffickers. One group of key informants thought that the stamps were used as a trademarked logo, similar to branding practice in licit businesses and markets. Both manufacturers and traffickers put their stamps and symbols on a package of heroin. Additionally, according to the interviewed traffickers, stamps can be used to reveal or alternatively disguise the producer(s).

“It is also to hide their lab and address and avoid detection of their labs.” Key Informant 1

“Recipients know from these labels where, and by whom, it was produced”, Key Informant 2

“It is a mark and brand like the ordinary products - like the grocery that we buy”. Key Informant 6

“Stamps are signs of quality and labs that produced them. It is also a way of communication” Key Informant 7

“Every lab has a stamp, some put a separate stamp on heroin and morphine bags for special and regular customers.” Key Informant 9
heroin generally means crude manufacture, but it is possible that a brown color is left deliberately in some cases. In comparison to the numerous heroin bags with cut-outs seized in Central Asia and the Russian Federation, in the eighty-seven cases of heroin bags used in this sample, only a very limited number of packages seized from vessels in the Indian Ocean have similar cut out holes.

Photos 3-4 show a heroin bag seized on 19th March 2020 in the Indian Ocean; photos 5-6 - Heroin bag seized on 8th April 2021 in the Indian Ocean

The analysis of photos of seized heroin bags revealed that hand-pressed stamps and handwriting (in particular, sequences of digits) appear to have a special

Machine-pressed stamps are found on exterior plastic bags and completely cover these bags. Their use seems to be limited. But more importantly, their importance in conveying special information is likely to be low. As depicted in photo 1, machine-stamped bags carry cloth packs with hand-pressed stamps and handwriting inside them. The photo evidence collected for this report does not allow a conclusion of whether the information on these bags with machine-pressed stamps is consistent with that found on the cloth bags inside them. In light of this, these plastic bags are most likely used only to insulate against water and moisture, especially when transported by sea. A similar conclusion was reached by the CARICC study on heroin stamps seized in Central Asia and the Russian Federation along the “northern Route” from Afghanistan.

PHOTO 1
Machine-pressed stamp on the heroin bag seized on 26th May 2017 in the Indian Ocean

PHOTO 2
Cut-out holes on the bag with heroin seized on 10th May 2017 in the Indian Ocean

The cut-out holes are believed to be used for visual examination of the quality of the product without opening the original non-transparent包装。For Afghan heroin it is believed that its color is associated with its purity. Generally, the purer the heroin the whiter the color, because variations in color result from the presence of impurities. A brown
and consistent meaning for those involved in the heroin trade. The stamps and hand-written sequences of digits found on interior cloth bags are often copied onto a piece of cloth or paper and attached to the top layer of exterior packaging, thus the focus on these two types of markings in this report.

Hand-pressed stamps & hand-written marks

The purpose of hand-pressed stamps seems to be two-fold: (a) to show the integrity of the original packaging and, thus, guarantee the drug’s quality; (b) to convey special information from or to the agents participating in the heroin trade on the production, transportation, or wholesale/consumption side. The nine key informants shared their views and interpretations of stamps, signs and handwriting used in the wholesale heroin packages seized in the Indian Ocean. Regarding the hand-pressed stamps shown in photos 3 and 4, almost all key informants agreed that hand-pressed stamps were either pressed by the producer(s) or trafficker clients who had purchased the heroin from the producers. One key informant reported that the hand-pressed stamp is both a “factory brand” and an “exporter logo”. He added that if the manufacturer is asked not to mark the package, then only the exporter’s logo will be pressed on the packages.

“It is usually hand-pressed by [a] producer, but sometimes middleman traffickers also do that.”

Key Informant 3

Additionally key informants believed that the hand-pressed stamps act as quality indicators for the heroin. Some were of the opinion that hand-pressed stamps allow customers to return the product to the producers if the quality of the heroin has not met expectations, and consequently the customers may not pay the previously agreed price.

“It is also a brand mark which shows the quality of the heroin. There are some people who will [commit] fraud, but the buyers can get in touch with a particular producer and check on the stamps and marks.”

Key Informant 1

“It...when the material is purchased with the same stamp and the heroin bags, later, if the quality of the product is bad, the product will be returned to its owner or the agreed price will not be paid if the product is for outside Afghanistan.”

Key Informant 9

PHOTOS 7-8

Photo 7 shows a heroin bag seized on 10th May 2017 in the Indian Ocean; photo 8- another heroin bag seized on 21st December 2018 in the Indian Ocean.

Stamps are observed hand-pressed along the seams of heroin bags, as shown in the photos above. A typical heroin bag seized in the Indian Ocean usually contains only one hand-pressed stamp; rarely two. There was only one case over the period, when the seized heroin was packed in a bag with three different stamps. A little more than half of all the examined stamps were round. Other commonly found shapes include rectangular and oval. Additionally, there were stamps in exotic shapes like the Pegasus, flowers, and heart-shaped or sun-shaped marks.

According to the interviewed key informants, the number of stamps is associated with the number of people (producers, traffickers, and DTOs) involved in the manufacturing and trafficking of heroin.

“...if the heroin wholesale is trafficked by the first producer to the final destination there
would be one stamp. If the package is handed over to the second network to take it to the next destination the second network will add his stamp or handwriting. It shows how many networks were involved in the smuggling of these packages.” Key Informant 1

“[multiple stamping] can be for a number of reasons such as a producer and trafficker work together and have their own stamps. Sometimes multiple networks are involved along the trafficking route until the heroin gets to the final destination, and that is why more than one stamp is on the bag”. Key Informant 3

“More than one stamp is [used] because different groups are involved and sometimes the quality of the product changes. [there] is not a written rule to explain it and it [only] is known to the producer and trafficker”. Key Informant 6

Some key informants believed that one stamp is pressed by the producer. The second and third stamps are pressed by traffickers. In general, more than one stamp on heroin packages is considered to indicate involvement of multiple producers and clients (traffickers) who purchase the heroin from the manufacturer. Key informants were asked to elaborate on the potential reasons as to why multiple hand-pressed stamps had been placed by the same person and offered differing opinions. Some argued that it might be to do with not disclosing the producer.

“They do this because of non-disclosure. They produce heroin with different qualities, so if the quality of heroin is low, the buyer does not know which laboratory produced it”. Key Informant 4

Others believed that because the heroin was sent to different locations, different stamps were pressed and an indicator of the final destination, whereas others thought that multiple stamps were pressed to guide the recipients. One key informant claimed that it did not have any special meaning. In the context of stamps being used for branding by DTOs, key informants were asked if the DTOs use one or more stamps. Participants claimed that depending on the size, quality of the heroin product, and recipients, each DTO uses one or more stamps.

“Each network has its own stamp, and they use different stamps”. Key Informant 2

“It depends on the size of the organization and the quality of the product. Stamps also show the quality of the heroin”. Key Informant 3
“They use [a] single stamp for high quality drug but different for low qualities. So, each lab might have several stamps and each stamp tells what quality of the drug”. Key Informant 4

“It depends on the organizations, sometime one [stamp] sometime more than one [stamp]”. Key Informant 6

“Some organizations have one specific stamp and bigger ones have multiple stamps”. Key Informant 7

“There are some famous organizations that use special numbers because they are in contact with the Taliban and mafia groups”. Key Informant 9

Key informants reported that clandestine laboratories, drug traffickers, and DTOs choose their stamps and decide on their features to represent their organization (e.g., shape, colour, objects, numbers, and texts to be placed on the stamps). Stamps appear to be known among the DTOs and, usually, other traffickers and DTOs cannot copy someone else’s stamp. In contrast to other participants, only one key informant claimed that stamps are registered in the name of the trafficker/DTO without elaborating on the process of registration and regulatory “authority.” He further added that if a producer wants to use a well-known stamp, they need to pay for it. Another key informant also stressed a “franchising” practice between “big and famous” DTOs and “minor” traffickers. Accordingly, small-scale traffickers can purchase the right to use the stamps of big DTOs. Another participant shared similar observations, stressing that DTOs can allow their stamps to be used by clandestine laboratories, presumably if they are producing heroin for that DTO. In that case, stamps and numbers are recorded. It was also reported by a key informant that sometimes high-quality trademarks are fraudulently used by drug manufacturers.

“Each of them has their own number and they [the DTO’s] choose it themselves but when a mark is chosen, then it belongs to that trafficker or organization and others cannot copy it. Sometimes high-quality marks are produced by fraudulent producers”. Key Informant 8

Stamps usually contain the following elements:

- Depictions of various physical objects like animals, trees, cars, small arms or weapons, portraits (like that of Pablo Escobar) or banknotes (dollar or euro),
- Year(s) or date allegedly linked to the production and/or expiration period of the good,
- Sequences of digits (identical and non-identical ones);
- Words like names of physical or legal persons, initials, or signature. The average number of elements was three and varied from one (like the word “SKY”) to a maximum of eight components. Roughly 60 per cent of studied stamps were comprised of one to three elements (excluding decorative parts).

PHOTOS 9-10
Below, from top to bottom: stamp with 8 elements and stamp with only 1 element.

Analyzing the frequency of the particular elements mentioned above, words were the most frequent (81 per cent of the examined unique stamps), followed by objects (64 per cent), sequences of digits, and production/expiration year(s) (53 per cent each).

52 UNODC, Key Informant Interview 1, 2022
53 UNODC, Key Informant Interview 7, 2022
54 Previous research based on interviews with drug traffickers operating in Afghanistan suggests that labs are often ‘free-lance and can produce heroin for different networks, with only some working for a specific producer. UNODC ”Voices of the Quachabar”, 2020.
55 Interviews with nine key informants
FIG. 5  Percentage of hand-pressed heroin stamps containing key four elements (N = 59 unique stamp records)

Source: CMF seizure records 2017-2021

Years on hand-pressed stamps and hand-written marks

When two years are noted, they may be linked to the production year and the expiration period. All key informants reported that when there are two years pressed on a stamp, the first year refers to the year of production. However, their opinions differed when it came to the second year. Three participants claimed that the second year marked indicates the year when heroin production continued by the same producer. For example, a package of heroin stamped 2020 and 2022 would indicate that the heroin was produced in 2020, but that the producer was still producing heroin in 2022. Another group of three participants argued that the second year stamped is the year when heroin is circulated to the markets. Two key informants claimed it was the expiration year for the heroin, and one key informant did not provide his opinions. However, the year or years on the stamp should be treated with caution, as one seizure in the Indian Ocean, as well as seizures made in Central Asia and the Russian Federation, show heroin bags marked with a year that has not yet started. It may be that the year of production noted on the stamp is possibly probably equal to the actual production year plus the duration of transportation to the final wholesale client as estimated by the producer.

FIG. 6  Year or years noted on heroin stamps (N = 31 unique stamp records contained this element)

Source: CMF seizure records 2017-2021
Unlike stamps seized in Central Asia which had a single year referring exclusively to the production year, heroin stamps from seizures made in the Indian Ocean show that there are instances when the single year may be linked to the expiration date. The Figure 7 show that in three cases, the stamps included a single year, which was 2 to 5 years after the seizure year. Afghan heroin is believed to have an expiration period of approximately 2 years (brown heroin up to 2 years and white heroin up to one year). In 78 per cent of seizures, the heroin was not older than two years. At the same time, there were extreme cases (which were also observed in Central Asia and the Russian Federation in 2012) when the seized heroin was allegedly produced seven years ago. Out of the nine key informants, seven believed that a single year on stamps indicates the year of production, whereas one participant believed it was an expiration year, and another thought it could be both the year of production and the expiration year.

A closer analysis of the three bags with stamps indicating a gap of more than two years, revealed that in one case the stamp year was updated with handwriting (in the other two instances – there were no clear images of handwriting). This again underlines the importance and necessity of analyzing stamps together with hand writings and, maintaining good-quality records for both types of markings. Returning to the combined stamped and handwritten years, the evolution of two one-bag stamps (see photos 11-15) over the period of 2017-2021 reveals that only one element was being changed - the year on the stamp. Therefore, the information that this element carries should be worth the producer’s (or another heroin-trade agent) additional expense of changing the stamp on an annual basis.

PHOTOS 11-13
One-bag “Hameed Spin Ghar” stamps with 2017 year (seized on 10th May 2017) and One of “Hameed Spin Ghar” stamps with 2018 (seized on 23rd December 2018)

PHOTO 14-15
One-bag “Hameed Spin Ghar” stamps with 2019 year (seized on 14th March 2019 and 4th May 2019)

Another example of the stamp below shows that if the producer, or another heroin-trade agent, doesn’t change the stamp to reflect the updated year, he may handwrite it on the package.

When the below photos 16, and 17 were shown to the key informants and asked about the years put on the stamp (2020) and hand-written (2021), some of them believed that 2020 on the stamp indicated the year of production and the handwritten year indicated when the traffickers obtained the package.57

**PHOTO 16-17**

Pegasus-shaped stamp containing 2020 year is updated with handwritten “2021”, seized on 7th June 2021

Finally, it is worth noting that the year on the stamp should be analyzed together with the rest of the stamp’s elements. Thus, the year 2022 noted on the stamp below may not be connected with the production and/or expiration date but is linked to the date of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

**PHOTO 18**

“FIFA WORLD CUP 2022 QATAR” stamp seized on 23rd December 2018 and 14th March 2019

Sequences of digits on hand-pressed stamps and hand-written marks

The sequences of digits found on stamps are one of two types: identical digits ranging from 111 to 999; or non-identical digits (355, 787, 844, etc.). The latter type was not observed on more than one unique stamp from the Indian Ocean over the period reviewed and accounted for 7 unique stamp records. Additionally, no matches for these non-identical digit sequences from the Indian Ocean were found on stamps from Central Asia and the Russian Federation seized in 2012. For sequences made up of identical digits, the most frequently observed ones are fives, sevens, and nines, as shown below. This finding is identical to the one made of an analysis of heroin stamps from Central Asia and the Russian Federation seized in 2012, which also saw multiple identical digit codes.58

The majority of the key informants believed that two sets of identical digits and non-identical digits were secret codes between drug producers and traffickers, facilitating the communication between the two parties. For the identical three-digit sequences (e.g., 333, 444, 555, and 999), two-thirds of the interviewed key informants reported that these numbers are secret codes between heroin manufacturers (clandestine laboratories) and their customers (traffickers).

One group of key informants thought that the numbers on the stamp were pressed by the producers, whereas hand-written numbers were put on by the traffickers. In all responses, key informants did not appear to know the algorithm or method used to encipher the original message conveyed with these numbers, although one participant suggested that they were selected based on an easy-to-remember principle. Another alluded that numbers were the reflection of Gematria,59 a practice of assigning a numerical value to a name, word, or phrase according to an alphanumerical cipher.60

“These are the codes that the traffickers use and usually use sequence numbers because it is easy to remember. Sometimes there are meanings behind these numbers that are taken from holy books like the Quran”. **Key Informant 3**

“These numbers are selected by labs or traffick-

57 Interview with key informants 3 and 6

59 For example, a key informant mentioned: “Basmala” (In the name of All, the most merciful and the most beneficent), which according to him is associated with the number of 786 in Gematria calculation, which adds up the numerical values of Arabic letters used to indicate the words in a piece of writing.  
60 Interview with Key Informant 4
ers because it is easier to remember. Sometimes the numbers are code. For example, 786 means ‘in the name of Allah, the most merciful and the most beneficent’....” **Key informant 5**

“Every number has a meaning, or it is a code and sometimes different traffickers have different numbers that they use as a brand. In the case of this picture, it could mean the 777 belongs to the lab owner and 999 belong to the trafficker. Sometimes these numbers also mean a specific location, such as 777 could mean Afghanistan and 999 could mean Iran or Pakistan or somewhere else [...] there is no code book to interpret these numbers”. **Key informant 6**

Two key informants associated those numbers with the quality of the heroin but did not detail the link between the number and the purity.

“Stamps are the brand names of the traffickers and indicate [the] quality of the heroin.” **Key informant 3**

“The numbers are secret, it can show heroin’s quality, and also address for buyer....” **Key informant 4**

The digits may not be linked to the exact purity, say 99 per cent or 55 per cent, but to the relative purity: the purity of heroin stamped with 999 is higher than that in the bag marked with 555. Digits may represent various regions in the production country which needs to be further investigated in future studies and investigations. Finally, the sole action of making them visible using large hand-written digits and/or putting them on the outer packaging seems to suggest that particular sequences may be used to refer to specific wholesale consumers.

In the case of the “Hameed Spin Ghar” stamps shown below (photos 22-25) it appears that it is the sequence of digits (in this case, identical digits – 555), among other things, that stays unchanged and consistent over time. Almost all stamps contain one sequence of digits. In two cases, the stamps noted two sequences of digits: in the first case, they were two sequences of identical digits (999 and 555); in the second instance, it was a combination of identical and non-identical digits (777 and 787). Some heroin packages have the same sequential digits both hand-pressed and hand-written. Key informants suggest that this is in case the stamps’ color fades out, the same numbers were also written on packages by hand. Among all kinds of markings, the hand-pressed stamps and hand-written sequences of identical digits are the most commonly copied onto the external layer of heroin packaging and, thus, appear to be of greater importance for agents involved in the heroin trade.
PHOTOS 19-21
Consistent combination of the sun-shaped stamp that contains 7777 and the hand-written sequence “7777”. Left photo - seized on 6th February 2021, middle and right photos: from seizure made on 19th March 2020

PHOTOS 22-25
Consistent combination of two “Hameed Spin Ghar” stamps containing 555 and the hand-written sequence “555”. From left to right, the first photo: 10th May 2017; second photo: 23rd December 2018; third photo: 14th March 2019; fourth photo: 4th May 2019

PHOTOS 26-27
Consistent combination of the “FIFA WORLD CUP 2022 QATAR” stamp containing sequence 777 and the hand-written sequence of 999. Left photo: 23rd December 2018; right photo: 14th March 2019

Sequences of non-identical digits are also copied by hand onto the outer or inner bag. None of these were seized on more than one occasion, therefore, it is impossible to conclude whether such combinations remain consistent over the time.

PHOTOS 28-29
844 sequence is a part of the stamp and handwritten on heroin bag

The cross-analysis of stamps from the southern and northern routes showed a matching distribution of sequences of identical digits. While within Afghanistan there is considerable opiate trafficking between districts, provinces and regions (source 61), it would seem that the sequences of identical digits are not associated with the locations where the drugs are produced but with the an element common to both routes, such as relative purity. Limited evidence provided by the “Compendium of Drug Seizures at Sea (Indian Ocean Region): October 2018” is in line with this conclusion. As shown in the table above, sequences of identical digits like 666 are used to denote a relatively higher purity of heroin (percentage of purity in the 80 per cents), while 444 and 555 are stamped on the bag with heroin of a relatively lower purity (purity in the 70 per cents range).

While key informants were not expected to reveal all the logic behind stamping practices observed on the wholesale heroin packages, some of their answers needed more investigation and field research. For example, claims that sequential digits represent a geographic location and/or a country are an example of further research, as this contradicts with the majority opinion that the sequential digits relate to relative purity.

Words on hand-pressed stamps and hand-written marks

Words on hand-pressed stamps appear to be strongly associated with the location of the drug production and therefore likely often linked with the producers and the destination of the illicit drugs, linked to the traffickers or end customer.

“[Words] show the producer. Like, if [the heroin] is produced in Helmand, it is in Pashto, or in Pakistan, it is in Urdu and English. Or if it is produced in Badakhshan, it is in Farsi, or in Jalalabad it is in English, Farsi, and Pashto. Also, in Farah province it is in three languages: English, Farsi, and Pashto.” Key Informant 1

“…if it is produced in Kandahar, it is in Pashto or in Pakistan in Urdu and English. Or if it is produced in Badakhshan, it is in Persian language”. Key Informant 2

“Each region uses its own language on productions. [The] eastern region marks in Pashto and English [-the] north and southern region Farsi. The language that is used also shows where the next destination is. For example, if it is in Pashto and English, then it is going to Pakistan and if Farsi and English then toward Iran and Tajikistan.” Key Informant 4

The majority of the stamps and handwriting seized in the Indian Ocean have words written in the Latin alphabet. At the same time, heroin stamps are frequently observed to contain words in Pashto or Urdu. Rarely, did heroin stamps seized in the Indian Ocean include words in Arabic or Dari/Farsi/Persian. The most frequently observed languages of Pashto and Urdu seem to point towards the south or east of Afghanistan and Pakistan as two major production sources for heroin circulating along the southern route. Only one out of fifty-seven stamps had a word possibly written in Dari/Farsi and pinpointed the production location to the northern or western part of Afghanistan and possibly part of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is quite different from the heroin stamps found in Central Asia and Russian Federation: The northern route, unsurprisingly sees a higher share of heroin stamps in Dari/Farsi. This is somewhat expected given that Dari/Farsi is mainly spoken in the Northern and or Western parts of Afghanistan, which supplies a higher proportion of “northern route” heroin. So, while there may be a considerable amount of inter-provincial trafficking of opiates within Afghanistan between DTOs, once the drug is exported different routes are supplied by heroin produced in specific regions of Afghanistan.

The information usually written on stamps and/or hand-written includes:

- names of physical persons;
- legal people;
- initials or signatures pointing to the names of individuals and/or legal entities;
- geographical locations.
A name of a person or a combination of that with a geographic object, e.g., Hameed Spin Char [Hameed is a male name and Spin Ghar is the name of a mountain range in, Nangarhar Afghanistan, where a large number of heroin laboratories have been located] is believed to be an alias used by drug producers. Nevertheless, according to one key informant, Spin Ghar, as such, still refers to the production location. Another key informant argued that Spin Ghar is a well-known area for clandestine laboratories [factories as he called them] in the Nangarhar province of Afghanistan.

“The names of the people are the names of the smugglers and lab owners. They give their goods to their customers with a guarantee. Those who buy the goods directly deliver the goods to their customers with the same name. If there is a problem - the goods are of low quality - the customer can send the material back and all costs must be paid by the producer.” Key Informant 9

Apart from geographical locations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, one group of stamps directly mentions two cities in the Islamic Republic of Iran; another group of stamps notes the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, Türkiye; yet another stamp – Qatar. For the stamp marked “Topkapi”, key informants suggested that it might have been pressed by DTOs out of Afghanistan, probably in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Türkiye, or in the bordering areas of these two states e.g., Urmia. If this is the case it would lead to interesting questions as to why drugs produced in this area would be seized in the Indian Ocean.

Among the businesses noted on stamps are:

- jewelry shops (two separate stamps);
- Sadaf factory or laboratory in south/east Afghanistan;
- and businesses of unknown nature (“Ehsan Limited”, where Ehsan is a name).

Similarly, words referring to precious metals or gems written on the heroin packages (e.g., gold, jewels) were interpreted by key informants as a sign of high-quality heroin rather than directly correlating the words with the business sector that both drug producers and traffickers might also operate in.

Depiction of Animals on Stamps

Stamps frequently include a depiction of an animal (a scorpion, eagle, or lion, as shown in the photos below). The interviewed drug traffickers reported that use of animals on stamps are similar to logos in trademarks, and they are selected based on the personal choice of laboratory owners. Those animals, according to them, have special meanings and carry some secret message or meaning. For example, “Camel” and “Scale” are used in clandestine laboratories in Jalalabad and “Crocodile” is used in Farah province of Afghanistan. Two key informants drew parallel lines between the animals’ characteristics and the purity of the drugs.

“The animals have meanings in culture of different ethnic groups in Afghanistan and sometimes brings luck. They also stand for being powerful.” Key Informant 6

PHOTOS 30-34

Examples of stamps containing animal figures and other elements such as years and non-identical digits. The first and second stamps were seized in 2019 and the third and fourth in 2021.
Period of usage of hand-pressed stamps

The analysis of the records of heroin packages seized in the Indian Ocean between 2017-2021 indicates that there is a maximum of three years difference between the year of seizures and the year put on the stamps. In most cases, there is only a one or two year difference. Additionally, the majority of stamps were seized once or twice in the period covered by this report. Most likely, those responsible for using these stamps change the stamps in such a drastic way that one cannot group these changed stamps based on the presence of at least two common elements. As noted before, different producers and different wholesale clients operating on three major trafficking routes may be using distinct (non-matching) stamps to begin with.

Comparison of hand-pressed stamps on heroin bags with methamphetamine or hashish stamps

Increasingly, Afghanistan is becoming a major manufacturer of methamphetamine as well as heroin and key informants reported that the DTOs behind clandestine heroin laboratories also produce methamphetamine as well. Joint seizures of both drug types occur from dhows in the Indian Ocean. Simultaneous seizures of heroin and other drugs, like methamphetamine or hashish, provide some insight, though very limited, into the markings found on heroin bags in comparison with marks found on bags with other drugs. The stamps found on seized heroin and meth seem to contain a larger number of elements than the stamps pressed on hashish. In one instance, the stamps found on seized heroin and meth were identical except for one word (“earth” used on the heroin bag; “sky” for meth).

“Methamphetamines are produced by [the same people who run] heroin labs, and the stamps on the packages are the same as heroin. The blue earth and blue sky belong to a single producer/customer. But for the Hashish, it is different, and Hashish [is] not produced in Heroin and Methamphetamine labs and owners and it mostly belongs to the sellers. The stamps are usually pressed by the seller.” *Key Informant 1*

“Both heroin and amphetamine [are] produced in the same factory or by the same network, they use the same of different stamp, but hashish does not have any specific stamp in Afghanistan, some time the traffickers, paint the photo of the leaf on the packages but mostly they add numbers like 1-2-3." *Key Informant 5*

PHOTOS 35-36

Blue earth stamp on heroin and Blue sky on meth. The drugs with these stamps were seized together on 4th September 2021

The similarity of heroin and meth stamps may indicate one buyer or one producer behind the drugs and would indicate poly-drug trafficking by Afghan DTOs. However, the answer may also lie in the substance matter of the drugs: meth and heroin are bulky, and stamps are pressed onto the bag rather than on the drug itself. In the case of hashish, key informants believed that instead of stamps, numbers were used on the packages.\(^\text{67}\) Hashish is resin like, and it is usually the drug, not the packaging of hashish, that gets stamped. Therefore, hashish stamps have fewer elements so that they remain readable even when pressed onto a resin substance.

\^[67]\: Interview with Key Informants 1, 2, 4, 5, 8
A CASE STUDY ON USING HAND-PRESSED STAMPS TO EXPAND OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

While understanding the exact meaning carried by heroin stamps or the agents behind them, these markings can substantially increase and expand our understanding of trafficking routes. The following stamps were seized in separate seizures in the Indian Ocean made in May 2017 and December 2018 with no further operational information related to the route, DTO and modus operandi. Through a simple visual examination and cross-matching of one-bag stamps and the stamps that shared at least two common elements, the following group of stamps was created.

PHOTOS 37-40:
A group of one-bag and “Topkapi 444” stamps

The grouping established an alleged production source in the southern or eastern part of Afghanistan or Pakistan. Secondly, the “Kakar” Pashtun ethnic group mentioned directly on one of the stamps may be involved in any of the stages of production, transportation, or wholesale distribution. Thirdly, the potential trafficking route was estimated to start in southern or eastern Afghanistan go via the Indian Ocean and Horn of Africa by maritime transportation, with a possible target of Türkiye as a destination point.

The creation of a unified database containing descriptions and photos of hand-pressed stamps and handwriting found on heroin bags (as well as other open information related to the seizure case) is highly needed and will benefit the work of the competent authorities. This database will allow one to connect one seizure to various cases in their region and/or the rest of the world. Based on that, multi-country and multi-agency work groups may be set up to exchange operational information and build a more detailed case file regarding one heroin stamp or a group of stamps. In this way, a more comprehensive trafficking route may be discovered and a larger number of physical and/or legal people involved in the production, trafficking or retail distribution may be identified and arrested. In addition, information on businesses, especially jewellery shops, mentioned on stamps, shall be used to enhance financial investigations of the flows of illicit drug proceeds, including via Hawaladars.