

CARICC Information Bulletin № 259

*Express analysis of drug seizures
in CARICC member states 1st quarter 2026
(based on electronic media reports)*

15 April 2026

In the first quarter this year law enforcement agencies and security structures of CARICC member states reported 633 drug seizures in mass media. Total seizures amounted to **6 tons 458 kg of narcotics and psychotropic substances, including: opium-group drugs – 285 kg (heroin – 66 kg, opium – 219 kg), cannabis-group drugs – 3 tons 125 kg (hashish – 542 kg, marijuana – 2,419 kg), synthetic drugs – 2,203 kg, and potent substances – 799 kg.** Another **14 tons 718 kg of precursors** were also seized.

Evolving drug situation

In the first quarter of 2026 drug situation in CARICC member states remained complex and varied. Total volume of seized drugs and psychotropic substances exceeded **6.4 tons**, while the amount of seized precursors was nearly **15 tons**. Three distinct patterns were identified:

1. **Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan** are characterized by a predominance of cannabis-group drugs (accounting for up to 85% of seizures), which is due to transit flows from neighboring countries and other regional sources. There is a high level of transnational organized crime, and incidents of armed resistance by smugglers have been reported.

2. **Russia and Kazakhstan – synthetic drugs** dominate the market (accounting for up to 75–80% of total volume), driven by large-scale illicit production, dismantling of dozens of laboratories, and widespread use of online sales (Telegram, stashes). Carfentanil poses a serious threat.

3. **Uzbekistan** is characterized by large-scale seizures of **potent substances**, primarily pregabalin and sibutramine, alongside traditional transit of opium and hashish from Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Key trends:

Cannabis remains the most prevalent drug in the region in terms of weight of seizures (over 3 tons), a factor linked to Central Asia's role as a transit route and its natural conditions.

Synthetic drugs are rapidly gaining market share, particularly in countries with well-developed manufacturing and online sales.

Opiates (heroin, opium) are losing ground but remain significant in southern transit corridors (Tajikistan → Uzbekistan).

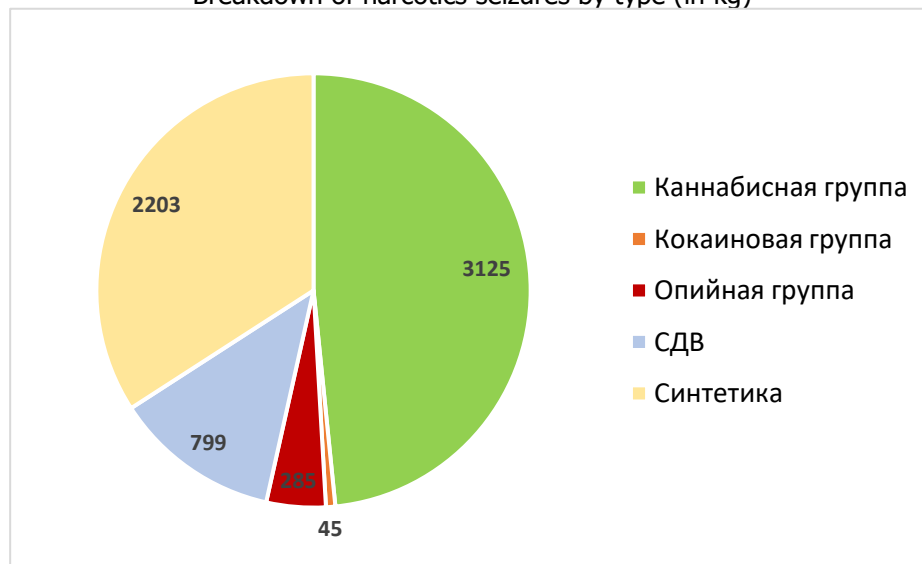
Recidivism, organized groups, and foreign involvement —systemic characteristics of drug crime in all countries of the region.

Data gaps: No information is available for Turkmenistan; Tajikistan is represented only minimally.

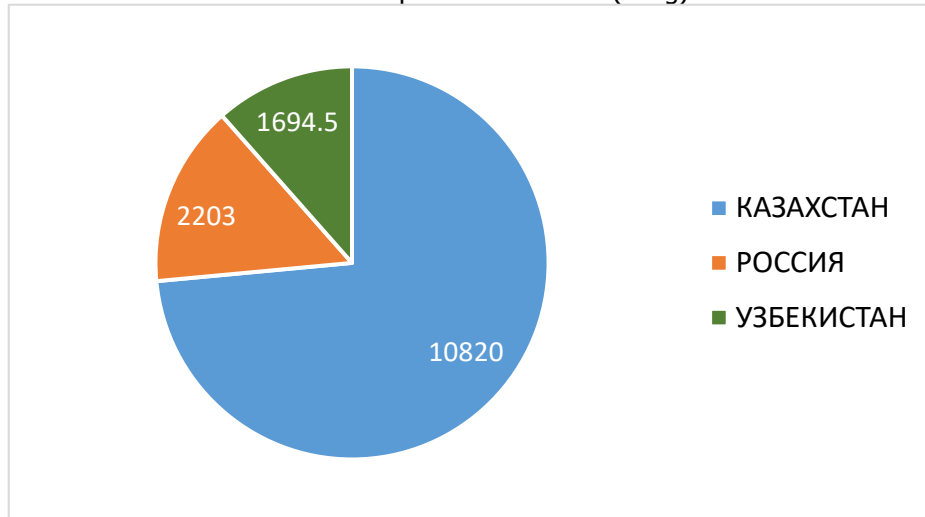
Distribution of seized narcotics by CARICC member states (in kg)



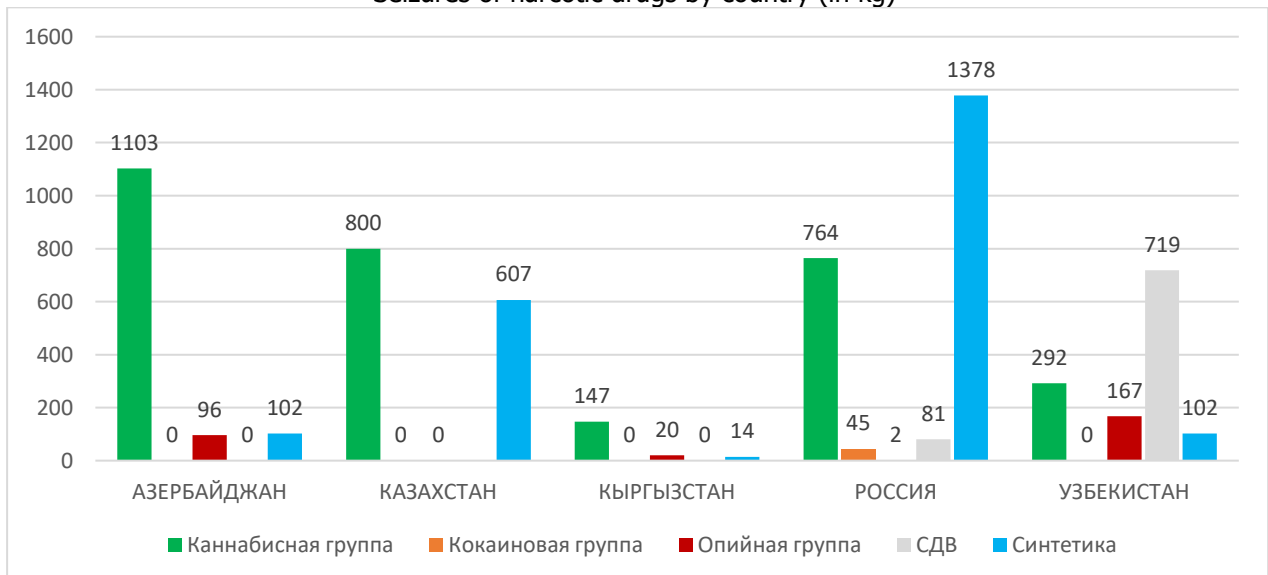
Breakdown of narcotics seizures by type (in kg)



Amounts of precursors seized (in kg)



Seizures of narcotic drugs by country (in kg)



Cannabis-group drugs accounted for majority of the total volume of narcotics seized in CARICC member states, while synthetic drugs prevailed in Russia and potent substances in Uzbekistan.

Thus, predominance of cannabis in seizures in Central Asia and Azerbaijan is no coincidence. It is a direct result of a combination of three key factors:

1. **Geopolitical:** the region's role as a transit route for Afghan drugs.
2. **Natural and climatic:** widespread presence of wild-growing cannabis.
3. **Socio-economic:** sustained demand driven by income levels and high availability of this type of drug.

In recent years, Kazakhstan and Russia have seen a rapid increase in the number of clandestine laboratories producing synthetic drugs, driven by high demand and active development of online distribution channels. At the same time, these countries serve as major

transit hubs and end-user markets for synthetic drugs. As a result, the share of synthetic drugs in the total volume of seizures has increased significantly and now accounts for about half; in Kazakhstan, in particular, this figure reaches nearly 50%.

In Uzbekistan, which lies along major international drug trafficking routes, large shipments of illicit substances being transported in transit are regularly intercepted. A significant portion of these seizures consists of potent pharmaceuticals that are illegally imported into the country, often disguised as legal goods.

This situation stems from the fact that Uzbekistan, primarily a transit country, faces heavy flows of illicit pharmaceutical products being transported through its territory.

Cses of drugs seized in the 1st quarter of 2026

Country	Cannabis group	Cocaine group	Opium group	Potent substances	Synthetic group	Total
AZERBAIJAN	79	0	28	1	30	138
KAZAKHSTAN	22	0	2		32	56
KYRGYZSTAN	16	0	1	3	11	31
RUSSIA	87	12	7	8	190	304
TAJIKISTAN	1	0	0	0	0	1
UZBEKISTAN	44	0	20	18	21	103
TOTAL	249	12	58	30	284	633

Total seizures of narcotic drugs across all countries and categories amounted to **633** cases, of which:

- **Cannabis group** – 249 (Russia – 87, Azerbaijan – 79).
- **Cocaine group** – 12 (Russia only).
- **Opium group** – 58 (Azerbaijan – 28, Uzbekistan – 20).
- **Potent substances** – 30 (Uzbekistan – 18, Russia – 8).
- **Synthetic group** – 284 (Russia – 190, Kazakhstan – 32, Azerbaijan – 30).

Distribution of countries by total number of seizures is as follows: **Russia** leads the list (304 cases), followed by **Azerbaijan** (138), **Uzbekistan** (103), **Kazakhstan** (56), **Kyrgyzstan** (31), and **Tajikistan** (1).

Main trend: synthetic drugs account for the majority of drug seizures in Russia and Kazakhstan; cannabis and opiates dominate in Azerbaijan; cannabis and synthetic drugs are the most common in Uzbekistan; and cocaine is virtually absent throughout the region.

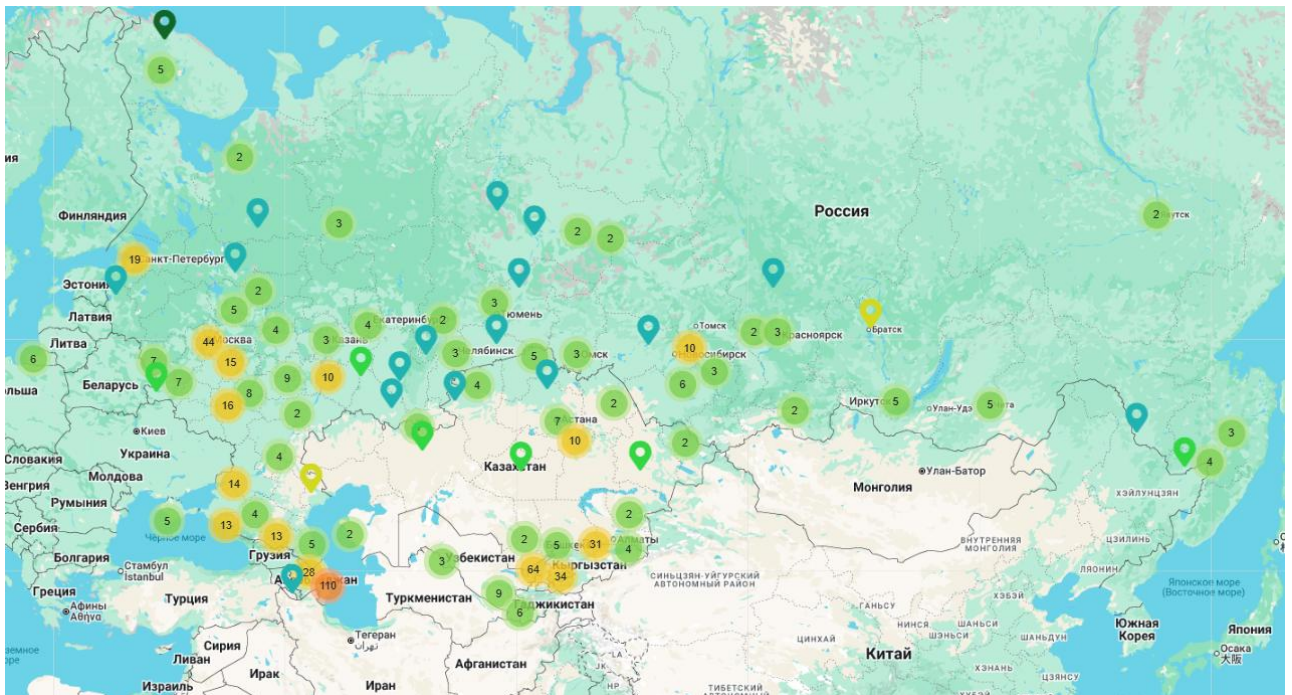
Drug crimes by type for the 1st quarter of 2026

Country	With prior convictions	Smuggling	Laboratories	Group activity	Arrested foreign citizens
AZERBAIJAN	63	17		28	
KAZAKHSTAN	1	13	9	9	1
KYRGYZSTAN	1	5	2	7	
RUSSIA	49	79	39	56	22
TAJIKISTAN		1			
UZBEKISTAN	13	46	13	25	2
TOTAL	127	161	63	125	25

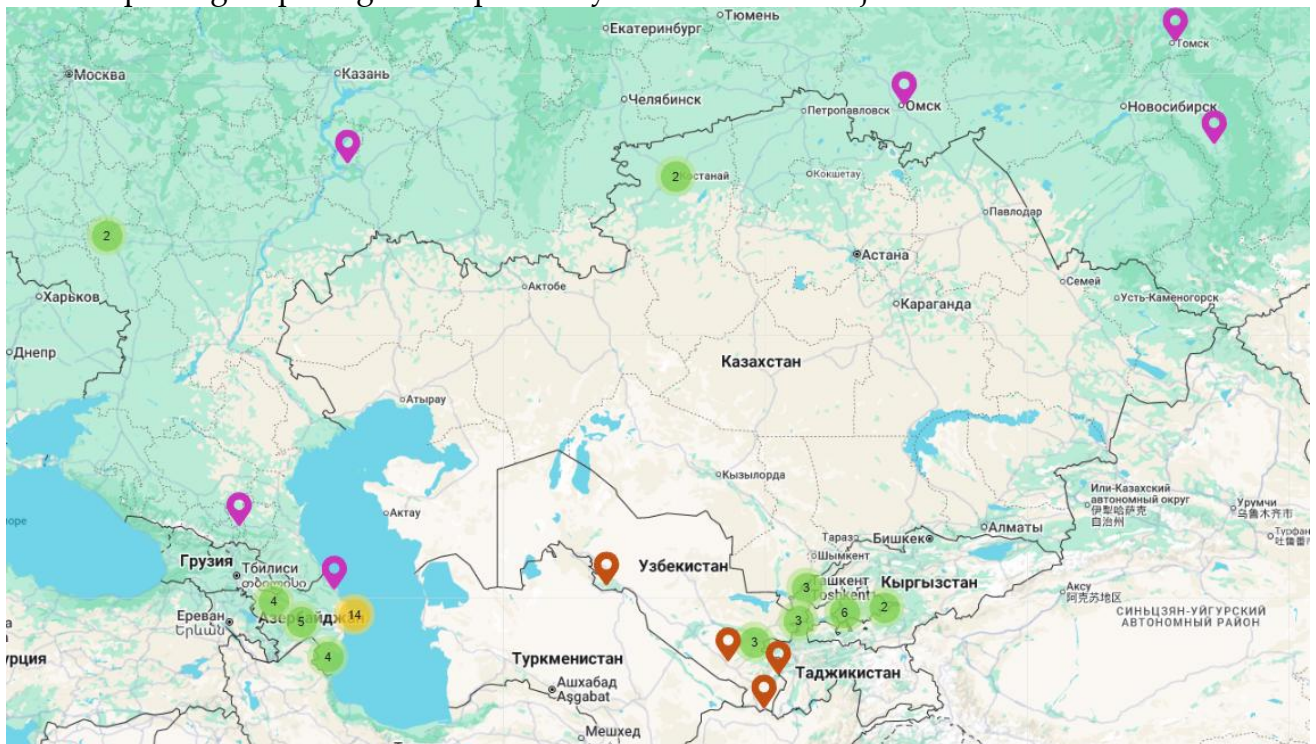
According to analysis of data, a total of 501 individuals were arrested for drug crimes. Drug crime statistics in the Russian Federation are as follows: 49 individuals with prior convictions, 79 cases of smuggling, 39 dismantled laboratories, 56 instances of organized criminal activity, and 22 foreign nationals arrested. In the Republic of Uzbekistan: detected cases of smuggling (46) and dismantled laboratories (13). The Republic of Azerbaijan reported the highest number of individuals with prior convictions (63), with no data available on dismantled laboratories or detained foreign nationals. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan show moderate levels of activity in categories under review, while the Republic of Tajikistan has recorded minimal activity, limited to a single case of smuggling.

Overall, the data shows: 127 individuals with prior convictions, 161 smuggling incidents, 63 dismantled laboratories, 125 cases of organized criminal activity, and 25 foreign nationals detained.

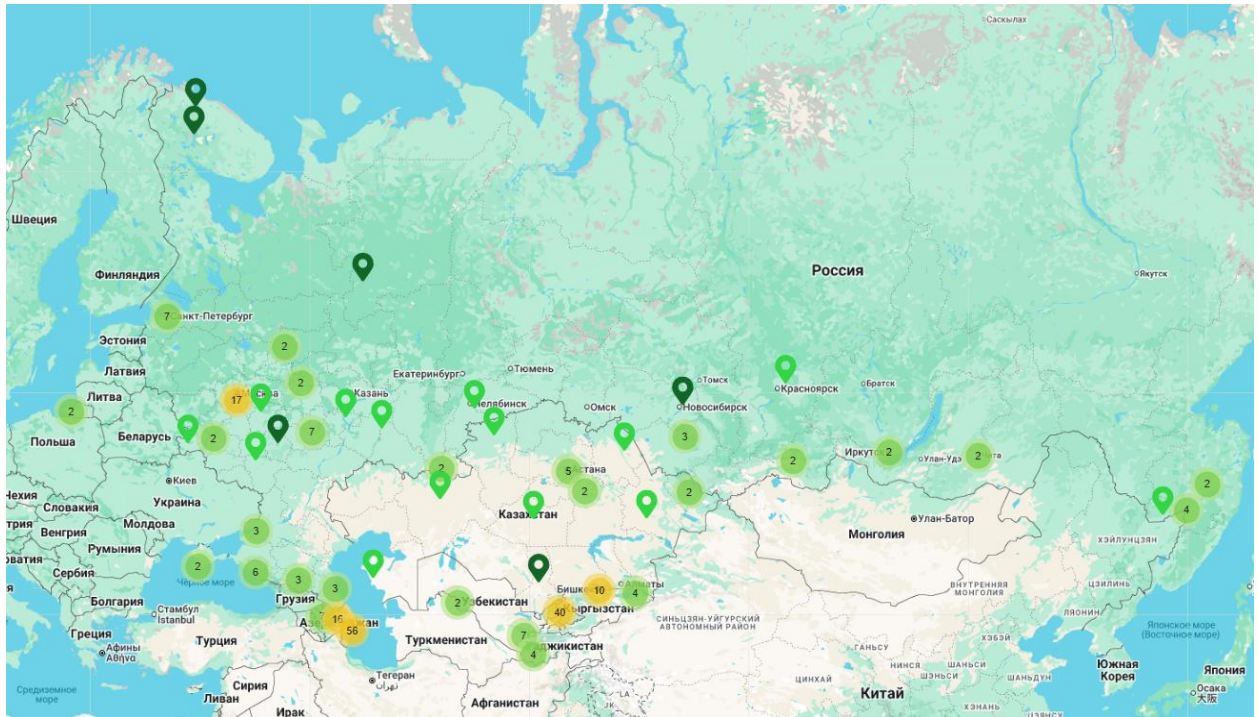
Analysis of data from “CARICC Seizures Portal” (<http://seizures.caricc.org>) shows that the largest number of seizures occurred in capital regions of CARICC member states.



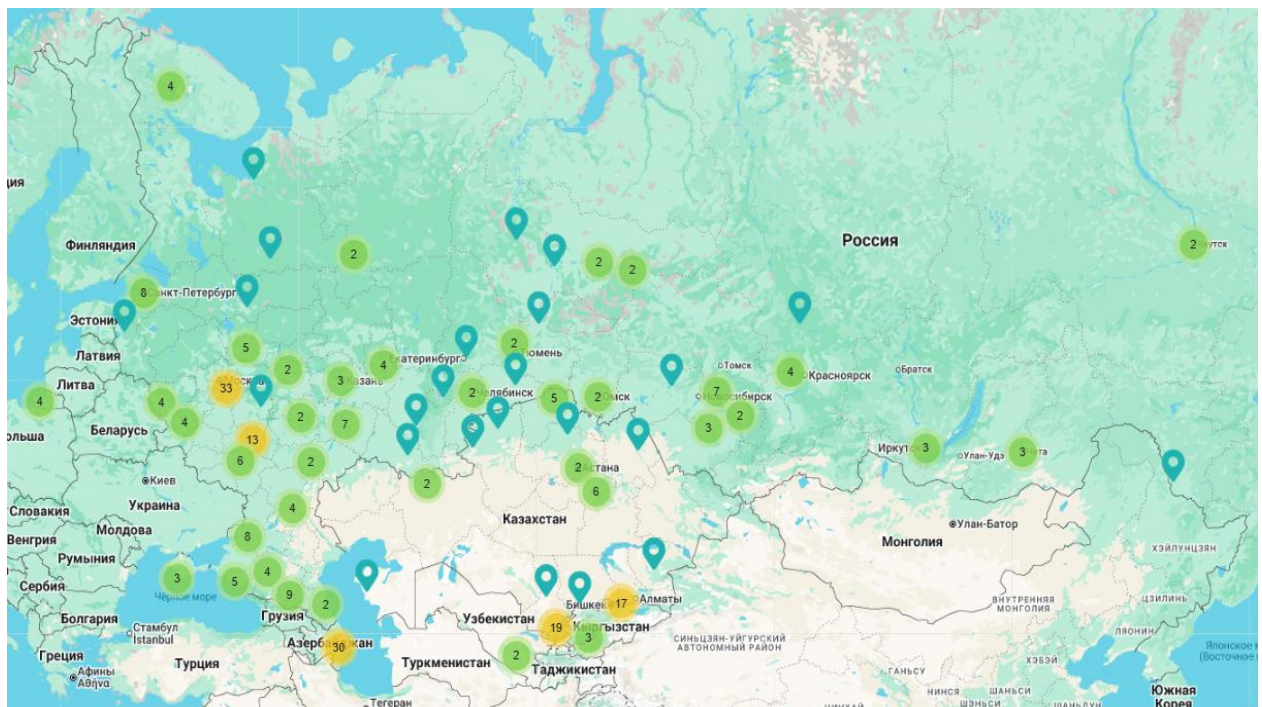
Opium-group drugs were primarily seized in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.



Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan account for the largest share of seized cannabis-group drugs.



At the same time, seizures of synthetic drugs are distributed relatively evenly across all regions. Synthetic drug trafficking in CARICC states poses a serious threat due to a combination of interrelated global and local factors.



It's mainly due to ongoing **global transformation of drug market**, where synthetic drugs are replacing traditional ones. This is due to their lower production costs, simplified

logistics for transportation, and a more pronounced impact of consumption. This global trend is compounded by specific regional conditions of the Central Asian states.

At the same time, as supply of traditional opiates from Afghanistan declines, the Central Asian market is rapidly being flooded with synthetic substances, a trend confirmed by statistical data. An additional factor significantly influencing drug situation is the use of modern information and communication technologies and Internet, which have radically changed mechanisms of drug distribution.

Currently, drug trade has largely shifted to darknet and messenger platforms (particularly Telegram), where sales take place through anonymous online stores and a system of stashes, without direct contact between sellers and buyers. In response to this, there has been a rise in the number of clandestine laboratories producing synthetic drugs. Combination of these factors has led to a significant expansion of illegal drug sales.

Internal factors also influence the situation. The region is characterized by heightened vulnerability among young people, and insufficient development of a culture of safe behavior in digital environment, which may increase their susceptibility to unlawful influence from drug dealers. This negative trend is further exacerbated by the rise in non-medical use of potent substances, including certain readily available prescription drugs (such as tramadol and pregabalin), which in some cases are viewed as a more accessible alternative.

Situation is further complicated by the region's role as a transit area and ongoing issues related to interagency coordination. Central Asia is used as part of illicit trafficking routes, which in some cases may be linked to other forms of transnational criminal activity, including financing of terrorism.

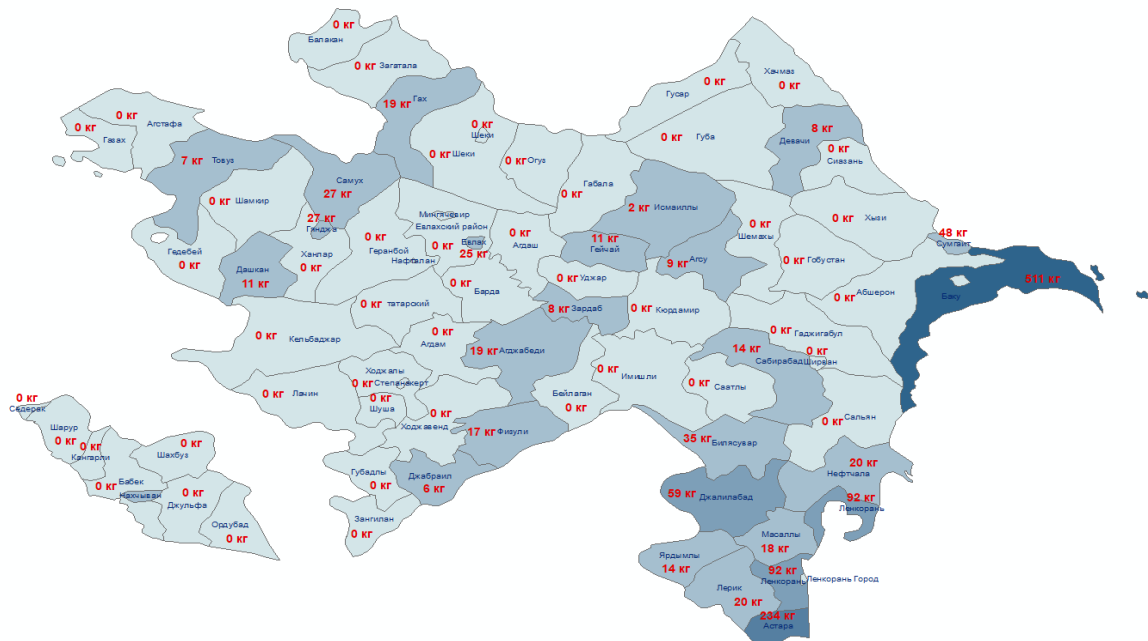
In response to these challenges, CARICC states with the support of international partners are working to strengthen cooperation, including through implementation of pilot early-warning systems for new psychoactive substances and development of coordinated roadmaps for joint action.

The following tables show seizures of narcotic drugs in the 1st quarter of 2026 (in kg) in CARICC member states.

REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

Region	Cannabis group	Opium group	Potent substances	Synthetic group	Total
Agjabedi district	17.2	1.0		1.0	19.2
Astara district	233.6			0.6	234.2
Akhsu district	9.0				9.0
Bilyasuvar district	29.5	6.0			35.5
Baku	470	31.2	0.1	28.6	530.8
Ganja		27.5			27.5
Gakh district	10.0			9.0	19.0
Goichai district	8.0	2.7		0.2	10.9
Dashkesan district	5.7	5.0			10.7
Jalilabad district	46.4			12.5	58.9
Jebrail district	5.7			0.0	5.7
Zagatal district	2.3	2.0			4.3
Zardab district	3.0	3.0		2.0	8.0
Ismaili district	2.0				2.0
Lenkoran district	79.8	8.0		4.1	91.9
Lerik district	20.0				20.0
Masallinsky district	18.0				18.0
Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic				41.6	41.6
Neftechalinsky district	20.0				20.0
Sabirabad district	14.0				14.0
Samukh district	23.9	3.0			26.9
Sumgait district	45.1	1.8		0.8	47.6
Tovuz district	6.6				6.6
Fizulinsky district	12.6	2.9		1.2	16.8
Shabransky district	5.6	2.0			7.6
Yardymlynsky district	14.2				14.2
Total	1103.0	96.0	0.1	102.1	1301.2

Map of narcotic drug seizures in the 1st quarter of 2026



The following conclusions can be drawn based on data presented regarding drug seizures in Azerbaijan during January–March 2026:

1. Dominance of cannabis group in the structure of drug seizures.

Total weight of seized drugs was approximately 1,300 kg. Of this amount, 1,100 kg (85%) was cannabis group (marijuana and hashish). The largest shipment of marijuana (79.8 kg) was concealed as lettuce during transit from the Southern route to Russia. This trend confirms that cannabis-group drugs remain primary narcotics seized in Azerbaijan, a fact linked both to transit of illicit drugs from the south and to local cultivation.

2. Opium-group drugs account for the second-largest share of seizures, with 96 kg of opium-group drugs seized (7%), of which:

Heroin — 54 kg. The largest shipment (27.5 kg) was discovered in Ganja; its street value is estimated at 1.6 million manats.

Opium — 42 kg.

Opium group is more than 12 times smaller than the cannabis group, which may indicate a shift in drug trafficking from Afghan opiates to cannabis or more effective interdiction of heroin trafficking routes.

3. Synthetic drugs are present, but in moderate amounts.

Synthetic group (methamphetamine, methadone, tablet forms) totaled 102 kg (8%), of which:

Methamphetamine — 98.4 kg. A unique case involved the seizure of 41.6 kg of liquid methamphetamine in Nakhchivan, which had been concealed in plastic containers inside a truck traveling from Iran to Türkiye.

Methadone — 3.2 kg (mostly in tablet form, totaling more than 8,000 tablets).

The share of synthetic drugs is relatively small compared to Kazakhstan or Russia (where it reaches 50%), but the absolute volume (over 100 kg per quarter) indicates a growing presence.

4. Main external source of drug supply is the Southern drug trafficking route. Analysis of identified cases indicates significant role of the Southern drug trafficking route, through which narcotics are transited through the territory of Azerbaijan and subsequently transported to Russia, Georgia, and Türkiye.

Sophisticated methods are used to conceal drugs: inside watermelons, disguised as lettuce or cabbage, or hidden in secret compartments in trucks.

An incident was reported in which narcotics were transported via the Southern route using an unmanned aerial vehicle; total weight was 10.22 kg.

In addition, in a number of instances detainees have pointed to possible coordination of shipments by foreign organizers.

5. Nature of crime:

organization, recidivism, use of weapons. Prior convictions — majority of those arrested have criminal records (in some cases, 2–3 individuals with prior convictions are implicated).

group nature — groups of 2–6 people acting on instructions from Iranian handlers are regularly detained.

Firearms — in one case (Goichai), a pistol was seized along with drugs, indicating possibility of armed escorts.

6. Geography of seizures:

Border regions (Astara, Lankaran, Bilasuvar, Samukh) — transit of large shipments (up to 80 kg) is intercepted here.

In major cities (Baku, Ganja, Sumgait), law enforcement operations have led to the seizure of shipments ranging from 5 to 50 kg, intended for street sales via stashes.

7. Potent and other substances. Potent substances (pregabalin) are present in minimal quantities (less than 0.1 kg) and appear only once as a secondary item.

Conclusions:

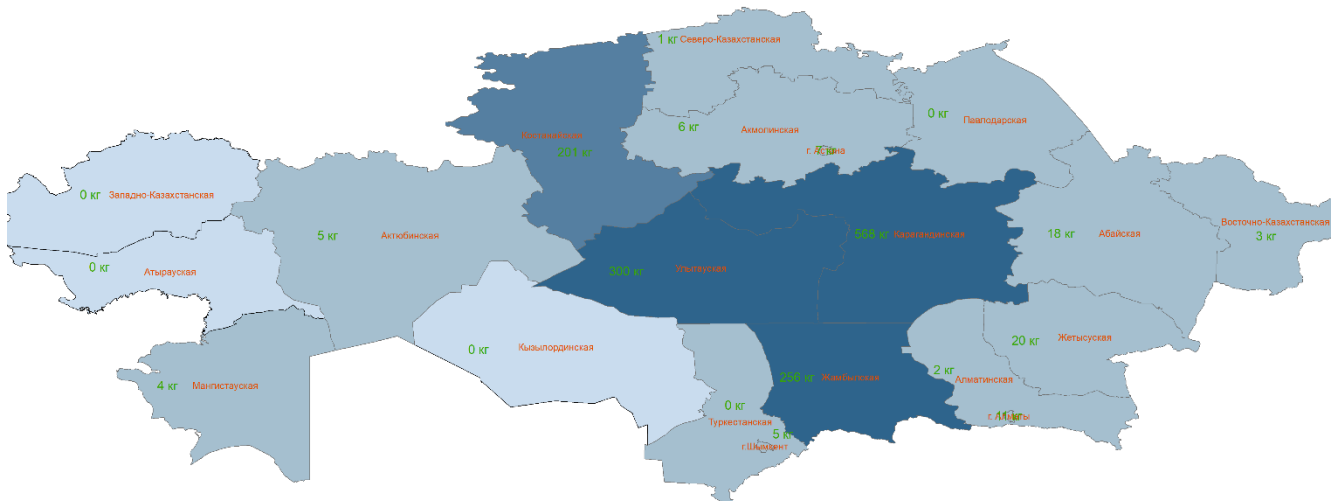
Drug situation in Azerbaijan during the 1st quarter of 2026 is characterized by dominance of cannabis-group drugs, which account for 85% of total seizures. A significant portion of these substances is delivered in transit via the Southern route. Opioid drugs account for about 7%, while synthetic drugs represent about 8% of the total. Criminal groups are highly organized and employ modern smuggling methods, including unmanned aerial vehicles and concealment of drugs within legal cargo. In a number of cases, there are indications of transnational coordination of criminal activity. In this regard, law enforcement agencies continue to prioritize combating channels for illicit trafficking of drugs entering from the south, including cannabis-group drugs.

REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

Table of narcotic drug seizures in the 1st quarter of 2026 (in kg)

Region	Cannabis group	Opium group	Synthetic group	Total
Abai region	18.0			18.0
Akmola region	5.3		0.3	5.6
Aktobe region	4.0		0.5	4.5
Almaty region			2.5	2.5
East Kazakhstan region	3.2			3.2
Almaty			11.1	11.1
Astana	5.0		2.0	7.0
Shymkent	0.0		4.8	4.8
Zhambyl region	254.7		1.0	255.7
Zhetysu region			20.0	20.0
Karaganda region	5.4		562.9	568.3
Kostanay region	200.0	0.1	1.1	201.2
Mangistau region	3.7		0.0	3.7
Pavlodar Region	0.3		0.1	0.4
North Kazakhstan region			0.5	0.5
Turkestan region	0.0		0.0	0.0
Ulytau region	300.0			300.0
Total	799.633	0.06	606.654	1406.347

Map of narcotic drug seizures in the 1st quarter of 2026



The following key trends have been identified based on data on drug seizures in Kazakhstan in January–March 2026:

1. Synthetic drugs and marijuana accounted for the majority of seizures; synthetic group (mephedrone, α -PVP, methamphetamine) were seized in quantities of at least 620 kg (including 500 kg of “finished crystallized product” in Karaganda region). Individual shipments reached 40 kg, 20 kg, 8 kg, and 4.5 kg. Seizures of cannabis group (marijuana, hashish) exceeded 940 kg. Record confiscations: 300 kg in Ulytau region, 200 kg in Kostanay region, 107 and 100 kg in Zhambyl region, 43.6 kg, 18 kg, and others. Opium products are virtually not present (less than 0.1 kg) – isolated minor incidents.

2. Large-scale underground production of synthetic drugs. At least 5 drug labs have been dismantled (Karaganda – 2, Zhetysu, Almaty region, Shymkent). Over 10 tons of precursors seized (4 tons, 5 tons, 1 ton, 800 kg). Production is geared toward domestic market and online sales (Telegram channels, stashes).

3. Local crime predominates, and proportion of foreigners is low. Overwhelming majority of persons arrested are citizens of Kazakhstan, often with prior convictions. Only one case mentions an international operation.

4. Active crackdowns on trafficking and smuggling. Dozens of instances of “sale” and “smuggling” have been recorded (including transportation of 200 kg of marijuana concealed in a truck and 300 kg from southern regions). Couriers and stashers are regularly apprehended with quantities ranging from 5 g to 2.85 kg.

5. Geographical concentration. Main regions: Karaganda, Zhambyl, Almaty, Kostanay, and Ulytau regions, and the cities of Almaty, Astana, and Shymkent.

Conclusions:

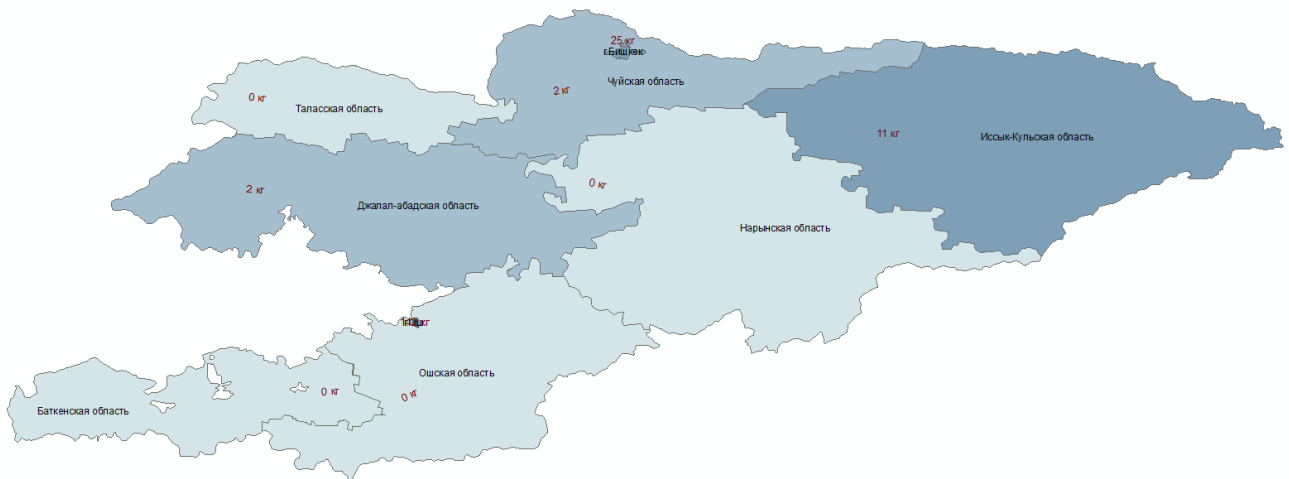
Drug situation in Kazakhstan is characterized by coexistence of large-scale marijuana trafficking (primarily from southern regions) and rapid growth of clandestinely produced synthetic drugs using cheap precursors, which are displacing opiates. Law enforcement agencies have been highly effective in dismantling laboratories and seizing large shipments, but there remains a steady demand for “synthetics” and cannabis.

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Table of narcotic drug seizures in the 1st quarter of 2026 (in kg)

Region	Cannabis group	Opium group	Potent substances	Synthetic group	Total
Bishkek	11.14		0.1	13.3	24.5
Osh	120.7	20		1	141.7
Jalal-Abad region	1.8				1.8
Issyk-Kul region	11.18				11.2
Chui region	1.78			0.1	1.9
TOTAL (kg)	146.61	20	0.1	14.4	181.1

Map of narcotic drug seizures in the 1st quarter of 2026 (in kg)



According to reports published in mass media, law enforcement agencies in the Kyrgyz Republic recorded 31 reports of drug seizures in the first quarter. A total of 181 kg of drugs were seized.

Key trends

Dominance of Afghan hashish and marijuana. Cannabis-group drugs rank first in terms of seizure volume. Total weight of seized marijuana and hashish exceeds 146 kg, making them primary items on black market.

Kyrgyzstan as a key transit hub. Drug trafficking in the country is predominantly transit-based. Large shipments, particularly of hashish, arrive from neighboring Afghanistan and continue onward via Kyrgyzstan.

High levels of transnational organized crime. Well-structured international criminal groups are active within Kyrgyzstan. For example, in January 2026 a transnational organized

crime group was dismantled, comprising citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. Another incident confirms joint efforts of Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies with their counterparts from neighboring countries. Foreign nationals (from Kazakhstan and a “neighboring state”) were involved in two separate operations and were arrested for smuggling and trafficking.

Growth of underground production. Clandestine laboratories have been detected in the country. In one instance, a laboratory producing hashish oil was dismantled, and a Telegram channel used to distribute it was identified. Additionally, 8 kg of methamphetamine were seized, indicating possible local production.

Large shipments and retail sales. In the first quarter, both exceptionally large shipments (136 kg and 7 kg of hashish) and smaller quantities intended for retail sale were intercepted. At the same time, contactless method of distribution via “stashers” widely used, which is facilitated through the Internet.

Conclusions:

In the first quarter of 2026 Kyrgyzstan remained a key hub for drug trafficking, primarily of Afghan hashish. The country is a transit territory where international criminal groups operate. At the same time, there is a clear trend toward localization of drug production and a shift to contactless distribution methods, including online sales, which points to the need for further strengthening regional cooperation in combating drugs.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Table of narcotic drug seizures in the 1st quarter of 2026 (in kg)

Region	Cannabis group	Cocaine group	Opium group	Potent subst.	Synthetic group	Total
Altai Krai	5.6	0	0	0	1.3	6.8
Amur region	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arkhangelsk region	0	0.1	0	0	3.5	3.6
Astrakhan region	0	0	0	2	0	2
Bryansk region	3	0.3	0	0	1.7	5
Volgograd region	0	0	0	0	1.5	1.5
Vologda region	0	0	0	0	4.9	4.9
Voronezh region	25	0	0.2	0	2.5	27.7
Moscow	7.6	1.6	0	30	7.7	46.9
St. Petersburg	37.4	41.8	0	0	12.8	92
Sevastopol	5.6	0	0	0	1.1	6.7
Jewish AR	7	0	0	0	0	7
Zabaikalsky Krai	8.3	0	0	0	0.1	8.5
Ivanovo region	0	0	0	2.5	3.5	6
Irkutsk region	0	0	0	0.9	0.2	1.1
Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria	5.8	0	0	0	0.4	6.2
Kaliningrad region	0.5	0	0	0	14.5	15
Kaluga region	0	0	0	0	262	262
Kemerovo region	0	0	0.2	0	15.7	15.9
Костромская область	32	0	0	0	0	32
Krasnodar Krai	20	0.2	0	9.9	0.6	30.7
Krasnoyarsk Krai	0.9	0	0	0	7.3	8.2
Kurgan region	0	0	0	0	3	3
Kursk region	0	0	0	0	8	8
Leningrad region	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.5
Lipetsk region	0	0	0	0	9.3	9.3
Moscow region	65.7	0	0	0	52.7	118.4
Murmansk region	0.1	0	0	0	4.6	4.7
Nizhny Novgorod region	33.7	0	0	0	513	546.7
Novosibirsk region	2.5	0.3	0	0	10.2	13
Omsk region	0	0	1	0	0.6	1.6
Orenburg region	8	0	0	0	0.5	8.6
Oryol region	3.9	0	0	0	0	3.9
Penza region	99.8	0	0	0	3	102.8
Pskov region	0	0	0	0	25	25
Republic of Adygea	1.5	0	0	0	0.4	1.9
Republic of Bashkortostan	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1
Republic of Dagestan	257	0	0	0	34.8	291.8
Republic of Ingushetia	0	0	0.2	0	8.1	8.3
Republic of Komi	1.3	0	0	0	2	3.3
Republic of Crimea	0	0	0	0	0.6	0.6
Republic of Mordovia	0	0	0	0	0.2	0.2
Republic of Sakha	0	0	0	0	2.5	2.5
Republic of Tatarstan	0	0	0	0	1	1
Republic of Tyva	18.5	0	0	0	0	18.5

Republic of Udmurtia	0	0	0	0	16	16
Rostov region	1.2	0	0	35.3	14.3	50.8
Ryazan region	0.1	0	0	0	90.5	90.6
Samara region	3.5	0	0.2	0	73.3	77
Sverdlovsk region	0	0	0	0	3.1	3.1
Smolensk region	0	0	0	0	65.4	65.4
Stavropol Krai	0	0	0	0	16.2	16.2
Tambov region	0.1	0	0	0	8.7	8.8
Tver region	40	0	0	0	0	40
Tomsk region	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.1
Tula region	48.6	0	0	0	3.4	52
Tyumen region	0	0	0	0	5	5
Ulyanovsk region	2.5	0.6	0	0	9	12.1
Khabarovsk Krai	15.2	0	0	0	1.7	16.8
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	0	0	0	0	23.4	23.4
Chelyabinsk region	2	0	0	0	15.1	17.1
Yaroslavl region	0	0	0	0	11.9	11.9
Total	764.1	44.8	1.9	80.6	1378.4	2269.8

The following trends were identified based on analysis of 235 documented cases of drug and precursor seizures in Russia in January–March 2026:

1. Dominance of synthetic drugs. Synthetic drugs (mephedrone, N-methylephedrone, α -PVP, methadone, amphetamine, carfentanil, LSD, MDMA, ephedrone, clephedrone, etc.) account for more than **75% of total volume of seized substances** (approximately **over 1,200 kg** in major cases alone). Record seizures:

- **260 kg** of N-methylephedrone (Kaluga region, laboratory)
- **65.6 kg** of N-methylephedrone (Ryazan region, laboratory)
- **51 kg** of α -PVP (Samara region)
- **40 kg** of mephedrone (Karaganda region, Kazakhstan)
- **20 kg** of mephedrone (Moscow region, laboratory)
- **15 kg** of mephedrone (Udmurtia, laboratory)
- **14 kg** of mephedrone (Kemerovo region, laboratory)
- **12 kg** of mephedrone (Chelyabinsk region)
- **11 kg** of methadone (Moscow region, laboratory)
- **10 kg** of carfentanil (Moscow region)

2. A significant portion of seizures consists of cannabis products. **More than 750 kg** of marijuana, hashish, hashish oil, and cannabis were seized. Largest seizures:

- **130 kg** of marijuana (Dagestan, smuggled from abroad)
- **122 kg** of marijuana (Dagestan, smuggling)
- **61 kg** of marijuana (Penza region)
- **29 kg** of marijuana (Kostroma region)
- **24 kg** of hashish (St. Petersburg, foreign organized crime group)
- **15 kg** of marijuana (Krasnodar Krai)

3. Opium and cocaine groups are insignificant. **Heroin** is seized in small quantities (a few kilograms), often mixed with synthetic drugs. The largest shipment – **1.2 kg** in Omsk region. **Cocaine** is rarely encountered, but quantities are large: **40 kg** in St. Petersburg (a container from Latin America), **1.7 kg** in the same city, and **0.6–0.99 kg** in Moscow and Ulyanovsk.

4. Potent substances are a growing threat. Pregabalin, sibutramine, tramadol, and tropicamide are being seized in large quantities:

- **30 kg** of pregabalin (Moscow, organized crime group)
- **8 kg** of pregabalin (Krasnodar Krai)
- **2.5 kg** of pregabalin (Ivanovo region)
- **1.9 kg** of pregabalin (Krasnodar)
- **0.87 kg** of sibutramine (Irkutsk region, mail)

5. Large-scale clandestine production of synthetic drugs. **At least 30 drug laboratories** were dismantled in various regions (Kaluga, Ryazan, Samara, Kemerovo, Moscow, Sverdlovsk, Tyumen, and others). **Tons of precursors** (1,000 L, 880 L, 175 L, etc.), chemical reactors, vacuum pumps, and protective suits were seized. Production is targeted at domestic market and sold through online stores.

6. Smuggling and international channels. **Southern direction** recorded in Azerbaijan, but in Russia smuggling is detected from the Middle East (Dagestan: 122 kg of marijuana from a “Middle Eastern country”), Latin America (40 kg of cocaine shipped by sea to St. Petersburg), Thailand (1 kg of marijuana in a package). **Transit through Kazakhstan** into Russia has also been detected (for example, arrest of a citizen of Kazakhstan with 5 kg of α -PVP in Kyrgyzstan). **Interregional couriers** are actively operating within Russia (residents of one region transport drugs to another).

7. A high rate of organized crime and recidivism. Most major cases involve individuals with **prior convictions**. **Group-based nature** – more than 40 incidents involving 2–7 people, often with specific roles assigned (coordinator, packer, stasher, courier). **Foreign nationals** appear in over 20 episodes: citizens of Central Asia, the South Caucasus, Egypt, and Latin America.

8. Geographical concentration. Major “hot spots” in Russia:

- **Moscow and Moscows region** – leaders in the number of cases and laboratories.
- **St. Petersburg** – large shipments of cocaine, hashish, and synthetic drugs.
- **Dagestan** – smuggling of marijuana and mephedrone from abroad.
- **Samara, Ryazan, Kaluga, and Kemerovo regions** – clandestine laboratories.
- **Krasnodar Krai, Rostov region, Penza region** – major seizures of marijuana and synthetic drugs.

9. Sales methods. **Contactless sales via “stashers”** using online stores, messaging apps, and cryptocurrencies are the dominant method. Couriers carrying shipments ranging from a few grams to 2–5 kg are regularly arrested. **Mail shipments** (potent substances, synthetics) and **smuggling in trucks** (disguised as agricultural products) are also common.

10. Trends and forecast. Compared to previous periods, there has been an **increase in the volume of synthetic drugs seized** (particularly mephedrone and α -PVP), a rise in the number of dismantled laboratories, and an expansion of geographic scope of illicit production. Opiates and cocaine account for a negligible share, confirming the global trend of replacing plant-based drugs with synthetic ones. Potent substances (such as pregabalin) are emerging as a distinct segment of black market. Further intensification of efforts to combat online trafficking and international cooperation is expected (for example, a joint operation by the Russian and Belarusian Ministries of Internal Affairs targeting a methadone laboratory).

Conclusions:

Drug situation in Russia in the 1st quarter of 2026 is characterized by **overwhelming prevalence of synthetic drugs**, large-scale underground production, active use of internet technologies, and a high level of organized crime. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that seized quantity of carfentanil poses one of the most serious threats to public health. The substance’s toxicity makes every shipment potentially lethal to millions of people. Law enforcement agencies are observing an increase in organized distribution methods involving couriers, “stashers,” and online stores. The situation calls for tighter controls on the movement of precursors and international cooperation to shut down supply channels.

Cannabis group remains significant, primarily due to smuggling and local cultivation. Opiates and cocaine are on the periphery.

REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan remains a critical link in drug trafficking route from Afghanistan to Russia and European countries. Virtually all major seizures involved interception of shipments in transit. The main trafficking routes identified during the reporting period led to neighboring Uzbekistan and beyond.

The most significant incidents illustrating this trend:

- **Attempt to cross border:** On 29 January, an armed group of Afghan smugglers attempted to cross into Tajikistan. Three intruders were killed during the firefight, and a large shipment of hashish and opium, along with weapons and ammunition, was seized.
- **Large seizures at border:** Other smuggling attempts have also been foiled since the beginning of the year. For example, 46 bags of hashish were seized from a detained Afghan national on 10 February. And **58 kg** of drugs, including 30 kg of opium, 19 kg of hashish, and 9 kg of heroin, were seized during an operation in the Shamsiddin Shohin area on 19 February.
- **Transit through Uzbekistan:** An attempt to obtain a particularly large shipment was foiled in Uzbekistan in March. A total of **77 kg** of hard drugs, including more than 8 kg of heroin and 54 kg of opium, were smuggled in from Tajikistan and seized.
- **Activities within the country:** Active law enforcement operations are also being carried out within Tajikistan. Significant quantities were seized during the quarter, including **20 kg of hashish** in Dushanbe, approximately 2 kg of hashish in the north of the country, and others.

Conclusions:

Drug situation in Tajikistan in the first quarter of 2026 was challenging, marked by mounting pressure from Afghan drug production and a high level of armed resistance from smugglers. Despite this, law enforcement agencies succeeded in effectively intercepting large shipments of drugs, preventing them from reaching black markets. A new threat is the rapid growth of smuggling and supply of synthetic drugs, primarily methamphetamine, which requires adaptation of countermeasures.

TURKMENISTAN

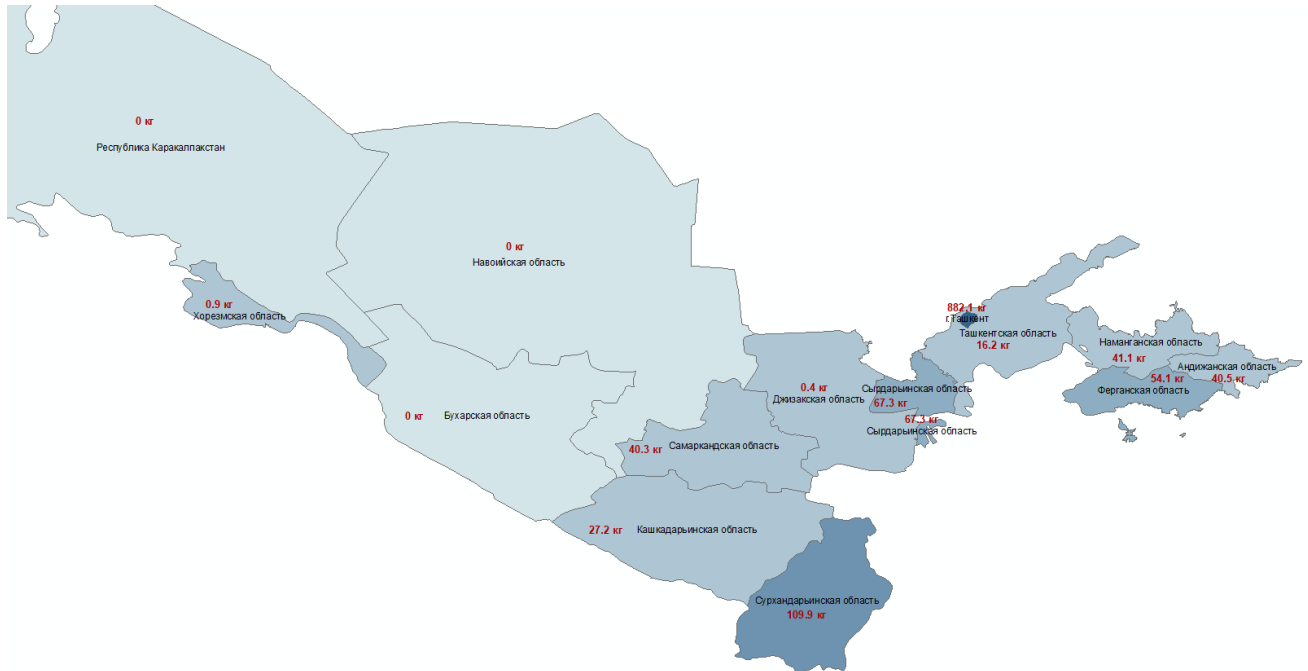
No information regarding major drug seizures in Turkmenistan was published in media during the first quarter.

REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

Table of narcotic drug seizures in the 1st quarter of 2026 (in kg)

Region	Cannabis group	Opium group	Potent substances	Synthetic group	Total
Andijan region	9.48	1.02	3.00	27.01	40.51
Tashkent	89.18	15.10	707.93	69.88	882.10
Jizzakh region	0.36				0.36
Kashkadarya region	22.58	4.60		0.02	27.20
Navoi region				0.01	0.01
Namangan region	41.11				41.11
Republic of Karakalpakstan	0.02				0.02
Samarkand region	14.96	25.19	0.11		40.26
Surkhandarya region	83.19	26.68			109.87
Syr Darya region		62.77	4.51		67.28
Tashkent region	9.32	1.94		4.94	16.20
Fergana region	21.83	29.20	3.11		54.13
Khorezm region	0.01	0.86			0.87
TOTAL	292.03	167.36	718.66	101.86	1279.91

Map of narcotic drug seizures in the 1st quarter of 2026 (in kg)



More than 500 kg of narcotics, psychotropic substances, and precursors were seized in Uzbekistan during the first quarter of 2026 (excluding a large shipment of 700 kg of sibutramine, which consists of finished pharmaceutical products).

Key trend:

Uzbekistan remains primarily a **transit and consumer market for conventional drugs** (hashish, opium) originating from Afghanistan and Tajikistan. At the same time, the share of **synthetic drugs and potent substances**, production of which is partially based domestically, is growing rapidly.

Dominance of cannabis group (hashish and marijuana).

Hashish is the most commonly seized drug. Largest shipments: **64 kg** (Tashkent, transshipped to Russia), **72.3 kg** (Surkhandarya, smuggled from Afghanistan disguised as potatoes), **20 kg** (Namangan, from Kyrgyzstan), **19.17 kg, 14.96 kg** (from Tajikistan), **10.74 kg** (from Tajikistan in a car's fuel tank), **9.8 kg** (Tashkent), **9.48 kg** (Andijan, from Kyrgyzstan), **5 kg** (carried across the Syr Darya river from Tajikistan), etc. Main routes for import of hashish: **southern and eastern directions** (Afghanistan → Surkhandarya, Tajikistan → Fergana Valley, Kyrgyzstan → Andijan/Namangan).

Marijuana and cannabis are seized in smaller quantities but on a regular basis: **21.7 kg** (Kashkadarya, prepared for sale), **3.5 kg** (Tashkent region), **4 kg** of cannabis (Tashkent), etc.

Opium group – significant volumes, but lags behind cannabis.

Opium was seized in quantities of at least **150 kg**. The largest shipments: **54.46 kg** (Syrdarya, smuggled in from Tajikistan), **14.76 kg** (Samarkand, from Tajikistan), **14.68 kg** (Surkhandarya, a teacher received it from Tajikistan), **12 kg** (Surkhandarya, from a pensioner leading a group) **9.98 kg, 9.4 kg, 7.23 kg, 5.02 kg**, etc.

Heroin was seized in relatively small amounts (about 10–11 kg), but some individual shipments were substantial: **8.31 kg** (Syrdarya, along with opium), **1.03 kg** (Samarkand, sold for \$38,000), **1.02 kg** (Andijan, sold for \$18,500).

Uzbekistan is still a key transit point for Afghan opium and heroin bound for Russia and other countries. Opium dominates over heroin, which may indicate an intermediate stage of trafficking (raw material is processed further).

Synthetic drugs – a new and growing threat.

- **Mephedrone** – leader among synthetic drugs. Largest seizures: **26 kg** (Andijan, laboratory + 590 liters of precursors), **2 kg** (Tashkent, student laboratory), **1.3 kg** (Tashkent, from a construction worker), **1.01 kg** (Andijan, group), **2.024 kg** (Tashkent, logistics operator shipping to Tajikistan), **1 kg** (Tashkent, laboratory).

- **α-PVP** (“salt”): **52.7 kg** (Tashkent, large-scale laboratory with a stash of 49.9 kg), **4.9 kg** (Tashkent region), **4.81 kg** (Tashkent, transported by car), **0.641 kg** (airport, a citizen of a neighboring country from Bishkek).
- **Clephedrone** – also mentioned (350 g, 1.2 kg, etc.).

An **underground synthetic drug production** network has been set up in Uzbekistan (at least 4–5 laboratories have been dismantled). Synthetic drugs are partially imported (from Kyrgyzstan, via air passengers), but the bulk is produced locally using imported precursors. Distribution methods include Telegram bots and stashes.

Potent substances – a massive black market.

- **Sibutramine** – **700 kg** (nearly 29,000 packages of weight-loss drugs) were seized in Tashkent from a seller with a prior criminal record.
- **Pregabalin** – seizures: **3.36 kg** (Gulistan, laboratory), **3.5 kg** (Tashkent, laboratory), **2.79 kg**, **0.11 kg**, etc. Also in the form of “Regapen” and “Zardex” capsules.
- **Regapen, Zardex** – shipments numbering in thousands (up to 10,000 tablets) smuggled from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
- **Tropicamide** – 150 units + 1 liter of liquid (Gulistan) seized.

Potent substances account for a significant share of illicit market. Their production and smuggling are well organized, often involving clandestine laboratories and international trafficking routes (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan).

Smuggling and external channels

Main methods by which drugs enter Uzbekistan:

Direction	Types of drugs	Methods
Afghanistan	Hashish, opium	Crossing the Amu Darya river, in trucks carrying a cover load (potatoes), through Kunduz province
Tajikistan	Opium, heroin, hashish	Stashes in fuel tanks, smuggling bags across border, vehicles, and boats across the Syr Darya river
Kyrgyzstan	Hashish, mephedrone, α-PVP, potent substances	Cross-border smuggling, airline passengers (Bishkek–Tashkent), stashes at border

SGB officers, customs officials, and border guards are actively cracking down on these smuggling routes, as evidenced by dozens of arrests made in the act.

Nature of crime

- **Previous convictions** – these individuals are involved in most major cases (especially those related to hashish and opium). They often have two or three prior convictions.
- **Group actions** – featured in over 20 episodes (couples, siblings, organized groups with assigned roles).

- **Foreign citizens** – citizens of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and one citizen of a neighboring country (likely Kazakhstan or Russia) were detained while transporting α -PVP by air.
- **Corruption component** – one episode involves a schoolteacher who received opium from Tajikistan.

Clandestine laboratories and manufacturing

At least 7 drug laboratories were dismantled during the quarter:

- In Gulistan – production of pregabalin and tropicamide.
- In Tashkent – 3 laboratories producing mephedrone and α -PVP (one in the basement of a residential building, another run by students, and a third in the Sergeli district with 3.5 kg of pregabalin and 45 liters of precursors).
- In Andijan – a large laboratory with 26 kg of mephedrone and 590 liters of precursors.
- In Kokand – an opium production laboratory (7.23 kg).
- In Tashkent region – a laboratory with 2.8 kg of synthetic drugs and 11.5 liters of precursors, and a stash of 49.9 kg of synthetic drugs and 48 liters of precursors.

Tons of precursors (1,590 kg, 590 L, 48 L, 45 L, 11.5 L, etc.), chemical equipment, and reactors were seized.

Geographical concentration

Regions with the highest crime rates:

- **Fergana Valley** (Fergana, Namangan, and Andijan regions) serves as a major hub for smuggling from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, with large shipments of hashish and opium.
- **Tashkent and Tashkent region** – center for production of synthetic drugs and potent substances, and wholesale distribution.
- **Surkhandarya region** – main gateway for Afghan hashish and opium (via the Amu Darya river).
- **Samarkand, Syr Darya, and Kashkadarya regions** – transit areas with regular seizures.

Sales methods

- **Contactless stashes** via Telegram bots are widespread (Tashkent, Navoi, Kashkadarya).
- **Face-to-face transactions** (direct sales) – common for opium and heroin.
- **Mail and freight shipments** – use of logistics companies (shipping mephedrone to Tajikistan), air passengers (capsules disguised as sports supplements).
- **Disguise in foods** (potatoes, confectionery).

Conclusions:

Drugs situation in Uzbekistan in the first quarter of 2026 was characterized by **continued transit of Afghan hashish and opium** across the southern and eastern borders, while **synthetic drugs** (mephedrone, α -PVP) and **potent substances** (pregabalin, sibutramine) **were rapidly gaining ground**. Law enforcement agencies (State Security Service, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Customs) have demonstrated high effectiveness in intercepting large shipments and dismantling clandestine laboratories. Major challenges remain unchanged: with a border stretching 7,089 km, Uzbekistan shares borders with all Central Asian countries as well as Afghanistan; consequently, there is smuggling from Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and a rise in domestic production of synthetic drugs and illicit trafficking of pharmaceuticals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CARICC's role in coordinating regional efforts

Strengthen information and analytical function of CARICC by developing a unified regional platform for rapid exchange of data on new psychoactive substances, laboratories, and drug trafficking routes, including further expanding functionality of CARICC's Seizures Portal.

Develop early warning mechanisms under the auspices of CARICC to ensure that participating countries are promptly informed of new smuggling schemes, including those involving digital technologies and crypto-assets.

Facilitate coordination of joint operations based on analytical products by CARICC, including strengthening cross-border cooperation and exchange of intelligence.

2. Priority areas for joint action by participating countries under CARICC coordination

Strengthen measures to identify and combat channels for online drug trafficking, including monitoring messaging apps, dark web platforms, and financial transactions involving digital assets.

Enhance effectiveness of controls over precursor and chemical substances used for illicit synthesis of narcotic drugs.

Expand the use of modern technical equipment and surveillance technologies to identify and eradicate drug crops and covert trafficking routes.

Streamline interagency cooperation in combating illicit trafficking of pharmaceuticals and controlled substances.

3. Developing a regional response to emerging threats

In coordination with CARICC) develop a regional approach to countering illicit trafficking of synthetic opioids, including carfentanil and its analogues, with a focus on training specialists and upgrading laboratory infrastructure.

Continue to carry out joint prevention and awareness campaigns aimed at reducing demand for synthetic drugs and new psychoactive substances, with a particular focus on youth.

