

ALL BRITISH MUSLIMS/IMAMS ESPECIALLY YEMENIS AND SOMALIS SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF THIS NEW BAN (Dr Katme)

Defiant May bans drug in terror link: Home Secretary overrules own advisers as she bans herbal stimulant khat

- **Amphetamine-like substance is already banned in most European countries**
- **Mrs May said that, if she did not act, Britain could become a transit route**
- **Fears proceeds from selling the drug could be fuelling extremist groups**

BY James Slack



Ban: Home Secretary Theresa May has banned the African herbal stimulant Khat

Theresa May yesterday over-ruled her own drug advisers to ban a herbal stimulant linked to Islamist extremism. The Home Secretary said that, if she did not act, Britain could become a transit route for illegally shipping khat into mainland Europe.

The amphetamine-like substance is already banned in most European countries, including France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Ireland.

Security experts have also warned that proceeds from selling the drug could be fuelling Islamist extremist groups, such as al-Shabab.

Mrs May said that khat, which is popular among Somalis living in the UK, would become a Class C drug like anabolic steroids.

The move will be controversial because it goes against the advice of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. In January the ACMD said there was 'insufficient evidence' that khat caused health problems. The panel also found 'no evidence' that khat, made from leaves and shoots of a shrub cultivated in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, was directly linked with serious or organised crime. But, in a statement to MPs, Mrs May said the risks posed could have been underestimated. She said: 'Failure to take decisive action and change the UK's legislative position on khat would place the UK at a serious risk of becoming a single, regional hub for [its] illegal onward trafficking. 'Seizures of khat transiting the UK en route to the Netherlands have already been increasing in size and frequency since the Dutch ban earlier this year.' Khat is imported from Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen. About 2,560 tonnes of khat were imported in 2011-12 with a value of £13.8m.

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It is usually chewed at social events in family homes, at community parties or at legal khat cafes. Users chew one or two bundles of khat for up to six hours at a time to produce a mild stimulant effect. Somali groups in the UK had told the ACMD that use of khat was a 'significant social problem' and said it caused medical issues and family breakdowns.

The ACMD said withdrawal symptoms such as tiredness and depression were associated with khat. The Home Office said the ban was intended to 'protect vulnerable members of our communities' and would be brought in at the 'earliest possible opportunity'.



Terror links: Bundles of khat on sale in Mogadishu, Somalia. Security experts have warned that proceeds from selling the drug could be fuelling Islamist extremist groups, such as al-Shabab

The decision risks sparking a new row between the government and the science world. Previous decisions to over-rule the ACMD on cannabis and Ecstasy drew a furious response which threatened to split the committee.

Last week, Professor David Nutt, former head of the ACMD, said banning the substance would show 'contempt for reason and evidence'.

Last night, police suggested users would escape with a warning the first time they were caught. Chief Constable Andy Bliss, spokesman for the Association of Chief police officers, said: 'As with other forms of drug misuse, the police response will be proportionate.'

'Activity is likely to be enhanced where there is also intelligence about associated crime or anti-social behaviour. There may be a case for police action to follow similar lines to the approach used for cannabis possession offences, where a first offence by an adult generally attracts a warning and a second the issuing of a penalty notice before escalating to arrest and prosecution.'

'We will explore this possibility with the Home Office and with the College of Policing over forthcoming weeks.'