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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 - Islamic State's Khorasan Province (ISIS-K)

Aka The Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham-Khorasan Province; the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Khorasan; Islamic State of Iraq and Levant in Khorasan Province; Islamic State Khurasan; ISIS-K; IS-Khorasan; ISIS Wilayat Khorasan; ISIL's South Asia Branch; South Asian Chapter of ISIL; ISIL Khorasan

Description: Islamic State's Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) was designated as an FTO on January 14, 2016. The group is based in Afghanistan, conducts operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and is composed primarily of former members of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. ISIS-K's senior leadership pledged allegiance to then-ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, which was accepted in 2015. The group has carried out suicide bombings, small arms attacks, and kidnappings in Afghanistan against civilians. ISIS-K has also claimed responsibility for attacks on civilians and government officials in Pakistan.

Activities: In 2019, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for an attack at the Ministry of Communications in Kabul, killing seven persons; a suicide bombing at a wedding hall in a Shiite minority neighborhood in Kabul, killing 80 people and injuring 154 others; and a bombing of a mosque in Nangarhar province killed at least 70 people. Also in 2019, ISIS-K suffered a series of major defeats and lost much of its territory in Nangarhar in the face of attacks by both the Defeat-ISIS Coalition and Taliban forces.

In 2020, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for an attack on a Sikh house of worship in Kabul that killed 25 worshipers and wounded 8 others. After that attack, Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security arrested the then-leader of ISIS-K, Abdullah Orakzai, and two other high-ranking commanders. Also in 2020, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for an attack on a prison in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, that killed at least 29 people and injured more than 50 others and a suicide bombing outside an education center in Kabul that killed at least 18 people and injured at least 57 others.

In 2021, ISIS-K attacks increased following the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan. In August, ISIS-K conducted a suicide bombing against the Kabul airport as the United States and other governments conducted a large-scale evacuation of their citizens and vulnerable Afghans from the country. At least 185 people were killed in the attack, including 13 U.S. service members supporting evacuation operations; at least another 150 people, including 18 U.S. service members, were wounded.

ISIS-K claimed responsibility for a June car bombing in Kabul that killed seven persons and wounded six others, as well as for a July rocket attack near the presidential palace ahead of a speech. Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for multiple IED attacks in Jalalabad in September that killed at least 35 Taliban members and 3 civilians; an October suicide bombing of a mosque in Kunduz that killed at least 50 civilians and injured 143 others; an October suicide bombing of a mosque in Kandahar that killed at least 47 civilians and injured at least 70 more; and a November attack against a military hospital in Kabul that killed at least 20 people and injured dozens more.

Strength: ISIS-K is estimated to have between 3,000 and 5,000 fighters.

Location/Area of Operation: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia

Funding and External Aid: ISIS-K receives some funding from ISIS-core. Additional funds come from illicit criminal commerce, taxes, and extortion on the local population and businesses.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the Islamic State's Khorasan Province (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2021)

Countries:

Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

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