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Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Aka IMU.

Description: Designated as a FTO on September 25, 2000, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) seeks to overthrow the Uzbek government and establish an Islamic state. For most of the past decade, however, the group has recruited members from other Central Asian states and Europe. Despite its objective to set up an Islamic state in Uzbekistan, the group operates primarily along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and in northern Afghanistan, where it fights against international forces. Several IMU members are also suspected of having traveled to Syria to fight with terrorist groups.

The IMU has had a decade-long relationship with al-Qa'ida (AQ), the Taliban, and Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan. Top IMU leaders have integrated themselves into the Taliban's shadow government in Afghanistan's northern provinces.

In August 2015, IMU leader Usman Ghazi publicly announced the group's shift of allegiance to ISIS. Numerous IMU members, including possibly Ghazi himself, were subsequently reported to have been killed as a result of hostilities between ISIS and its former Taliban allies.

Activities: Since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU has been focused predominantly on attacks against international forces in Afghanistan. In late 2009, NATO forces reported an increase in IMU-affiliated FTFs in Afghanistan. In 2010, the IMU claimed responsibility for the September 19 ambush that killed 25 Tajik troops in Tajikistan. On June 8, 2014, IMU claimed responsibility for an attack on Karachi's international airport that resulted in the deaths of at least 39 people.

Throughout 2015, the IMU actively threatened the Afghan government, specifically in the northern part of the country. In April, the group released a video showing IMU members beheading an individual they claimed to be an Afghan soldier and threatened to behead Hazara (a historically persecuted ethnic group in Afghanistan) hostages, in supposed retaliation for the Afghan security forces capture of several female members of IMU. Also in 2015, Uzbek refugee Fazliddin Kurbanov was convicted and sentenced in 2016 by a U.S. federal court to 25 years in prison for planning a bomb attack in Idaho. Kurbanov had been in contact with members of IMU online, seeking advice on how to make explosives and discussing attacking U.S. military bases.

In June 2016, a faction of the IMU announced its continued commitment to the Taliban and AQ, marking a split with its leader Ghazi and the rest of the group, which announced its loyalty to ISIS in 2015 and has since cooperated with Islamic State's Khorasan Province. IMU did not claim responsibility for any attacks in 2018.

Strength: The group consists of 200 to 300 members.

Location/Area of Operation: The group operates in Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Funding and External Aid: The IMU receives support from a large Uzbek diaspora, terrorist organizations, and donors from Europe, Central and South Asia, and the Middle East.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2018)



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