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Country Report on Terrorism 2013 - Chapter 2 - Ethiopia

Overview: The Government of Ethiopia viewed instability in Somalia as a critical national security threat and maintained a defensive military presence along the Somali border to stem potential infiltration of violent extremists into Ethiopia. Ethiopian military forces continued counterterrorism operations in Somalia in partnership with the Government of Somalia and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and were instrumental in combating al-Shabaab in southern and central Somalia. At the end of 2013, Ethiopia committed to having its troops join AMISOM. The Ethiopian government remained concerned about groups it has designated domestically as terrorist groups, including the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and Ginbot 7. The Ethiopian government collaborated with the United States on a number of regional security issues.

2013 Terrorist Incidents: On October 13, two suspected al-Shabaab operatives, identified by the Ethiopian government as Somali nationals, detonated an explosives-laden vest while preparing for a suicide attack against an unspecified target in Addis Ababa, killing both operatives. Police immediately detained at least three individuals associated with the plot, and announced in December that five additional suspects had been arrested.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The Ethiopian government passed the Antiterrorism Proclamation (ATP) in 2009, followed by legislation in 2011 designating five organizations as terrorist groups – including al-Qa'ida (AQ), al-Shabaab, the ONLF, OLF, and Ginbot 7. While the ATP has been used to prosecute and convict a small number of individuals associated with terrorist activity, it has also been used to prosecute and convict journalists, opposition political figures, and activists. International observers, including the U.S. government, have also raised concerns over the conduct of other trials against members of Ethiopia's Muslim community where evidence presented appeared to be indicative of acts of a political nature rather than terrorism.

Ethiopia's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) has broad authority for intelligence, border security, and criminal investigations, and is responsible for overall counterterrorism management. The Ethiopian Federal Police (EFP) work with the NISS on counterterrorism issues. To improve its counterterrorism capacity, Ethiopia participated in programs funded through the U.S. Department of State's Regional Strategic Initiative and Antiterrorism Assistance program (ATA). Through ATA, Ethiopia received training and related equipment to support capacity building on leadership and management, border security, and investigative skill development.

Ethiopia employed biometric security measures at international airports and most major points of entry, and is continuing to add such capabilities at additional border crossings.

Significant law enforcement actions included:

- In February, the Ethiopian government reported that security personnel had disrupted a nascent al-Shabaab offshoot cell in Ethiopia named Hareketul Shebabil Fi Biladel Hijeraiten.
- In March, the Ethiopian government announced that security personnel had arrested eight al-Shabaab members accused of plotting to kidnap UN workers.
- In April, prosecutors charged 28 individuals (11 of whom were charged in absentia) under the Antiterrorism Proclamation for alleged links to AQ and al-Shabaab. Trial proceedings were temporarily closed to the public in July after prosecution witnesses expressed concerns about their personal safety; legal proceedings were reopened October 29 and were ongoing at year's end.

Lack of experience among police, prosecutors, and judges with regard to terrorism incidents and cases remained a challenge. The Ethiopian government has expressed interest in and willingness to engage with foreign governments and international bodies to improve its capabilities in these areas.

In November, three Ethiopian police analysts participated in a capacity building program in Kenya to train with regional counterparts to combat al-Shabaab. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation provided training to Ethiopian counterparts on improvised explosives device analysis, and on techniques and methods used by al-Shabaab.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: In 2013,Ethiopia became a member of the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG), an associate member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and a regional FATF-style body. In October, the FATF called attention to the country's failure to meet its agreed action plan and called for additional work on its deficiencies: to establish and implement an adequate legal framework and procedures to identify and freeze terrorist assets; and improve customer due-diligence measures. Its membership in the ESAAMLG could facilitate the country to conduct a formal risk assessment of its vulnerabilities; the lack of such a strategic approach has been highlighted by experts as a major gap.

Although terrorist financing is criminalized, prosecutions are rare. In 2013, the National Bank of Ethiopia froze and confiscated assets allegedly used in planning terrorist acts. The Charities and Societies Agency is responsible for monitoring NGOs, but has limited expertise in the area of terrorist finance.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm.

Regional and International Cooperation: Ethiopia is a member of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism. Ethiopia participated in regional and multilateral forums for counterterrorism, including IGAD Security Sector Program trainings, which build the capacity of IGAD member states to mitigate, detect, and deter terrorist activity. Ethiopia was an active participant in AU counterterrorism efforts, which included activities of the Center for Study and Research on Terrorism and meetings of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa.
