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Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Haqqani Network

Aka HQN.

Description: Designated as a FTO on September 19, 2012, the Haqqani Network (HQN) was formed in the late 1980s, around the time of the then-Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. HQN's founder Jalaluddin Haqqani established a relationship with Usama bin Laden in the mid-1980s, and joined the Taliban in 1995. After the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, Jalaluddin retreated to Pakistan where, under the leadership of Jalaluddin's son Sirajuddin Haqqani, the group continued to direct and conduct terrorist activity in Afghanistan. In July 2015, Sirajuddin Haqqani was appointed Deputy Leader of the Taliban.

Activities: HQN has planned and carried out numerous significant kidnappings and attacks against U.S. and Coalition Forces in Afghanistan, the Afghan government, and civilian targets. In September 2011, HQN wounded 77 U.S. soldiers in a truck bombing in Wardak province and conducted a 19-hour attack on the U.S. Embassy and International Security Assistance Force headquarters in Kabul, killing 16 Afghans. In June 2012, a suicide bomb attack against Forward Operating Base Salerno killed two U.S. soldiers and wounded more than 100 others.

In April 2016, HQN was blamed for an attack in Kabul against a government security agency tasked with providing protection to senior government officials, killing 64 people and injuring more than 300 others in what was the deadliest attack in Kabul in 15 years. Afghan officials blamed HQN for being involved in a June 2016 double suicide attack outside of Kabul against Afghan police cadets and first responders; 30 people were killed.

On May 31, 2017, a truck bomb exploded in Kabul, killing more than 150 people. Afghan officials blamed HQN for the attack. In October, an American woman and her family were recovered after five years of HQN captivity.

HQN carried out multiple terrorist attacks in 2018. HQN was believed to be responsible for a January 2018 ambulance bombing in Kabul that killed more than 100 people. Afghan officials blamed HQN for a January 2018 attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul that killed 22 people, including Americans. HQN was also blamed for a May 2018 attack on the Afghan interior ministry that resulted in the death of a police officer.

Strength: HQN is led by a small cadre of family members, but is believed to have several hundred core members. However, it is estimated that the organization is able to influence a network of upwards of 10,000 fighters. HQN is integrated into the larger Afghan Taliban and cooperates with other terrorist organizations operating in the region, including al-Qa'ida and Lashkar e-Tayyiba.

Location/Area of Operation: HQN is active along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and across much of southeastern Afghanistan, particularly in Loya Paktia, and has repeatedly targeted Kabul in its attacks. The group's leadership has historically maintained a power base around Pakistan's tribal areas.

Funding and External Aid: In addition to the funding it receives as part of the broader Afghan Taliban, HQN receives some funds from donors in Pakistan and the Gulf, but mostly from taxing local commerce, extortion, smuggling, and other licit and illicit business ventures.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the Haqqani Network (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2018)



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Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research
and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

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