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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 1 - Kuwait

Overview: The Government of Kuwait focused on improving its capacity to implement counterterrorism arrangements concluded in previous years. Kuwait joined the United States and other members of the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC) in coordinated domestic designations of individuals and entities associated with Hizballah and the Taliban. Kuwait is a regional leader in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and co-leads, with Turkey and the Netherlands, the Coalition’s FTF Working Group. In February, Kuwait hosted a full Coalition ministerial meeting at which the Coalition’s Guiding Principles were affirmed.

2018 Terrorist Incidents: There were no reported terrorist incidents in Kuwait in 2018.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Kuwait made no significant changes to its counterterrorism legal framework or border security procedures in 2018.

In January, the Court of Appeals upheld the sentences of seven defendants convicted of funding ISIS and training ISIS members to use arms. The first defendant, a Lebanese national, was also convicted of fighting for ISIS and sentenced to 15 years. The other six defendants (two Kuwaitis, two Saudis, one Syrian, and one Egyptian) were sentenced to 10 years each.

Also in January, the Criminal Court, after finding insufficient evidence, acquitted five Syrians and one Iraqi of transferring money to Syria through an exchange bureau to finance and support ISIS.

In March, the Court of Appeals upheld the 2017 sentencing of a Filipina national to 10 years in prison, followed by deportation, for her affiliation with ISIS. The subject was in contact with the terrorist group in Libya where her husband was an ISIS fighter. She confessed to being a member of ISIS and plotting terrorist attacks in Kuwait.

In July, the Court of Cassation upheld the Court of Appeals’ five-year prison sentence of a Kuwaiti citizen for joining ISIS and fighting for the terrorist group in Syria. Charges also included exporting and selling Syrian oil for the terrorist group’s benefit.

During 2018, the Kuwaiti government participated in multiple Department of State-supported capacity-building workshops that focused on counterterrorism or counterterrorism financing. In addition, Kuwait concentrated on law enforcement and

judicial capacity building across a broad spectrum of government agencies. For example, in December the Department of Justice’s Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training (OPDAT) organized a three-day, AML/CFT training for practitioners from across Kuwait’s AML/CFT regime, to include Kuwait’s FIU, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and others on a broad spectrum of investigative techniques often used in terrorism investigations.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Kuwait is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), the Defeat-ISIS Coalition’s Counter-ISIS Finance Group, and the TFTC. Kuwait’s FIU is a member of the Egmont Group.

In 2018, Kuwait hosted two meetings of the TFTC Executive Committee in Kuwait City. In May, TFTC member states designated individuals and entities associated with Hizballah. However, Kuwait chose not to designate Hasan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Hizballah. In October, Kuwait joined its TFTC partners in designating nine individuals associated with the Taliban, including those facilitating Iranian support to bolster the terrorist group.

In 2018, Kuwait’s National Committee on CFT finalized its National CFT Risk Assessment, which contains plans and recommendations that will be presented to the Kuwait Cabinet.

In October, five Kuwaitis who work in counterterrorism and the financial industry participated in the Department of State’s International Visitor Leadership Program, meeting with professional counterparts and visiting U.S. public and private sector organizations related to combating terrorist financing and FTFs.

Countering Violent Extremism: Kuwait’s Ministry of Education implemented a program to fight what it viewed as extremist ideologies at public schools through teacher-training and student-counseling programs. As part of the government’s National Plan to Reinforce Moderation, the Ministry of Information runs a television channel with programming aimed at audiences believed to be at higher risk of radicalization to violence. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs maintained a training program for imams and a separate program enabling social salon (diwanya) owners to invite religious scholars to engage attendees and counter the potential presence of “radicalizing influences.” In August, the Ministry announced a new annual award for the imam who offers an innovative initiative in the field of “countering extremism.”

International and Regional Cooperation: In January 2018, Kuwait joined the UNSC for a two-year term and serves as chair of the UNSC’s Democratic Republic of the Congo Sanctions Committee and vice chair of the Somalia and Central African Republic sanctions committees. In February, Kuwait hosted the Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq. In June, Kuwait participated in the FATF-MENAFATF joint plenary meeting in Paris. Kuwait is also an active member of the Arab League and of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. As a member of the Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC), Kuwait has been playing a lead role in mediating the GCC dispute among Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates on the one hand and Qatar on the other.

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