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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 1 - Georgia

Overview: In 2018, Georgia, a longstanding member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, continued its robust engagement with the United States across a range of counterterrorism-related issues. The State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG), Georgia’s lead agency regarding terrorism-related incidents and investigations, reported a decline of support for ISIS among Georgian citizens in 2018. The SSSG arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced eight individuals for supporting ISIS member Akhmet Chataev, who was killed in a counterterrorism operation in Tbilisi in 2017. The SSSG estimates that approximately 14 Georgian nationals are in Syria or Iraq supporting terrorist groups. In addition to implementing several amendments aimed at strengthening counterterrorism legislation, Georgia established a Permanent Interagency Commission, which is working on Georgia’s national counterterrorism strategy and action plan.

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

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Georgia continued to enhance its counterterrorism legislation in 2018 through amendments to its criminal code, which granted government officials greater authorities for cases with connections to foreign jurisdictions. Under the new amendments, investigators and prosecutors are entitled to interview witnesses remotely or those registered in a foreign state using technical means, obtain computer data under the control of a foreign jurisdiction, and conduct investigations and examinations in a foreign jurisdiction with its agreement.

Georgia is generally capable of detecting, deterring, and responding to terrorism incidents. The SSSG has the lead in handling terrorism-related incidents and investigations, and is generally well equipped and well trained. The SSSG’s Counterterrorism Unit continues to receive regular training and equipment. Recognizing the need for a whole-of-government response to the challenges of terrorism, in September 2018, Georgia established its SSSG-chaired Permanent Interagency Commission, an interagency group responsible for drafting and monitoring the implementation of Georgia’s national counterterrorism strategy and action plan. In 2018, Georgia also carried out exercises to enhance interoperability and cooperation between agencies with counterterrorism-related mandates.

Georgia took steps in 2018 to improve its border, maritime, and aviation security through legislation and infrastructure improvement. In April, Georgia passed Government Decree N174, which enhances the legal procedures related to the development of Georgia’s API and PNR systems, in line with UNSCR 2396. In May, Georgia integrated INTERPOL databases into its national border databases. Throughout 2018, Georgia improved infrastructure on four land border sectors bordering Armenia and Turkey. Georgia’s Border Police installed surveillance and monitoring systems at three land border sectors on its border with Armenia. In October, the United States transferred two Island class patrol boats to Georgia’s Coast Guard, and the Georgian government approved a new statute for the Joint Maritime Operations Center, updating its rules and procedures regarding information exchange. In 2018, Georgia’s Civil Aviation Agency conducted 23 quality control activities, including inspections, audits, and covert tests.

In 2018, Georgia detained, prosecuted, and sentenced several Georgian nationals affiliated with Chechen ISIS member Akhmet Chataev, following his death in a SSSG-led counterterrorism operation in November 2017. SSSG-led operations in Tbilisi and Pankisi Gorge led to the detention of eight individuals. All eight were found guilty of terrorism charges. The SSSG also investigated three cases of false notifications of terrorism, one case of public incitement to terrorism and illegal purchase and storage of firearms and ammunition, and two cases of preparation of an act of terrorism.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Georgia is a member of MONEYVAL, a FATF-style regional body. Georgia’s FIU, the Financial Monitoring Service (FMS), is a member of the Egmont Group. In 2018, the FMS drafted a new AML/CFT law and submitted it to the government for approval. In addition, in 2018 the Interagency Commission on Implementation of UNSCRs also submitted 15 motions requesting to freeze the assets of 130 individuals and 30 entities and seize the frozen assets of one individual and 19 entities. The Commission also implemented several UNSCRs related to asset freezing, travel bans, and arms embargoes on individuals and legal entities suspected of involvement in terrorism.

The FMS reported that the SSSG launched investigations into two cases of terrorism financing. The National Bank of Georgia carried out on-site inspections of 25 financial institutions to assess the efficiency of risk management processes relating to money laundering and terrorism financing. The Government of Georgia charged six individuals associated with Chechen ISIS member Akhmet Chataev with financing terrorism and/or providing other material support to terrorist activities. Georgia also conducted trainings, seminars, and workshops on AML/CFT involving approximately 120 participants from across the Georgian government.

For additional information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes* (<https://www.state.gov/2019-international-narcotics-control-strategy-report/>).

Countering Violent Extremism: In 2018, the Georgian government continued its CVE efforts in vulnerable populations by focusing on initiatives in education, civic and political participation, media and access to information, gender issues, preserving minority culture and identity, justice and law-enforcement activities, and social and regional integration.

In cooperation with the Council of Europe, Georgia implemented the “Reference Framework of Competencies for Democratic Culture” project, which aims in part to prevent radicalization to terrorism in schools. Georgia also held a series of CVE trainings and conferences promoting religious tolerance and antidiscrimination.

In 2018, Georgia developed several initiatives aimed at addressing the perceived underlying drivers of terrorist radicalization in vulnerable communities, including the implementation of small grants programs, under which Georgia issued seven grants in the Pankisi Gorge in 2018. Georgia also received targeted training funded by the Department of State and conducted by the Department of Justice on CVE topics including effective law enforcement techniques, prosecutorial strategies, benefits of community outreach programs, digital investigation and analysis, effective electronic and other covert surveillance techniques, threats emanating from al-Qa’ida, ISIS, ISIS-Yemen, or al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula propaganda, FTFs, battlefield evidence, and returning ISIS fighters.

International and Regional Cooperation: Georgia is actively engaged on counterterrorism issues at the international, regional, and bilateral levels. Georgia also cooperates closely with NATO, the Council of Europe, the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUAM) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development.

In 2018, Georgia signed a Memorandum of Understanding on secure communication lines and a liaison agreement in March with Europol, enabling the use of Europol’s secure channels for communication. Adding to existing agreements with 23 countries and the EU, Georgia also signed agreements on the exchange and mutual protection of classified information with Albania, Moldova, and Italy, and concluded similar agreements with Germany and Belarus.

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Annual report on terrorism (covering 2018)



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