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Country Report on Terrorism 2019 - Chapter 5 - Aum Shinrikyo (AUM)

Aka A.I.C. Comprehensive Research Institute; A.I.C. Sogo Kenkyusho; Aleph; Aum Supreme Truth

Description: Aum Shinrikyo (AUM) was designated as an FTO on October 8, 1997. It was established in 1987 by leader Shoko Asahara and gained legal status in Japan as a religious entity in 1989. The Japanese government revoked its recognition of AUM as a religious organization following the group's deadly 1995 sarin attack in Tokyo. Despite claims that the group has renounced violence and Asahara's teachings, members of AUM continue to adhere to the violent and apocalyptic teachings of its founder.

Activities: In March 1995, AUM members simultaneously released the chemical nerve agent sarin on several Tokyo subway trains, killing 13 and causing up to 6,000 people to seek medical treatment. Subsequent investigations by the Japanese government revealed that AUM was responsible for other chemical incidents in Japan in 1994, including a sarin attack on a residential neighborhood in Matsumoto that killed seven and injured approximately 500. Japanese police arrested Asahara in May 1995; in February 2004, authorities sentenced him to death for his role in the 1995 attacks.

Although AUM has not conducted a terrorist attack since 1995, concerns remain regarding its continued adherence to the violent teachings of Asahara. The group now consists of two factions, both of which have recruited new members, engaged in commercial enterprises, and acquired property. In July 2000, Russian authorities arrested a group of Russian AUM followers who planned to detonate bombs in Japan as part of an operation to free Asahara from prison. In August 2012, a Japan Airlines flight to the United States turned back after receiving a bomb threat demanding the release of Asahara.

In March 2016, Montenegro expelled 58 people associated with AUM found holding a conference at a hotel in Danilovgrad. One month later, Russian authorities carried out raids on 25 AUM properties and opened a criminal investigation into an AUM cell. In November 2017, Japanese police raided the offices of a “successor” group to AUM.

On July 6, 2018, AUM leader Shoko Asahara was executed. AUM did not claim any attacks in 2019.

Strength: AUM is estimated to have around 1,500 followers.

Location/Area of Operation: Japan and Russia

Funding and External Aid: AUM's funding comes primarily from member contributions and group-run businesses.

ecoi.net summary:



Brief description of the Aum Shinrikyo (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2019)

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Japan, Russian Federation

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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 (Telephone) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

Contact

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