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Students

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Visas

Menu

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Country Reports on Terrorism 2020: Singapore

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Singapore

Overview: Singapore continued to identify counterterrorism as the nation's top security policy priority and has a comprehensive CT strategy based on global and regional trends. The strategy included vigilant security measures, regional and international law enforcement cooperation, efforts to counter radicalization to violence, and a campaign to prepare the populace for possible attacks. Singapore was a committed, active, and effective CT partner in 2020. CT remained a pillar of the security relationship between Singaporean and U.S. law enforcement and security services. Cooperation on CT and information sharing continued during 2020. Singapore's domestic CT apparatus and its ability to detect, deter, and disrupt threats remained effective.

2020 Terrorist Incidents: There were no reported terrorist incidents in Singapore in 2020.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Singapore uses its Internal Security Act (ISA) to arrest and detain suspected terrorists. The ISA authorizes the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), with the consent of the president, to order arrests and detentions without a warrant, trial, or full judicial due process, if it is determined that individuals pose a threat to national security. There were no legislative changes in 2020.

Singapore detained several individuals under the ISA for terrorism-related activities in 2020, including a 17-year-old Singaporean in January for allegedly supporting ISIS by assisting in online propaganda efforts and calling for the beheading of Singapore's president on social media. MHA arrested a 16-year-old Singaporean male in December under the ISA for reportedly plotting to attack two mosques with a machete on the anniversary of the 2019 Christchurch, New Zealand, mosque shootings, making him the youngest ISA detainee to date. The arrest marked the first known instance of right-wing-inspired terrorism plotting in the country. Singapore also detained a work permit holder from Bangladesh in November for disseminating pro-ISIS propaganda, donating to organizations to benefit the Syria-based Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, and promoting armed violence. Singapore released at least three Singaporeans who were previously detained under the ISA after assessing their rehabilitation progress and determining the individuals no longer posed a security threat that required preventive detention. Singapore allowed restriction orders against six Singaporeans to lapse.

Security forces were on heightened alert following terrorist attacks in Europe in September, and the Singapore Police Force and Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) enhanced border security measures and patrols. Singapore's law enforcement and security services were capable of proactively detecting, deterring, and preventing acts of terrorism, including through interagency cooperation, regular exercises, and information sharing. In March the Ministry of Defense announced it would restructure the Singapore Armed Forces' military intelligence units to better detect and respond to terrorist plots.

Singapore maintains a "not if, but when" stance regarding the likelihood of terrorist attacks within the country. The government's SGSecure public awareness campaign, which aims to enhance emergency preparedness and community resilience, introduced new online programs and training sessions during the COVID-19 global pandemic. In January the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth launched a new Crisis

Preparedness for Religious Organizations program under the SGSecure Community Network to help religious organizations prepare for terrorist threats and other crises. The program seeks to help religious organizations protect sites of worship and congregants, prepare emergency plans, and support the larger community during a crisis.

To detect possible terrorist movements by air into or transiting through the country, Singapore's primary border security agency, ICA, implemented Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record data collection in 2019. ICA also enhanced its border capabilities by equipping all immigration checkpoints with iris and facial biometric scanners.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Singapore is a member of FATF and APG, and its Suspicious Transaction Reporting Office is a member of the Egmont Group. The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) announced in November that it will stop issuing S\$1,000 notes in 2021 to reduce money laundering and terrorism financing risks. There were no legislative changes in 2020.

Singapore convicted and sentenced three Indonesian foreign domestic workers under the Terrorism (Suppression of Financing) Act in February and March. The accused were sentenced to between 18 months and 3 years and 9 months in prison for contributing up to \$915 to support an Indonesia-based terrorist group Jamaah Ansharut Daulah. In January a Singaporean was sentenced to 33 months' imprisonment for transferring \$330 to fund ISIS. In March, MAS fined TMF Trustees Singapore Limited \$300,000 for noncompliance with AML/CFT requirements and, in July, revoked the capital markets services license of Apical Asset Management for serious breaches of the same requirements.

Countering Violent Extremism: Through entities such as the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research and the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), Singapore serves as a regional CVE hub. The government encourages interreligious and interethnic dialogue through Interracial and Religious Confidence Circles, the interagency Aftercare Group, and local community fora that bring leaders from Singapore's religious and ethnic communities together to discuss issues of concern and build trust. The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), the Islamic authority in charge of Muslim affairs, maintains a social media presence and holds outreach and

educational events to counter terrorist propaganda and recruitment efforts. MUIS manages the Asatizah Recognition Scheme that vets Islamic Religious Council teachers and scholars in Singapore.

RRG, a volunteer organization made up of religious scholars and teachers, has had success in counseling detainees held under the ISA through a comprehensive program involving religious and psychological counseling. RRG also operates a resource and counseling center for the Muslim community and held virtual community events and engagement sessions during the COVID-19 pandemic, including to raise awareness about the threats of online radicalization to violence.

International and Regional Cooperation: Singapore is an active participant in CT cooperation efforts in ASEAN, ARF, ADMM, and APEC. The nation is a strong advocate for the ASEAN “Our Eyes” regional initiative, which strives for ministerial-level CT information sharing. Singapore participated in the Third Sub-Regional Meeting on Counterterrorism in December, the Aqaba Process Virtual Meeting in September, and INTERPOL’s Project Pacific working group to discuss CT issues in November. Singapore opened the Counter-Terrorism Information Facility in December, a Singapore-led initiative to increase information sharing between military and law enforcement agencies.

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