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# Country Reports on Terrorism 2022: France

BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM

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## France

**Overview:** France is a key partner of the United States in the global fight against terrorism. Bilateral U.S.-France CT cooperation is strong.

Per the Secretary General of National Defense and Security, the terrorist threat in France remained “very high.” Security services are concerned about “Sunni terrorism” and “ultraright” groups and consider endogenous attacks (lone-actor attacks) to pose the most significant current threat. They also note concern about the threat posed by the recent and impending release from prison of dozens of convicted terrorists tied to the 2015 terrorist attacks in France. The National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC) continued to pose a terrorist threat. French law enforcement and intelligence agencies have thwarted at least 39 attacks they labeled “Islamic” since 2017 and interrupted nine REMVE terrorist plots tied to the ultraright.

**2022 Terrorist Incidents:** At least a dozen attacks occurred or were thwarted in 2022, including these three:

On July 11, the FLNC claimed 16 attacks in Corsica, against homes, construction companies, and police vehicles.

On November 22, a 22-year-old man with a “Fiche S” (on a French government watch list), attacked a police officer shouting “Allah Akbar” while in custody at the Annecy police

station. He was charged with “intentional violence against a person in authority, in relation to a terrorist undertaking.”

On November 18, in Strasbourg, police arrested seven individuals suspected of preparing a terrorist attack in France, according to France’s domestic intelligence agency. Two of the seven, Russian and Tajik nationals, had recently arrived in France.

**Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security:** Under the 2021 Upholding Republican Values law, acts of online hate speech are punishable by up to five years’ imprisonment and a substantial fine. France in 2022 adopted the Counterterrorism and Intelligence Law that expanded the CT tools available to security agencies and made permanent some of the temporary measures imposed by the 2015 state of emergency.

According to statistics released by the Ministry of the Armed Forces in March 2021, the government continued to deploy 3,000 military personnel throughout the country to patrol vulnerable sites under Operation *Sentinelle*.

In 2022, France established a new interministerial Passenger Information Unit that uses Advanced Passenger Information/Passenger Name Record data from the *Agence Nationale des Données de Voyage* to screen arriving and departing passenger data against other police and administrative databases.

In 2022, France modified its longstanding policy against the repatriation of French foreign terrorist fighters’ associated family members, repatriating since January more than 100 women and children from northern Syrian displaced persons camps. All adult FTFs returning to France since 2016 have been prosecuted. Minors, depending on their age, may face legal action if they are suspected of having participated in terrorist activities. Minors not believed to have participated in terrorist activities are placed into child protective services or with family members who do not pose a threat of radicalization to violence and are enrolled in an extensive rehabilitation and reintegration program.

High-profile terrorist cases in the judicial system included the following:

The appeals of Ali Riza Polat and Amar Ramdani were denied before the Paris Special (Terrorism) Criminal Court on October 20. The two defendants were charged in the 2015 attacks against satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, police in Montrouge, and a kosher supermarket in Paris. The court determined that Polat would receive a life sentence after his appeal. Ramdani was found guilty but had his sentence reduced to 13 years.

The Paris Special Criminal Court upheld a life sentence for Moroccan national Ayoub El Khazzani on December 8. El Khazzani was seeking to overturn his 2020 conviction related to the foiled Thalys train attack in 2015.

On December 13 the Paris Special Criminal Court ordered prison terms of two to 18 years for all eight suspects charged in the 2016 Nice terrorist attack that killed 86 people.

On December 14 the Paris Special Criminal Court sentenced 30-year-old French Moroccan national Siham Idrissi to 12 years in prison for cooperation with a criminal enterprise. Idrissi married two ISIS fighters, one of whom was close to the mastermind behind the 2015 coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris.

France observed a rise in ultraright violent extremism, also described locally as “ideologically or politically motivated terrorism.” The Government of France identified and labeled 1,300 “ultraright radicalized individuals” as Fiche S, indicating inclusion on France’s national security watchlist. On May 17 the General Directorate for Internal Security (FBI equivalent) arrested 11 activists linked to the ultranationalist movement “Patriotic Vengeance.” The group reportedly aspired to seize power after the “collapse of the republic,” following the start of an anticipated race war. On December 14 a group of 47 armed individuals close to the “far right” were arrested as they prepared to move toward the Champs-Élysées after a French soccer victory.

**Countering the Financing of Terrorism:** France is a member of FATF, and its FIU, the Intelligence Processing and Action Against Illicit Financial Networks Unit (Tracfin), is a member of the Egmont Group. In May the Paris Court of Appeals confirmed the indictment of French cement maker Lafarge for paying millions of euros to terrorist groups, including ISIS, in 2013 and 2014 to ensure the continuation of Lafarge’s operations.

**Countering Violent Extremism:** As part of its efforts to counter “Islamist separatism,” the government announced it would end foreign government funding of imams from Türkiye, Algeria, and Morocco by 2023, replacing this program with imams trained within France. France increased scrutiny of religious schools to identify and close “illegal schools” that are run by “religious extremists.”

**International and Regional Cooperation:** France is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and is active on the UN Security Council ISIL and al-Qa’ida Sanctions Committee.

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