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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 1 - Kuwait

Overview: Kuwait is an active participant in international fora and regularly participates in counterterrorism training. The nation is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and co-leads the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group with Türkiye and the Netherlands. Kuwait has begun its Financial Action Task Force mutual evaluation process. However, the planned March onsite assessment was postponed to late 2023 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021 Terrorist Incidents: There were no terrorist incidents reported in Kuwait in 2021.

Legislation, Law Enforcement and Border Security: There were no changes to Kuwait's counterterrorism legal framework. Political gridlock in the National Assembly prevented the passage of substantive counterterrorism legislation.

In June, more than 100 officials from the Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO), the Ministry of Interior, and the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) attended a series of workshops hosted by DOJ OPDAT to strengthen Kuwait's ability to detect and combat terrorism financing. In November, more than 70 officials from the PPO and the MOI participated in OPDAT-sponsored training on countering the use of cyberspace and cryptocurrency in terrorism. Private sector groups, including the Kuwaiti bar association and trade groups for the banking and remittance industries, also participated in OPDAT-sponsored training.

In September, Kuwait's criminal court sentenced an individual to five years' imprisonment for joining Hizballah and planning to use weapons to commit a hostile act against Lebanon. The prosecutors working on the

investigation had received capacity building assistance from the United States.

In November, as part of a broader political dialogue, Amir Nawaf Al Sabah commuted the sentences of 20 members, including the leader of the "Abdali cell," convicted in 2016 of charges including storing weapons and explosives and spying for Lebanese Hizballah. The pardons also included four additional persons convicted of harboring Abdali cell members while they fled prosecution.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Kuwait is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, the Defeat-ISIS Coalition and its Counter-ISIS Finance Group, and the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center. The Kuwait FIU is a member of the Egmont Group.

Kuwait has not updated its AML/CFT law since its passage in 2013. In May, Kuwait advised the public about the risks of virtual assets such as Bitcoin, but the government has not yet enacted any regulations to govern the use of cryptocurrency.

In November, Kuwait detained 24 persons for allegedly using charitable organizations to raise money for Hizballah, including one individual who had been designated as a terrorist by the U.S. Department of the Treasury in September. The proceedings are ongoing.

For much of 2021, Kuwait's FIU was under acting leadership. The FIU continues to have a backlog of reporting on its investigations and prosecutions data. Kuwaiti prosecutors also dismissed several money laundering investigations for lack of evidence. The FIU is increasing its ability to share information with partner agencies by concluding interagency MOU, including with Kuwait's Central Bank in October.

Countering Violent Extremism: The Ministry of Interior runs TV and radio programming aimed at audiences believed to be at higher risk of "radicalization." The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs launched a five-year strategic plan to promote moderation and confront violent extremism. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs operates the Kuwait Moderation Center, which sponsors programs designed to promote religious tolerance. In October, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs formed a committee to counter radicalization to violence and violent extremism on the internet and social media.

International and Regional Cooperation: Kuwait served as chair of the Arab League from September to early 2022, is a member of the Governing Board of Administrators of the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law and remains an active member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Small Group. Kuwait continued its historical role as mediator in several regional disputes, most notably mediating the Gulf Cooperation

Council (GCC)-Lebanon rift. Additionally, Kuwait hosts the headquarters for Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR).

Kuwait is a member of the following international organizations engaged in counterterrorism cooperation: the United Nations, the Arab League, the GCC, the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, and CJTF-OIR.

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