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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 - Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

Aka IMU

Description: Designated as an FTO on September 25, 2000, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) seeks to overthrow the Uzbek government and establish an Islamic state. For most of the past decade, however, the group has recruited members from other Central Asian states and Europe. Despite its stated objective to set up an Islamic state in Uzbekistan, the group operates primarily along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and in northern Afghanistan, where it previously fought against international forces. Several IMU members are also suspected of having traveled to Syria to fight with terrorist groups.

The IMU has had a decade-long relationship with al-Qa'ida (AQ), the Taliban, and Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan. Top IMU leaders integrated themselves into the Taliban's shadow government in Afghanistan's northern provinces when the Taliban battled the Afghan government.

In 2015, IMU leader Usman Ghazi publicly announced the group's shift of allegiance to ISIS. Numerous IMU members, including possibly Ghazi himself, were subsequently reported to have been killed as a result of hostilities between ISIS and the IMU's former Taliban allies.

Activities: In 2014, IMU claimed responsibility for an attack on Karachi's international airport that resulted in the deaths of at least 39 people.

Throughout 2015 the IMU actively threatened the Afghan government, primarily in the northern part of the country. In 2015 the group released a video showing IMU members beheading an individual they claimed to be an Afghan soldier and threatened to behead Hazaras (a historically persecuted ethnic group in Afghanistan) whom they were holding hostage, in supposed retaliation for the Afghan security forces' capture of several female IMU members. In 2016, Uzbek refugee Fazliddin Kurbanov was sentenced by a U.S. federal court to 25 years in prison for planning a bomb attack in Idaho. Kurbanov had been in online contact with members of IMU, seeking advice on how to make explosives and discussing attacking U.S. military bases.

In 2016 a faction of the IMU announced its continued commitment to the Taliban and AQ, marking a split with its leader Ghazi and the rest of the group, which announced its loyalty to ISIS in 2015 and

has since cooperated with Islamic State's Khorasan Province. IMU did not claim responsibility for any attacks in 2021.

Strength: The IMU consists of up to 700 people.

Location/Area of Operation: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Türkiye, and Central Asia

Funding and External Aid: The IMU receives support from a large Uzbek diaspora, terrorist organizations, and donors from Europe, Central and South Asia, and the Middle East.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2021)

Countries:

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye

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