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Country Reports on Terrorism 2022: Kenya

BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM

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Kenya

Overview: Al-Shabaab continued to pose the primary terrorism threat in Kenya. In 2022, sporadic terrorist attacks in Kenya continued, primarily along the Kenyan-Somali border. IEDs and ambushes against Kenyan security forces and important infrastructure were the primary means of attack. Attacks along roads used by Kenyan security forces and other government officials resulted in numerous additional civilian casualties. While Kenyan security forces were the principal targets, key infrastructure also was affected. NGO reporting indicated a 10 percent to 25 percent uptick in terrorist attacks in 2022 over 2021.

Kenya plays a leading role in regional counterterrorism cooperation. The Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) continued to participate in the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and supported border security and counter-IED efforts within Kenya. Security services responded to numerous terrorist incidents, while also disrupting al-Shabaab and ISIS attack planning, recruitment, and travel. Kenyan security forces continued to demonstrate improved procedures regarding protection of human rights in response to terrorist threats and attacks.

2022 Terrorist Incidents: Terrorist incidents in 2022 included the following:

On January 31 an IED placed by suspected al-Shabaab militants struck a passenger vehicle in Mandera County near the Somali border, killing seven persons and injuring 13

others.

On March 11, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for killing four construction workers and injuring two in an attack in Lamu County.

On August 1, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for attacking a police base in Mandera with explosive devices, injuring three officers.

On October 8, suspected al-Shabaab militants attacked a pub near a military base in Lamu County.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Kenya's government continued to rely on the Prevention of Terrorism Act (amended in 2014) to investigate and prosecute terrorism. Two defendants in separate terrorism cases at the U.S.-funded, CT-focused Kahawa Law Court in Nairobi pleaded guilty to terrorism-related charges within the past year. In May the prosecution began its case-in-chief against three defendants regarding the 2019 Dusit D2 attack, which resulted in the deaths of 22 individuals (including one U.S. citizen). All defendants were accused of assisting the coordinators and attackers through the provision of internet services and fake identification documents and facilitating financial transactions. The Kenyan judiciary proposed creating a specialized High Court at Kahawa Law Court that would specialize in terrorism and transnational crime and handle terrorism appeals. The creation of this court should also reduce greatly the time between verdict and final conviction as well as improve the quality of appellate decisions in terrorism cases.

CT functions are divided among the three branches of the National Police Service:

1. The Kenya Police Service (including the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU); the Traffic Police; and the regional, county, and local police).
2. The Directorate of Criminal Investigations (including the investigative Antiterrorism Police Unit, the Bomb Disposal Unit, and the Cyber Forensics Investigative Unit).
3. The Administration Police (including the Border Police Unit).

The National Intelligence Service, elements of the KDF, and cabinet ministries also share responsibility for CT functions. Uneven coordination, resource constraints, insufficient training, and unclear command and control continue to hinder CT effectiveness. Kenya's National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) continued to work with private sector organizations to prevent soft target attacks.

Kenya's interagency Joint Terrorism Task Force charged its first case in 2022, which resulted in the defendant pleading guilty to association and facilitation charges, and maintains active investigations.

Kenyan officials continue to work to secure the nation's porous land borders to prevent terrorist exploitation, but hurdles remain. Aviation safety and security at Nairobi's international airport and other ports of entry are generally adequate and watchlist screening and basic equipment at smaller ports of entry have improved. Allegations of corruption at border entry and exit points continue and a government study recommended strengthening border controls and ensuring greater oversight of security officials at border points to counter human trafficking and smuggling.

The Kenyan government worked to prevent the transit of foreign terrorist fighters, including Kenyans attempting to join al-Shabaab or ISIS, and those returning from abroad. Kenyan security services also detected and deterred terrorist plots and responded to dozens of terrorism-related incidents. The Kenyan government cooperated with the United States on threat information and security, including through a dedicated GSU CT response team funded by the United States.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Kenya is a member of the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group, and its FIU is the Financial Reporting Center. In June, Kenya helped host a regional counterterrorism financing meeting in Nairobi, where Kenyan officials discussed collaboration with their Djiboutian and Somali counterparts.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the [*2022 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*](#) [1 MB].

Countering Violent Extremism: The Kenyan NCTC's County Action Plans for CVE in all 47 counties continued to be the primary framework for CVE programming at the local level, but implementation of action plans in some counties continued to be slowed by a lack of funding. Police in Nairobi and from coastal and northeastern counties participated in community engagement training and early warning- and-response programs. Judicial officials continued to improve management of remand prisoners through plea bargaining and other methods.

International and Regional Cooperation: Nairobi hosts the UN headquarters in Africa. In March, the United Nations Office of Counterterrorism opened a new Program Office in Nairobi to support countries in East Africa and the Horn of Africa to counter terrorism and

prevent violent extremism. The KDF continued its participation in ATMIS. Although not a member, Kenya participated in regional meetings of the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

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