

Country Report on Terrorism 2023 - Chapter 1 - Libya

Overview: Libyan government officials continued to work with U.S. counterparts to combat terrorism, although fractured security institutions limited cooperation. After elections scheduled for 2021 were “postponed,” the Libyan House of Representatives, with the backing of the Libyan National Army (LNA), appointed a new, interim Government of National Stability (GNS) to replace the Government of National Unity (GNU) based in Tripoli; however, the UN and most countries, including the United States, continued to recognize the GNU as the government of Libya.

Despite the political impasse, terrorist groups such as the Islamic State and al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb were unable to regroup or exploit the political uncertainty. While terrorist groups controlled no territory in Libya and remained significantly degraded in terms of numbers and capacity, they remained a threat. The GNU and the LNA, which controls most of Libyan territory outside of the northwestern part of the country, are reliable and willing U.S. counterterrorism (CT) partners, although the GNU’s capacity to eliminate terrorist safe havens, counter terrorist financing, deter the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, and ensure effective counterproliferation efforts across Libya’s territory were limited. The LNA countered terrorism in the territory under its de facto control in the East and the South of the country.

2023 Terrorist Incidents: There were no significant terrorist incidents in Libya in 2023.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: There were no changes in 2023. The GNU retained the former Government of National Accord’s 2020 CT Strategy. Owing to the fractured political situation, coordination between relevant authorities usually occurred on an ad hoc basis, and an implementation plan for the 2020 CT Strategy was not promulgated. Throughout 2023 the GNU and the LNA conducted CT operations in areas under their respective control.

Libya lacks a comprehensive counterterrorism law, though the Libyan penal code criminalizes offenses that may threaten national security, including terrorism, the promotion of terrorist acts, and the handling of money in support of such acts.

The country’s porous southern border was nominally under LNA control, but the LNA relied on local armed groups, militias, and foreign terrorist fighters to police the southern frontier. Smuggling and trafficking, including in persons and arms, were rampant. The LNA conducted effective CT operations in the South on a limited basis.

Libya’s four largest international airports, located throughout the country and falling under the control of the GNU and the LNA, continued to participate in CT Bureau’s Aviation Security Program, which trains airport screeners and managers. In July the European Union Aviation Safety Agency removed restrictions on EU-registered aircraft flying into Libyan airspace, as long as operations are in full coordination with local authorities and flights direct to Libyan airports on the coast.

In December, local media reported that the Libyan Supreme Court released four Hamas members after serving only eight years of 17- to 22-year sentences for arms possession and smuggling.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Libya is a member of Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, and its Financial Intelligence Unit is the Central Bank of Libya. There were no significant changes in 2023.

Countering Violent Extremism: The Libya Antiterrorism Center’s Community Protection Department continued efforts to counter violent extremist ideology through education and media

outreach in partnership with civil society organizations, and with religious and educational institutions.

International and Regional Cooperation: Libya is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Libya regularly votes in favor of counterterrorism measures in the UN General Assembly, the Arab League, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.