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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM 2020

December 2021

Country Reports on Terrorism 2020

BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM

Country Reports on Terrorism 2020 is submitted in compliance with Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f (the “Act”), which requires the Department of State to provide to Congress a full and complete annual report on terrorism for those countries and groups meeting the criteria of the Act.

Description: Al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was designated as an FTO on January 19, 2010. In 2009, the now-deceased leader of al-Qa’ida in Yemen, Nasir al-Wahishi, publicly announced that Yemeni and Saudi al-Qa’ida (AQ) operatives were working together under the banner of AQAP. The announcement signaled the rebirth of an AQ franchise that previously carried out attacks in Saudi Arabia. AQAP’s stated goals include establishing a caliphate and implementing Sharia law in the Arabian Peninsula and the wider Middle East.

Activities: AQAP has claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist acts against both local and foreign targets since its inception in 2009. These include a 2009 attempted attack on Northwest Airlines Flight 253 from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan. In 2010, AQAP claimed responsibility for a foiled plot to send explosive-laden packages to the United States on cargo planes. In 2015, brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi attacked the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, killing 12 people. One of the brothers, who had traveled to Yemen in 2011 and met with now-deceased Anwar al-Aulaqi, claimed responsibility for the attack on behalf of AQAP.

In 2017 a U.S. Navy SEAL was killed in a raid against AQAP leaders in Yemen. That same year, AQAP attacked a Yemeni Army camp, killing at least two soldiers. In 2018, AQAP senior leader Khaled Batarfi called on the group’s supporters to “rise and attack” Americans “everywhere.” In 2019, AQAP gunmen killed 19 soldiers in an attack on an army base in southern Yemen.

In February, AQAP released a video claiming “full responsibility” for Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani’s 2019 shooting at Naval Air Station Pensacola that killed three persons and injured eight others.

Strength: AQAP fighters are estimated to be in the low thousands.

Location/Area of Operation: Yemen

Funding and External Aid: AQAP’s funding has historically come from theft, robberies, oil and gas revenue, kidnap-for-ransom operations, and donations from likeminded supporters.

al-Qa’ida in the Indian Subcontinent

Aka al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent; Qaedat al-Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent

Description: Al-Qa’ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was designated as an FTO on July 1, 2016. Established in 2014, AQIS focuses on terrorist activity in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Its leader is Asim Umar, a former member of the FTO Harakat ul-Mujahideen. In 2019, the Afghan government reported that Umar was killed in a military raid on a Taliban compound in Helmand province, Afghanistan.

Activities: In 2014, AQIS claimed responsibility for an attack on a naval dockyard in Karachi, Pakistan, in which militants attempted a hijacking of a Pakistani Navy frigate to attack nearby

U.S. warships. AQIS also claimed attacks against human rights activists and secular writers in Bangladesh, including U.S. citizen Avijit Roy, U.S. Embassy local employee Xulhaz Mannan, and Bangladeshi nationals Oyasiqur Rahman Babu, Ahmed Rajib Haideer, and A.K.M. Shafiul Islam. In 2017, AQAP called on AQIS to launch more attacks on Burmese authorities because of Burma's policies toward Rohingya Muslims. AQIS has not claimed responsibility for any attacks since 2017. In 2019, Asim Umar, the head of AQIS, was killed in a joint U.S.-Afghan military operation.

AQIS did not claim responsibility for any attacks in 2020. India's National Investigation Agency arrested 10 alleged al-Qa'ida-affiliated operatives from Kerala and West Bengal on September 19 and 26.

Strength: AQIS is estimated to have several hundred members.

Location/Area of Operations: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan

Funding and External Aid: AQIS likely receives funding from al-Qa'ida senior leadership and engages in general criminal activity, kidnapping, and extortion.

al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb

Aka AQIM; GSPC; *Le Groupe Salafiste Pour la Predication et le Combat*; Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat; Salafist Group for Call and Combat; Tanzim al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Maghrib al-Islamiya

Description: The Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) was designated as an FTO on March 27, 2002. The Department of State amended the GSPC designation on February 20, 2008, after the GSPC officially joined with al-Qa'ida in 2006 and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) became the primary name of the group. Although AQIM remains largely a regionally focused terrorist group, it has adopted a more anti-western rhetoric and ideology. The group aspires to overthrow "apostate" African regimes and create an Islamic state. Following the death of AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel, who was killed in June by French forces, the group chose Abu Obaida Yusuf al-Annabi as Droukdel's successor.

Activities: Following AQIM's 2007 bombing of the UN headquarters building and an Algerian government building in Algiers, which killed 60 people, AQIM's northern leadership was contained to northeastern Algeria, while the group's southern battalions focused mostly on kidnapping-for-ransom efforts. In 2011 and 2012, however, AQIM took advantage of the deteriorating security situation across Libya, Mali, and Tunisia to expand its operations. Terrorists with ties to AQIM were involved in the 2012 attack on U.S. facilities in Benghazi that killed U.S. Ambassador to Libya J. Christopher Stevens and three other embassy staff members. In 2014, AQIM killed 14 Algerian soldiers in an ambush east of Algiers.

In 2015, AQIM claimed responsibility for an attack on a UN vehicle in Kidal, Mali, which wounded seven peacekeepers. That same year, AQIM twice attacked UN convoys near Timbuktu, Mali, with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades; three peacekeepers were killed