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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 4 - Terrorist Safe Havens - Libya

Libya remained politically divided during the year between the Government of National Unity (GNU) and eastern-based parallel institutions and groups. Terrorist groups attempted to exploit a security vacuum in the southern region of the country but were limited in their ability to do so because of tactical gains by the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) against these groups. The nationwide ceasefire signed in 2020, after the LNA's failed attempt to take control of Greater Tripoli, was largely respected.

The GNU, although the internationally recognized government, lacked the capacity and reach to exercise control in most of Libya and relied on armed groups for security in areas it did not have the ability to effectively control, including the capital Tripoli. The GNU had limited ability to eliminate terrorist safe havens, track or prevent the flow of FTFs in and out of the country or ensure effective counterproliferation efforts owing to difficulties of controlling the borders and underresourced enforcement of security procedures at airports, seaports, and land-border crossings. The GNU and aligned groups maintained their strongest influence in the Western Mountains and the northwest coastal areas stretching from the Tunisian border to territory just west of Sirte. LNA-aligned groups exerted control in the remainder of Libya, including Cyrenaica, and the central and southern districts of Jufra, Kufra, Murzuq, and Sabhā. Although significantly degraded, remnants of terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb continue to pose threats particularly in Libya's vast, sparsely populated desert areas in the South. The LNA effectively countered terrorism in the East and the South of the country, but its counterterrorism gains were limited to areas under its control. During the year, significant numbers of foreign forces, fighters, and mercenaries remained deployed to the country, including the Russian-backed private military company Wagner Group.

Associated documents

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Libya

Annual report on terrorism (covering 2021)

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