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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 - Haqqani Network (HQN)

Aka HQN

Description: Designated as an FTO on September 19, 2012, the Haqqani Network (HQN) was formed in the late 1980s, around the time of the then-Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. HQN's founder Jalaluddin Haqqani established a relationship with Usama bin Laden in the mid-1980s and joined the Taliban in 1995. After the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, Haqqani retreated to Pakistan where, under the leadership of his son Sirajuddin, HQN continued to direct and conduct terrorist activity in Afghanistan. In 2015, Sirajuddin Haqqani was appointed deputy leader of the Taliban. Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, Sirajuddin Haqqani was appointed as the Taliban's so-called Minister of the Interior.

Activities: Before the withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces in 2021, HQN planned and carried out numerous significant kidnappings and attacks against U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Ghani administration officials, and civilian targets. In 2011, HQN wounded 77 U.S. soldiers in a truck bombing in Maidan Wardak province and conducted a 19-hour attack on Embassy Kabul and International Security Assistance Force headquarters in Kabul, killing 16 Afghans. In 2012 an HQN suicide bomb attack against Forward Operating Base Salerno killed 2 U.S. soldiers and wounded more than 100 others.

In 2016, HQN was blamed for an attack in Kabul against a government security agency tasked with providing protection to senior government officials, killing 64 people and injuring more than 300. In 2017, Afghan officials blamed HQN for a truck bomb that exploded in Kabul, killing more than 150 people. Later that year, an American woman and her family were recovered after five years of HQN captivity.

HQN was believed to be responsible for a 2018 ambulance bombing in Kabul that killed more than 100 people. Afghan officials blamed HQN for a 2018 attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul that killed 22 persons, including Americans. In 2019, HQN released two hostages, including a U.S. citizen, who had been kidnapped at gunpoint in 2016.

In 2020 the Ghani administration identified HQN as responsible for an attack on a military court in Paktika province killing at least five, as well as for a bombing in Kabul that killed three civilians.

Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August, several HQN leaders were appointed to positions in the so-called "interim government" announced by the Taliban. In addition to Sirajuddin Haqqani's role as the Taliban's interior minister, Khalil ur-Rahman Haqqani was appointed as the so-called Minister of Refugees. In 2021, HQN did not claim responsibility for any terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. Some HQN members probably have positions in the so-called Ministries of Interior and Defense.

Strength: HQN is estimated to have between 3,000 and 5,000 fighters.

Location/Area of Operation: Afghanistan and Pakistan

Funding and External Aid: HQN is funded primarily from taxes on local commerce, extortion, smuggling, and other illicit activities and illicit business ventures. In addition to the funding it receives as part of the broader Afghan Taliban, the group has received some funds from donors in Pakistan and the Persian Gulf region.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the Haqqani Network (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2021)

Countries:

Afghanistan, Pakistan

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