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Overview: In 2015, the continued conflict between the then internationally-recognized government in Tobruk and the Tripoli-based faction allowed violent extremist groups to expand their foothold in Libya. Although all sides in the conflict claimed to reject terrorism, security forces and armed groups affiliated with both sides were more focused on their opponents in the internal conflict than on combatting violent extremist groups. Libya's porous borders, vast uncontrolled weapons stockpiles, and critically weak law enforcement institutions continued to make it a permissive environment for terrorist groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Ansar al-Sharia, and other groups. There were reports of infighting between ISIL and other Libyan violent extremist groups and conservative militias, including the expulsion of ISIL from the eastern city of Darnah by a coalition of competing extremist groups.

As the internal conflict between the rival factions continued in 2015, terrorist groups were able to exploit the lack of effective state institutions to increase greatly their influence in Libya. ISIL expanded its control of the area around the coastal city of Sirte, which it initially seized in 2014. ISIL imposed its strict form of sharia law and instituted public punishment and executions. Following an attempted uprising against ISIL in Sirte in August, ISIL reportedly crucified four men; according to media, others have been executed since then for failing to adhere to ISIL rules or for being "spies" or "sorcerers." Additionally, ISIL is believed to be responsible for a series of killings in Ajdabiya targeting military and religious leaders opposed to ISIL.

A coalition of conservative militia and some violent Islamist extremists remained in control of the eastern city of Darnah, which has lacked virtually any state presence since the 2011 revolution. ISIL, which had previously controlled the city, was expelled in June by the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Darnah, an umbrella organization consisting of conservative militias and Salafist groups opposed to ISIL, including the U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization Ansar al-Shari'a in Darnah. In 2015, violent extremist groups in Darnah reportedly employed summary executions and public floggings to enforce their interpretation of sharia law, and carried out assassinations and beheadings of civil society activists, judges, and security officials.

Conflict in Benghazi continued between General Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council, an umbrella organization of extremist groups and anti-Haftar militia. The LNA has been unsuccessful in its stated goal of removing violent extremist organizations from Benghazi.

2015 Terrorist Incidents: The following list of terrorist incidents is designed to highlight major attacks believed to be perpetrated by violent extremist groups against western, diplomatic, Libyan government, and civil society targets. It is not exhaustive and does not encompass the numerous acts of violence perpetrated by the parties to the current political conflict, which have each accused their opponents of conducting kidnappings, assassinations, and attacks on civilian infrastructure such as airports and seaports. The list of incidents in Ajdabiya, Benghazi, Darnah, and Sirte should not be considered comprehensive. Frequently, there were no claims of responsibility for assassinations or other attacks.

- In January, ISIL declared the city of Sirte part of the group's caliphate and seized the local radio station, a hospital, and other government buildings.
- On January 27, gunmen attacked the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli, killing 10. ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On February 15, a video published on social media depicted the beheading of 21 Coptic Christian migrant workers, all but one of them Egyptian. ISIL's "Tripoli Province" claimed responsibility for the killings.
- On February 22, two bombs exploded at the residence of the Iranian ambassador to Libya. The residence was unoccupied and no one was injured. ISIL claimed responsibility for the bombing.
- On April 13, a gunman opened fire outside the South Korean Embassy in Tripoli, killing two and wounding one. On the same day, a bomb exploded outside the Moroccan Embassy in Tripoli. There were no casualties.
- On April 19, a video published on social media depicted the execution by beheading and gunshot of approximately 30 Ethiopian Christians. ISIL claimed responsibility for the killings.
- On April 20, there was an explosion outside the Spanish Embassy in Tripoli; there were no casualties.
- On August 12, members of ISIL killed Sheikh Khalid Ben Rajah, a local imam in Sirte, after he refused to relinquish control of his mosque. An uprising against ISIL in Sirte resulted, which led to ISIL killing at least twenty members of the uprising and hanging some of their corpses from street lights.
- In late August, ISIL conducted multiple public beheadings and crucifixions in Sirte.
- On October 16, ISIL beheaded two Libyan men in Sirte accused of sorcery.
- On October 18, a video was published depicting the killing of a Christian man from South Sudan, for which ISIL claimed responsibility.
- On October 23, a political demonstration against the UN-led Political Dialogue was shelled; the attack killed 12 and injured 39. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On October 29, Salafist preacher Sheikh Suleiman Kabylie was killed when a car bomb exploded beneath his vehicle. He had been an outspoken critic of ISIL and had denounced terrorism on social media. ISIL claimed responsibility for his killing.

- On November 6, a Salafist preacher opposed to ISIL, Faraj al-Oraibi, was killed when exiting his mosque in Ajdabiya.
- On November 26, four men with Salafist ties were killed in Ajdabiya, purportedly for their perceived opposition to ISIL and Ansar al-Sharia. The Libyan Foreign Minister claimed on December 1 that ISIL had killed 37 people in Ajdabiya as of that date.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Libya lacks a comprehensive counterterrorism law, although the Libyan penal code criminalizes offenses prejudicial to state security, including terrorism, the promotion of terrorist acts, and the handling of money in support of such acts. In 2013, the General National Congress (GNC) – at that time Libya's official legislature – adopted laws outlining a plan to disband non-state militias and integrate them into state security forces; however, neither law has been implemented. Libya has ratified the AU's Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, which requires states to criminalize terrorist acts under their national laws.

The Libyan government, in the midst of a protracted internal conflict, proved incapable of confronting the rapid expansion of terrorist groups in Libya. Neither the then internationally-recognized government in Tobruk nor the rival faction in Tripoli produced a strategy to combat the growing terrorist threat. Nor was there any new legislation passed to confront the growing threat of terrorism in Libya.

Even prior to the outbreak of large-scale violence in July 2014, Libyan law enforcement personnel lacked the capacity to detect, deter, respond to, or investigate terrorist incidents. There were no reported terrorism-related prosecutions in 2015. In many parts of Libya, security and law enforcement functions were provided by armed militias rather than state institutions. National police and security forces were fragmented, inadequately trained and equipped, and lacked clear reporting chains and coordination mechanisms. Security and law enforcement officials, including prosecutors and judges, have been targeted in kidnappings and assassinations, resulting in the continued suspension of court operations in Benghazi and Darnah. ISIL declared its own police presence in Sirte in December. Libya's military was similarly weak, with units often breaking down along local, tribal, or factional lines. Formal security structures were often overmatched by non-state armed groups. Counterterrorism operations conducted by Libyan Special Operations Forces have failed to significantly reduce the level of terrorist violence, bombings, assassinations, or kidnappings in Benghazi.

The Libyan government lacked a comprehensive border management strategy and was unable to secure the country's thousands of miles of land and maritime borders, enabling the illicit flow of goods, weapons, migrants, and foreign terrorist fighters that pose serious security challenges to the region. Libyan border security forces were generally poorly trained and underequipped, and frequently participated in illicit cross-border trade. Border security infrastructure damaged and looted during the 2011 revolution has not been repaired or replaced, and the ongoing conflict has affected border security infrastructure along Libya's border with Tunisia. The gunmen in the March 18 attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunis and the June 26 attack on the Riu Imperial Marhaba Hotel in Sousse were Tunisian nationals, but reportedly trained in Libya before the attacks. Security at Libya's airports was minimal, with limited document screening and no utilization of Passenger Name Record systems or biometric technology. Libya also lacked the resources, manpower, and training to conduct sufficient maritime patrols to interdict or dissuade illicit maritime trafficking and irregular migration. According to Italian officials, more than 100,000 migrants arrived in Italy in 2015, many transiting through Libya. Existing legislation outlining the responsibilities of various government agencies in the area of border management was vague and often contradictory, resulting in ad hoc and poorly coordinated efforts.

Previous international border security efforts, particularly the EU Border Assistance Mission to Libya (EUBAM), remained on hold, with staff relocated to Tunisia and a considerable reduction in personnel. EUBAM remained in contact with Libyan border officials, primarily those from the Libyan Coast Guard and the Department for Combatting Illegal Migration.

Libya has historically expressed desire to cooperate in the investigation of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and interests, including the September 2012 killing of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans at U.S. government facilities in Benghazi. However, Libyan support to these investigations has been limited given the overall weak capacity in Libya's law enforcement institutions and complications from the country's political conflict. In 2013, the Libyan Ministry of Justice signed a Declaration of Intent to facilitate law enforcement cooperation with the United States on investigations, including that of the 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 bombing.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Libya is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, a Financial Action Task Force-style regional body. There was little reliable data on Libya's 2015 anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing progress or efforts, and Libyan government and financial institutions generally lacked the ability to identify and interdict illicit financial flows. For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

Countering Violent Extremism: The Libyan government has not adopted a comprehensive strategy for countering violent extremism. Continuing online threats, kidnappings, and assassinations of activists who speak out against violent extremists contributed to a culture of intimidation and self-censorship.

International and Regional Cooperation: Since the outbreak of large-scale violence in July 2014, nearly all diplomatic missions in Libya withdrew from the country, including the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). The political conflict and lack of an international presence in Libya severely limited cooperation on counterterrorism activities. Previous bilateral programs, which sought to increase the capacity of Libya's law enforcement and defense institutions, have been on hold since 2014.

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