



Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Iraq

Publisher [United States Department of State](#)

Publication Date 30 April 2014

Cite as United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Iraq*, 30 April 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/536229e622.html> [accessed 6 August 2014]

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Overview: The terrorist organization previously known as al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) changed its name in 2013 to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). ISIL remained an al-Qa'ida (AQ) affiliate in 2013, despite continued disputes between its leaders and AQ senior leadership. The group and its affiliates are herein referred to as al-Qa'ida in Iraq/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (AQI/ISIL) to account for attacks carried out during the year under both names.

Despite a significant increase in the level of terrorist violence, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) made some progress combating AQI/ISIL and other Sunni insurgent groups in 2013. The Iraqi government largely succeeded in securing large religious gatherings at holy sites in Najaf and Karbala and high-profile government events, but terrorist bombings and other attacks continued to occur against provincial level interests, the ISF, and some soft targets. The number of both large-scale terrorist attacks aimed at soft targets, which have become the hallmark tactics of groups like AQI/ISIL, and smaller-scale tactics such as small arms fire and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), reached levels not seen since 2007. There were no significant attacks on U.S. interests and no U.S. fatalities in 2013 from these attacks.

AQI/ISIL significantly increased the lethality, complexity, and frequency of terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2013. According to UN estimates for 2013, more than 7,800 civilians (including civilian police) and over 1,000 ISF personnel were killed in acts of terrorism and violence – an average of 24 deaths per day. Press, host nation reports, and other public sources of information compiled for the time period from January through November estimated the death toll of civilians and ISF due to terrorist and criminal violence at 7,058 (4,817 civilians, 2,241 security personnel). Throughout the year, AQI/ISIL grew increasingly indiscriminate in its attacks and demonstrated increasing capabilities to plan, coordinate, and conduct large-scale attacks effectively. AQI/ISIL carried out numerous high-profile suicide bombings and vehicle-borne explosive device (VBIEDs) attacks on government and civilian targets, aiming to increase tensions among Iraqi sectarian groups and ethnic minorities and undercut public perceptions of the government's capacity to provide security. In addition to targeting government facilities and the ISF, the group targeted Shia places of worship, large religious processions such as the Shia pilgrimage to Karbala, funerals, schools, minority groups, journalists, critical infrastructure, and public spaces such as parks, cafes, and markets.

While AQI/ISIL continued to rely predominantly on suicide bombings and VBIEDs, it has increasingly relied on gunmen using assault rifles or silenced weapons to carry out targeted assaults on government and security officials, as well as against Sunnis affiliated with the

government through the Sahwas (Sunni Awakening Councils), in areas where the group exercised greater control, such as Anbar, Ninawa, and Salah ad Din Provinces. The police and judiciary continued to face threats to their personal safety and that of their families. Terrorists increasingly targeted families of ISF who were operating within their home provinces. Journalists were also increasingly targeted by terrorist groups.

Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqah al-Naqshabandiyah (JRTN), a Sunni nationalist insurgent group with links to the former Baath Party, also continued attacks during 2013, largely targeting the ISF in northern Iraq.

The ISF proved to have some capability in finding, arresting, and charging terrorism suspects. In October, the ISF arrested at least 560 people, mostly under the Antiterrorism Law of 2005, according to media and host government reports. In addition, the ISF found and cleared at least 135 IEDs of various types and found and cleared 32 weapons caches. Among the confiscated items were 48 IEDs, almost 400 mortar and artillery of varying caliber, 42 rockets, 21 rocket-propelled grenade rounds, several kilograms of C-4 explosives, over 30 kilograms of TNT, over 120 hand- and stun-grenades, and two landmines. As of the end of September, Iraq's Counterterrorism Service (CTS) had made over 700 terrorism-related arrests, based on the service's own reporting.

In October, the Government of Iraq established the Joint Operations Command (JOC). The JOC was designed to facilitate intelligence coordination among the various national security ministries and agencies. Each ministry or agency had a senior representative at the JOC headquarters. The representatives submitted actionable information to the JOC commander regarding terrorist threats, who in turn ordered the relevant provincial Operations Commands to carry out operations against specified targets.

Iraq-U.S. counterterrorism cooperation remained strong but limited to training, advisory, and information-sharing programs.

2013 Terrorist Incidents: Terrorist groups significantly increased the number of attacks throughout the country in 2013, many of which involved suicide bombs, VBIEDs, and targeted shootings, hallmark tactics of AQI/ISIL. In 2013, an average of 68 suicide and VBIED attacks per month were attributed to AQI/ISIL. Terrorist groups grew more indiscriminate in their attacks and increasingly targeted schools, oil infrastructure, and public spaces such as parks, cafes, and markets. Following is a partial listing highlighting some of the most egregious incidents:

- On March 4, the Ministry of Defense issued a statement claiming that terrorists from Syria had entered Iraq and killed 48 unarmed Syrian soldiers. The 48 Syrian soldiers had fled to Iraq following clashes on March 1-2 between Syrian Army and Free Syrian Army forces on the Syrian side of the Rabbia border crossing that connects to Ninawa Province. The ISF were escorting the 48 Syrian soldiers back to Syria when their convoy came under attack in Anbar Province. Nine Iraqi soldiers were also killed in the attack, with many more wounded. The Free Syrian Army denied any involvement in the attack. Iraqi press speculated AQI/ISIL involvement in the attack.
- On July 21, AQI/ISIL conducted well-coordinated simultaneous attacks against Taji and Abu Ghraib prisons. At least 10 ISF personnel were killed and more than 500 suspected AQI/ISIL prisoners reportedly escaped.
- On July 29, a wave of coordinated VBIED attacks in rapid succession targeted predominantly Shia areas in Southern Iraq, killing more than 50 people and wounding an estimated 190. At least 17 VBIEDs detonated, including at least nine in Baghdad, and six in the southern provinces of Muthanna, Basrah, and Wasit.
- On July 31, an IED blast in a café in Diyala Province left 20 people dead and wounded.

- On September 21, two VBIEDs were employed in an attack on a Shia funeral in Sadr City. The coordinated attack killed at least 50 and wounded at least 120.
- On September 29, AQI/ISIL carried out a complex attack involving VBIEDs and small arms fire against the Asayish (the Kurdistan Regional Government's internal security force) headquarters in Erbil. The attack killed six security personnel and wounded more than 60 bystanders.
- On October 6, in Ninewa Province, two VBIEDs were detonated in the al-Aiyathiya neighborhood. The first VBIED was detonated near an elementary school and the second one targeted an Iraqi Police checkpoint. The attacks killed up to 13 school children and one Iraqi police officer. Another 140 were wounded, mostly students from the school. On October 17, near the end of the Eid al-Adha holiday, a suicide bomber detonated a VBIED in a Shabak minority neighborhood in eastern Mosul, killing 15, including seven children, and wounding more than 50 others.
- On December 1, unidentified gunmen killed a Sunni tribal leader in Fallujah, Anbar Province.
- On December 3, a VBIED outside the mayor's office in Tarmiya, Baghdad Province, killed at least 14 and wounded 40 others.
- On December 6, gunmen attacked local area mayors in Diyala and Salah ad Din provinces. The attack in Diyala resulted in the mayor's death, while the official in Salah ad Din sustained injuries.
- On December 23, five people were killed in a suicide bombing after armed militants stormed a television complex in the city of Tikrit. The violence unfolded when a car bomb exploded outside Salah ad Din TV and the local offices of al-Iraqiyya State TV. Militants then stormed the offices of Salah ad Din TV and a suicide bomber killed the chief news editor, a copy editor, a producer, a presenter, and the archives manager. Five other employees were wounded. Security forces arrived at the scene, fought the attackers, and regained control of the building.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Iraq's Antiterrorism Law, Number 13, of 2005, is the primary means of prosecuting terrorism crimes. Iraqi Courts use various provisions of the Penal Code, Number 111, of 1969, to address crimes that do not fall squarely within the Antiterrorism Law. The U.S. government engaged with judicial and law enforcement authorities in numerous activities designed to strengthen criminal justice institutions and promote the rule of law.

Draft legislation for a law that formalizes the CTS as a ministerial-level organization and codifies the Service's mission and authorities under Iraqi law has been under consideration by the Council of Representatives since 2009. The CTS relies on the Ministry of Defense for its budget.

Violent sectarian strife was one of the greatest deterrents to effective law enforcement and border security. Iraq's law enforcement capacity as it pertains to proactively detecting, deterring, and preventing acts of terrorism strengthened in 2013 but needs improvement.

Iraq has a number of counterterrorism units that fall under the Ministries of Interior (MOI), Defense, and other agencies. However, there is no mechanism to determine which agency should lead or respond to particular counterterrorism incidents. This leads to a significant lack of coordination and cooperation among the Iraqi entities that lessens Iraq's effective response to the overwhelming threat from terrorism.

The Iraqi government is working to improve its law enforcement capacity via U.S.-assisted training in various areas of border control, chemical weapons threat mitigation, explosive incident countermeasures, post-blast investigations, vital infrastructure security, protection of national leaders, maritime port and harbor security, crisis response, police leaders' role in combating terrorism, fraudulent document recognition, and forensic examination of terrorist crime scenes. Other projects sponsored by the United States included financial investigation training to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as capacity building in the Iraqi judiciary, corrections service, and police. In October, a U.S.-funded program helped the Iraqi government open a free legal clinic at its Rusafa court complex in Baghdad. The help desk was a critical link between the Iraqi government and its citizenry, and served as a mechanism for assisting some of Iraq's more vulnerable segments of society, such as women who suffered from domestic violence and juveniles who were exposed to sexual or other abuse.

Iraq's MOI and Ministry of Transportation continued to strengthen their border security capabilities, and information-sharing within the Government of Iraq regarding travel documents is improving. For example, Iraq uses the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) System, which registers and screens travelers entering and exiting the country. As of the end of 2013, Iraq's PISCES system was operational at six international airports, 11 land border locations, and one seaport. This program is run and coordinated by the Iraq National Information Service.

In 2013, the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program worked to improve Iraqi law enforcement capabilities in the areas of investigations, border security, and crisis response. ATA provided courses in border control management, maritime port and harbor security, and identifying fraudulent document recognition.

The deteriorating security situation in Syria has made it increasingly difficult for the ISF to secure Iraq's 400-mile border with its western neighbor. Since 2012, terrorist groups have gained greater access to weaponry as a result of increased smuggling and ease of movement along Iraq's border with Syria. In an effort to improve security along the border, the government formed the al-Jazirah and al-Badiyah Operations Command.

During 2013, the Syrian refugee population in Iraq soared from approximately 68,000 on January 1 to 148,000 in mid-May, when the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) closed the unofficial border crossing that most refugees had used to enter Iraq. The KRG authorities reopened the border from August 15 through September 22, during which time as many as 75,000 more Syrian refugees entered the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). In the wake of the September 29 attack against Asayish headquarters in Erbil, officials in the IKR maintained tight controls on refugee flows and tightened restrictions on Iraqi Arabs attempting to enter the region from other provinces of Iraq. The UN estimated the Syrian refugee population to be at 210,000 in December. However, the total Syrian refugee population in 2013 is estimated to possibly have reached as high as 225,000.

Iraq's Higher Judicial Council reported an estimated 2,252 terrorism cases in 2013. Of those, 363 resulted in convictions, with the remainder dismissed. The Federal Court of Cassation reviewed 2,225 of the decisions. Arrests in Iraq are often used as a means to corral potential offenders, but the counterterrorism conviction rate does not correlate with the number of arrests.

In 2013, the U.S. Federal Bureau of InvestigationI submitted more than 35 requests for information regarding a variety of counterterrorism investigations to the Ministry of Interior's (MOI) Federal Intelligence and Investigations Agency (FIIA). FIIA's responses have been sporadic; nevertheless, FIIA continued to articulate its need for counterterrorism investigative training and its intent to provide more comprehensive responses. A Statement of Intent was drafted and passed to FIIA which would structure and reinforce communication with FIIA, and at year's end was awaiting approval from the MOI.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Since 2005, Iraq has been a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body. Late in 2013, Iraq assumed the presidency of MENAFATF for a period of one year. In November 2012, MENAFATF adopted Iraq's first-ever mutual evaluation to review compliance with international anti-money laundering/combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) standards. The report identified significant risks and Iraq agreed on an action plan to address its vulnerabilities. In September 2013, the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) submitted an interim report to the MENAFATF Secretariat. Iraq also underwent a FATF Targeted Review, negotiating an action plan to address deficiencies in its AML/CFT regime. The international community, including the United States, provided subject matter expertise to assist Iraq.

In June, CBI Acting Governor Abdul Basit Turki replaced the previous director of the Iraqi financial intelligence unit (the Anti-Money Laundering Unit or AMLU). The AMLU is not independent of the CBI and suffers from lack of capacity and human and material resource constraints.

The Iraqi legal framework for AML/CFT is based on the Anti-Money Laundering Law of 2004, the Antiterrorism Law of 2005, and the Penal Code.

Iraq acceded to the Terrorist Financing Convention in November 2012. In March 2013, the Government of Iraq published in its official gazette the Arab Agreement to Combat Money Laundering and Terrorism Finance, which the Government of Iraq previously signed in Cairo in December 2010. There was no formal mechanism in place to implement UNSCR 1267/1989 (al Qa'ida) sanctions and no mechanism at all to implement UNSCR 1373 (2001). Further, neither the CBI nor the AMLU has legal grounds to impose freezing of assets.

Iraq's implementation of UNSCRs pertaining to CFT depends on the approval of the draft law by the Cabinet and the Parliament. The delay is due to a combination of lack of institutional capacity, political consensus, and a backlog of pressing political and economic reform issues. The Iraqi government had requested technical assistance to finalize the law by September 2015. The nationwide criminalization of terrorist financing in accordance with international standards and the establishment and implementation of appropriate procedures to freeze terrorist assets in line with international standards depend on the passage of the draft law.

The CBI and AMLU lack the institutional capacity to monitor money and value transfer services (MVTs) effectively. The Government of Iraq has imposed few penalties for non-compliance and issued no enforceable regulations regarding internal AML/CFT controls to the MVTs sector. The CBI and AMLU do not require such data collection because there is no provision in Iraqi law that requires the inclusion of the originator's account number in all segments of wire transfers. It is unclear if banks and other financial institutions are monitoring for compliance regarding the inclusion of full originator and beneficiary information in wire transfers.

Iraq's suspicious transaction report requirement is inadequate due to the delay and the threshold for reporting. While the Government of Iraq has required non-profit organizations (NPOs) to file suspicious transaction reports, which it has monitored and regulated, there has been no review of the adequacy of existing laws and regulations regarding exploitation or abuse of NPOs by terrorists or terrorist organizations. It is likely that the Government of Iraq lacks the institutional capacity and resources to enforce and prevent NPO exploitation by terrorist organizations.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the 2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2014/index.htm>.

Regional and International Cooperation: Iraq continued to engage with its neighbors through the Arab League. Iraqi Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) experts from the Ministry of Defense

attended a "Train-the-Trainer" course on "Countering the Threat of Home-made Explosives." The course was held at the NATO-accredited EOD Centre of Excellence in Slovakia in November 2013. This training was the first activity with Iraq funded under the NATO Science for Peace and Security Program.

Iraq hosted its first International Conference for Counterterrorism on November 27-28. Representatives from the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, and China attended.

Countering Radicalization to Violence and Violent Extremism: Various U.S. entities offered programs to the Government of Iraq during 2013 aimed at helping it counter radicalization to violence and violent extremism. The programs varied from those rooted in economic development to community engagement. The active members of the more than 5,000 alumni of U.S. government exchange programs in Iraq conducted a variety of community development programs targeting marginalized populations in Iraq.

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