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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 1 - Spain

Overview: Spain continued to respond effectively to the global terrorism threat in border and transportation security, countering terrorism financing, and countering violent extremism through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Spain remained on “high” national alert for terrorism throughout 2021 for the seventh year in a row. Spanish authorities continued to arrest individuals suspected of planning terror attacks, facilitating terrorist financing, and engaging in ISIS- and al-Qa’ida-related recruitment and radicalization, both online and in their communities. During the year, Spanish counterterrorism cooperation with the United States was excellent.

In 2021, Spain served as co-facilitator of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy Review. Spain maintained its contribution to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, with about 150 personnel deployed to Iraq throughout the year in military and police training missions. Spain continued to exercise leadership in regional and global CT fora, including the GCTF and the 5+5 Defense Initiative.

2021 Terrorist Incidents: On September 14, a Moroccan national drove a vehicle into a crowd of people outside a restaurant, killing one bystander and injuring two others, before stabbing himself to death. Notes left by the perpetrator suggesting premeditation caused the Guardia Civil to investigate the crash as a potential terrorist incident.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security Legislation: No changes since 2020.

During 2021, the government continued to implement the 2020 law regarding the collection and analysis of API/PNR.

The Spanish government continued to implement its National Strategy Against Terrorism. The Ministry of Interior, through its Intelligence Center for Counterterrorism and Organized Crime (CITCO), with contributions from the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Justice, developed the document to align with the four pillars of Counterterrorism Strategies of the EU and the UN: Prevent, Protect, Pursue, and Prepare the response. The strategy includes measures to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks against soft targets, such as hotels, stadiums, tourist resorts, and cultural sites, in line with UNSCR 2341 on protecting critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks.

The Spanish criminal code punishes any act of “collaboration with the activities or purposes of a terrorist organization,” including promoting terrorism on social media, self-radicalization on the

internet, training remotely, operating without clear affiliation, and traveling in support of nonstate terrorist actors. Spanish authorities reported they had undertaken 22 counterterrorist operations and detained 45 suspects for terrorism-related charges during the year.

Significant law enforcement actions related to CT included the following:

- On January 10, Spanish National Police (SNP) arrested three individuals on terrorist charges for allegedly planning an imminent terrorist attack in Spain or another European country.
- On March 4, the government destroyed 1,377 weapons that had been under judicial control in relation to trials completed during 1975-2005 in prosecution of domestic terror groups.
- On April 29, the SNP arrested three suspected terrorists who used social networks to encourage terrorist and violent actions against French individuals and institutions.
- The SNP arrested, on terrorism charges, an Algerian national affiliated with a North African criminal smuggling operation on July 31 on Mallorca. Officials suspect the smuggling operation of facilitating entry for suspected Algerian terrorists into Spain and transporting suspected terrorists between Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.
- On September 9, the SNP identified a prisoner at Penitential Center of Daroca, in Zaragoza, with ties to ISIS and launched an intervention. Authorities said the inmate “devoted significant time” to radicalizing fellow prisoners and made credible threats of violence against Spanish government entities.
- On October 10 and 11, SNP arrested five Algerian nationals and charged one with indoctrination, terrorism, and possession of a deadly weapon, and three others with membership in a terrorist group.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: There have been no legislative or significant policy changes since 2020. On March 23, the SNP arrested the president of the Islamic Commission of Spain Mohamad Aiman Adlbi, along with two other individuals, as part of an antiterrorism financing operation. The 74-year-old Adlbi was provisionally released because of health issues while the investigation continues. Spain is also a member of the Defeat-ISIS Counter-ISIS Finance Group.

Countering Violent Extremism: Spain continued implementation of its national CVE plan, developed in 2015, adjusted annually, and led by CITCO. The plan identifies the potential for terrorist radicalization and recruitment down to the census district level, using an algorithm based on socioeconomic factors, and seeks to build partnerships at the local level between civil society leaders from vulnerable communities and representatives of law enforcement and other public services. On November 29, the union of incarcerated Basque separatist terrorists (*Euskal Preso Politikoen Kolektiboa*, or EPPK) announced it would no longer support public events celebrating the release of Basque Fatherland and Liberty (*Euzkadi ta Askatasuna*, or ETA) members who had been convicted of violent terrorist acts. The welcome-home ceremonies, known as *ongi etorri*, are seen by many as glorification of violence and an effort to undermine rule of law. Despite the November 29 statement, the *ongi etorri* continued to take place regularly when ETA members were released from prison.

International and Regional Cooperation: In 2021, Spain served as co-facilitator of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy Review. Spain is a founding member of the GCTF and supports CT initiatives in the UN, the Council of Europe, NATO, and the OSCE. In addition to its membership in the Counter-

ISIS Finance Group, Spain is a member of the Foreign Terrorist Fighter, Stabilization, and Communications Working Groups.

Spain is a donor nation to the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund and maintained forces throughout 2021 in EU training missions in Mali and Somalia. Spain continues to support the 5+5 Defense Initiative bringing together European (France, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain) and North African (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia) countries to build capacity on CT, maritime and aviation security, and disaster management. The Spanish cities of Fuenlabrada and Málaga are both members of the Strong Cities Network.

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