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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 1 - Tajikistan

Overview: In July 2018, an unprecedented attack left four Western tourists dead, including two Americans, which underscored the threat posed by ISIS in Tajikistan and the importance of counterterrorism efforts, as well as initiatives to counter terrorist recruitment and radicalization. The majority of Tajik domestic counterterrorism activities conducted in 2018 targeted organizations and individuals allegedly linked to Islamist terrorism in Tajikistan, but the government also arrested terrorist suspects returning from Afghanistan, Iraq, Russia, and Syria. Tajik authorities reported that an estimated 1,900 Tajik citizens have traveled to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS since 2015. The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that 163 FTFs have returned to Tajikistan. According to the Prosecutor General, more than 450 Tajik citizens remained imprisoned in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan for participating in terrorist groups’ combat operations, and another 470 Tajik fighters were killed. The government viewed northern Afghanistan as the primary potential source of terrorist activity, and continued to take steps to strengthen its border-defense capabilities. Tajikistan has been willing to engage with the United States on counterterrorism issues.

2018 Terrorist Incidents:

- On July 29, five men attacked a group of seven Western cyclists on a rural highway outside Danghara, southeast of Dushanbe, killing four people, including two Americans. Assailants ran several cyclists off the road and then attacked them with knives. Police shot and killed four of the attackers, and the lone survivor was sentenced to life in prison on November 21. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack and the assailants pledged loyalty to ISIS in an online video. The government, however, believed that the opposition political party, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), was responsible for the attack.
- On August 26, assailants killed two Tajik forestry workers and wounded one other in the Farkhor district, near the Tajik-Afghan border. Details surrounding the incident are unclear. Both the Tajik and Afghan media reported a retaliatory airstrike against militants on the Afghan side by the Tajik, or possibly the Russian military; however, both Dushanbe and Moscow officially refuted this claim.
- On November 4, Tajik officials reportedly arrested 12 suspects planning to set off a bomb at the Russian 201st motorized rifle division headquarters in Dushanbe, allegedly under instructions from ISIS.

- On November 7, a bloody prison riot in the northern city of Khujand left dozens of individuals, including several prison guards, killed or injured. ISIS claimed responsibility for the riot.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: On June 13, the Tajik Parliament adopted amendments to Article 179 of the criminal code that empower law enforcement agencies to track which websites people visit, including social media pages. Based on this amendment, the government can prosecute anyone for hitting “like” or “share” under a social media post that espouses “extremism” or terrorism. Critics argued that this law gives the government indefinite latitude in determining what constitutes “extremism,” noting that the Tajik government continues to unilaterally designate political opposition groups such as the IRPT, or religious affiliations, such as Salafi Muslims, as terrorist groups.

There were no reported changes to law enforcement capabilities in 2018.

Travel document security and biographic and biometric screening capabilities are lacking at ports of entry, particularly land crossings. Major entry points have access to INTERPOL databases and other watchlists, but connectivity at smaller border posts is lacking. Tajikistan is currently installing three e-gates at the Dushanbe Airport for e-visa holders. The system is connected to INTERPOL and will automatically check the status of e-visa holders.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Tajikistan belongs to the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG), a FATF-style regional body. Tajikistan’s FIU, the Financial Monitoring Department (FMD) at the National Bank of Tajikistan, is a member of the Egmont Group. The National Bank of Tajikistan is currently working to improve Tajikistan’s image with the FATF and the EAG. FMD’s website contains a list of individuals and entities involved in terrorism, including those sanctioned under relevant UNSCRs. In November 2018, the EAG approved a mutual evaluation report of Tajikistan to evaluate its compliance with and effectiveness toward meeting FATF standards.

For additional information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes* (<https://www.state.gov/2019-international-narcotics-control-strategy-report/>) and the *2018 FATF Mutual Evaluation Report* (<http://www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/mutualevaluations/documents/mer-tajikistan-2018.html>).

Countering Violent Extremism: Tajikistan continued to focus on implementation of the 2016 national CVE strategy. The strategy, designed for implementation from 2016 to 2020, is a whole-of-government approach to combat radicalization in Tajik society.

Tajikistan amended its criminal laws in 2015, permitting authorities to pardon Tajik fighters who voluntarily return from Iraq or Syria and renounce foreign militant groups. This is not a blanket amnesty and applies only to those who have not taken part in violence. To date, the government has dropped charges against approximately 43 FTFs

who were reintegrated into their communities. Those pardoned remained on government watchlists but were not legally prevented from applying for jobs, enrolling in universities, or traveling abroad.

In an effort to counter what it considers “extremism,” the government continued to restrict certain forms of political and religious expression and groups it classifies as “extremist.” In December 2018, Tajikistan was again designated a Country of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

International and Regional Cooperation: Tajikistan is an active participant in regional security arrangements, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). On February 21, the Tajik Parliament ratified the SCO's Convention on Combatting Extremism. As a member of the C5+1 diplomatic platform, Tajikistan participates in the associated C5+1 Security Working Group, which focuses on regional cooperation on counterterrorism and CVE.

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on terrorism (covering 2018)



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