



Chapter 5: Terrorist Safe Havens (Update to 7120 Report)

BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Country Reports on Terrorism 2015

Report

Chapter 5

Terrorist Safe Havens (Update to 7120 Report)

Terrorist safe havens described in this report include ungoverned, under-governed, or ill-governed physical areas where terrorists are able to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, transit, and operate in relative security because of inadequate governance capacity, political will, or both.

As defined by section 2656f(d) of Title 22 of the U.S. Code, the term "terrorist sanctuary" or "sanctuary" excludes the territory of a country the government of which is subject to a determination under section 2405(j)(1)(A) of the Appendix to Title 50; section 2371(a) of Title 22; or section 2780(d) of Title 22— the state sponsors of terrorism. Accordingly, information regarding Iran, Sudan, and Syria can be found in Chapter 3, State Sponsors of Terrorism.

TERRORIST SAFE HAVENS

AFRICA

Somalia. In 2015, terrorists used many primarily rural sections of south-central Somalia as safe havens. Terrorists continued to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, and operate with relative ease in these areas due to inadequate security, justice, and governance capacity at all levels.

Al-Shabaab's capacity to rebound from counterterrorism operations is due in large part to its ability to maintain control of large swaths of rural areas and routes in parts of Somalia. In 2015, al-Shabaab lost a number of safe havens in south-central Somalia, many of which provided access to funds and other resources the group extorted from local communities. Despite the success of coordinated African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) operations that drove al-Shabaab from former strongholds in Baardheere and Dinsoor, the terrorist organization managed to establish new safe havens from where it planned and launched attacks against government officials, AMISOM bases, and soft targets in Kenya and other parts of the region. The Federal Government of Somalia and its regional administrations lacked the capacity and resources to fill security voids left in the wake of AMISOM's operations with civilian law enforcement. These gaps allowed al-Shabaab to retain the freedom of movement necessary to establish new safe havens and re-infiltrate areas that AMISOM cleared but could not hold.

As seen in previous years, al-Shabaab used smaller towns in the Jubba River Valley such as Jilib and Saakow as bases for its operations. These areas allowed the group's operatives to continue exploiting the porous border regions between Kenya and Somalia and launch deadly cross-border attacks. Kenya suffered one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in its history when in April, al-Shabaab operatives assaulted the Garissa University College using light arms and suicide vests and killed more than 145 Kenyans, most of whom were students. Al-Shabaab also used villages along major coastal routes in southern Somalia, namely Kunyo Barow and Tortorow, to facilitate access to areas just outside of major population centers in Mogadishu and Kismaayo. These and other routes throughout southern Somalia serve as lifelines for al-Shabaab as low-level fighters established illegal checkpoints to collect taxes and tolls from locals. Although the group continued to generate funds from the illicit trade of charcoal and other commodities, al-Shabaab leveraged tax collection to compensate for declining revenues after losing access to the port in Baraawe in 2014.

The Federal Government of Somalia remained committed to regional counterterrorism efforts that aim to eliminate al-Shabaab's access to safe haven in Somalia. Though progress on this front was uneven in 2015, these efforts provided the Somali government with enough space and time to focus on the federalism process and advance its political objectives.

According to independent sources and NGOs engaged in demining activities on the ground, there was little cause for concern for the presence of WMD in Somalia.

The Trans-Sahara. There are ungoverned, under-governed, and ill-governed areas of Mali that terrorist groups have used to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, and operate in relative security, despite Malian authorities willingness and responsiveness as counterterrorism partners, a UN peacekeeping mission, and French forces in the region. The Malian government has reestablished its political presence in the cities of Timbuktu and Gao, with some local government officials returning to their posts in 2015. The military, in conjunction with the French and UN forces, worked to eliminate terrorist safe havens in Mali.

The Malian government does not support or facilitate the flow of foreign terrorist fighters through its territory, but the lack of government control across large portions of its territory and porous borders makes preventing the flow very difficult.

The Malian government does not support or facilitate the proliferation or trafficking of WMD in and through its territory.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Sulu/Sulawesi Seas Littoral. The number of islands in the Sulawesi Sea and the Sulu Archipelago make it a difficult region to secure. Cooperation by all states bordering this region remained strong with U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Although Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have improved efforts to control their shared maritime boundaries – including through U.S.-funded efforts to enhance domain awareness in the waters south and southwest of Mindanao – the expanse remained difficult to control. Surveillance improved but remained partial at best, and traditional smuggling and piracy groups have provided an effective cover for terrorist activities, including the movement of personnel, equipment, and funds. Kidnappings for ransom remained an ongoing threat.

Southeast Asia is vulnerable to exploitation by illicit traffickers and proliferators given the high volume of global trade transiting the region as well as the existence of smuggling and proliferation networks. Weak strategic trade controls, legal and regulatory frameworks, inadequate maritime law enforcement and security capabilities, and emerging and re-emerging infectious disease and burgeoning bioscience capacity, make Southeast Asia an area of concern for WMD proliferation and transit. Other than Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines, strategic trade control laws that include controls over dual-use and end-use or “catch-all” controls are lacking in Southeast Asia. Assisting these countries to develop strong laws that meet international standards and effective targeting and risk management systems are major goals of the Export Control and Related Border Security program over the next few years.

The Southern Philippines. The geographical composition of the Philippines, spread out over 7,100 islands, makes it difficult for the central government to maintain a presence in all areas. Counterterrorism operations, however, have been successful at isolating the geographic influence and constraining the activities of transnational terrorist groups. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Jemaah Islamiya (JI), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and other militant groups were present in areas on Mindanao, and especially across the islands of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. The New People’s Army (NPA) maintained a presence across the Philippines, particularly in rural and mountainous areas. Continued pressure from Philippine security forces made it difficult, however, for terrorists to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, and operate outside their base locations.

The Philippines and the United States have strong counterterrorism cooperation. In 2015, the United States continued to work with the Government of the Philippines to monitor and investigate groups engaged in or supporting terrorist activities in the Philippines. The Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines, under Operation Enduring Freedom, was concluded in June 2015 after more than a decade. The government launched numerous operations, particularly in the Southern Philippines, against organizations like the ASG, JI, BIFF, and NPA, and prosecuted terrorist suspects and organizations. In 2015, the Philippines also continued coordinating with U.S. law enforcement authorities, especially regarding wanted U.S. fugitives and suspected terrorists.

In November, the Philippines passed the Strategic Trade Management Act (STMA), which allows it to control the import and export of dual-use items. At year’s end, the Philippines was working to implement the provisions of the STMA, including setting up a licensing office within the Department of Trade and Industry that will issue licenses required to import and export controlled dual-use commodities and technology. Early implementation progress has been slow, however, due to a number of factors, including a lack of funding, and risks missing the deadlines set by the STMA.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Egypt. Portions of Egypt’s Sinai region were a safe haven for terrorist organizations in 2015. The Government of Egypt views terrorism as one of the country’s greatest threats and has dedicated significant military resources to combat indigenous and transnational terrorist groups. The Egyptian government continued its extensive security campaign focused on Northern Sinai against ISIL Sinai Province (ISIL-SP), launching Operation Right of the Martyr in September. The Northern Sinai was closed off to tourists, journalists, U.S. government officials, and NGOs in 2015.

ISIL-SP has claimed responsibility for increasingly frequent and sophisticated terrorist attacks against Egyptian forces, such as the simultaneous attack on multiple police and security installations in Sinai’s Sheikh Zuewid on July 1; and high profile targets, for example downing a Metrojet airliner, killing all 200 passengers and seven crew members on October 31.

Through its Export Control and Related Border Security Program, the United States is working with the Government of Egypt to enhance Egypt’s border security capabilities through the provision of land, air, and maritime border enforcement and targeting and risk management training for Egyptian Customs, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Transportation, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials. In addition, since 2009, the Department of State’s Nonproliferation & Disarmament Fund has assisted Egypt with the provision of passenger and cargo vehicle x-ray detection equipment with the capability to inspect vehicular and truck traffic at fixed transportation checkpoints for WMD-related materials, conventional weapons, and other illicit items.

Iraq. Portions of Iraq remained under the control of ISIL during 2015, including the city of Mosul. However, after ISIL took control of large swaths of Iraqi territory in 2014, the Government of Iraq made steady, significant progress in retaking terrain from ISIL throughout 2015. Supported by the 66-member Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, the Government of Iraq retook more than 40 percent of Iraqi territory once controlled by ISIL by the end of 2015, including several key cities. In April, an Iraqi-led military effort retook the city of Tikrit, and by the end of the year 80 percent of internally displaced persons had returned to the city. In November, Peshmerga forces retook the town of Sinjar, a city that came to the world’s attention in the summer of 2014 when ISIL committed atrocities against the Yazidi community.

At the end of 2015, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), accompanied by local Sunni fighters and police, liberated large parts of Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province and a strategically important hub.

ISIL used the territory under its control in 2015 to produce sulfur mustard and IEDs filled with chlorine. The United States has been proactively working with our allies to dismantle this chemical weapons capability, as well as deny ISIL access to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials and expertise through interdictions and strengthening the ability of regional governments to detect, disrupt, and respond effectively to suspected CBRN activity.

Due to security conditions in Iraq, the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program has had difficulty implementing outreach activities. EXBS priorities previously included working with the Government of Iraq to develop and implement regulations and procedures related to The Act of the Iraqi National Monitoring Authority on WMD Non-Proliferation No. 48 of 2012 (INMA Act), adopt and implement a control list, and to enhance Iraq’s border security capabilities related to the inspection and detection of WMD-related goods and technologies. However, these activities are largely on pause. Instead, the EXBS program is assessing equipment and training needs for security forces in the newly liberated regions, as they seek to consolidate gains and reclaim territory from ISIL.

The United States and Iraq strengthened their bilateral partnership to counter nuclear terrorism in September 2014 by concluding the “Joint Action Plan between the

Government of the Republic of Iraq and the Government of the United States of America on Combating Nuclear and Radioactive Materials Smuggling." The arrangement expresses the intention of the two governments to work together to enhance Iraq's capabilities to prevent, detect, and respond to nuclear smuggling incidents, and ultimately prevent terrorist groups from acquiring nuclear and radiological materials.

Lebanon. The Lebanese government does not control all regions of the country or its borders with Syria and Israel. Hizballah controls access to parts of the country, including restricting Lebanon's security services, which allows Hizballah to operate with relative impunity. The government took no action in 2015 to disarm Hizballah, to eliminate its safe havens within Lebanese territory, or to prevent the flow of Hizballah members to Syria or Iraq. Ungoverned areas along the un-demarcated Lebanese-Syrian border also served as safe havens for Nusrah Front, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and other Sunni terrorist groups in 2015, which operate in mountainous, mostly uninhabited zones where the government has limited reach. The Government of Lebanon has made attempts to eradicate these safe havens, however, and is engaged in sustained military operations to rid Lebanon of these Sunni terrorist groups. Palestinian refugee camps were also used as safe havens by Palestinian and other armed groups to house weapons, shelter wanted criminals, and plan terrorist attacks.

The United States works closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces to combat terrorist threats along the Syrian border by providing counterterrorism training, military equipment, and weaponry.

Lebanon is not a source country for WMD components, but its porous borders make the country vulnerable for use as a transit and transshipment hub for proliferation-sensitive transfers, particularly with the conflict in Syria. The LAF Engineer Regiment partners with U.S. government agencies to detect and prevent proliferation and trafficking of WMD along the Syrian border.

The Export Control and Related Border Security program (EXBS) is providing robust commodity identification training for items that can be used in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons, in order to keep these items from transiting through Lebanon. EXBS was also launching a frontier border security interdiction training program, in partnership with the Department of Defense, to strengthen LAF and ISF border security and interdiction capabilities.

Libya. Libya's porous borders, fragmented security forces, and vast ungoverned territory have made it a permissive environment for terrorist groups such as Ansar al-Shari'a Benghazi, Ansar al-Shari'a Darnah, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Murabitoun, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Due to the inability of the Libyan government to effectively administer its territory, terrorist organizations have found safe havens primarily in Sirte, Darnah, Benghazi, and Sabratha, although violent extremist groups operate with impunity throughout Libya. While the Libyan National Army launched a military operation in 2014 with the stated goal of removing violent extremists from Benghazi, it has not succeeded in fully liberating Benghazi from the control of terrorist groups. The government failed to eliminate terrorist safe havens in Libya in 2015, and has been unable to prevent flows of foreign terrorist fighters in and out of its territory. Terrorist training camps and facilitation networks exist throughout Libya; local tribes and minority groups frequently serve as facilitators, although this appears largely due to economic rather than ideological motivations. Libya serves as a major source and transit country for foreign fighters en route to Syria and Iraq. There are indications that foreign terrorist fighters are beginning to return to Libya or choosing to stay in Libya to fight there, increasing concerns that Libya has become a battlefield for violent extremist groups such as ISIL.

In 2013, the United States signed an agreement with the Libyan government to cooperate on destroying Libya's stockpile of legacy chemical weapons in accordance with its obligations as an Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) member state. Libya successfully completed operations for the disposal of its remaining mustard gas filled in artillery projectile and aerial bombs in January 2014. Libya also completed the disposal of its remaining bulk mustard in 2013. However, Libya retains a stockpile of natural uranium ore concentrate (yellowcake), stored in a former military facility near Sebha in Libya's south. This material represents a limited risk of trafficking and proliferation due to the bulk and weight of the storage containers and the need for extensive additional processing before the material would be suitable for weapons purposes.

Yemen. Throughout 2015, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIL-Yemen exploited the political and security vacuum to strengthen their foothold and expand recruiting inside the country. The Yemeni government has operated in exile for much of 2015, greatly diminishing its ability to focus on counterterrorism efforts. AQAP and ISIL-Yemen have portrayed the unrest in Yemen as part of a broader Sunni-Shia sectarian conflict. By exploiting this sectarian divide, these groups have increased their support base in Sunni communities and enabled ISIL-Yemen, in particular, to gain a foothold in the country.

AQAP benefitted during 2015 from the conflict in Yemen by expanding its presence in the southern and eastern governorates. Establishing deeper tribal and familial relationships in these areas allowed AQAP to expand the territory it controlled during 2015 to Abyan, Taiz, and its largest safe haven in the port city of Mukalla. Access to the port enabled AQAP to increase its finances. AQ also maintains a presence in Aden.

While AQAP remains the predominant Sunni Islamist terrorist group in the country, there are seven known *wilayat* (province) pro-ISIL groups operating in 10 of Yemen's provinces, including Sa'ada, Sana'a, al-Jawf, al-Bayda, Taiz, Ibb, Lahij, Aden, Shahwah, and Hadramawt. ISIL-Yemen's "*wilayat*" are beginning to exert more influence by competing to obtain support from Sunni tribes and militias in the same areas. While the exact composition of the group is still unknown, its numbers are considerably smaller than AQAP's despite it having likely drawn members from some of the same disillusioned Yemeni AQAP members who previously supported ISIL in Iraq and Syria. While ISIL-Yemen has demonstrated a violent operational pace, it has yet to occupy significant territory.

Yemen's political instability continued to hinder efforts to enact or enforce strategic trade controls, leaving the country vulnerable as a transit point for WMD-related materials.

SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan. The border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan is an under-governed area that terrorists exploit to conduct attacks in both countries. Terrorist networks active in Afghanistan, such as al-Qa'ida (AQ), the Haqqani Network, and others, operate in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. ISIL Khorasan (ISIL-K) is largely based in Afghanistan, but its support network also reaches into Pakistan's tribal areas along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The Afghan government has struggled to assert control over this remote terrain where the population is largely detached from national institutions. Afghanistan cooperates with U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Since taking office in September 2014, President Ghani has pursued cross-border security cooperation with the Pakistani government, including the prospect of joint operations to reduce safe havens on both sides of the border.

The potential for WMD trafficking and proliferation remains a concern in Afghanistan because of its porous borders and the presence of terrorist groups. The United

States and Afghanistan continued to work to finalize a bilateral framework to facilitate closer cooperation to counter nuclear terrorism and enhance Afghanistan's capabilities to prevent, detect, and respond to nuclear smuggling incidents. The Afghanistan and U.S. governments also continued to work to implement comprehensive strategic trade controls and strengthen Afghanistan's border security system.

The Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program contributes to strengthening Afghanistan's border enforcement capacity by providing border interdiction trainings to Afghan Customs Department and the Afghan Border Police. EXBS also sponsors regional cross-border collaboration through trainings with its Central Asian neighbors through the OSCE and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime – World Customs Organization's Container Control Program. To increase the Government of Afghanistan's strategic trade control awareness and capacity, EXBS sponsored training for an Afghan delegation, which included representatives from the Afghan Atomic Energy High Commission, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the University of Georgia, Center for International Trade Security.

The United States continued to assist the Afghan government in building capacity to secure potentially dangerous biological materials and infrastructure housed at Afghan facilities, promote surveillance capabilities to detect and identify possibly catastrophic biological events, and engage Afghan scientists and engineers that have WMD or WMD-applicable expertise.

Pakistan. In 2015, an assortment of terrorist groups, to include the Haqqani Network, attempted to hide in or operate from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, a mountainous region along Pakistan's northwest border with Afghanistan. The National Action Plan (NAP) calls upon the government to "ensure that no armed militias are allowed to function in the country," although claims about the NAP's uneven implementation was a frequent feature in Pakistani media. As in 2014, Pakistan launched military operations to eradicate terrorist safe havens, although their impact on all terrorist groups was uneven. The government administered an Exit Control List (ECL) intended to prevent terrorists and criminal actors from traveling abroad. In August, September, and November, the government announced its intention to remove thousands of people from the ECL on grounds of their wrongful or unsubstantiated addition. Some UN-designated terrorist groups, such as Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LeT) affiliates Jamaat-ud-Dawa and Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation, were able to fundraise and hold rallies in Pakistan. LeT/JuD leader, Hafiz Saeed, who is also a UN-designated terrorist, was able to make frequent public appearances in support of the organization's objectives, which were covered by the Pakistani media, for much of the year. In September, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Agency prohibited media coverage of LeT and affiliated groups, although the groups continued to recruit and operate around the country. Despite JuD and FIF's proscription under UN sanctions regimes, the Pakistani government affirmed in December that neither organization was banned in Pakistan.

To combat the trafficking of items that could contribute to WMDs and their delivery systems, Pakistan continued to work towards harmonizing its national control list with items controlled by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, Missile Technology Control Regime, and Australia Group, as well as taking positive moves such as adding catch-all provisions to its export licensing procedures. Along with list development, Pakistan developed industry internal compliance guidelines and an industry outreach program for strategic technology sectors, which regularly shares information with these industries. The U.S. government seeks to partner more closely with Pakistan on a further enhanced outreach campaign for industry to fully understand and implement Pakistan's export control requirements, as well as to begin a dialogue on controls on conventional weapons and related dual-use technologies. In addition to industry outreach, Pakistan also participated, developed, and delivered a series of technical trainings to responsible government licensing and enforcement officials for the proper identification of dual-use commodities that could be used to create WMDs and/or their delivery systems. Overall, Pakistan was a committed partner that undertook great efforts to build its export control capabilities.

Pakistan is a constructive and active participant in the Nuclear Security Summit process and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and has worked to strengthen its strategic trade controls, including updating its national export control list. The Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program increased the Government of Pakistan's enforcement capacity by sponsoring training for Pakistani Customs and Strategic Export Control Division officials on how to properly identify strategic commodities of concern. These commodity identification and advanced interdiction trainings were implemented by the U.S. Department of Energy. EXBS also sponsored regional collaboration through nonproliferation fellowships and cross-border coordination with Afghanistan through the UN Office and Drugs and Crime – World Customs Organization's Container Control Program (CCP). Under the CCP, training was provided to enhance the targeting of skills of port control unit officials at the Torkham and Jalalabad border-crossings.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Colombia. Rough terrain and dense forest cover, coupled with low population densities and historically weak government presence have defined Colombia's borders with Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil, and historically have allowed for safe havens for terrorist groups, particularly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The Government of Colombia has not only maintained pressure on these groups to deny safe haven, disrupt terrorism financing efforts, and degrade terrorist groups' logistics infrastructure, but it also has continued to conduct operations to combat their ability to conduct terrorist attacks. Coupled with ongoing peace negotiations with the FARC and two FARC unilateral cease fire declarations, Colombia experienced an overall decline in the total number of terrorist incidents in 2015. Despite these successes, illegal armed groups, primarily known as "Bandas Criminales," continued to use the porous border, remote mountain areas, and jungles to maneuver, train, cultivate and transport narcotics, operate illegal mines, "tax" the local populace, and engage in other illegal activities.

Improved relations with neighboring Ecuador have led to some increased cooperation on law enforcement issues. Colombia also continued to cooperate and share information with the Panamanian National Border Service. Additionally, Brazil began implementing its Integrated Border Monitoring System in an effort to monitor its entire border, and along with continued cooperation with the Government of Colombia, addressed potential safe haven areas along their shared borders.

Venezuela. Venezuela's porous border with Colombia has made the country attractive to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the National Liberation Army, who use it to transit in and out of its territory. There were credible reports that Venezuela maintained a permissive environment that allowed for support of activities that benefited known terrorist groups.

COUNTERING TERRORISM ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT

In 2015, the Department of State designated one new Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and amended two existing designations. In addition, the Department

designated 37 organizations and individuals as Specially Designated Global Terrorists under Executive Order (E.O.) 13224, and amended two existing designations. The Department also revoked the designations of two organizations and two individuals.

The Department of the Treasury also designated organizations and individuals under E.O. 13224. For a full list of all U.S. designations, see the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control website at <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDN-List/Pages/default.aspx>.

2015 Foreign Terrorism Organization/Executive Order 13224 group designations:

- On September 3, the Department of State revoked the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designation of the Revolutionary Organization 17 November.
- On September 29, the Department of State amended the E.O. 13224 designation of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant to include the alias Islamic State, and amended the FTO designation on September 30. (See Chapter 6, Foreign Terrorist Organizations, for further information on ISIL).
- On September 29, the Department of State designated Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshabandi (JRTN) under E.O. 13224 and as an FTO. (See Chapter 6, Foreign Terrorist Organizations, for further information on JRTN.)
- On September 29, the Department of State amended the FTO and E.O. 13224 designation of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis to include the alias ISIL Sinai Province as its primary name. (See Chapter 6, Foreign Terrorist Organizations, for further information on ISIL-Sinai Province.)
- On December 9, the Department of State revoked the FTO designation of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG).

2015 Executive Order (E.O.) 13224 designations:

- On January 14, the Department of State designated 'Abdallah al-Ashqar. Al-Ashqar is a leadership figure and member of the military committee of the Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSC). Al-Ashqar is known to have purchased missiles and other materials to attack Israel.
- On February 9, the Department of State designated German national Denis Cuspert. Cuspert was a recruiter and propagandist for ISIL. He was allegedly killed in an airstrike near al-Raqqah, Syria, in October 2015.
- On March 25, the Department of State designated Aliaskhab Kebekov, who was the leader of Russia-based terrorist group Caucasus Emirate, until his death during a battle with Russian Special Forces in April 2015.
- On April 14, the Department of State designated Syrian-based Tunisian national Ali Ouni Harzi. Harzi was also added to the UN 1267/1989 al-Qaida Sanctions List. Harzi joined Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia (AAS-T) in 2011. He was a high-profile member known for recruiting volunteers, smuggling weapons and explosives into Tunisia, and facilitating the travel of AAS-T fighters to Syria. Harzi was killed in an air strike in June 2015.
- On April 21, the Department of State designated Ahmed Diriye and Mahad Karate. Diriye became the leader of al-Shabaab in September 2014, following the death of former leader Ahmed Abdi Godane. Prior to assuming leadership of the group, Diriye served as Godane's assistant, the deputy governor of Lower Juba region and al-Shabaab's governor of the Bay and Bakool regions. By 2013 he had become a senior advisor to Godane and oversaw the group's domestic activities. Karate plays an important role in al-Shabaab's intelligence wing, the Amniyat.
- On April 21, the Department of State designated Christodoulos Xiros and Nikolaos Maziotis. Xiros is a chief assassin of 17 November. He was most recently arrested in January 2015 by Greek police while planning to carry out armed assaults in Greece, possibly with the intent to free prisoners. It is believed that at the time of his arrest, Xiros was working with members of the Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei. Maziotis is the leader of the Greece-based Revolutionary Struggle. Under his leadership, the group claimed responsibility for the April 2014 bombing in central Athens outside the offices of the Greek central bank.
- On April 28, the Department of State designated Meliad Farah, Hassan el-Hajj Hassan, and Hussein Atris. Farah and Hassan have been publicly identified as key suspects in a July 2012 bombing in Burgas, Bulgaria, which targeted Israeli tourists and killed six people. The bombing has been attributed to Hizballah. Atris is a member of Hizballah's overseas terrorism unit. In 2013, Atris was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison by a Thai court for illegally possessing materials to manufacture explosives. He was released in September 2014 and is believed to reside in Lebanon.
- On August 25, the Department of State designated Abdul Aziz Haqqani. Aziz Haqqani is a senior member of the Haqqani Network (HQN) and brother to HQN leader Sirajuddin Haqqani. For several years, Aziz Haqqani has been involved in planning and carrying out IED attacks against Afghan government targets, and assumed responsibility for all major HQN attacks after the death of his brother, Badruddin Haqqani.
- On September 8, the Department of State designated Lebanese born Samir Kuntar. In April 1979, Kuntar participated in the attempted kidnapping of an Israeli family in Israel that resulted in the deaths of five Israelis, including two young children. Kuntar was convicted in an Israeli court for the murders; he was released from prison in 2008 as part of a prisoner exchange. Kuntar later emerged as one of the most visible spokesmen for Hizballah. With the assistance of Iran and Syria, Kuntar played an operational role in building Hizballah's terrorist infrastructure in the Golan Heights. He was killed on December 19, 2015 in Jaramana, Syria.
- On September 8, the Department of State designated Hamas operatives Muhammed Deif, Yahya Ibrahim Hassan Sinwar, and Rawhi Mushtaha. Sinwar and Mushtaha are known for their role in founding the Hamas military wing, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigade. Deif is a top commander of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigade.
- On September 9, the Department of State designated Abu Ubaydah Yusuf al-Anabi, a senior leader of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb. In an April 2013 video, al-Anabi called on violent extremists to initiate armed conflict against French interests worldwide, presumably in response to France's intervention in Mali.
- On September 29, the Department of State designated 10 individuals and five groups connected to foreign terrorist fighters in Algeria, Indonesia, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen:
 - Rustam Aselderov is a former commander of the Caucasus Emirate, and the current leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Caucasus Province (ISIL-CP). Aselderov defected from Caucasus Emirate and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in early December 2014. A spokesman for al-Baghdadi accepted this pledge of allegiance and appointed Aselderov as the "emir" of ISIL-CP.
 - French citizen Peter Cherif is a foreign terrorist fighter and member of al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). In 2004, he was captured while fighting for al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) near Fallujah, Iraq. He was convicted in Baghdad in July 2006 for illegally crossing the border and sentenced to 15 years in prison. He escaped in March 2007 after an insurgent attack and prison break and traveled to Syria. He was later arrested in Syria, extradited, and served 18 months in jail in France. He was released pending trial and fled to Yemen. Cherif was sentenced to five years in prison, in absentia, for being a member of a terrorist organization.
 - Tarkhan Ismailovich Gaziyeu is a North Caucasian warlord, who has been involved in the Chechen insurgency since 2003. In 2007, Gaziyeu became the Caucasus Emirate Commander of the Southwestern Front of the Province of Chechnya and carried out numerous attacks in this role. Gaziyeu split from

the group in 2010 and travelled to Turkey. He now leads a group in Syria, known as "Tarkhan Jamaat," which is part of ISIL, and has participated in fighting in Latakia, Syria.

- French national Boubaker Hakim was once a member of Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia. Hakim claimed responsibility for the assassination of two Tunisian politicians in 2013. He is now a member of ISIL.
- Maxime Hauchard is a French national who traveled to Syria to join ISIL in August 2013. Hauchard was identified among the ISIL fighters appearing in the November 2014 execution video, which depicted the beheadings of several Syrian soldiers and showed the severed head of an American hostage.
- Shamil Izmaylov is a Russian militant currently fighting in Syria. Before traveling to Syria in 2012, Izmaylov trained in and later set up his own terrorist training center in Egypt. In mid-2013, Izmaylov established a Russian-speaking ISIL faction in Raqqa that has been fighting as a distinct unit. In addition to participating in combat in Syria, Izmaylov has been associated with the Caucasus Emirates.
- British citizen Sally Jones traveled from the UK to Syria in 2013 to join ISIL and fight alongside her husband, deceased ISIL hacker Junaid Hussain. Jones and Hussain targeted American military personnel through the publication of a "hit list" online encouraging lone-offender attacks. Jones has used social media to recruit women to join ISIL. In August 2015, she offered guidance to individuals aspiring to conduct attacks in Britain on how to construct homemade bombs.
- Tajikistan citizen Gulmurod Khalimov – a former Tajikistan special operations colonel, police commander, and military expert – is a Syria-based ISIL member and recruiter. Khalimov appeared in a propaganda video confirming he fights for ISIL.
- French citizen Emilie Konig traveled to Syria in 2012 to join and fight for ISIL. While in Syria, Konig directed individuals in France to attack French government institutions. In a video posted on May 31, 2013, Konig was shown training with weapons in Syria.
- British citizen Nasser Muthana travelled to Syria from Cardiff, UK in November 2013 to fight for ISIL. In June 2014, Muthana was featured in an ISIL propaganda video in which he and two other English-speaking individuals attempt to persuade Muslims in the West to join the fight. In the video, Muthana admitted to participating in battles in Syria and expressed his plans to travel to Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan to continue the fight. Muthana has also used social media to threaten the British government about returning to the UK to test new skills he has gained in Syria.
- Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Caucasus Province (ISIL-CP) became ISIL's newest regional group on June 23, 2015, when the spokesman for ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi released an audio recording accepting the allegiance of the fighters of four Caucasus regions – Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria. On September 2, 2015, ISIL-CP claimed responsibility for an attack on a Russian military base in Magaramkent, southern Dagestan, which killed and wounded a number of Russian citizens. In December 2015, the group also claimed responsibility for a shooting near the citadel of Derbent in Dagestan, Russia that killed one and left 11 others injured.
- Jund al-Khilafah in Algeria (JAK-A) is an ISIL-affiliated group operating in Algeria. The group emerged in September 2014 when top military commanders of AQIM's central region broke away from AQIM and announced allegiance to ISIL. JAK-A became notorious following its September 2014 abduction and beheading of French national Herve Gourdel.
- Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al Naqshabandi (JRTN) aims to overthrow the Government of Iraq and implement a Ba'athist or similar regime. It first announced insurgency operations against Coalition Forces in Iraq in December 2006 in response to Saddam Hussein's death. More recently, the group has played an important role in some of ISIL's most significant military advances, including the seizure of Mosul.
- Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) was announced in an online video in January 2015. ISIL-K is led by former Tehrik e-Taliban Pakistan commander Hafiz Saeed Khan and consists of former Pakistani and Afghan Taliban commanders.
- The Mujahidin Indonesian Timur (MIT) is an ISIL-linked terrorist group operating in Indonesia. MIT members have ties to other Department of State designated FTOs, including Jemmah Anshorut Tauhid and Jemaah Islamiya. In July 2014, MIT's leader, Abu Warda Santoso, pledged allegiance to ISIL. MIT has become increasingly bold in its attacks on security forces.
- The Department of State amended the E.O. 13224 designation of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) to include the alias ISIL Sinai Province as its primary name. ABM has used ISIL Sinai Province as its primary name since pledging allegiance to ISIL in November 2014. The group has since continued attacking Egyptian targets. (See Chapter 6, Foreign Terrorist Organizations, for further information on ISIL Sinai Province.)
- The Department of State amended the E.O. 13224 designation of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant to include the alias Islamic State. (See Chapter 6, Foreign Terrorist Organizations, for further information on ISIL.)
- On November 13, the Department of State designated Maghommed Maghommedzakirovich Abdurakhmanov. Abdurakhmanov is believed to have beheaded three individuals in Syria. He was arrested in July 2013, and in July 2015 was sentenced by a Turkish court to seven-and-a-half years in prison for being a member of a terrorist organization.
- On December 9, the Department of State designated Emrah Erdogan. Erdogan is a German-national known to have joined in combat, recruited, and fundraised as a member of al-Qa'ida and al-Shabaab. Erdogan was sentenced to seven years in prison in January 2014 in Germany for these activities and for phoning in false terrorist threats against the parliament in Berlin in November 2010.

MULTILATERAL EFFORTS TO COUNTER TERRORISM

In 2015, the United States continued to work through multilateral organizations to strengthen regional and international efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism, including by developing and promoting global norms and building the capacities of states to implement them.

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). Since its launch in September 2011, the GCTF has mobilized more than US \$300 million to support national and regional efforts to strengthen civilian institutions to counter terrorism and violent extremism. This includes support for the development and implementation of GCTF framework documents at both the regional and country levels. The GCTF is working with partners around the globe to change how states – particularly those emerging from authoritarian rule – respond to the challenges of terrorism and the violent extremist ideologies that underpin it. The GCTF, with its 30 founding members (29 countries and the EU), regularly convenes counterterrorism policymakers and practitioners, as well as experts from the UN and other multilateral and regional bodies, to identify urgent CT needs, devise solutions, and mobilize expertise and resources to address such needs and enhance global cooperation.

With its primary focus on countering violent extremism (CVE) and strengthening civilian criminal justice and other rule of law institutions that deal with terrorism, the GCTF aims to diminish terrorist recruitment and increase countries' capacity for dealing with terrorist threats within their borders and regions.

In the past year, the GCTF launched two new initiatives:

- **The International CT and CVE Clearinghouse Mechanism (ICCM):** Operating as a project under the auspices of the GCTF, the ICCM will develop and manage an up-to-date database of recent and ongoing counterterrorism and CVE capacity-building assistance. The ICCM will assist pilot countries and donors to mobilize and coordinate donor resources to address identified needs, especially regarding key aspects of UN Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions related to counterterrorism and CVE. This initiative initially will focus on three pilot countries – Kenya, Nigeria, and Tunisia.
- **The Initiative to Address the Lifecycle of Radicalization to Violence:** This initiative is developing tools that can be applied across the full life cycle of radicalization: from the front end, where governments and communities are attempting to prevent susceptible individuals from being attracted to the ideologies promoted by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist groups; to the back end, where governments and communities need to assess the risk posed by violent, radicalized individuals and determine their long-term disposition and possible rehabilitation and reintegration into society, either in or out of the criminal justice system. The purpose of the GCTF cross-working group initiative is to expand on existing GCTF good practices and develop additional tools needed to address the full life cycle of radicalization from prevention to intervention to rehabilitation and reintegration.

The GCTF has also inspired the establishment of three independent institutions that provide platforms for delivering sustainable training and resources in support of CVE and strengthening rule of law.

- Based in Abu Dhabi, **Hedayah**, the first international center of excellence on CVE, hosted a number of training and capacity-building courses focusing on community policing and community engagement, CVE and education, and CVE and communications. Hedayah developed *Guidelines and Good Practices for Developing National CVE Strategies* which is a document that offers guidance for national governments interested in developing or refining a national CVE strategy, or CVE components as part of a wider counterterrorism strategy or framework.
- **The International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJJ)**, based in Malta, was inaugurated in June 2014 as a center dedicated to providing police, prosecutors, judges, corrections officials, lawmakers, and other criminal justice actors with the training and tools required to address terrorism and related transnational criminal activity. During 2015, the IJJ trained more than 450 judges, prosecutors, investigators, parliamentarians, and other criminal justice professionals and experts from more than 30 countries. Some of the activities supported by the IJJ during the last year included programs directed at: dismantling terrorist facilitation networks; building informal and formal legal cooperation networks; combating kidnapping for ransom; fostering the rule of law while developing counterterrorism policies; supporting border security; bringing foreign terrorist fighters to justice; strengthening mutual legal assistance efforts; supporting senior judicial officials in developing criminal justice responses to terrorism; hosting the GCTF Criminal Justice-Rule of Law Working Group Plenary Meeting; and developing a parliamentary program in the area of counterterrorism.
- In June 2014, the **Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF)** became fully operational in Geneva as a foundation under Swiss law, with its first Board meeting held in November of that same year. Pilot countries include Bangladesh, Mali, and Nigeria. In 2015, each of the pilot countries set up a “country support mechanism” which brings government, civil society, and the private sector together to develop needs assessments and oversee development of grant applications. An Independent Review Panel was established to review and make recommendations on grant applications. Grants will be focused on programs that strengthen resilience against violent extremism. In December 2015, the Governing Board approved Burma, Kenya, and Kosovo as additional beneficiary countries and reviewed the pilot countries’ draft national applications.

The UN is a close partner of, and participant in, the GCTF and its activities. The GCTF serves as a mechanism for furthering the implementation of the universally-agreed UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and, more broadly, to complement and reinforce existing multilateral counterterrorism efforts, starting with those of the UN. The GCTF also partners with a wide range of regional multilateral organizations, including the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the AU, and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

The United Nations (UN). Sustained and strategic engagement at the UN on counterterrorism issues is a priority for the United States. Throughout 2015, the UN Security Council (UNSC) remained engaged with stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters by promoting implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178 (2014), a Chapter VII binding resolution that requires all states to “prevent and suppress the recruiting, organization, transporting, or equipping” of foreign terrorist fighters, as well as the financing of foreign terrorist fighter travel and activities.” Lithuania, Spain and the United States chaired ministerial meetings during their respective UNSC presidencies that focused specifically on measures to enhance border security; criminalize and prevent the travel of foreign terrorist fighters, counter violent extremism (CVE), and counter-ISIL financing. In 2015, the UNSC adopted several other counterterrorism-related resolutions, including: UNSCR 2199 to degrade ISIL, al-Nusra Front, and other al-Qa’ida (AQ)-associated groups’ financial support networks, paying particular attention to halting oil smuggling, kidnapping for ransom, and the illicit trade of antiquities from Syria; UNSCR 2250 to emphasize the role of youth in countering terrorism and countering violent extremism leading to terrorism; and UNSCR 2253 to further disrupt AQ and ISIL’s sources of revenue. In addition, the United States engaged with a wide range of UN actors on counterterrorism, which included:

- **The Counter-Terrorism Committee Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED).** The United States supported CTED efforts to analyze capacity gaps of Member States to implement UNSCRs 1373, 1624, and 2178, and facilitate training and other technical assistance to UN member states. This included participating in the UN Security Council’s Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) thematic debates on a range of issues including stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters; the role of women in countering violent extremism; and preventing terrorists from exploiting the Internet and social media to recruit terrorists and incite terrorist acts, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- **The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF).** The United States supported CTITF efforts to create a capacity-building plan to assist Member States’ implementation of UNSCR 2178 and improve implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, including by serving on the Advisory Board of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), which delivers training and technical assistance. In 2015, the United States funded a range of UNCCT and CTITF activities including: promoting effective use of advance passenger information to stem the flow of Foreign terrorist fighters; capacity building for Mali’s security and justice sectors; a training initiative to secure open borders; implementing good practices on addressing and preventing terrorist kidnapping for ransom; and supporting community engagement through human rights-led policing.
- **The UNSC 1267/1989/2253 Committee.** On December 17, 2015, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Jacob Lew chaired a special UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting with finance ministers on countering ISIL finance and all forms of terrorist financing to bolster international efforts to further disrupt ISIL’s sources of revenue and isolate it from the international financial system. At the finance ministers meeting, the UNSC unanimously adopted UNSCR 2253, which updated the UN sanctions on al-Qa’ida to recognize the increasing prominence of ISIL as a global threat by renaming the 1267/1989 al-Qa’ida Sanctions Regime and

List to the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qaida Sanctions Regime and List. The United States worked closely with the UN Sanctions Committee and its Monitoring Team in 2015 by proposing listings and de-listings, providing amendments, engaging the Committee's Ombudsperson in de-listings, and providing input to the Committee to enhance its procedures and implementation of sanctions measures. The United States also assisted the Monitoring Team with information for its research and reports. There are 215 individuals and 72 entities listed on the list. In 2015, 35 individuals and four entities were added to the list. The Committee also worked to ensure the integrity of the list by conducting regular reviews and by endeavoring to remove those individuals and entities that no longer met the criteria for listing. In 2015, 21 individuals were de-listed, of which eight individuals were de-listed following the submission of a petition through the Office of the Ombudsperson.

- **The UN Office on Drugs and Crime's Terrorism Prevention Branch (UNODC/TPB).** The Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB), in conjunction with the UNODC's Global Program against Money Laundering, continued to provide assistance to countries seeking to ratify and implement the universal legal instruments against terrorism. The United States provided funding to UNODC/TPB for a vast array of counterterrorism programming focused on strengthening the criminal justice system's response to terrorism. In 2015, the United States provided funding for several new TPB programs aimed at strengthening the legal regime against terrorism within a rule of law framework in Morocco and improving the criminal justice response to foreign terrorist fighters in the Balkans and Central Asia.
- **The UN Inter-Regional Crime Research Institute (UNICRI).** The United States has provided financial support to a UNICRI-led global effort to strengthen the capacity of countries to implement the good practices contained in the GCTF's *Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders*. In addition, in 2015, the United States provided funding to UNICRI to launch a pilot diversion program aimed at potential foreign terrorist fighters and others at risk of recruitment into violent extremism and terrorism. This pilot effort seeks to address the challenges presented by youths who have come to the attention of law enforcement as a result of having come under the influence of violent extremist ideologues or terrorist recruiters.
- **The UNSC 1540 Committee.** The Committee monitors and fosters implementation of the obligations and recommendations of UNSCR 1540, which establishes legally binding obligations on all UN Member States related to the establishment of and enforcement of appropriate and effective measures against the proliferation of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, their means of delivery, and related materials to non-state actors, including terrorists. The 1540 Committee's program of work focuses on four main areas: monitoring and national implementation; assistance; cooperation with international organizations, including the UNSC committees established pursuant to UNSCRs 1267 and 1373; and transparency and media outreach. The Committee submitted its annual report on implementation to the UNSC in December 2015, which also described preparations for the 2nd Comprehensive Review of UNSCR 1540 in 2016. The Committee's Group of Experts also participates as part of the CTITF, and cooperates with INTERPOL, UNODC, FATF, and other bodies involved in counterterrorism efforts.
- **The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).** ICAO's Universal Security Audit Program (USAP) continued to contribute directly to U.S. security by ensuring that each of ICAO's 191 member states conducts regular security audits that comply with aviation security standards. In 2015, ICAO continued to transition to the USAP-Continuous Monitoring Approach (USAP-CMA) to enable greater focus of resources on states requiring more assistance in meeting the Standards. ICAO has begun to pilot the process and certify auditors accordingly. USAP conducted assistance missions to help states correct security problems revealed by surveys and audits. ICAO, in partnership with the UN's CTED, has assisted member states in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on counterterrorism, including border control. The two entities have conducted assessment visits and organized workshops focused on countering terrorism and the use of fraudulent travel documents, and promoting good practices on border control and aviation security. ICAO is also working with member states to encourage incorporation of advance passenger information and Passenger Name Record in the travel decision process and with priority countries on implementation of ICAO's public key directory program, as a means to validate e-passports at key ports of entry. Also, ICAO with the World Customs Organization is working to establish standard practices for enhanced screening of cargo. Together with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, ICAO and CTED have encouraged member states to ratify and implement international counterterrorism treaties.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The IAEA continued to implement its Nuclear Security Plan (2014-2017) for countering the threat of terrorism involving nuclear and other radioactive material. The United States was actively involved in IAEA efforts to enhance security for vulnerable nuclear and other radioactive materials and associated facilities, and to reduce the risk that terrorists could gain access to or use such materials or expertise.

The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Through its secure I-24/7 global police communications system, INTERPOL connects its member countries' law enforcement officials to its array of investigative and analytical databases, as well as its system of messages, diffusions, and notices. Following the example of the U.S. National Central Bureau, a number of member countries are now integrating INTERPOL's information sharing resources and capabilities into their respective national border security and law enforcement infrastructure to help monitor and interdict the international transit of foreign terrorist fighters and other transnational criminals. With financial and staffing support from the United States, the INTERPOL Counter-Terrorism Fusion Centre's Foreign Terrorist Fighter project represents a multinational fusion cell that manages an analytical database containing identity particulars that supports law enforcement and border control authorities' abilities to determine the terrorist threat posed by subjects located in, or attempting to enter, their respective jurisdictions. More than 50 countries now contribute to INTERPOL's foreign terrorist fighters database, and information shared through its channels has increased six-fold in the last year, growing to some 5,000 foreign terrorist fighters identities. From these records, dedicated analysis has been delivered to INTERPOL's membership to combine, evaluate, and share intelligence on the capabilities, means and emerging trends of foreign terrorist fighters to ensure that the right piece of data reaches the right officer on the frontlines. In this respect, more than 2,000 INTERPOL alerts intended to disrupt foreign terrorist fighter mobility were issued by member countries in the last year.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the FATF-Style Regional Bodies (FSRBs). The United States supported FATF plenary activities on a number of countering the financing of terrorism (CFT) issues including guidance on, and vulnerabilities of, emerging terrorist financing risks, preventing terrorist financing abuse of the non-profit sector, and countering the financing of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; and participated in the FATF-style regional bodies (FSRBs) work to strengthen the implementation of FATF CFT standards. In particular, the United States continued to stress the importance of targeted sanctions and Recommendation 6, a provision to freeze and confiscate assets. The United States also continued to stress Recommendation 5, a provision to criminalize terrorist financing for any purpose, including, as clarified in a newly-revised interpretive note, the financing of foreign terrorist fighters.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Under the 2015 Serbian Chairman in-Office, the OSCE focused on counterterrorism, culminating in the adoption of declarations on countering violent extremism (CVE) and strengthening OSCE efforts to counter ISIL/DAESH at the OSCE Belgrade Ministerial

Council meeting in December 2015. Throughout the year, the OSCE conducted numerous CVE initiatives in line with the February White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, such as launching a robust CVE communications campaign, hosting a counterterrorism conference that joined together a broad array of stakeholders on sharing best practices to counter the incitement and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters, and developing a capacity-building program for community leaders to thwart violent extremists. These CVE-related initiatives were bolstered by other OSCE activities, such as an expert workshop on Media Freedom and Responsibilities in the Context of Counterterrorism Policies in Bucharest in October 2015 and a conference on foreign terrorist fighters in Southeastern Europe in September 2015. On border security, U.S. funding to the OSCE's Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe contributed to building the capabilities of border and customs officials to counter transnational threats in Central Asia. The United States also funded a border security training seminar focused on the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners (North Africa and the Middle East) in Spain. Through the OSCE's Action against Terrorism Unit, the United States also supported initiatives aimed at addressing effective criminal justice system responses to terrorism, travel document security, cyber security, and nonproliferation.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO's counterterrorism efforts focus on improving awareness of the threat, developing response capabilities, and enhancing engagement with partner countries and organizations. In 2015, the North Atlantic Council and working level NATO committees hosted representatives from the UN, GCTF co-chairs Turkey and the United States, and NGOs for discussions on the foreign terrorist fighter threat and lessons learned in countering violent extremist content online. The NATO Headquarters' Intelligence Unit now benefits from increased information sharing between member services and the Alliance, and produces analytical reports relating to terrorism and its links with other transnational threats.

Building partner capacity and developing innovative technologies are part of NATO's core mission, and methods that address asymmetric threats like terrorism are of particular relevance. Much of this work is conducted through the Defence Against Terrorism Programme of Work (DAT POW), which aims to protect troops, civilians, and critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks, including suicide bombers, IEDs, rockets against aircraft, and chemical, biological and radiological materials. The DAT POW supports the implementation of NATO's spearhead force – the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force – by developing projects to improve troop readiness and preparedness. To complement counter-ISIL coalition efforts, NATO has continued to develop a Defense and Related Security Capacity Building package to assist Iraq in building more effective security forces.

European Union (EU). In 2015, the EU's work with the United States included efforts to curb terrorist financing, strengthen cooperation on countering violent extremism, shut down foreign terrorist fighter networks, and build counterterrorism capacity in partner countries. Much of this work is completed through regular senior-level and working-level consultation and collaboration, including the U.S.-EU Consultation on Terrorism and the U.S.-EU Political Dialogue on Counterterrorist Financing. In the aftermath of the November 13 terrorist attacks in Paris, the EU committed during in December to several counterterrorism actions, including improving data entry of foreign terrorist fighters in various EU information data bases, approving a Passenger Name Record directive to help identify and track terrorist travelers, and pursuing closer cooperation with key partners such as the United States.

Group of Seven (G-7). Within the context of the G-7 Roma-Lyon Group (RLG) meetings on counterterrorism and counter-crime, the United States helped develop a policy toolkit of measures to address the foreign terrorist fighter problem and generated support for the newly established International Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism Clearinghouse Mechanism (ICCM), which the G-7 supports under the auspices of the GCTF. The United States also sought to advance projects through the RLG's expert groups on counterterrorism, transportation security, high-tech crime, migration, criminal legal affairs, and law enforcement.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Counterterrorism activities of the 27-member ARF countries included the annual meeting on counterterrorism and transnational crime (CTTC) and supported capacity building through ARF institutions. In 2015, the United States provided funding for an ARF Workshop for First Response Support for Victims of Terrorism and Other Mass Casualty Events, which was hosted by the Government of Philippines in Manila on September 22-23. The workshop brought together policymakers, practitioners, and first responders across the ASEAN region from the domains of (natural) disaster preparedness and management and those responsible for managing and coordinating responses to terrorist attacks. Participants included a total of 63 policymakers, practitioners, and first responders from 16 countries. The meeting took stock of national and regional efforts on these fronts in Southeast Asia as well as international good practices in the area of first responder support to victims of terrorism and other mass casualty events. Additionally, the United States encouraged information sharing and supported the CTTC work plan, which focused on illicit drugs; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear terrorism; cybersecurity; counter-radicalization; the sponsorship of a regional transnational crime information sharing center; and a workshop on migration.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). In 2015, APEC continued to implement its comprehensive Consolidated Counterterrorism and Secure Trade Strategy. The Strategy, adopted in 2011, endorsed the principles of security, efficiency, and resilience, and advocated for risk-based approaches to security challenges across its four cross-cutting areas of supply chains, travel, finance, and infrastructure. The United States sponsored a workshop that highlighted the threat that foreign terrorist fighter travel poses to the Asia-Pacific region and explained why advance passenger information systems are effective at helping mitigate that threat. The United States also sponsored a workshop on countering terrorists' use of new payment systems (NPS) that helped reinforce the capacities of APEC members to promote the legal and transparent use of NPS while effectively countering their illicit uses.

Organization of American States' Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (OAS/CICTE). In 2015, the CICTE Secretariat conducted 62 activities, training courses, and technical assistance missions that benefited more than 3,687 participants in five thematic areas: border control; critical infrastructure protection; counterterrorism legislative assistance and terrorist financing; strengthening strategies on emerging terrorist threats (crisis management); and international cooperation and partnerships. The United States is a major contributor to CICTE's training programs and has provided funding and expert trainers for capacity-building programs focused on aviation security, travel document security and fraud prevention, cybersecurity, legislative assistance and counterterrorism financing, supply chain security, and customs and immigration.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

A matrix of the ratification status of 18 of the international conventions and protocols related to terrorism can be found here: https://www.unodc.org/tldb/universal_instruments_NEW.html

LONG-TERM PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES DESIGNED TO COUNTER TERRORIST SAFE HAVENS AND RECRUITMENT

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (CVE). CVE refers to proactive actions to counter efforts by violent extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence; and efforts to address specific factors that facilitate violent extremist recruitment and radicalization to violence.

President Obama convened the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in February 2015. More than 60 countries, 12 multilateral bodies, and representatives from civil society, business, and the faith community participated and launched a global “whole-of-society” effort to tackle the broad range of factors fueling violent extremism.

The Summit underscored the need for a comprehensive approach that seeks to both limit the growth of active violent extremist groups and prevent new ones from emerging. Summit participants outlined a concrete action agenda with nine pillars related to preventing and countering violent extremism:

1. Promote local research and information-sharing on the drivers of violent extremism;
2. Empower civil society;
3. Strengthen relations between at-risk communities and security and police forces;
4. Promote counter-narratives and weaken the legitimacy of violent extremist messaging;
5. Promote educational approaches to build resilience to violent extremism;
6. Enhance access to mainstream religious knowledge;
7. Prevent radicalization in prisons and rehabilitate and reintegrate violent extremists;
8. Identify political and economic opportunities for at-risk communities; and
9. Strengthen development assistance and stabilization efforts.

Governments in Albania, Algeria, Australia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mauritania, and Norway hosted regional CVE summits to engage additional states, municipal governments, and civil society and private sector participants in preventive approaches to violent extremism. A number of countries developed National CVE Action Plans charting their way forward.

On the margins of UNGA 71, mayors from around the world launched a new Strong Cities Network to identify and share community-level best practices for building social cohesion and resilience against violent extremism.

Young people gathered at the first-ever Global Youth CVE Summit to showcase innovative tools for countering the appeal of violent extremism among their peers. Researchers and practitioners with the support of State and USAID launched the RESOLVE Network (Researching Solutions to Violent Extremism) to connect with policy institutes and methodologists around the world to better understand the community-level factors fueling violent extremism and the best evidence-based approaches to address them. Civil society organizations joined in all of these events and initiatives, further amplifying the chorus of voices to counter violent ideologies on the ground.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development sponsored a new CVE Center for Excellence and Counter Messaging for the East Africa region. The Government of Albania is spearheading an initiative to build regional capacity and cooperation around CVE, for example by supporting CVE-related research and counter-messaging.

In line with the Department of State and USAID Joint Strategy on CVE, State and USAID leverage a range of available diplomatic, development, and foreign assistance tools and resources to have a demonstrable impact to prevent and counter the spread of violent extremism.

The following five objectives guide our CVE assistance and engagement:

1. Expand international political will, partnerships, and expertise to better understand the drivers of violent extremism and mobilize effective interventions.
2. Encourage and assist partner governments to adopt more effective policies and approaches to prevent and counter the spread of violent extremism, including changing unhelpful practices where necessary.
3. Employ foreign assistance tools and approaches, including development, to reduce specific political or social and economic factors that contribute to community support for violent extremism in identifiable areas or put particular segments of a population at high risk of violent extremist radicalization and recruitment to violence.
4. Empower and amplify locally credible voices that can change the perception of violent extremist groups and their ideology among key demographic segments.
5. Strengthen the capabilities of government and non-governmental actors to isolate, intervene with, and promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals caught in the cycle of radicalization to violence.

State and USAID are pursuing a range of programs to assist partners around the world to prevent and counter radicalization and recruitment to violence. Key areas of programming include the following:

- **Supporting the Development and Implementation of National CVE Action Plans:** The United States is providing technical support and assistance to governments as they design and implement national CVE action plans, in partnership with civil society and the private sector. To reinforce these national action plan efforts, the United States is supporting Hedayah, the CVE Center of Excellence in Abu Dhabi, in providing capacity building and technical expertise to governments on CVE policy and practice.
- **Researching Drivers of Violent Extremism and Effective CVE Interventions:** The United States is supporting innovative regional, country-based, and thematic research on the drivers of violent extremism and on programming approaches designed to inform targeted CVE policy and programming. The United States is supporting the Researching Solutions to Violent Extremism (RESOLVE) Network, which connect academics and researchers to study the dynamics of CVE in specific, local contexts and identify effective CVE interventions. At the same time, the United States is also working with the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) to develop an expanded toolkit for addressing the life cycle of radicalization to violence.

- **Building the CVE Capacity of Criminal Justice Actors and Institutions:** The United States is supporting programs, especially in the Horn, Sahel, and Maghreb regions of Africa to strengthen the CVE capacity of law enforcement, including police deployed to peace and stabilization operations, prison management and justice sector actors, and to help address drivers of violent extremism such as corruption and human rights abuses. The United States is also supporting programs to train and assist corrections officials to counter radicalization to violence in prison settings and promote rehabilitation, including addressing returning foreign terrorist fighters.
- **Strengthening CVE Efforts by Sub-National, City, and Local Partners:** The United States is supporting the Strong Cities Network, a global network of municipal and other sub-national leaders and local government practitioners involved in building community resilience and social cohesion to counter violent extremism in their local communities. The United States is also contributing to the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, the first multilateral fund supporting community-based projects that counter local drivers of recruitment and radicalization to violence.
- **Enhancing Civil Society's Role in Countering Violent Extremism:** Recognizing that youth play a vital role in preventing the spread of violent extremism, the United States is supporting programs that empower youth as change agents in preventing violent extremism in their communities. The United States is also supporting programs that elevate the role of women in preventing the spread of violent extremism in their countries, communities, and families.
- **Countering Violent Extremist Messaging and Promoting Alternative Narratives:** With the leadership of the announced interagency Global Engagement Center, the United States is supporting efforts to help government and non-governmental partners to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL's) messaging and promote alternative narratives. The United States is supporting the Sawab Center in Abu Dhabi, the first-ever joint online messaging program, to counter ISIL propaganda by directly exposing its criminal nature, challenging its doctrine of hate and intolerance, and highlighting Coalition successes. The United States is also supporting efforts to mobilize and build the capacity of civil society actors and other influential voices who can credibly challenge violent extremist narratives, including through the Peer-to-Peer: Challenging Extremism Program (P2P).

CIVILIAN COUNTERTERRORISM CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS. As the terrorist threat has evolved and grown more geographically diverse in recent years, it has become clear that our success depends in large part on the political will and capabilities of our partners to counter terrorism. To succeed over the long term, we must have partners who can not only militarily disrupt threats and degrade networks in a way that comports with international laws and norms, but who have strong civilian capabilities, as well. We need law enforcement, justice sector, and corrections partners, who can disrupt attacks and investigate, arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate terrorists and their facilitation networks.

The United States uses various funding authorities and programs to build the capacity of law enforcement, justice, and corrections officials to counter terrorism. The Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism oversees the following capacity-building programs: Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA), Counterterrorism Financing (CFT), Counterterrorism Engagement with Allies (CTE), the Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), and the Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP). For further information on these programs, we refer you to the Annual Report on Assistance Related to International Terrorism, Fiscal Year 2014: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/rpt/221544.htm>.

In his speech at West Point in May 2014, President Obama called for the United States to develop more effective partnerships in countries and regions where terrorist networks seek a foothold and announced the **Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF)** to provide significant, flexible resources to build "a network of partnerships from South Asia to the Sahel."

Congress has appropriated significant additional funding for the **Department of State's Counterterrorism Partnership Fund**. This funding will enable us to significantly expand civilian counterterrorism capacity-building activities with key partner nations in the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and South and Central Asia, and other regions as required to mitigate the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, prevent and counter terrorist safe havens and recruitment, and counter Iranian-sponsored terrorism.

REGIONAL STRATEGIC INITIATIVE (RSI). Terrorist groups often take advantage of porous borders and ungoverned areas between countries. The RSI program enables flexible civilian responses to rapidly evolving threats and builds the partner capacity and cooperation necessary to counter the most serious threats facing the United States. Current RSI efforts focus on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters to Syria and Iraq, countering terrorist safe havens, counter-ISIL messaging, and countering Hizballah's activities.

In 2015, RSI supported a wide variety of projects focused on regional law enforcement cooperation and effectiveness against transnational threats. Examples include the counterterrorism rapid response project, which allows the Department of State to quickly deploy advisors and experts to provide immediate assistance to partner nations in various technical areas. In 2015, the rapid response fund mechanism was used to assist Kosovo in processing foreign terrorist fighter cases and taking them to trial; training for Tanzanian Police in improving their skills in dismantling explosive devices, including IEDs; and a central authorities-focused project in India that targeted information sharing in counterterrorism cases. Other RSI projects in 2015, included a series of global engagements geared at building partner nations' domestic and regional capacity to counter Hizballah criminal activities by using legal and law enforcement tools; as well as activities aimed to assist in the implementation of the Global Counterterrorism Forum good practices, including the *Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon (Hague-Marrakech Memorandum)*.

Programs to Counter Foreign Terrorist Fighters

During the period 2012-2015, significant numbers of foreign terrorist fighters traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight alongside a number of violent extremist groups, most prominently the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front. While some of these individuals have been killed in the fighting, thousands have returned home and more will certainly follow. Many of these fighters are returning home with battlefield experience and can pose a direct and immediate threat to their home countries and regions. Amplified by social media, and fueled by local factors, new fighters continue to be attracted to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria and to other regions where ISIL affiliates are active and emerging. North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe remain key source regions for foreign terrorist fighters. There is also increasing concern regarding ISIL's presence in Libya, and the travel of foreign terrorist fighters to that conflict zone.

The Department of State has played a pivotal role in the creation of an international framework for addressing the threat from foreign terrorist fighters. In 2014, the Department of State worked with partners to establish a Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group and adopt *The Hague-Marrakesh Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon* under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). This

memorandum gave practical effect to UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178, which was adopted on September 24, 2014, during a high-level UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting chaired by President Obama. Additionally, the U.S.-led Global Coalition to Counter ISIL established an ISIL-focused Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group co-led by Turkey and the Netherlands.

In part as a result of our efforts, at least 45 countries have passed or updated existing laws to more effectively identify and prosecute foreign terrorist fighters. Thirty-five countries have arrested foreign terrorist fighters, and 12 have successfully prosecuted at least one foreign terrorist fighter. The United States has information-sharing arrangements with 50 international partners to identify and track the travel of suspected terrorists, and at least 50 countries, plus the UN, now contribute foreign terrorist fighter profiles to INTERPOL, a four hundred percent increase over a two-year period. Several countries have also developed new action plans and programs to counter foreign terrorist fighter radicalization and recruitment in their countries, for example in the Western Balkans.

Strategic Objectives: Looking forward, the Department of State will continue to expand and deepen bilateral and multilateral engagement to counter the foreign terrorist fighters threat and related radicalization and recruitment to violence. We have identified the following six strategic objectives, which the Department pursues in close partnership with other U.S. government agencies.

- **Work with partners to identify, monitor, and address the travel of foreign terrorist fighters to and from Iraq and Syria and new areas affected by ISIL expansion, such as Libya.** The Department continues to prioritize bilateral engagement with key source and transit countries. Our approach brings together partner countries' homeland security, law enforcement, justice sector, intelligence, diplomatic, military, capacity building, and information sharing efforts. These engagements facilitate increased cooperation and, where appropriate, technical assistance. Such cooperation takes the form of information-sharing arrangements, provision of hardware and software to improve border security and management, financial intelligence exchanges, and support in law enforcement investigations, amongst others. Over the course of the last three years, the Department of State has led interagency delegations to countries in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. In the past six months, the Department has prioritized engagement with Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands to increase cooperation to counter foreign terrorist fighters. Following the November Paris attacks, the Department is leading efforts to deploy interagency expert teams to broaden and deepen cooperation with European partners to combat terrorist travel and help reduce the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across their borders. These teams will provide tailored advice in areas such as information sharing, watchlisting, and border security.
- **Encourage and assist top foreign terrorist fighter source and transit countries to employ more robust border and aviation security procedures to identify and interdict potential foreign terrorist fighters and those returning.** The Department funds a variety of programming that is implemented by our interagency and multilateral partners, including the Department of Homeland Security, to bolster partner nation capacity to secure borders and prevent foreign terrorist fighters travel onward to conflict zones and back home to countries of origin. Trainings focus on aviation security, to include traveler screening and airport security practices; maritime security, which encompasses training to deter and interdict materiel to support ISIL (illicit funds, weapons and people) and a variety of border security courses aimed at improving controls at land borders.
- **Enable top foreign terrorist fighter source and transit countries to track and interdict travel by foreign terrorist fighters through more robust information sharing, watchlisting, and traveler screening both with the United States and between top foreign terrorist fighter source and transit countries.** The United States now has information-sharing arrangements with 50 countries. Under these arrangements, the United States and foreign partners exchange screening information on known and suspected terrorists, which serves to disrupt and stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters to ISIL and other terrorist groups. The United States has expanded information sharing with several countries, including Malaysia, Turkey, and some Gulf Cooperation Council countries – many of which were traditionally reluctant to create formal arrangements. Additionally, the Department, working in partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ) INTERPOL Washington, has launched a new effort in Southeast Asia to enhance law enforcement and border security agencies' access to INTERPOL data, develop protocols and expertise to leverage INTERPOL data, and encourage best practices for interagency and international collaboration to combat the flow of foreign terrorist fighters from the region.
- **Encourage and assist top foreign terrorist fighter source and transit countries to establish and employ the necessary legislative, administrative, policy and criminal justice frameworks, capabilities, tools and programs to investigate, interdict, divert, prosecute, adjudicate and incarcerate aspirant or returning foreign terrorist fighters.** The Department works with a full range of implementers to help partners develop or improve their criminal justice systems to deal with terrorism cases within a rule of law framework. For example, State funds the DOJ to help governments draft new legislation where necessary and to assist partner countries to enforce laws designed to address the foreign terrorist fighter problem. As a result, countries in the Western Balkans – including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia – have recently adopted counterterrorism legislation. Though it did not receive assistance from the DOJ, Croatia also recently adopted counterterrorism legislation. In addition, the Department is working within the UN system and with regional and sub-regional organizations to develop technical assistance programs that advance the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, UNSCR 2178, and GCTF Good Practices to Counter the Global Foreign Terrorist Fighter Phenomenon.
- **Encourage and assist top foreign terrorist fighter source and transit countries to counter violent extremism and prevent radicalization to violence, including through community resilience programs and counter-messaging.** Our CVE efforts are guided and shaped by a developing understanding of the local geography, demography, and drivers of recruitment and radicalization to violence: where the hotspots are; who is most susceptible; and why they may be motivated to join. We support a range of foreign terrorist fighters-relevant CVE programming including, but not limited to: building the capacity of credible third parties to deliver CT messaging and to develop positive alternatives to the messaging of violent extremists; engaging youth at-risk of radicalization to violence with positive alternatives; empowering women, religious leaders, and civil society more broadly as constructive CVE advocates and activists; amplifying the voices of victims and survivors of terrorism as well as returned/rehabilitated foreign terrorist fighters and other violent extremists; and supporting rehabilitation and reintegration in prisons and beyond. The Department's CVE programming funds counter-recruitment and counter-messaging efforts. For example, in Southeast Asia, we currently support a series of training workshops to share good practices, approaches, and tools for effective counter-narratives with regional governments and civil society; there is a particular thematic focus on ISIL. In the Western Balkans and Southeast Asia, we support local law enforcement engagement with at-risk communities and civil society groups to raise awareness of radicalization to violence, and design collaborative initiatives to provide positive alternatives in places where there has been some foreign terrorist fighter flow.
- **Encourage and assist top foreign terrorist fighter source and transit countries to develop comprehensive diversion and rehabilitation and reintegration programs for aspirant and returning foreign terrorist fighters, both inside and outside the prison setting.** The Department supports

rehabilitation and reintegration programs, which are essential elements to assist foreign terrorist fighters in disengaging from violent behavior. We have taken a number of steps over the past several years to promote rehabilitation and reintegration programs in prisons. For instance, the Department is supporting a DOJ and UN project at high-level security prisons in East Asia that focuses on training correction officials on proper management of terrorist inmates. Since prisons can be places where radicalization to violence can occur, we are also supporting efforts to promote a full range of criminal justice sector tools that can be used in lieu of sentencing an offender to prison. For example, we are supporting a pilot diversion program aimed at potential foreign terrorist fighters and others at risk of recruitment into violent extremism and terrorism. This pilot effort seeks to address the challenges presented by youths who have come to the attention of law enforcement as a result of having come under the influence of violent extremist ideologues or terrorist recruiters. Other programs target returning foreign terrorist fighters to help them reintegrate into society and avoid becoming a source of enduring threat. To help partner countries deal with returning foreign terrorist fighters that may be outside of the criminal justice system, we are supporting an initiative being implemented by Hedayah and the International Institute for Justice and Rule of Law. This effort, launched in January 2016, is designed to assist countries develop or refine their rehabilitation and reintegration programs, strategies, policies and procedures.

SUPPORT FOR PAKISTAN

In 2015, the United States continued to build a long-term partnership with Pakistan, as we believe that a stable, secure, prosperous, and democratic Pakistan is in the long-term U.S. national security interest. To support this partnership, the United States has allocated civilian and security assistance totaling more than US \$9 billion since 2009. U.S. security assistance to Pakistan is designed to build Pakistan's counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capacity. In addition, since 2001, the Department of Defense has reimbursed nearly US \$14 billion in Coalition Support Funds for Pakistani expenditures in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Account	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015 653(a)
Total Foreign Assistance	1,237.1	853.4	787.8
Economic Support Fund (ESF)	826.3	456.5	468.0
Intl. Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE)	47.4	55.4	40.0
Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining (NADR)	8.4	5.6	10.0
Foreign Military Financing (FMF)	280.2	269.9	265.0
International Military Education and Training (IMET)	5.0	4.9	4.8
Food for Peace Title II (FFP)	69.9	61.1	--

*figures in millions, USD

Since the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act (commonly referred to as Kerry-Lugar-Berman, or "KLB") was enacted in October 2009, and with funding made available in annual appropriations legislation, the United States has committed more than US \$5 billion in civilian assistance to Pakistan, in addition to more than US \$1 billion for humanitarian assistance. The United States continued to focus on five sectors determined in consultation with the Pakistani government in 2011: energy; economic growth including agriculture, stabilization of areas vulnerable to violent extremism; education; and health. Emphasis on improving democracy, governance, and gender equity are integrated into programming across the five sectors.

Since the passage of this major authorization and annual appropriations legislation, U.S. assistance has made almost 2,300 megawatts available to Pakistan's electricity grid, benefiting some 23 million Pakistanis and helped Pakistan take steps to reform the troubled sector; funded the refurbishment or construction of nearly 1,000 kilometers of roads, enabling trade, security, and mobility; trained more than 5,600 police and 1,000 prosecutors across Pakistan; provided scholarships to approximately 12,000 Pakistanis to attend Pakistani universities, 50 percent of whom were women; and supplied better access to comprehensive family planning services to more than 100,000 women.

Energy: Chronic energy shortages severely limit Pakistan's economic development. As such, energy is our top assistance priority, supporting the goal of job creation, security, and political stability in Pakistan. U.S. assistance has helped Pakistan improve governance and management systems, and increase the country's distribution companies' revenue collection by more than US \$400 million in 2015, as well as provide commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses. The United States continued to fund infrastructure rehabilitation projects, especially in clean energy, and provided technical assistance to Pakistani energy institutions, including distribution companies, to increase power generation and improve performance. The new U.S.-Pakistan Clean Energy Partnership will help the private sector add at least 3,000 megawatts of clean power generation infrastructure to Pakistan's national electricity system by 2020.

Economic Growth: Through a range of programs and public-private partnerships in agriculture and other sectors of Pakistan's economy, U.S. assistance helped Pakistan create jobs and foster economic growth. In 2014, the United States made awards for the Pakistan Private Investment Initiative, a public-private program in which U.S. capital, matched equally by private sector funding, committed to provide equity to small-and medium-sized Pakistani enterprises to provide much needed liquidity. During U.S.-Pakistan Economic Partnership Week in Islamabad in March 2015, U.S. Secretary Penny Pritzker and Pakistani Finance Minister Ishaq Dar hosted the third U.S.-Pakistan Business Opportunities Conference. The U.S. Department of Commerce is providing technical assistance in the areas of trade facilitation, intellectual property reform, competition and telecommunications law, and commercial law education. The Pakistani participants attend trade shows and

hear from U.S. companies and business associations about best practices and the underpinnings of U.S. success, including the free market and rule of law. The Department of Commerce also trains private sector professionals in a variety of industries, including supply chain, packaging, and gems and jewelry. To promote private investment, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) facilitated US \$800 million in financing and insurance for projects in Pakistan. Trade and investment assistance was provided under the bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. The United States supported implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. The United States has contributed US \$15 million to the development of the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) project, which will transmit 1,300 megawatts of electricity from Central Asia to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and supports the CASA-1000 Secretariat.

Stabilization: The United States supported Pakistan's efforts to make its territory inhospitable to violent extremists by strengthening governance and civilian law enforcement capacity and promoting socioeconomic development, particularly in areas bordering Afghanistan and other targeted locations vulnerable to violent extremism. U.S. efforts included road construction, small community-based grants, police and governance training, and providing equipment to civilian law enforcement.

Education: Pakistan's ability to educate its youth is critical to its economic growth and future trajectory. U.S. education programs focused on increasing the number of students who enroll in and complete courses in primary and tertiary educational institutions; and improving the quality of that education – with a specific focus on reading – to prepare Pakistani students for the workforce. Pakistan is the recipient of the largest U.S. government-funded Fulbright Program in the world, and, since 2009, the Fulbright Program has funded more than 800 Masters and 200 PhD candidates and nearly 100 Senior Scholars from Pakistan. Through the Merit- and Needs-Based Scholarship Program and predecessor projects, the United States has funded more than 12,000 total scholarships for underprivileged students to attend university in Pakistan and financed a new dormitory for women at Forman's Christian College in Lahore. The United States funds 23 partnerships between Pakistani and U.S. universities to facilitate professional development for faculty, curriculum reform, joint research, and peer-to-peer interaction. In June 2015, USAID, in collaboration with Pakistan's Higher Education Commission, launched the U.S.-Pakistan Centers for Advanced Studies, which established three centers in Pakistan through partnerships between four Pakistani and three U.S. universities in energy, water, and agriculture and food security. Under a U.S.-Pakistan Basic Education Initiative, the United States funded reading programs to improve the reading skills of 1.9 million primary grade students. The United States has also funded the rebuilding or renovation of almost 600 schools, and provided English language training to 9,400 underprivileged Pakistani teenagers countrywide.

Health: The provision of basic health services in Pakistan is inadequate for much of the population, particularly for rural populations. U.S. health programs supported the Government of Pakistan's efforts to deliver healthcare, particularly in the areas of maternal and child health. U.S. assistance was also used to support Government of Pakistan initiatives to construct health clinics and hospitals, fund the acquisition of medical materials, and provide critical family planning and reproductive health care. Since 2010, USAID has trained more than 29,000 health care workers, who served more than 3.5 million community members throughout Pakistan.

Humanitarian Assistance: Since October 2009, more than US \$1 billion of emergency humanitarian assistance has been provided to Pakistan in response to floods and conflict, above and beyond bilateral assistance. During the historic floods in 2010, funding from the American people helped 10 million flood-affected citizens, who received rescue services, food, emergency shelter, cash grants, and even seeds to replant crops. During his January 2015 visit to Pakistan, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry pledged US \$250 million to facilitate the return of 1.6 million Internally Displaced Persons to the FATA. The pledge consists of humanitarian aid, early recovery assistance, and post-conflict development assistance.

International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement: Pakistan took important steps to counter violent extremists operating in the areas bordering Afghanistan during 2015. These steps included intensifying support to civilian law enforcement and border security agencies. The United States directly supported Pakistan's efforts to build the capacity of its civilian law enforcement and border security agencies by providing training, equipment, infrastructure, and aviation assistance. U.S. assistance helped build capacity in law enforcement agencies responsible for holding areas cleared by Pakistan's military, protecting local populations from militant attacks, and maintaining law and order. Collectively, these efforts enhanced the counterinsurgency, law enforcement, and counter-narcotics capacities of Pakistan's civilian law enforcement and border security agencies. Improved security will, in turn, facilitate economic development, which is necessary for long-term Pakistani stability and progress.

Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR): The United States provided assistance to strengthen Pakistan's export control system to prevent transfer of WMD and related technology. NADR/Export Control and Related Border Security funds were used for nonproliferation export control training, national control list harmonization, and customs enforcement, general inspection, and WMD detection training for border control personnel. The United States also provided targeted assistance to build Pakistani law enforcement capacity to detect, deter, and respond to terrorist threats.

Foreign Military Financing (FMF): FMF promotes the development of Pakistan's long-term counterinsurgency (COIN) and counterterrorism capabilities to enable security and stability throughout the country, particularly in the conflict-affected areas bordering Afghanistan, and to improve Pakistan's ability to lead and participate in maritime security operations that support counterterrorism aims. The United States continued to focus FMF towards seven core capabilities: precision strike; air mobility/combat search and rescue; battlefield communications; night operations; survivability and countering IEDs; border security; and maritime security.

International Military Education and Training (IMET): The IMET program supported professional military education for Pakistan's military leaders, emphasizing respect for the rule of law, human rights, and democratic values, including civilian control of the military. IMET also supported effective management of Pakistan's defense establishment through training in logistics, defense acquisition, and resource management. A significant portion of this funding supported training related to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in Pakistan. To build capacity and cooperation between our security forces, Pakistan received the largest amount of IMET of any of our global partners, at nearly US \$5 million annually. Since 2009, the United States has trained more than 2,300 members of the Pakistan military.

Measures to ensure that assistance has the greatest long-term positive impact on the welfare of the Pakistani people and their ability to counter terrorism: More than a quarter of U.S. civilian assistance is implemented via Pakistani partners, including the Government of Pakistan and private sector actors, when practicable. This is done to strengthen local capacity and increase sustainability, providing the greatest possible long-term impact of U.S. assistance. Increasingly, the Administration is also implementing public-private partnerships to engage the private sector as a long-term partner in Pakistan's development.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have a strong bilateral relationship. Multiple high-level visits in 2015 deepened this relationship at the personal and institutional level and provided senior officials from both countries the chance to discuss means of improving counterterrorism coordination.

During 2015, the Government of Saudi Arabia, working with the United States, continued to build and augment its capacity to counter terrorism and violent extremist ideologies, including al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Saudi Arabia continued to maintain a robust counterterrorism relationship with the United States and supported enhanced bilateral cooperation to ensure the safety of U.S. and Saudi citizens in both countries, and to enhance the security of infrastructure in Saudi Arabia critical to the global economy. Saudi Arabia continued its long-term counterterrorism strategy to track and halt the activities of terrorists and terror financiers, dismantle the presence or reconstitution of al-Qa'ida (AQ)-affiliates, impede the ability of militants to operate from or within Saudi Arabia, and to implement laws against supporting terrorist groups and travel to conflict zones. Saudi Arabia welcomed UN Security Council Resolutions 2170 and 2178, expanding existing counterterrorism programs and rhetoric to address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, and leveraged terrorist finance provisions of its Law for Crimes of Terrorism and Terrorist Financing (CT Law) to combat funding of violent extremist groups operating throughout the region. Saudi Arabia continued to cooperate with the United States to prevent acts of terrorism both through engagement in bilateral programs and through information exchange agreements with the United States. During 2015, Saudi Arabia increased its public designations of individuals and entities for violating the Kingdom's laws criminalizing terrorist financing and support. Saudi Arabia in April designated the Pakistan-based al-Furqan Foundation for providing financial support to groups operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including AQ, and in May and November sanctioned more than 12 individuals and entities acting on behalf of Hizballah.

Saudi Arabia sought to expand economic and civic opportunities for its people. Nearly half of the Saudi populace is under 25 years of age. The late King Abdullah promoted an economic development agenda, and Saudi Arabia has sought to address economic sources of social discontent, such as housing scarcity and the need to create jobs for millions of Saudis. During his September 2015 visit to Washington, King Salman announced a US \$4 trillion investment plan to diversify the Saudi economy away from oil and provide employment to Saudi youth. In December 2015, for the first time, women were allowed to vote in and run as candidates for municipal elections.

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs continued to train and regulate imams, prohibiting them from inciting violence, and continued to monitor mosques and religious education. The King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue continued to promote tolerance and respect for diversity through its dialogue and awareness-raising programs. The Ministry of Interior continued to operate its flagship de-radicalization program (the Sakina Campaign for Dialogue). Some religious figures not directly associated with the establishment, however, reportedly made statements that promoted intolerant views.

The United States continued to support Saudi Arabia in reforms it is undertaking by facilitating Saudi nationals studying in the United States and promoting educational exchanges; encouraging increased bilateral trade and investment; urging Saudi Arabia to take actions necessary to attract job-creating partnerships with U.S. companies; and supporting programming in such areas as judicial reform and women's entrepreneurship, as well as the Ministry of Interior's well-developed extremist rehabilitation program, the Mohammed bin Naif Counseling and Care Center, to reduce recidivism among former fighters charged with crimes related to terrorism.

Throughout 2015, Saudi Arabia continued its efforts to disrupt terrorist activities in its territory by tracking, arresting, and prosecuting terrorist suspects. Neighborhood police units engaged and worked directly with community members in Saudi Arabia, encouraging citizens to provide tips and information about terrorist activity. The government offered rewards for information on terrorists, and Saudi security services made several announcements throughout the year pertaining to the arrest of hundreds of AQAP and ISIL members and supporters.

Saudi security professionals regularly participated in joint programs and information exchange agreements around the world in 2015, including in the United States and Europe. The Saudi Arabian government has continued to provide specialized training programs to combat terrorism financing for bankers, prosecutors, judges, customs officers, and other officials from government departments and agencies. In 2008, the U.S. and Saudi Arabian governments concluded a Technical Cooperation Agreement, and a year later established the joint Office of Program Management-Ministry of Interior (OPM-MOI) to implement it, institutionalizing a Saudi-funded bilateral program of technical assistance focused on the protection of critical infrastructure and the Saudi public. Through the OPM-MOI program, U.S. agencies are helping Saudi Arabia improve its ability to thwart terrorists before they act and to respond to terrorist attacks if they occur. In April 2014 and August 2015, the Saudi Arabian government participated in the U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Strategic Cooperation Forum Task Force on counterterrorism and border security. Saudi officials have issued statements encouraging enhanced cooperation among GCC and Arab League states on counterterrorism issues, and the Saudi Arabian government has hosted international counterterrorism conferences on combating extremist ideology and countering terrorist financing. In May 2015, the Saudi government hosted the second meeting of the Counter ISIL Finance Group (CIFG).

U.S.-Saudi collaboration was not confined to bilateral issues. With political upheaval across the region throughout the year, the United States consulted closely with the Saudi government on regional stability, including in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. Working both bilaterally and multilaterally through the GCC and the Arab League, the Saudi government provided leadership in promoting peaceful transitions. Saudi Arabia has cooperated regionally and internationally on counterterrorism issues as demonstrated by its participation in the Global Counterterrorism Forum. Saudi Arabia is a member of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), and the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force. As part of its strategy to promote stability throughout the region, the Saudi government increased the scope of its economic and development assistance. On the humanitarian front, Saudi Arabia pledged a US \$500 million grant to the UN for Iraq humanitarian assistance in July 2014, US \$60 million in Syria humanitarian assistance at the International Pledging Conference in Kuwait, and US \$104 million in humanitarian assistance to the World Food Program for refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Syria.

Saudi Arabia has been an important partner in the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, participating in Coalition airstrikes against ISIL in Syria, and offering to host a train and equip program for the moderate Syrian opposition. In addition, Saudi Arabia has enacted tough criminal penalties for those traveling to fight in foreign conflicts and has enforced those penalties. The Government of Saudi Arabia and religious leaders have issued many public statements against ISIL. Saudi Arabia, along with Italy and the United States, co-leads the Counter-ISIL Finance Group (CIFG), which coordinates the Coalition's efforts to disrupt and dismantle ISIL's financial infrastructure.

On December 14, 2015, the Saudi government announced the formation a 34-state Islamic Counterterrorism Coalition to be headquartered in Riyadh that will focus on countering violent extremism and coordinating military efforts against all terrorist threats – including ISIL – in Muslim countries.

**BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS INITIATIVES:
OUTREACH TO FOREIGN MUSLIM AUDIENCES**

This section is provided by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)

Four of the five broadcast entities under the supervision of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) provided programming for countries with large Muslim populations in 2015: the Voice of America (VOA), the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (Alhurra TV, Radio Sawa, and Afia Darfur), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), and Radio Free Asia (RFA).

- Eighteen of RFE/RL's broadcast languages – almost two-thirds of the total – were directed to regions with majority-Muslim populations, including Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Additional broadcasting regions in the Russian Federation included the majority Muslim populations of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and the North Caucasus.
- VOA has been particularly successful in reaching non-Arabic-speaking Muslim audiences, with strong performances in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania, among other places.
- The Middle East Broadcasting Networks broadcast throughout the region to more than 340 million people.
- VOA and RFE/RL provided news and information to Afghanistan and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region in Dari and Pashto. Together, RFE/RL and VOA reached nearly 53 percent of Afghan adults each week.
- Radio Free Asia broadcast to the more than 16 million mainly ethnic Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of northwestern China and Central Eurasia.
- The BBG, in partnership with Radio Free Asia, launched the online news operation Benar News to reach predominantly Muslim audiences in India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. These communities often lack access to accurate and balanced journalism, but at the same time are exposed to a proliferation of violent extremist narratives supporting the ideology of terrorist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Benar News counters those narratives by publishing credible domestic news, features, analysis, and commentary in multiple formats – text, video, and pictures – and in five languages – Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia, Thai, Bengali, and English. Among its inaugural coverage in 2015, Benar News launched the series **"Torn Lives,"** which profiles people affected by the rise of ISIL and violent extremist groups.

The BBG used the latest communications technologies to avoid jamming of its signals and to reach audiences through digital and other communications tools, such as web chats and blogs.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Arabic: Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) has seven bureaus/production centers in the region, in addition to its main studios in Virginia, and a network of regional correspondents. MBN broadcast to a population that includes an estimated 317 million Muslims or about 23 percent of the world's Muslim population. MBN takes a diverse approach to reaching the largest potential audience, using three platforms: television (Alhurra TV, Alhurra-Iraq TV), radio (Radio Sawa, Radio Sawa Iraq and Afia Darfur), and digital (Alhurra.com, RadioSawa.com and Irfasaatak.com). The networks provided a unique, local perspective of breaking news, current events, and balanced coverage on topics such as freedom of speech, religion, and the role of women in society and politics. Alhurra also produced programs encouraging freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and non-violence.

Iraq: Every week, 36 percent of Iraqi adults – some 6.3 million people – listened to or watched one of the three BBG broadcasters serving the country: Alhurra TV, Radio Sawa, and VOA Kurdish. One in three Iraqis say Alhurra-Iraq is their most important source of information. Radio Sawa Iraq is one of the top radio stations among adults. In August 2015, the resources of RFI were merged with Sawa to provide the audience extensive Iraq-specific news informational programming. VOA Kurdish reached three percent of Kurdish-speaking Iraqis weekly.

In 2015, MBN created **Raise Your Voice**, a multi-platform initiative for Iraqi audiences across television, radio, and digital, composed of five television programs, one radio program, an interactive website, and a digital team to engage audiences on "Raise Your Voice" social media properties. This initiative, entirely in Arabic, is designed as a non-sectarian platform to encourage citizens to speak out and be a part of the discussion about the fight against violent extremism.

These television programs air on Alhurra-Iraq, targeting Iraqi audiences, and the radio program is broadcast over Radio Sawa Iraq. These programs are also available to the entire region via satellite and digital distribution, through YouTube and social media properties.

Television

- **Delusional Paradise:** A 30-minute, weekly mini-documentary series composed of firsthand accounts, obtained through original interviews, of families and communities that have suffered at the hands of ISIL. The program covers families that have lost loved ones both due to ISIL recruitment and attacks, including an interview with the Jordanian pilot's family. The program was launched on Sept. 26, 2015 and airs on Alhurra, as well as Alhurra-Iraq. MBN has licensed the program to LBC, so that Delusional Paradise also airs on the popular Lebanese channel.
- **From Irbil:** Kurdistan is not well represented in the major Arabic-language satellite television networks. Launched on November 28, 2015, "From Irbil" is a weekly program in Arabic that reports from the streets of Kurdistan and will focus on the plurality of Iraq, discussing issues that are important to Kurds, Shia, and Sunni. It airs on Alhurra-Iraq, targeting Iraqi audiences, but is also available to the entire region via satellite and online.
- **Light Among Us:** A weekly mini-documentary series coming from the streets of Iraq, it will be dedicated to stories of Iraqis who have overcome challenges and obstacles to better their lives and their country despite the current crisis. The program started airing on Alhurra-Iraq November 8, 2015.

Radio

- **What's Your Opinion:** Launched in August 2015, this daily interactive program on Radio Sawa's Iraq streams during the evening drive. The program's two Iraqi hosts field calls and interact with social media throughout the program. This program features topics that tie into MBN's "Raise Your Voice" digital

properties.

Digital

- **Irfaasawtak.com:** An interactive website, with a corresponding Facebook page, that provides a platform for essayists, reporters, and community-members to productively discuss violent extremism. The website has a weekly theme, such as “Children in Danger: How to protect children from extremist ideology” and “Reform in Arab countries: How the lack of reforms has contributed to extremism.” The website posts six to seven daily articles on the topic that are either commissioned articles, selected audience posts, or pieces of MBN journalism.

VOA is providing news coverage of ISIL activities in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and the region on all platforms – radio, television, online, and social media – as well as providing information on U.S. policies and activities to address the ISIL threat. In 2015, VOA established the Extremism Watch Desk to acquire content in eight different languages focused on ISIL and its extremist activities. That content is translated into English, video is added when available, and it is shared with VOA’s 45 language services, the VOA News Center, and BBG colleagues at MBN and RFE/RL, multiplying the amount of material available for broadcast across the BBG.

Kurdish: The Kurdish Service covered counterterrorism on a daily basis by conducting interviews and increasing stringer reporting from the region, including audio and video reports from the front lines. Much of this content has been broadcast on affiliate NRT TV in northern Iraq, on the BBG FM network in northern Iraq, and on numerous radio affiliates in Iraq. VOA Kurdish has conducted many interviews with the people on the ground including Yezidi girls who were taken by ISIL and were able to escape.

Persian: VOA’s Persian Service provided relevant global and regional news relating to Iran and crucial information about U.S. policy toward Iran and the region. VOA Persian delivered original television programming for six hours per day. In addition, VOA and RFE/RL’s Radio Farda each produced one hour of Radio-on-TV (ROT), starting with VOA Persian’s ROT Tamasha, and followed by Radio Farda’s ROT “Sobhane Ba Khabar.” As of June 2015, Radio Farda was also providing live, five-minute TV newscasts online and on VOA’s Persian video stream at the top of the hour from 7am to 1pm Tehran time.

- VOA Persian became the first international broadcaster into Iran during the P5+1 talks to start live news updates at the top of every hour and to provide 11 hourly live five-minute news bulletins to the Iranian viewers throughout the day that resulted in increasing delivery of combined VOA Persian – Radio Farda live news content by 62 percent during a 24-hour cycle.
- VOA Persian implemented a sharp increase – by 60 percent – of live breaking news broadcasts focusing on major speeches and statements by President Obama and Secretary Kerry, key Congressional hearings, and major international events. In most cases, VOA Persian was the only broadcaster in Farsi in Iran to go live.
- VOA Persian launched “Tablet,” a new, edgy weekly current affairs talk show with a youthful, energetic feeling.

RFE/RL’s Radio Farda broadcast newscasts at the top of each hour, followed by reports, features, interviews, and regular segments on youth, women, culture, economics, and politics.

- Radio Farda live coverage from Vienna of the P5+1 negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program served as a primary source of information for Iranians, with a record one million page views logged on July 14, 2015 – the day the deal was announced.
- Radio Farda’s comprehensive human rights monitoring is unique inside Iran. It is listened to by prison inmates who rely on it for accurate reporting on their cases.
- Radio Farda’s online community continued to increase. Its main Facebook page has a fan base of 1.5 million.
- Radio Farda’s circumvention strategies to fight internet blockage by the Iranian regime remained successful, with nearly 286 million page views logged in 2015.

SOUTH ASIA

Afghan: VOA’s Afghan Service and RFE/RL’s Radio Free Afghanistan covered all aspects of the conflict in Afghanistan and the border region on radio, TV, and digital platforms. In addition, VOA and RFE/RL provided extensive coverage of the emergence of ISIL in eastern Afghanistan since January 2015, dispatching reporting teams to the region and collaborating with VOA’s News Center. The coverage included exclusive interviews with two ISIL defectors, a profile of a counter-ISIL commander and reports on a pro-ISIL rally on a university campus that led to the arrest of several ISIL sympathizers.

- VOA’s Afghan Service covered the Afghan government’s peace initiatives with interviews with High Peace Council officials, former Taliban officials, and ordinary citizens as well as original reports and analysis.
- Research shows that RFE/RL’s Radio Free Afghanistan is one of the most popular and trusted media outlets in Afghanistan. One of the leading news sources inside the country, its programs provided reliable information on the war on terrorism.
- Radio Azadi has covered the emergence of ISIL in Afghanistan from its beginning, and was the first media outlet in the country that reported on the threat.

Urdu: VOA Urdu reporters in Washington and stringers in five major Pakistani cities reported on terrorism-related activities and provided updates on all major developments in the target area. VOA Urdu particularly highlighted the ongoing Pakistani military operation in Pakistan’s volatile tribal areas with close coordination between Islamabad, Kabul, and Washington. Another issue of focus has been Pakistan’s efforts to facilitate the Afghan peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

The Pakistan/Afghanistan Border Region: VOA Deewa and RFE/RL Radio Mashaal broadcasts go directly to Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions to cover the terrorism threat, which includes ISIL sympathizers, the Haqqani Network, AQ, and the Taliban. Broadcasting highlights included:

- The Nobel peace laureate Malala Yousafzai chose VOA Deewa to connect with girls and women in the region.
- VOA Deewa has a daily ‘Radio on TV’ broadcast targeted toward women called ‘Bibi Shereen’ (Darling Woman). Violent extremists believe it is forbidden for women to raise their voices but VOA Deewa empowers women in communities where there are violent extremists to raise their voice against violence and radical views.

- Radio Mashaal continues to offer audiences programming that is an alternative to the extremist rhetoric in the region. Mashaal launched a weekly program, *Towards Peace*, aimed at promoting dialogue and democracy as a means of conflict resolution in the tribal regions of Pakistan. The program talks to experts, tribal leaders, and other relevant stakeholders to examine ways to achieve political goals, settle disputes, and solve problems through non-violent means.

Bangla: The VOA Bangla Service continuously broadcasts the following on multimedia platforms: interview based reports, features, roundtable discussions, and popular call-in shows on terrorism, human rights themes, and security issues.

CENTRAL ASIA

In September 2015, RFE/RL started producing a version of its Russian-language "Current Time" video program for the Central Asian market. The show is on domestic stations in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan, and provides audiences with unique video-reporting tailored to their needs.

RFE/RL launched an experimental wire service directed at Central Asia, which provides news in the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Russian languages to more than 900 subscribers, including a large number of Central Asian media professionals. This allows RFE/RL to help foster a positive, pluralistic media environment.

RFE/RL's English-language Mejlis experts' roundtable regularly reports on Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and ISIL terrorism throughout the region, and is among RFE/RL's most popular online features.

Kazakhstan: RFE/RL's Kazakh Service content was delivered via its internet website, mobile site, and social media platforms. The web strategy attracted a younger audience to this bilingual (Kazakh and Russian) site, providing opportunities for interactivity and exploring new genres such as video reporting. The Service's reporting on [Kazakh terrorist fighters in Syria and Iraq](#) was [widely quoted in local Kazakh media](#) and sparked many discussions on Kazakh language web forums.

Kyrgyzstan: RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service is the second [most trusted radio news source](#) in Kyrgyzstan, according to a July 2015 survey conducted by the International Republican Institute, Baltic Surveys Ltd./The Gallup Organization, SIAR Research and Consulting, and USAID. The weekly reach of the Service rose in 2015 to 36.2 percent of the population. The Kyrgyz Service's weekly television news programs – the political talk show "Inconvenient Questions" and youth-oriented "Azattyk+" – reach one in four Kyrgyz every week.

Tajikistan: RFE/RL's Tajik Service served as a reliable source of news and information in Tajikistan. An international conference on combating extremism in Dushanbe was opened with a Tajik Service video report about Tajiks who had joined ISIL.

Uzbekistan: The VOA Uzbek Service's weekly 30-minute TV feature program, daily six-minute TV News Brief and a daily 30-minute radio broadcast featured interviews with U.S. and international sources on topics including religious extremism, terrorism, and U.S.-Uzbekistan and U.S.-Central Asian relations. VOA Uzbek regularly covers the Fergana valley. The Service distributed original stories to mobile phone subscribers. Reports were also accessible on Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, SoundCloud, and Russia based Odnoklassniki, MoiMir, and VKontakte. VOA Uzbek has FM radio affiliates in Northern Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, and a TV affiliate in Southern Kyrgyzstan and Northern Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan: RFE/RL's Turkmen Service is the only international media company under supervision of the BBG providing regular multi-media reporting from inside the country, with original video reporting and photojournalism on such issues as homelessness, housing conditions, and travel restrictions on Turkmen citizens, while its reporting on human rights cases has brought critical attention to cases of activists and journalists imprisoned or detained. A variety of foreign stringers, such as those of AP, Reuters, and RIA Novosti, also contribute reporting on Turkmenistan.

EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC

China: VOA delivers news, including religious and local issues affecting more than 23 million Chinese Muslims, to China via satellite television, radio, internet, social media, and mobile channels in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Tibetan. VOA provided extensive coverage of Chinese government policies and treatment of ethnic Uighurs and Tibetans. There were also reports about Muslim migrants traveling through Southeast Asia and their alleged involvement in terrorist activities.

- Radio Free Asia's Uighur language service broadcast two hours daily, seven days a week, and was the only international radio service providing impartial news and information in the Uighur language to the potential audience of more than 16 million Uighur Muslims in northwestern China and Central Eurasia. Consistent with RFA's mandate, the Uighur service acted as a substitute for indigenous media reporting on local events in the region. Its programs included breaking news, analysis, interviews, commentary, a weekly news review, and feature stories. RFA's Uighur service first reported on a [knife attack at a coal mine](#) that left dozens dead in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. RFA's reports were cited by global media outlets and human rights groups worldwide including CNN, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, BBC, *Le Obs*, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch.
- RFA Uighur also closely covered the arrest and trial of Uighur economics scholar [Ilham Tohti](#), who was sentenced to life in prison for his blogging activity. Tohti was considered a moderate Uighur voice. RFA interviewed Tohti's colleagues, friends, and family.

Indonesia: About 89 percent of Indonesians are Muslim making it the country with the single largest Muslim population. VOA Indonesian's weekly audience reach stands at more than 33 million people or 18.9 percent of the adult population as last measured in 2015. The VOA Indonesian Service routinely covered all terrorist developments in Indonesia and the Indonesian government's and civil society's response. The Indonesian Service also reported to Indonesia on ISIL and violent extremism developments in the Middle East as well as the U.S. and world response.

Thailand: VOA's Thai Service has 11 affiliate radio stations in southern Thailand. VOA Thai broadcast news and information eight hours and 30 minutes per week to all of its affiliates; it also produced a weekly video report for placement with TV networks in Thailand. The programs emphasized the U.S.-Thailand relationship, religious and cultural diversity, and education. VOA Thai broadcasts via six radio affiliates to the three southern provinces and also Songkhla, an adjacent province.

Burma: VOA's Burmese Service closely monitored and reported on relations between the Buddhist and Muslim communities in Burma, particularly in Arakan State, while reporting on events and ways to promote mutual trust, tolerance, and understanding. VOA weekly call-in discussion programs provided effective fora to

discuss national elections and sensitive issues and to stimulate further dialogue. VOA Burmese broadcast daily radio and television programs via domestic affiliates and via satellite and with popular web and mobile sites. The VOA Burmese Bureau in Yangon participated in local, ethnic media seminars to discuss professional journalism standards and to identify and counter hate messages.

- RFA's Burma Service closely covered the ongoing plight of Burma's minority Muslim Rohingyas, who have often had to bear the brunt of anti-Muslim communal violence and have been forced in many cases to live as refugees.
- The service also continued to cover the humanitarian crisis resulting from the Burmese government's policies in Rakhine state.

EUROPE AND EURASIA

The Russian Federation and Ukraine: In 2015 the BBG expanded "Current Time," its daily 30-minute Russian-language television news program, jointly produced by VOA and RFE/RL. Airing in nine countries via 25 media outlets and available to digital audiences worldwide, weekend editions of the program were launched. A version of "Current Time" produced for the Central Asian market aired in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In support of the "Current Time" brand, RFE/RL launched a social media-driven digital reporting and engagement service (DIGIM), tasked with disseminating and producing innovative cross-platform digital content and engaging with Russian-language audiences on social media.

VOA's Russian and Ukrainian Services regularly addressed terrorism-related issues and threats in the United States, Europe, and other key areas of interest to the target audience. Journalist Fatima Tlisova provided VOA Russian with enterprise reporting related to the trial of Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, which began in March 2015. The Service also provided extensive coverage of ISIL's growing influence in the North Caucasus and Russia's military intervention in Syria.

Tatarstan/Bashkortostan: The Tatar and Bashkir communities are the two largest Muslim communities in Russia. RFE/RL's Tatar/Bashkir Service was the only major international media producing content in the Tatar and Bashkir languages and provided listeners with objective news and analysis on issues such as Russia's policy toward ethnic and religious minorities, centralization, corruption, the role of Islam in predominantly Muslim regions, and gender issues. The Service's webpage, the most technologically advanced state-of-the-art web source in Tatar, remained a virtual meeting place for people to discuss these and other issues.

North Caucasus: Broadcasting in the Avar, Chechen, and Circassian languages, RFE/RL's North Caucasus Service reported the news in a region where media freedom and journalists remained under severe threat.

Turkey: The VOA Turkish Service produced 2.5 hours of original television content per week, and had a strong presence in Turkey on TV and on the internet. Content was distributed nationwide via affiliate TGRT Haber TV and online on affiliate Mynet. Turkish stringers in Ankara and Istanbul have been covering Turkey's security operations against suspected ISIL militants and recruiters inside Turkey. Stringers in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, and Syria covered ISIL-related stories as well. Coverage of Turkey-Syria-U.S.-ISIL issues and interviews were often picked up by many Turkish media outlets with full attribution to VOA Turkish.

The Balkans: VOA's Balkan Services provided extensive coverage of the rise of violent extremism in the region's countries with sizeable Muslim populations – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia. More than 4.7 million adults weekly consumed VOA content across broadcast and digital platforms throughout the Balkans. VOA coverage highlighted the threats posed by international terrorist networks that recruit foreign terrorist fighters for ISIL and for al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. VOA's Balkan Services also focused on U.S.-sustained efforts to work with western Balkans nations to confront the terrorists and reduce their capacity to recruit in the region.

RFE/RL's Balkan Service is the only inclusive source of news in a region where genuine media freedom remains elusive and many outlets reflect ethnic divisions. The Service provided comprehensive coverage of the worsening refugee crisis situation, as tens of thousands fleeing Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, made their way through Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia in the hopes of reaching Germany.

Azerbaijan: VOA's Azerbaijani Service delivered daily TV and web programming focused on the country's political dynamics. Due to its aggressive social media campaign, VOA Azerbaijani's multimedia content now receives half a million views per month on Facebook. VOA Azerbaijani remained a leading authoritative source of news regarding the large Azeri population in northern Iran.

Despite the December 2014 raid by Azerbaijani authorities on RFE/RL's Baku bureau, which led to the bureau's formal closure in May 2015, the Azerbaijani Service has continued to provide vital coverage of under-reported events in the country. The Service's "Korrupsiometr" web portal features the latest laws and regulations, along with Azerbaijani lawyers responding to audience questions.

AFRICA

Hausa: VOA's Hausa Service continued to provide comprehensive, multimedia coverage of Boko Haram's terrorist activities in Northern Nigeria and neighboring countries through its daily news programming, interactive call-in shows, and audio streaming and postings on its website.

- The Service also launched its first television program in September 2015. The new half-hour weekly magazine show, "Taskar," combines original reporting from across the United States and from Hausa Service reporters not only in Nigeria, but also in Niger and Cameroon.

Somali: VOA Somali continues to cover an area heavily affected by terrorism and violent extremism. Somalia has seen relentless attacks by the terrorist group al-Shabaab. VOA Somali regularly interviewed Somali government officials, Islamic scholars, and independent experts to give perspectives and context on the terrorist threat.

- In April 2015, VOA Somali interviewed a former high-level al-Shabaab intelligence official who had surrendered to the Federal Government of Somalia in the months prior. His interview provided an insider's view of al-Shabaab's foreign terrorist fighter recruitment, relationship with al-Qa'ida affiliates, and prospects of aligning with ISIL.
- In November 2015, VOA Somali launched a daily youth show called "Today's Youth" that gives the latest updates on music, technology, and news, about employment and arts to youth who have been affected by years of war.
- In addition, VOA Somali's weekly "Islamic Affairs" show, which focuses on major issues affecting Muslims, continued to attract lots of interest among the listeners. In one program, Islamic scholars discussed the causes of violent extremism among youth.

Swahili: VOA's Swahili Service broadcast to large Muslim populations in Tanzania and Kenya, and smaller Muslim communities in Uganda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 2014, the Service has increased its efforts to reach the Muslim communities in Kenya's Indian Ocean coastline, where the city of Mombasa was rocked by several terrorist attacks. To improve its coverage in the area, VOA Swahili is opening a reporting center in Mombasa. In 2015, Swahili service programming on the security situation in the city has played a significant role in initiating a conversation in Mombasa exploring how older people, religious leaders, and matriarchal leaders can reclaim the moral authority they used to enjoy before vocal radical voices silenced them in recent years.

French to Africa: VOA's French-to-Africa Service broadcast to Muslims throughout Francophone Africa. Via FM transmitters in Bamako, Niamey, Abidjan, and Ouagadougou, VOA provided extensive coverage of the peace process in Mali. VOA also provided reports about terrorist attacks in Mali and in Paris. In 2015, VOA continued to broadcast to the entire region in French and to Mali in Bambara, the most widely spoken local language of Mali. The service also reaches Muslims through Sahel Plus, a 25-minute weekly French program with news and features about issues of common concern to people in the Sahel region. French-to-Africa's weekly program *Dialogue des Religions* also offered discussions with Muslim scholars and experts on a variety of topics, including Islam.

ENGLISH

On September 10, VOA English joined with VOA Central News to produce a 90-minute Radio/TV/Web simulcast around President Obama's speech on ISIL, complete with analysis and Congressional reaction.

VOA English provided extensive, timely and in-depth coverage on conflicts in the Middle East and parts of Africa to a global audience on multimedia platforms, and special reports to affiliate stations.

- In October 2015, VOA English and the Newseum Institute coproduced a television special that took an in-depth look at ISIL and its use of propaganda. *ISIL and the Digital War* featured analysts Michael Weiss and Lorenzo Vidino.
 - VOA English current affairs program *Press Conference, USA* interviewed U.S. Representative Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.
 - In 2015, VOA English provided in-depth analysis and perspective on the war in Syria with newsmakers, such as former U.S. Ambassador to Syria Edward Djerejian and Mideast and strategic analyst Anthony Cordesman.
-