

Austria

According to Austria's counterterrorism agency, the Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution and Counterterrorism (BVT), there was a growing number of radicalized individuals among second- and third-generation Muslim immigrants and among converts to Islam.

Austria has a fairly comprehensive counterterrorism and anti-money laundering legislative framework in place. In December, the government introduced a bill that would make it a crime to attend terrorist training camps abroad or to receive terrorism training on the Internet.

In August, Austria's Supreme Court upheld a prison sentence for a young couple jailed for terrorist threats conveyed through the Internet in late 2007. In a related development, a Canadian court ruled in October 2009 that a Moroccan national, who had maintained close contact with the Austrian couple, was guilty of having planned bomb attacks against OPEC, UN sites, and German facilities in Austria and Germany in 2007.

There are believed to be 4,000 sympathizers of the PKK in Austria. Some Turks in Austria supported Turkish extremist Metin Kaplan, who advocates replacement of the Turkish state by an Islamic regime and who has been linked to violent criminal acts.

Austria closely followed EU policies to counter terrorist financing and actively participated in the EU Clearinghouse mechanism, which designates terrorist financiers under UNSCR 1373. Austria fulfilled its obligations to freeze assets, pursuant to UNSC resolutions and EU Clearinghouse designations, but did not initiate any freezing actions independently. Parliament passed two relevant laws in 2009. The Administrative Assistance Implementing Act provides a new basis for handling foreign authorities' assistance requests for exchange of tax information. Austrian authorities will provide information in tax proceedings, including data formerly blocked by bank secrecy regulations. The Law on Payment Services integrates European Council Directive 2007/64/EC on payment services into domestic law and establishes a license requirement for money transmitters, which previously was regulated under the Banking Act for relevant businesses. The FATF's 2009 Mutual Evaluation Report, which includes FATF assessment of Austria's anti-money laundering and counterterrorist financing (AML/CTF) regime, acknowledged that Austria has established a comprehensive AML/CTF system, but raises questions about its effective implementation. In reaction, the Austrian government announced additional legal changes to bring its AML/CFT standards fully in compliance with the FATF's 40+9 recommendations.

The BVT continued to monitor a handful of mosques in Vienna suspected of preaching radicalism. Likewise, it continued to follow the activities of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad movement, certain radicalized converts to Islam, and suspected Afghan and Chechen extremists entering Austria as asylum seekers.

Austria has about 23,000 Chechen refugees. According to counterterrorism experts, a small Vienna-based Chechen group serves as the European arm of the Chechen separatist movement headed by Dokku Umarov. The Vienna-based group is suspected of extorting money from the Chechen exile community in Austria.

In late 2008, domestic and international media reported a possible link between Austria and the terrorists responsible for the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai. As reported by the Indian newspaper "Indian Express" in 2008, one of the SIM cards used by one of the terrorists had been issued by a Vienna-based telecommunications company. An Austrian newspaper subsequently claimed the terrorists had communicated via a Voice-Over-Internet Server in Vienna.

As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Austria chaired the al-Qa'ida and Taliban Sanctions Committee 1267. In this capacity, Austria sought "to place particular focus on observance of rule of law and human rights with terrorism suspects."

Vienna is the seat of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and of the related Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB). In 2009, Austria contributed US\$ 825,000 to the UNODC. In October, together with a handful of other nations, Austria held a two-day counterterrorism networking workshop in Vienna, gathering representatives from 100 nations and 40 international organizations and UN units. In Afghanistan, Austria supported criminal law and criminal justice capacity building programs. Austria worked with the UNODC and the EU to establish more effective border control checkpoints along the Afghan-Iranian border.

Austria continued its participation in the Salzburg Forum, a regular meeting platform of interior ministers from Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Romania, and Bulgaria designed to fight terrorism and organized crime in the region. Similarly, the Austrian government worked throughout the year to promote and expand the Pruem Treaty, under which the seven EU signatory states share information from their police databases. The treaty, which involves the exchange of DNA, fingerprint, and vehicle data, was designed, in part, to identify terrorism suspects.