

## Country Report on Terrorism 2014

### BULGARIA

**Overview:** Continued migration of asylum seekers from Syria to Bulgaria as well as increasing evidence of the transit of foreign terrorist fighters through Bulgaria raised the country's counterterrorism profile in 2014. In response, the Government of Bulgaria has worked to enhance its prevention and enforcement tools, including new foreign terrorist fighter legislation and the development of a National Counter Terrorism Center. Bulgaria is a member of the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The Prosecution Service promised indictments in early 2014 against defendants in the 2012 airport bus bombing case in Burgas, but they had not been issued by year's end.

U.S. agencies maintain a regular exchange of counterterrorism information with various entities within the Bulgarian government and assisted it to detect and react to terrorist threats within Bulgaria.

The Ministry of Interior and State Agency for National Security have responded strongly to evidence of possible domestic support for ISIL. In November, police arrested a group of Muslim men from Roma communities in the Pazardjik area for inciting war and anti-democratic activities. The men are followers of a controversial imam who posted pictures online of himself and some of his followers wearing clothing and holding a banner imprinted with the ISIL logo.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has designated a Counterterrorism Coordinator, who is a key point of contact for Post on issues like foreign terrorist fighters.

**Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security:** Bulgaria prosecutes suspected terrorists under several general provisions of the Penal Code but lacks a comprehensive counterterrorism legal framework. In 2014, the Minister of Justice introduced a new Penal Code which included updated counterterrorism statutes. The draft was not passed before the government fell and parliament was dissolved. With the arrival of a new government in November, the future of reforms to the code is unclear.

Law enforcement cooperation between U.S. agencies and their Bulgarian counterparts has historically been strong. However, the previous government reshuffled and reorganized key police units, and the resulting reassignment of personnel and imposition of new rules slowed joint casework. The new administration has promised to reverse many of the changes.

The Interior Ministry has operational units responsible for deterring, detecting, and responding to incidents, including the Specialized Unit for Combating Terrorism (SOBT), Security Police, and Special Police Forces. Specialized law enforcement units are properly equipped and supported with relevant training but lack resources in regional areas where the terrorism threat appears strongest.

The influx of asylum seekers in 2014, primarily from Syria, put significant strain on law enforcement. The Interior Ministry reassigned scores of local police to the border area to assist the besieged border police. The result has been increased deterrence against illegal border crossings but significantly less capacity for other law enforcement issues.

The establishment of the National Counterterrorism Training Center (NCTC) in 2014 provides the first inter-ministerial standing task force to develop law enforcement sensitive watch lists, coordinate between law enforcement and security services on counterterrorism checks and incidents, and build a common operating picture of the threats to national leadership facing Bulgaria. Officials at the center will have the ability to receive and provide information to border guards, customs officials, counterterrorism officials, intelligence officers, and the police. The center has also served as a taskforce center when coordinating inter-ministerial counterterrorism operations. Through Regional Strategic Initiative-funded Antiterrorism Assistance program support in counterterrorism skills and other initiatives, the Department of State provided technical training to NCTC staff and worked with them to develop a national counterterrorism strategy.

**Countering the Financing of Terrorism:** Bulgaria belongs to the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL). Bulgaria is also a member of the Egmont Group, a global association of financial intelligence units. The Financial Intelligence Directorate of the State Agency for National Security (FID-SANS) has primary responsibility for anti-money laundering measures for all reporting entities. The Bulgarian National Bank (BNB) also has a Special Supervision Directorate to investigate banks for compliance with money laundering and terrorist financing requirements. Although reporting by non-bank institutions, such as gaming entities, investment intermediaries, notaries, non-profit organizations (NPOs), and leasing companies has increased, it remained low. FID's resources remained limited, particularly with respect to performing onsite inspections in non-banking institutions. Publicly available information on persons who own, control, or direct the activities of NPOs was not consistently maintained. In 2014, the government did not identify, freeze, seize, or forfeit any terrorism-related assets. For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

**Regional and International Cooperation:** Bulgaria is a member of and active contributor to counterterrorism initiatives at the UN, EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, Organization for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and NATO. Law enforcement officials benefit from joint investigations and training opportunities with international partners. Bulgaria's aforementioned participation in GCTF activities is an example of this contribution.

**Countering Radicalization to Violence and Violent Extremism:** The Grand Mufti of Bulgaria issued a statement and, along with the National Council of Religious Communities in Bulgaria, adopted a decree condemning ISIL and its violent activities. The Grand Mufti has been a voice of tolerance and moderation but he has complained that the Government of Bulgaria is not a strong enough partner in this effort.