

BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM
Country Reports on Terrorism 2015
Report

SENEGAL

Overview: The Government of Senegal continued to take a firm stance against terrorism as international and regional terrorist activity led to growing concern that Senegal itself could become a target for terrorist attacks. The government worked closely with U. S. military and law enforcement officials to strengthen its counterterrorism capabilities. The risk of violent extremism and terrorist activity in Senegal arises from transnational threats due to the Senegalese military presence in several theaters of operation, including the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Senegal has no comprehensive counterterrorism legislation. In 2007, however, the government amended the criminal code to establish criminal offenses for terrorist acts as defined in the Organization of African Unity Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. The result of this amendment, Article 279 of the criminal code, allows the state to prosecute an individual or group that “intentionally undertakes an act to disturb public order, or the normal functioning of national and international institutions, through intimidation or terror.” The maximum penalty is life in prison.

Senegal’s gendarmerie, national police, customs, and national intelligence organizations lack capacity to detect, deter, and prevent acts of terrorism in their own territory. Senegal is working to improve its law enforcement capacity by participating in multilateral efforts, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum’s (GCTF’s) Border Security Initiative and programs of the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Senegal also participated in U.S. government counterterrorism capacity-building programs, such as the Department of State’s Antiterrorism Assistance Program, and received significant funding and training from the French government.

Senegalese officials have identified a lack of border resources and regional cooperation as major security vulnerabilities. Areas in the southern and eastern portion of the country have far fewer resources to detect and deter extremists from traveling through this area. Additionally, there is a lack of interagency cooperation and coordination across several of the government entities that deal with terrorism.

Significant law enforcement actions against terrorists in 2015 included the arrest of several religious leaders who were accused of having links with terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram and al-Qa’ida. In October, police made several arrests in order to expose a network of violent extremists who were associated with suspected Boko Haram leader Makhtar Diokhané.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Senegal is a member of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa, a Financial Action Task Force-style regional body. Senegal’s financial intelligence unit, the National Financial Intelligence Processing Unit, is a member of the Egmont Group. At the regional level, Senegal implements the anti-money laundering/counterterrorism financing (AML/CFT) framework used by member states of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Among WAEMU countries, Senegal was the first to domesticate the regional AML/CFT legal framework.

Senegal did not enact any new laws or regulations on countering terrorism finance in 2015, nor did they prosecute anyone under their 2009 AML/CFT regulations. For additional information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the 2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INSCR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

Countering Violent Extremism: Strong cultural and religious traditions have made Senegalese society resistant to violent extremist ideologies. Islam in Senegal is organized around several influential brotherhoods which are generally tolerant and do not preach extremist ideology. These brotherhoods are also fairly resistant to external influences. The government has reached out to the brotherhoods to offer support in resisting violent extremism.

International and Regional Cooperation: Senegal is a member of the UN, AU, ECOWAS, OIC, and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. The government also participates in the GCTF's Sahel Regional Capacity Building Working Group and hosted the 2015 African Land Forces Summit in collaboration with the U.S. Africa Command. Senegal hosted a second annual International Forum on Peace and Security in November. In May, President Macky Sall was elected as the Chairman of the ECOWAS committee and has put regional security cooperation at the top of his agenda.