
TURKMENISTAN

Overview: The Government of Turkmenistan continued its efforts to improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies to combat terrorism, ensure border security, and detect terrorist financing. The Government of Turkmenistan has been reluctant to work with the State Department, however, participating in only two out of five Antiterrorism Assistance courses offered in the past three years. Counterterrorism cooperation continued to focus on building the trust and relationships necessary for future effective, widespread training and capacity building. Broad, vague definitions of terrorism and so-called “religious extremism” are sometimes used by the government to target internal dissent.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The country’s legal system as it pertains to counterterrorism centers on the 2003 counterterrorism law that defines which crimes are considered terrorist in nature. This law is supplemented by articles 271-273 of the criminal code, which pertain to terrorist acts and terrorist financing and are used to prosecute terrorism-related offenses.

The Ministries of National Security, Internal Affairs, Defense, and State Border Service perform counterterrorism functions and share information through an interagency commission. The country’s law enforcement capacity needs improvement, as law enforcement units have a poor record of accountability and respect for human rights. Prosecutors, however, do play a significant role in the investigation phase of a case, and specialized law enforcement units exist to conduct investigations. These units possess specialized equipment but usually only use the equipment for official ceremonies and demonstrations as opposed to daily operations. Turkmenistan also participated in U.S. and international-sponsored training programs, including a UN Office on Drugs and Crime program on international counterterrorism instruments and a U.S. training program on combating transnational threats. Turkmenistan remained a partner nation for the Department of State’s Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, and the ATA program provided a successful crisis management seminar for law enforcement leaders in 2013.

The State Border Service (SBS) continued to operate frontier garrisons on its borders with Iran and Afghanistan and managed eight radiation portal monitors along its borders, which were donated by the Department of Energy through its Second Line of Defense program. The State Migration Service maintains a terrorist screening watch-list and possesses biometric screening capabilities at ports of entry.

Turkmenistan’s political will to counter terrorism and ensure border security is evident in the government’s continued emphasis on maintaining stability above all other concerns. On border security, the Government of Turkmenistan has increased its cooperation with the United States via participation in the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program, and for the first time, participated in programs pertaining to legal/regulatory reform and the creation of a strategic trade control regime to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Petty corruption, however, sometimes hampered effective law enforcement. For example, in October, President Berdimuhamedov dismissed the Chairman of the State Border Service (SBS), who was imprisoned shortly thereafter on bribery charges. Additionally, international

cooperation with the government is often hampered by a bureaucracy that operates according to an opaque set of rules and that frequently deems public information “state secrets.”

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Turkmenistan is a member of the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG), a FATF-style regional body. 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: Turkmenistan government officials participated in OSCE-sponsored trainings on border security, countering the financing of terrorism, and protecting human rights while combating terrorism.

Countering Radicalization to Violence and Violent Extremism: Turkmenistan's law enforcement and security agencies exercise stringent control over the population. The Turkmen government reportedly views conservative Islam with suspicion. Since the country's independence, mosques and Muslim clergy have been state-sponsored and financed. This level of government surveillance suggests that any violent extremist groups existing in Turkmenistan would be small, underground, and disparate. However, the severe curtailment of basic freedoms, growing economic inequality, an ideological void among young people, and the perception of corruption could cause people to be attracted to violent extremist ideologies. We refer you to the Department of State's *Annual Report to Congress on International Religious Freedom* (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/rpt/index.htm>) for further information.