

Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Kyrgyzstan

Overview: In 2013, there were no reported terrorist attacks in Kyrgyzstan. However, Kyrgyzstani security forces arrested several individuals suspected of affiliation with terrorist organizations and terrorist activities abroad. Security forces became more aware of increased recruitment of citizens for terrorist acts in Syria. On December 26, the Government of Kyrgyzstan arrested one fighter who reportedly returned from Syria.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan is committed to preventing terrorist attacks and reaches out to international organizations and foreign governments that can provide training and technical assistance. The country remains vulnerable, however, especially in the south where conflicts on the border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and lack of central government control of the mountainous border are an issue. The Government of Kyrgyzstan is also concerned about the potential for an influx of terrorist elements into its territory following the withdrawal of ISAF troops from Afghanistan in 2014.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: In 2013, the State Committee for National Security (GKNB) remained the main government organization tasked with countering terrorism. It arrested several individuals based on their alleged connections to terrorist organizations, including those linked to Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which the Kyrgyzstani government designated as a terrorist organization in 2003. Embassy officials report positive cooperation with Kyrgyzstan's main counterterrorism bodies – the GKNB and the MOI.

In November 2013, the Kyrgyzstani Parliament approved a law aimed at improving interagency cooperation and regulations in the field of counterterrorism. The law addressed the integration of international agreements and improvements in streamlining regulations for counterterrorism activities. The new legislation also reduced the number of people required in order for a mass gathering to receive additional security and protection from terrorist attacks. This will allow more events to qualify for an increased police presence.

Although the GKNB's antiterrorism unit has demonstrated the capacity to quickly react to bomb scares or other potential terrorist threats, it has limited capacity to act to counter the threat in practice. It lacks both specialized training and equipment.

There remains strong political will and desire for increased capacity building and acquisition of equipment and all law enforcement entities demonstrated a desire for cooperation with international organizations. Kyrgyzstani police officers continued to participate in the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, and received training focused on enhancing law enforcement capacity to secure Kyrgyzstan's airports and conduct terrorism-related investigations. The ATA program continued to focus on strengthening police capacity to secure the country's borders.

The border guards and customs service also cooperated closely with Embassy Bishkek's Export Control and Related Border Security Assistance (EXBS) office. EXBS is funding construction of additional border towers and providing renovations and enhancements to existing border towers along the southern borders of Kyrgyzstan with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The OSCE, through its Community Security Initiative (CSI) continued to support an embedded police advisor with law enforcement agencies in each region of Kyrgyzstan, which began following ethnic clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in 2010 in the southern regions of Osh and Jalalabad. Along with community policing, the advisors train local law enforcement officials on how to identify potential terrorist attacks.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan does not maintain a terrorist screening watch list. It also does not have biographic or biometric screening capabilities at ports of entry. Although internal information sharing within the host government increased in 2013, it still needs improvement. Information sharing with other countries happened

rarely and usually only by request in the context of a human trafficking or other organized crime investigation. The Government of Kyrgyzstan does not collect advance passenger name records on commercial flights.

In August, the GKNB arrested two citizens of Kyrgyzstan and a citizen of Kazakhstan who were suspected members of a terrorist cell in southern Kyrgyzstan. According to GKNB, the suspects intended to execute a series of attacks in Kyrgyzstan on behalf of foreign sponsors. The suspects purchased weapons, explosive materials, and communication equipment. In September, GKNB Special Forces facilitated the repatriation of two Kyrgyzstani recruits from Syria, working in collaboration with relatives of the recruits. It is not clear how many Kyrgyzstani nationals remain in Syria. On December 26, an alleged fighter who returned from Syria was arrested in Batken province under suspicion of attempting to recruit local Kyrgyzstani citizens for membership into an unnamed terrorist group.

Deterrents to more effective host government law enforcement measures against terrorism include interagency rivalries, a lack of coordination between the GKNB and the MOI, and budgetary constraints. Inefficient Soviet-era bureaucratic structures, low salaries, and frequent personnel turnover hampered law enforcement efforts. Kyrgyzstani counterterrorist units remained largely untested in real-life situations.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Kyrgyzstan belongs to the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and the Finance of Terrorism (EAG), a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body. In October 2011, Kyrgyzstan made a high-level political commitment to work with the FATF and EAG to address its strategic anti-money laundering/counterterrorist finance (AML/CFT) deficiencies. Since then, Kyrgyzstan has taken steps towards improving its AML/CFT regime. However, the FATF called for the country to address its remaining deficiencies: the criminalization of money laundering in accordance with international standards; improving the framework for freezing terrorist assets; and improving the AML/CFT supervisory program. In 2012, the Government of Kyrgyzstan established a Commission on Combating the Financing of Terrorism but it was largely inactive in 2013. 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: In 2013, Kyrgyzstan participated in counterterrorism activities organized by the OSCE, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Antiterrorism Center, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The U.S. military conducted eight counterterrorism training events with the GKNB, the Interior Ministry, the Defense Ministry, and the Border Service. These events were designed to teach units to perform typical military tasks while respecting human rights and the safety of noncombatants.