

- **Source:**
USDOS - US Department of State
- **Title:**
Country Report on Terrorism 2016 - Chapter 2 - Algeria
- **Publication date:**
19 July 2017
- **ecoi.net summary:** Annual report on terrorism (covering 2016) [ID 344140]
- **Countries:**
Algeria
- [Original link](#)

Recommended citation:

USDOS - US Department of State: Country Report on Terrorism 2016 - Chapter 2 - Algeria, 19 July 2017 (available at ecoi.net)

http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/344140/475148_en.html (accessed 21 August 2017)



Country Report on Terrorism 2016 - Chapter 2 - Algeria

Overview: Algeria continued an aggressive campaign to eliminate all terrorist activity within its borders, and sustained its policing efforts to thwart terrorist activity in urban centers. Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), AQIM-allied groups, and ISIS elements including the Algerian branch known as Jund al-Khilafah in Algeria (JAK-A, Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria), were active terrorist organizations within Algeria and along its borders. These groups aspired to establish their interpretations of Islamic law in the region and to attack Algerian security services, local government targets, and Western interests.

Regional political and security instability contributed to Algeria's terrorist threat. Terrorist groups and criminal networks in the Sahel attempted to operate around Algeria's nearly 4,000 miles of borders. Continuing instability in Libya, terrorist groups operating in Tunisia, fragile peace accord implementation in Mali, as well as human and narcotics trafficking, were significant external threats.

Algeria is not a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS; however, Algeria actively supported the effort to defeat ISIS in other ways, such as counter-messaging, capacity-building programs with neighboring states, and co-chairing the Sahel Region Capacity-Building Working Group (SWG) of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF).

Although there was one reported kidnapping by terrorists as a tactic to compel provision of supplies of food, there were no reports of kidnappings for ransom by terrorist groups in Algeria in 2016. The Algerian government maintained a strict "no concessions" policy with regard to individuals or groups holding its citizens hostage.

2016 Terrorist Incidents: JAK-A, which has sworn allegiance to ISIS, claimed responsibility for attacks on security forces, including two lethal attacks. Algerian government efforts continued to restrict the group's ability to operate. Within the region, AQIM continued attacks using improvised explosive devices, bombings, false roadblocks, and ambushes. Through November 2016, open sources reported 36 terrorist attacks. Attacks in 2016 included:

- On March 18, projectiles struck a gas plant operated by Statoil and BP in Krechba, in the southern Algerian desert. AQIM released a statement claiming the attack, which produced no casualties.
- On April 15, four soldiers were killed during a combing operation in the Constantine province.
- On October 29, a policeman was killed in the eastern city of Constantine. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack via its propaganda arm, Amaq.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: On June 19, the President signed a new law adding articles to the Algerian penal code and expanding criminal liability in the areas of foreign terrorist fighters, those who support or finance foreign terrorist fighters, the use of information technology in terrorist recruiting and support; and internet service providers who fail to comply with legal obligations to store information for a certain period or to prevent access to criminal material. The legislation was intended to implement UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), and the UN Security Council (UNSC) ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qa'ida sanctions regime.

The government stated that penal code reforms adopted in December 2015 had reduced the use of pretrial detention in 2016, but overuse of pretrial detention remained a problem.

Military forces and multiple law enforcement, intelligence, and security services addressed counterterrorism, counter-intelligence, investigations, border security, and crisis response. These included the various branches of the Joint Staff; the army; the 140,000 members of the National Gendarmerie; and the Border Guards under the Ministry of National Defense (MND); and approximately 210,000 national police, or General Directorate of National Security, under the Ministry of Interior. Military forces and security services conducted regular search operations for terrorists, especially in eastern Algeria and in the expansive desert regions in the south. Public information announcements from the MND provided timely reporting on incidents during which MND forces captured or eliminated terrorists and seized equipment, arms, ammunition caches, and drugs.

Border security remained a top priority to guard against infiltration of terrorists from neighboring countries. Official and private media outlets reported on measures to increase border security, including closed military border areas, new observer posts in the east, reinforced protection of energy installations, additional permanent facilities for border control management, new aerial-based surveillance technologies and upgrades to communication systems. The Algerian government reported it had established a regularly updated database regarding foreign terrorist fighters, which is deployed at all border posts and Algerian diplomatic missions overseas.

The Government of Algeria closely monitors passenger manifests for inbound and outbound flights and scrutinizes travel documents of visitors, but does not collect biometric information. Algeria uses a computerized fingerprint identification system, undertakes training, and is equipped to recognize fraudulent documents. The Government of Algeria used INTERPOL channels, alerts, and diffusion notices to stay informed on suspicious travelers at land, air, and maritime borders.

To enhance its capacity to deal effectively with security challenges within its borders and defend against threats to regional stability, Algerian law enforcement agencies participated in the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) Program and other training offered by third countries. Algerian participants attended and hosted numerous workshops conducted under the aegis of the GCTF. The U.S. Department of Justice's International

Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, funded by the Department of State, concentrated on capacity-focused consultations and mentoring in forensics, border security, criminal investigation, and evidence collection at crime scenes.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Algeria is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a Financial Action Task Force-style regional body. Its financial intelligence unit, known as the Financial Intelligence Processing Unit (CTRF), is a member of the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units. In February, the FATF removed Algeria from its list of jurisdictions subject to FATF monitoring under its ongoing global anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) compliance process. The FATF cited Algeria's significant progress in improving its AML/CFT regime. Similarly, in April, the MENAFATF announced that it was moving Algeria from "follow up" status to a biennial reporting status, and praised Algeria's compliance with international AML/CFT standards.

On June 19, the President signed a new law expanding the Algerian penal code in the areas of foreign terrorist fighters, and those who support or finance foreign terrorist fighters, in an effort to comply with UNSCR 2178.

CTRF regularly publishes administrative orders signed by the Minister of Finance, directing the immediate freezing and seizure of the assets of persons and entities listed by the UNSC ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qa'ida sanctions regime. Although the system for freezing and seizure is in place, to date these orders have not yet resulted in the actual freezing or seizure of assets of listed persons.

The banking system in Algeria is underdeveloped and tightly monitored by Algerian authorities. Processes within the banking system are bureaucratic and require several checks at various points of the money transfer process, and a large informal cash-based economy has developed. The scale of the informal market has made its eradication extremely difficult, and multiple fiscal initiatives by the government have failed to co-opt illegal traders into formalizing their businesses. Reportedly, a network of informants and Algerian undercover officers monitor significant unregulated cash transactions, but given the informal nature of the system, it is difficult to police adequately.

In recent years, Algeria has taken steps to address several AML/CFT deficiencies. In 2015, Algeria amended the law to expand the definition of the financing of terrorism to include the criminalization of financing an individual terrorist or terrorist organization for any purpose. By amending the AML/CFT law, progress was also made on addressing customer due diligence, requiring all financial institutions to not allow the opening of anonymous or numbered bank accounts. Further, financial institutions were obligated to report to the CTRF suspicious transactions when funds are suspected of being associated or connected with a crime or suspected of being related to terrorism or used by terrorists, terrorist organizations, or terrorist financiers.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2017 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

Countering Violent Extremism: The Algerian government reports that its policies underscore the value of state oversight for religious education, including by the training and credentialing of imams as a way to promote social stability and ensure they do not incite violence or promote intolerance through their teaching and preaching. The Algerian government appoints, trains, and pays the salaries of imams. The penal code outlines punishments, including fines and prison sentences, for anyone other than a government-designated imam who preaches in a mosque. The Algerian government monitors mosques for possible security-related offenses and prohibits the use of mosques as public meeting places outside of regular prayer hours. Government officials publicly affirm Algeria's Sunni Maliki tradition of Islam, and characterize it as upholding the values of tolerance, brotherhood, and acceptance of others.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs warns Algerians against foreign violent extremism (including ISIS), and heeding *fatwas* (judicial rulings) that originate outside Algeria. Plans announced in 2015 to establish an "Academy of *Fatwas*" and an "observatory" to guard against untrained imams and importation of values "alien" to Algeria's religious tradition remain at the proposal stage. The government promotes programs on television and radio that gave "repentant" terrorists a platform to dissuade others from joining violent extremist organizations.

A national taskforce on cybercrime, established in October 2015, continues to work with cybercrime units of the police and gendarmerie to prevent online recruitment. In addition, the government established memoranda of cooperation among the Ministries of Interior, Communications, Education and Religious Affairs, and set up specialized web sites to counter "fatwas" issued by extremists.

Viewing broad-based socioeconomic opportunity as a way to prevent radicalization to violence, Algerian government programs target youth and the unemployed by providing tuition, job placements, and paid internships to university students.

The Government of Algeria airs content through Radio Quran aimed at countering religious extremism, specifically violent forms of Salafism. Mini lectures with the stated intent to "defuse" intolerant or violent discourse air regularly, and the most relevant lectures were broadcast two to three times per week.

The MND released communiqués from its website on captured or eliminated terrorists, indicating where the operation occurred and where arms were recovered, with no further commentary or analysis. The MND excluded group affiliation to deny terrorists publicity. Algerian leaders publicly condemned terrorism in televised addresses and statements to the press. Posting photographs and videos of terrorist acts on the internet is prohibited. MND officials and the MND website reminded citizens to verify their sources and statistics related to security matters with the MND communications office.

Under the 2006 Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, Algeria offers amnesty to former terrorists who lay down their weapons and disavow violence. Exceptions are made for perpetrators of particularly egregious acts, such as rape, murder, and bombings. Per the Charter, the government extends judicial assistance and social and job reintegration measures to repentant terrorists, victims of terrorism, and families of terrorists across the country.

International and Regional Cooperation: Algeria is an active member and participant in the African Union (AU), the GCTF, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Arab League. It is a founding member of the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law. Algeria participated in counterterrorism-related projects implemented by the UN Office on Drug and Crime's Terrorism Prevention Branch; participated in CEMOC (Comité d'État-Major Opérationnel Conjoint) with Mali, Mauritania, and Niger to promote security cooperation in the region; and hosted CEMOC's Liaison and Fusion Center for information sharing. Algeria also provides significant funding to the AU's Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa.

Algeria sits on the UN Counter-Terrorism Center's Advisory Board and hosts the headquarters of AFRIPOL, a pan-African organization to foster police training and cooperation. As a founding member of the GCTF, Algeria served as co-chair of the SWG, which promotes regional and international cooperation and provides a venue for experts to discuss capacity-building gaps specific to the Sahel region and identify solutions. Under the auspices of the SWG, Algeria hosted a regional workshop on the role of the criminal justice system in countering terrorism and on developing and implementing national plans of action to prevent violent extremism. In 2016, Algeria also convened international workshops on the role of democracy in countering terrorism, and on Terrorists' Use of the Internet.

In 2016, Algeria continued strong diplomatic engagement to promote regional peace and security. Algerian officials reported that security cooperation along the Algeria-Tunisia border had prevented several terrorist attacks. On the diplomatic front, Algeria chaired the implementation committee for the peace accord in Mali. Algeria continued to press publicly and privately for groups and stakeholders to support the UN political process in Libya. Algeria also participated in various Sahel-Saharan fora to discuss development and security policies, the evolution of regional terrorism, and donor coordination.

Algeria is an active member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), a U.S. multi-year interagency regional program aimed at building the capacity of governments in the Maghreb and Sahel to confront threats posed by violent extremists. Both Morocco and Algeria participate in the TSCTP; the 5+5 Defense Initiative, which brings together five European and five North African countries to address security issues in the Mediterranean; and the GCTF; however, political disagreement over the status of Western Sahara remained an impediment to bilateral and regional counterterrorism cooperation in 2016.

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