



SAUDI ARABIA AND COUNTERTERRORISM

MARCH 2019

Saudi Arabia is one of the leading nations combating terrorism and terrorist financing, and has been working closely with its allies on all fronts. Saudi Arabia is hunting down the men, cutting off the money and destroying the mindset that ISIS and other terror organizations create and rely on.

SAUDI ARABIA AS A TERROR TARGET

Saudi Arabia is the main target of Daesh (ISIS) and other terror groups because it is the birthplace of Islam and home to the Two Holy Mosques. Saudi Arabia continues to expand and intensify its counterterrorism initiatives, as terrorism remains a major threat to the safety and security of our citizenry and the global community.

- Saudi Arabia has faced more than 60 terrorist attacks by Daesh and Al-Qaeda, more than 25 of them since 2015. More than 200 citizens and policemen have been killed in terrorist attacks.
- There has been a significant increase in the rhetoric against the Saudi government by Daesh activists in social media networks.

THE MEN: COMBATING TERRORISM

Over the past decade, the Saudi government has fundamentally restructured its operations to address national security threats and prevent terrorist attacks. This includes finding and eliminating terrorists within the Kingdom.

- Saudi Arabia is a member of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS, taking military action in support of coalition airstrikes in Syria. As of March 2017, Saudi Arabia has flown 341 sorties against ISIS in Syria, the second largest number after the United States. In December 2018, Saudi Arabia announced the contribution of \$100 million for Coalition-supported stabilization efforts in liberated areas of Syria.



- In December 2015, Saudi Arabia announced the formation of a multi-nation Islamic Military Counterterrorism Coalition to combat terrorism, with a joint operations center based in Riyadh. The Alliance currently consists of 41 member nations, and its inaugural meeting was held in Riyadh in November 2017.
- In order to streamline and enhance counterterrorism efforts, King Salman created the Presidency of State Security in July 2017. The newly-restructured agency combined counterterrorism and intelligence operations under one entity and disconnected the body from the Ministry of Interior. The activities of the Presidency are under the direct supervision of King Salman.
- Saudi security forces have arrested more than 300 foreign nationals in the last two years for involvement in terrorist activities with ISIS, highlighting the Kingdom's commitment to apprehending the men behind terrorist plots.
- In December 2017, Saudi Arabia pledged \$100 million to support the G-5 Sahel force to counter terrorism in West Africa.
- In 2014, Saudi Arabia issued a royal decree on counterterrorism. The decree reinforced that acts of terrorism, including membership in terrorist organizations and participation in hostilities outside the Kingdom, will not be tolerated.
- In 2011, Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with the U.N. to launch the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center. Saudi Arabia has pledged \$110 million to the center to help build its capabilities and effectiveness in helping countries combat terrorism. In addition to its efforts with the UNCCT, Saudi Arabia has held workshops on UN Security Council Resolutions through the Security Council's Counterterrorism Committee. The Kingdom has worked in close coordination with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the UN Monitoring Team on these initiatives.
- Saudi Arabia is fully committed to the implementation of all UN Security Council Resolutions related to combating terrorism, including UNSC Resolutions 1267, 1989, 1988, 1373, 2170 and 2178. The Kingdom is also a signatory to all 16 UN Conventions on combating terrorism and its financing.
- On a regional level, Saudi Arabia ratified the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism in 1998.
- Saudi Arabia is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, an international forum of 29 countries and the European Union working to prevent, combat and prosecute terrorist attacks.



THE MONEY: COMBATING TERROR FINANCING

In order to combat terrorist financing, Saudi Arabia has enacted one of the strictest financial control systems in the world.

- According to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Saudi Arabia has “demonstrated an ability and willingness to pursue terrorist financing, which resulted in over 1700 investigations and convictions since 2013.” Saudi Arabia earned observer status in FATF in 2015.
- Saudi Arabia is currently a member of FATF’s sub-set organization, the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), approved by Saudi Arabia’s Council of Ministers in 2005.
- Saudi Arabia and the United States established and co-chair the Terrorist Financial Targeting Center (TFTC) in May 2017 as a new collaborative effort to stem the flow of terrorist financing. Since its establishment, the TFTC has undergone designations for a number of terrorists from a variety of groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Hezbollah and the Taliban.
- Saudi Arabia, the United States and Italy are co-chairs of the Counter ISIS Finance Group, a broader coalition established in 2015 focused on disrupting ISIS financing.
- Saudi Arabia has established a financial intelligence unit (FIU), which is a member of the Egmont Group. The FIU has signed 31 Memorandums of Understanding with its counterparts on the exchange of information in this field. In addition to participation in the Egmont Group’s activities, it has contributed \$1 million to the organization.

The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) requires all financial institutions within the Kingdom’s jurisdiction to implement all of the recent recommendations for combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism issued by the FATF.

- Saudi charities cannot operate abroad except through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre or the Saudi Red Crescent, which is under strict supervision from the government.



- The collection of cash contributions in mosques and public places is prohibited.
- Saudi authorities have closed down unlicensed money-exchange or money-transfer centers.
- In order to engage Saudi citizens in combating money laundering, the Council of Ministers ordered that financial awards be offered to individuals who report cases of money laundering and terror financing operations.
- Saudi Arabia has placed sanctions on entities that assist in terror financing, including joint designations with the U.S. against the Al-Haramain Foundation, Al-Furqan, and others. In October 2016, Saudi Arabia imposed sanctions on two individuals and a business for connections with Hezbollah.
- As part of the Kingdom's commitment to strengthening its counter financing capabilities, Saudi Arabia's Public Prosecution issued a manual in 2017 addressing guidelines preventing money laundering, including procedures and steps that must be taken if money laundering is uncovered.
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a participant in a number of multilateral and global organizations that address counter terror financing. These organizations include: The Group of 20 (G20), Financial Stability Board (FSB), International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) and the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS). In all these groups, Saudi Arabia supports all initiatives and efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

THE MINDSET

Saudi Arabia is carrying out a multifaceted campaign that attacks extremism at its ideological roots as a critical component of its strategy to defeat terrorism.

- In May 2017, Saudi Arabia inaugurated the Global Central for Countering Extremist Ideology (Etidal), a hub of counterterrorism efforts focusing on promoting a media and online culture of moderation and preventing the spread of propaganda. The Center is headquartered in Riyadh, and has developed innovative techniques that can monitor, process and analyze extremists' speeches with high accuracy.



- The Ministry of Education has revised its school textbooks to ensure that they do not include intolerant language, and regularly audits these textbooks and curricula to ensure that teachers do not espouse intolerance or extremism.
- Imams who preach intolerance or hate toward others are dismissed, punished, or retrained.
- The National Dialogue Forum of the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND) was instituted in June 2003 to debate reform and suggest remedies following the Al- Qaeda terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Each of these meetings takes place in a different city in the Kingdom. The Center's objective "is to combat extremism and foster a pure atmosphere that give[s] rise to wise positions and illuminating ideas that reject terrorism and terrorist thought."

QUOTES BY SAUDI OFFICIALS AND SENIOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is determined, God willing, to strike with an iron fist those who target the minds and attitudes of our youth."

King Salman bin Abdulaziz
Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques
July 5, 2016

"We will not allow [terrorists] to distort our peaceful religion. Today we are sending a strong message that we are working together to fight terrorism. ... Today we affirm that we will pursue terrorism until it is eradicated completely."

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman
November 27, 2017

"The greatest and most appalling of all sins is for anyone to deliberately and premeditatedly shed the blood of innocent people... wreak chaos and havoc and undermine security and stability in order to achieve the evil goals of criminal gangs and sectarian terrorist organizations."

Sheikh Khalid Ali Al-Ghamedi
Imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah
July 8, 2016



“Islam magnifies the sanctity of human blood and criminalizes terrorism that kills and terrorizes innocent people in their homes, markets and facilities teeming with men, women and children, and that all humanity rejects and condemns it.”

General Secretariat of the Council of Senior Scholars
July 15, 2016

“Terrorism has no religion, it has no nationality, it has no ethnicity, it has no humanity. It is incumbent upon all of us to do everything in our power to defeat it.”

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir
July 15, 2016

“I believe that no two countries are working as closely in fighting terrorism, and in particular ISIS, as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States. This has been the case for a number of years. We are intensifying our efforts.”

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir
March 23, 2017

QUOTES BY CURRENT AND FORMER U.S. OFFICIALS

“The creation of this new Terrorist Financing Targeting Center is a major step forward in our ability to disrupt the finances and operations of terrorist organizations. For the first time, we are establishing a multinational center to focus our efforts and disrupt the financial and support networks that enable terrorists. The TFTC will be a catalyst for additional multilateral actions against terrorist financiers, and a place where member countries come together to fight against these common threats.”

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin
October 25, 2017

“The Saudi government took a zero-tolerance stance on ISIL, condemning its activities and participating in coalition military action to defeat the group in Syria and Iraq. Its external military action against ISIL in Syria as a part of the U.S.-led coalition was complemented by an aggressive campaign by both official clerics and King Salman to discredit the group and condemn its activities as acts of terrorism.”

U.S. Department of State
Country Reports on Terrorism 2015
June 2, 2016



“...there's no country that wants to defeat the Islamic State or al Qaeda more than the country [Saudi Arabia] whose current crown prince was nearly blown up by an al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula terrorist with a bomb inside him that was built by Ibrahim al-Asiri, the most dangerous man in the world, still at large in Yemen.”

Retired Gen. David Petraeus
June 20, 2016

“...Saudi Arabia remains one of our most important allies in that region. We have robust cooperation with Saudi on counterterrorism, regional challenges, economics, energy. Our cooperation in those and in other areas will not change.”

Elizabeth Trudeau
Director, Press Office, U.S. Department of State
July 15, 2016

“Al-Qaeda’s financial strain is also the result of critical bilateral cooperation. Our partner Saudi Arabia has made great progress in stamping out al-Qaeda funding sources within its borders.”

David S. Cohen
Former U.S. Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence
March 4, 2014

“Saudi Arabia is by all measures one of the countries most central to our global counterterrorism efforts. I would characterize the quality of this relationship as one of active partnership aimed at achieving progress on several issues. The success of global anti-money laundering and counterterrorist financing (AML/CFT) efforts relies, in good measure, on ensuring that this partnership is real, focused and lasting.”

Daniel L. Glaser
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Terror Financing and Financial Crimes
November 2005