

GEORGIA

Overview: Georgia, a longstanding member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, continued its strong engagement with the United States across a range of counterterrorism-related issues. It participated in numerous bilateral exercises and remained a solid U.S. security partner. In May, U.S. and Georgian leadership signed the Agreement of the United States of America and the Government of Georgia Concerning Security Measures for the Protection of Classified Information, establishing a legal foundation for bilateral intelligence sharing that will strengthen counterterrorism cooperation and enhance the Georgian military's interoperability with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Georgia continued to enhance its counterterrorism legislation in 2017. Georgia introduced legislation with a view to reform and increase management oversight of covert investigative operations and the use of electronic surveillance. The parliament adopted other amendments in 2017, including granting authority to law-enforcement bodies to request electronic communications directly from the agency conducting the surveillance and strengthening security protections for individuals involved in criminal cases. The government also implemented a new law on international protection. The law was designed to allow the government to refuse refugee, asylum, or other international protection to persons reasonably considered involved in acts of terrorism and/or have connections to terrorist organizations or groups the government deemed "extremist."

Overall, the Georgian government is generally capable of detecting, deterring, and responding to terrorist incidents. The State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG) has the lead in handling terrorism-related incidents and is generally well equipped and well trained. In 2017, Georgia's law enforcement bodies signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Improving the Efficiency of Interagency Cooperation in the Law Enforcement Sphere, which provides for the creation of an Operational Headquarters on Management of Extreme Situations, in the event of a terrorist act.

Georgia improved infrastructure in five land border sectors (four along the Azerbaijani border and one along the Turkish), and added four along the Turkish border. Georgia also established the Risk and Threat Assessment Unit, which operates in line with the European Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model, and signed the Tactical Memorandum with the NATO Maritime Command, promoting cooperation and information sharing between NATO and Georgia's Joint Maritime Operations Center. This makes Georgia a non-operational partner of the NATO-led Operation Sea Guardian, one of NATO's activities to counter terrorism. The government passed additional safety measures in the aviation sector as the State Program on Safeguarding Civil Aviation Security Against Acts of Unlawful Interference legislation was adopted, in conformity with the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, and standards and recommended practices established by International Civil Aviation Organization. Finally, the government approved and implemented the Joint Action Plan on the Management of Crisis – Extreme Situations in the Field of Civil Aviation.

On November 21-22, the SSSG's counterterrorism unit led an operation in a residential building in Tbilisi, intending to detain four suspected terrorists who opened fire on the Special Forces. One member of the terrorist group was detained, two were killed, and a fourth suspect detonated an explosive, killing himself. The Georgian government later identified one of the dead as international terrorist Akhmet Chataev. One Georgian officer was killed and four others were wounded. On December 26, following judicial authorization, the SSSG counterterrorism department launched an early-morning counterterrorism raid in Pankisi Gorge. Authorities detained four individuals based on their alleged connection to Chataev. One man was critically wounded in the raid and later died. As of late December 2017, investigations into both raids were ongoing.

In July, Georgia launched an investigation and subsequent criminal proceedings against a Georgian citizen who was allegedly fighting with ISIS.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Georgia is a member of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism, a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body. Georgia's financial intelligence unit, the Financial Monitoring Service of Georgia, is a member of the Egmont Group. Georgia's anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism legal framework remains largely in compliance with international standards, in particular with updated FATF recommendations.

In late 2017, the Government of Georgia adopted the *Rules of Providing Information and Filling the Illegal Income Legalization and Terrorism Financing Risk Supervisory Reports by the Commercial Banks*, with the intent to improve reporting forms.

Based on reports provided by Georgia's Financial Monitoring Service, the SSSG launched an investigation into a potential terrorism financing case involving a foreign citizen attempting to open an account in a local private bank who was suspected of having links with an entity operating in Syria. The investigation was ongoing at the end of 2017. Three terrorism-financing cases from 2016 remained ongoing in 2017.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2018 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*.

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): In 2017, the Georgian government continued its CVE efforts in vulnerable populations by focusing on initiatives in equality and integration, education, civic and political participation, media and access to information, gender equality, and preserving minority culture and identity.

The Georgian government launched a three-month internship pilot program for ethnic minority students that included over 65 students interning in 20 state agencies and local self-government bodies. Another project initiated in 2017 was the "Young European Ambassadors" program, aimed at providing various minority target groups with information on Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations in their native languages. The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection organized multiple cultural events in both the Pankisi Gorge and Akhaltsikhe, promoting cultural diversity through various fora. The Ministry of Internal Affairs launched a pilot program focusing on community policing in one district in Tbilisi with the hope of identifying gaps and implementing the program on a broader scale.

International and Regional Cooperation: Georgia is actively engaged on counterterrorism issues at the international, regional, and bilateral levels. Georgia also cooperates closely with NATO; participates in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, including its Foreign Terrorist Fighters working group; the Council of Europe Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, and the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. In December, Georgia co-sponsored UN Security Council resolution 2396 on returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters.

In 2017, Georgia signed the Operational Strategic Cooperation Agreement with Europol, an agreement with Germany on the Exchange and Mutual Protection of Classified Information, and an agreement with the European Union on Security Procedures for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information. Separately, Georgia signed bilateral treaties focused on further law enforcement cooperation with Greece and Sweden. Georgia has similar cooperation agreements in place with 28 countries. In 2017, more than 150 representatives from the SSSG and other relevant law-enforcement agencies participated in more than 30 counterterrorism-related trainings, seminars,

conferences, and capacity-building exercises organized with the support of their international partners.