

SENEGAL : 2019 Country Reports on Terrorism

Overview: Although there were no reported terrorist attacks in Senegal in 2018, the Government of Senegal considers itself a likely potential target given ongoing terrorist activities in West Africa. In light of these concerns, Senegal worked closely with U.S. military and law enforcement officials to strengthen its counterterrorism capabilities.

The risk of terrorist activity in Senegal arises from external and internal factors. Externally, the prevalence of multiple active terrorist groups in neighboring Mali risks spilling across the border into Senegal and threatening stability. Senegal has combated this threat by contributing troops to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which may make Senegal or its interests targets for Mali-based terrorist groups. Internally, the promotion of extremist ideologies by a small number of religious leaders constituted the chief concern; however, these ideologies remain outside the Islamic norms that predominate in Senegal.

2018 Terrorist Incidents: There were no reported terrorist incidents in Senegal in 2018.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: There were no significant changes to Senegal's counterterrorism legal framework in 2018, but the Senegalese government did seek to formalize guidelines for the treatment of terrorism cases. Senegal continued to enhance the capabilities of its Inter-Ministerial Framework for Intervention and Coordination of Counterterrorism Operations (CICO). CICO, formed in 2016, is designed to coordinate the government's response to terrorism.

In 2018, the Superior Court of Dakar adjudicated and published comprehensive decisions on four terrorism cases, including the 29-defendant trial involving popular religious leader Alioune Ndao. Evidence suggested that all four cases resulted from exploitation of intelligence and involved relatively sophisticated investigative techniques and considerable domestic and regional cooperation. The cases demonstrate that Senegal takes seriously its small terrorism docket. The near 50 percent acquittal rate also provides a roadmap for U.S. engagement with law enforcement and justice sectors in 2019.

Senegal's gendarmerie and national police have specialized units to detect, deter, and prevent acts of terrorism. Challenges remain to effective interagency cooperation and information sharing between the various governmental bodies that have counterterrorism functions in the country. Development of the CICO is leading to improvements in these areas.

With funding from the United States, the Government of Senegal inaugurated a new regional counterterrorism training facility in the city of Thiès, the first of its kind in West Africa. The facility provides a base for U.S. government-sponsored counterterrorism training, which is developing Senegal's own training capacity and increasing its ability to project security throughout the region.

Senegal is working to improve its law enforcement capacity by participating in multilateral efforts, such as the GCTF's Border Security Initiative, AU programs, and the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS). Additionally, Senegal continued to work with the International Organization for Migration to promote cooperation and coordination between border agencies. Senegal also received support from the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program, which provided courses and consultations directly focused on soft target identification and protection, as well as the aforementioned counterterrorism center.

Senegalese officials identified a continued lack of border resources and regional cooperation as security vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities were exacerbated by the absence of systems to verify travel document security, the effective use of terrorist screening watchlists, and the capabilities of biographic and biometric screening collection beyond that deployed at major ports of entry. The country's border areas have far fewer resources to detect and deter terrorists in comparison with facilities at the new Blaise Diagne International Airport near Dakar.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Senegal is a member of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), a FATF-style regional body. Senegal's FIU, the National Financial Intelligence Processing Unit (CENTIF), is a member of the Egmont Group. In February 2018, the National Assembly passed a new AML/CFT law to bring Senegal into conformity with other member countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union and to address identified flaws. The new law increases the independence of CENTIF, heightens scrutiny of bulk cash transactions and virtual banks, and expands terrorist finance investigations to include preparatory acts such as attempt and conspiracy. The president has not yet signed a decree implementing the new law.

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

Countering Violent Extremism: There were no changes in 2018.

International and Regional Cooperation: Senegal is a member of the AU, ECOWAS, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and TSCTP. Although not a member of the GCTF, Senegal participated in regional workshops and activities held by the GCTF West Africa Region Capacity Building Working Group. The French and the EU provided financial support and training to reinforce Senegal's counterterrorism and border security capabilities. In November, the Government of Senegal hosted the Fifth Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, which continued a strong focus on terrorism as part of the event's agenda.