



SAUDI ARABIA

and

COUNTERTERRORISM

FACT SHEET: FIGHTING AND DEFEATING DAESH

MAY 2017

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.

Terror Target

- Saudi Arabia has faced more than 60 terrorist attacks by Daesh and Al-Qaeda, more than 25 of them just in the last two years. More than 200 citizens and policemen have been killed in terrorist attacks.
- Daesh perceives the Saudi government as an “un-Islamic” enemy that is too closely connected to the West.
- There has been a significant increase in the rhetoric against the Saudi government by Daesh activists in social media networks.

Fighting Back

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 Daesh and other terror organizations create and rely on.



The Men: Combating Terrorism

- 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 Daesh in Syria, the second largest number after the United States.
- In December 2015, Saudi Arabia announced the formation of a multi-nation Islamic Military Alliance to combat terrorism, with a joint operations center based in Riyadh. The Alliance currently consists of 41 member nations.
- Saudi security forces have arrested more than 300 foreign nationals in the last two years for involvement in terrorist activities with Daesh.
- 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.

The Money: Combating Terror Financing

- Saudi Arabia, the United States and Italy are co-chairs of the Counter ISIL Finance Group, a broader coalition established in 2015 focused on disrupting ISIL's financing.
- Saudi Arabia earned observer status in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in 2015 and is aiming for full membership in 2018.
- Saudi Arabia has established a financial intelligence unit (FIU), which is a member of the Egmont Group.
- 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 are prohibited from transferring money abroad.
- Saudi charities cannot operate abroad except through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre or the Saudi Red Crescent, which is a semi-government entity.
- The collection of cash contributions in mosques and public places is prohibited.
- Saudi authorities have closed down unlicensed money-exchange or money-transfer centers.
- 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.



The Mindset: Overcoming Extremism

- Saudi Arabia's actions against Daesh include an aggressive public education/ideological campaign by official clerics in the Kingdom to discredit the group and condemn their activities as acts of terrorism.
- Saudi Arabia monitors its mosques to prevent political and religious incitement. Preachers espousing radical ideologies are removed from their posts and sent through re-education programs.
- Saudi officials and religious scholars have publicly and unequivocally condemned terrorist acts.
- The Senior Council of Ulema (religious scholars) has issued a fatwa (religious edict) prohibiting terrorism and terrorist financing, and declaring any support for terrorism a violation of Islamic law.
- Saudi Arabia works with affected individuals through de-radicalization programs and campaigns to promote tolerance.

Recent Quotes by Saudi Officials and Senior Religious Scholars

"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

"The most powerful weapon being used by the enemies of our nation is to stoke division and have the youth break away from the group and consensus."

Sheikh Hussain Al-AsShaikh
Imam of the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah
July 8, 2016



"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."

Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir
July 15, 2016

"The Kingdom has been keen to combat terrorism based on its conviction that terrorism has no identity and no religion, and from its belief that the terrorists are committing these acts stemming from their deviant ideologies and evil thought. All negative religious, political and social ideologies that use religion as a tool, throughout human history, do not reflect the absolute truth about religion."

Crown Prince Mohammad bin Naif
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior
February 10, 2017



"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."

Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir
March 23, 2017

Recent Quotes by Current and Former U.S. Officials

"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

"Saudi Arabia is one of our closest partners on counterterrorism. I have worked very closely, especially [with] Crown Prince Mohammad bin Naif, over the last 15 years. And they are truly a good example of how foreign intelligence services can work against these terrorist organizations. And Saudi Arabia faces a very serious threat from counterterrorism."

Director John Brennan
Former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
September 11, 2016