



**THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS
TO COMBAT TERRORISM**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Initiatives and Actions to Combat Terrorism

International terrorism threatens the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its allies and the global community. Defeating the terrorist enemy requires sound policies, concerted government efforts and international cooperation. The primary mission of the Saudi government is to forge partnerships with multilateral organizations and foreign governments to advance counterterrorism objectives and protect the national security of the Kingdom.

In September 2011, Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with the United Nations to create the United Nations Centre for Counter Terrorism (UNCCCT) and donated \$10 million to its establishment. In 2014, King Abdullah provided the Centre with a donation of \$100 million to enhance its capabilities and effectiveness in helping countries combat terrorism.

The initiative for this center was conceived in 2005, when the late King Abdullah held the “Counter-Terrorism International Conference” in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. More recently, in 2013, Saudi Arabia hosted a two-day international conference in cooperation with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center (UNCCCT). The conference, held under the patronage of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal, included the presence and participation of the U.N. and delegates from nearly 50 countries around the world.

In 2014, King Abdullah 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 September 2014, the Royal Saudi Air Force participated in military operations over Syria to confront terrorism emanating from Daash (ISIS) and to support the moderate Syrian opposition as part of an international coalition to defeat terrorism.

In March 2015, Saudi Arabia, as part of a coalition, launched military operations in support of the people of Yemen and the legitimate government of Yemen.

Saudi Arabia continues to develop innovative and effective strategies to go after the men, money and mindset that support terrorism and extremism.

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The Men: Counterterrorism Training & Technology

During the last decade, the Saudi government, the Ministry of Interior and relevant agencies have fundamentally restructured operations and coordination to better address national security threats and to prevent terrorist attacks. Much of this activity has been aimed at dismantling the physical presence of Al-Qaeda and the ability of militants to operate from or within the Kingdom.

To do so effectively, Saudi security forces maintain rigorous security standards and undertake continuous training on the latest best practices for combating terrorist threats. Security professionals regularly participate in joint programs throughout the world, including in Europe and the United States.

Saudi security agents also work with their international counterparts to conduct missions and exchange information. Saudi Arabia and the United States have established two joint task forces—one that pursues leads to terrorist activities and another that tracks terror financing.

These efforts to enhance the sophistication of Saudi Arabia's human resources have been complemented by the deployment of new technologies that assist in safeguarding the Kingdom.

In addition to adopting enhanced tactics to patrol the county's desolate borderlands, the Saudi government has also implemented soft-counterterrorism measures designed to confront threats in the Kingdom's dense urban areas. Neighborhood police units engage and work directly with community members, encouraging citizens to provide tips and leads about suspicious activity. This approach has led to arrests of most-wanted terrorists and to the discovery of safe houses where terrorists were meeting, plotting and staging attacks.

Throughout the last decade, these activities—training, education, the inclusion of technology and community outreach—have allowed Saudi security forces to foil many terrorist plots within the Kingdom and to dismantle Al-Qaeda's operations. They have also created an unwelcome environment to terrorists and extremists.

Despite their effectiveness, these activities have not come without sacrifice. In combating terrorist-related events, many Saudi security officers have died and hundreds have been wounded carrying out their duties. Casualty rates have decreased in recent years, as a result of improved training, experience and preventative activities—including increased efforts to combat the financing of terrorism and to eradicate the influence of extremist ideologies.

In addition to training courses for combating terrorists, Saudi Arabia has led numerous international counterterrorism conferences on subjects ranging from combating extremists ideology to combating terror financing. In 2010, Saudi Arabia hosted a three-day counterterrorism workshop titled the "International Legal Framework for Combating Terrorism and its Financing Workshop." The conference was attended by more than 76 national, regional and international experts on terrorism. Also in 2010, the Islamic University of Madinah in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior organized "The Conference of Terrorism Between Intellectual Extremism and Extremist Ideology." International conferences such as these give nations and international organizations an opportunity to

meet and discuss best practices for combating terrorism. These conferences are critical to ending the threat of terrorism on global community.

The Money: Combating Terror Financing

By 2003, the Saudi government had put in place the majority of its new financial controls and banking regulations aimed at stopping those who financially support terrorism and extremism within Saudi borders and beyond. The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) had issued instructions to all Saudi financial institutions to implement the 40 recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the G-8 countries regarding money laundering and the recommendations regarding terror financing. In 2003, the Saudi Arabian Financial Crimes Unit was also established, and in September 2005 it transitioned to become the Kingdom's official Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), specially tasked with handling money laundering and terror finance cases. Saudi Arabia was admitted into the Egmont Group in 2009. In 2010, FATF's report on efforts to combat money laundering and terror financing ranked Saudi Arabia first in the Arab world and among the top ten within the Group of 20 (G-20) countries.

To ensure the success of these controls and regulations, the Saudi government created special training programs for bankers, prosecutors, judges, customs officers and other officials from government departments and agencies. Programs are offered by the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences (formerly the Naif Arab Academy for Security Sciences) and the King Fahd Security Faculty, Public Security Training City. The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) also offers programs, and has implemented a technical program to train judges and investigators on legal matters involving terrorism financing and money laundering methods, international requirements for financial secrecy, and methods exercised by criminals to exchange information.

A central aspect of regulating financial controls has been ensuring oversight of charitable giving – a key tenet of the Islamic faith. There are thousands of Islamic charities in the Kingdom. To bring order to these organizations, the Saudi government instituted direct oversight of charitable organizations, and through SAMA instructed all banks and financial institutions in the Kingdom to stop all financial transfers by Saudi charities to any accounts outside the Kingdom. The government consolidated oversight in 2004, through the issuance of a Royal order approving the creation of the Saudi National Commission for Relief and Charity Work Abroad with the responsibility for regulating all charitable activities abroad.

Saudi Arabia took additional steps to seek out and stop ongoing illicit activities. The Saudi government and the United States jointly designated several organizations as financiers of terrorism under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1267, including: the Bosnia-based Vazir and the Liechtenstein-based Hochburg AG; four branch offices of the Al-Haramain Foundation (Kenya, Tanzania, Pakistan and Indonesia); and, five additional branch offices of Al-Haramain—an organization which is now dissolved.

The Kingdom coordinates such efforts with multiple international partners, including Great Britain, which, together with Saudi Arabia, jointly froze the assets of Saad Al-Faqih's London-based Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA) for allegedly providing

support to Al-Qaeda. Al-Faqih is named on the UN Security Council Resolution 1267 list of individuals tied to Al-Qaeda.

Since terrorists and terror financiers do not operate solely within the borders of any particular nation, Saudi Arabia holds international cooperation as a central component to the success of its counterterrorism efforts. Saudi officials, security and counterterrorism experts work with their counterparts at every level of governments throughout the world to ensure programmatic effectiveness and to maintain cooperation.

Specifically, to help further patrol the areas of charity, banking and money laundering, agents from the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) work with Saudi financial experts to track leads and share intelligence. In February 2008, Saudi Arabia and France signed a new civil service agreement to enhance bilateral cooperation in the areas of counterterrorism, anti-narcotics and to combat money laundering.

In 2012, a symposium patronized by the Saudi Minister of Interior was held in Riyadh on “The Role and Responsibility of Public Prosecution and Judiciary Bodies in Anti-Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism.” The symposium was organized by the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution (BIP) in collaboration with the Middle East & North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF). Its participants included delegations from many countries, as well as a number of representatives of international financial institutions.

Since the formulation of these controls and the implementation of the training programs, the Saudi government has prosecuted numerous individuals suspected of financing terrorism, and has frozen bank accounts, filed charges against and convicted individuals.

The Mindset: Overcoming Extremism

As a part of Saudi Arabia’s long-term counterterrorism strategy, and to complement efforts to track and halt the activities of terrorists and terror financiers, the Kingdom pursues “soft” counterterrorism policies. These include everything from direct outreach to Saudi society at large to terrorist reeducation efforts. This approach constitutes a “war of ideas,” which aims to instill the concepts of moderation and tolerance, and to undermine any justifications for extremism and terrorism on an intellectual level. In doing so, Saudi Arabia is protecting vulnerable groups, such as youth, and any potentially disenfranchised elements of society.

Broadly, the Kingdom has undertaken several initiatives to counter the extremist mentality and to promote moderation and tolerance among its citizenry.

- Public Awareness Campaign: Initiated a public awareness campaign to reinforce the true values of the Islamic faith and to educate Saudi citizens about the dangers of extremism and terrorism. The campaign included advertisements on television, radio and billboards, as well as programs on television, in schools and mosques, and at sporting events. The centerpiece of the campaign was a series of public service

announcements that aired up to 25 times a day on a number of Arabic satellite networks, including Al-Arabiya, MBC and Future Television, as well as on Saudi TV channels. Six government ministries coordinated the development and execution of the programs.

- Public & Religious Education: Conducting an ongoing program to modernize textbooks and curricula, to introduce enhanced teaching methods and provide better training for educators. Efforts such as these combat extremism and prepare Saudi citizens for life in a global economy. These developments also extend to Saudi religious schools. Imams have been prohibited from incitement and talk of intolerance, and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs is conducting a program to educate imams and monitor mosques and religious education to purge extremism and intolerance.
- Global Interfaith Dialogue Initiative: Launched an international effort to promote interfaith dialogue. In early 2008, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz launched the interfaith dialogue as a way to underscore the commonalities among the world's religions. To initiate this endeavor, King Abdullah convened a meeting on June 4, 2008 of more than 500 Muslim scholars from around the world. The conference highlighted the importance of dialogue and emphasized the need for the faiths and cultures of the world to combat extremism and intolerance. This was followed by the World Conference on Dialogue in Spain on July 16, 2008. The conference, hosted by King Abdullah and King Juan Carlos I of Spain, brought together 300 delegates from around the world representing Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism and Shintoism. The culmination of this dialogue initiative was a special session of the UN General Assembly on November 12, 2008, attended by more than 25 world leaders. The fourth international interfaith conference was organized by the Muslim World League and held on September 30- October 1, 2009. The conference was held under the patronage of Swiss President Hans-Rudolf Merz.

On a more advanced, focused level, Saudi Arabia has also been conducting two different, yet complementary programs: “Counter-Radicalization” and “Rehabilitation.” Whereas the broader public programs are preventative in nature, each of these programs go directly to the active source of extremism propagation and serve to neutralize it.

In creating these programs, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior drew on the expertise of a group of international social scientists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other physicians and experts to create strategies tailored to radicalism. In addition, the Ministry has been working in conjunction with King Fahd Security College and Naif Arab University for Security Sciences to develop and refine the training activities for public security professionals.

- Counter-Radicalization Program: The purpose of the program is to combat the spread and appeal of extremist ideologies among the general populous. It strives to instill the true values of the Islamic faith, such as tolerance and moderation. Central to this effort is education about the dangers of radical Islam—consisting of school and religious programs and popular pronouncements, and the provision of positive,

alternative outlets for at-risk groups—such as encouraging participation in sporting events and athletic programs, social outings, etc.

- **Rehabilitation Program:** The rehabilitation program is intended to reintegrate deviants/extremists back into society, change their behavior (disengage them) and change their beliefs (de-radicalize them). It is designed to target deviants who have completed their prison sentences. The program reeducates violent extremists and extremist sympathizers through intensive religious debates and psychological counseling. The goal is for them to renounce ideologies that espouse terrorism. Any individual who has committed or participated in a violent crime, constituting murder, will not be released following completion of the course.

Saudi Arabia’s rehabilitation program for detainees is the longest continually functioning rehabilitation program in the world, and several countries are establishing similar programs based on the Kingdom’s model, including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States military through “Task Force 134” in Iraq.

While the program has obtained positive results, the Saudi government views terrorism as a serious, ongoing threat and the Kingdom continues to refine its programs and enlist more detainees in hopes of disengaging and de-radicalizing them.

Conclusion

Although successful in the design and implementation of its counterterrorism programs during the last decade, Saudi Arabia continues to enhance its initiatives, as terrorism remains a threat to the safety and security of its citizenry and those of the global community.

Saudi Arabia continues to seek ways to improve its ability to identify, penetrate and dismantle terrorist plots through structural reforms, the development of new intelligence and law enforcement tools, and an approach that values information sharing, communication and prevention. Greater international cooperation and coordination will only serve to further mitigate extremist incitement and terrorist activities throughout the world.



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