

Qatar

Overview: The United States and Qatar continued to increase CT cooperation in 2019, building on progress made after the U.S. Secretary of State and Qatari Foreign Minister signed a CT MOU in July 2017. At the U.S.-Qatar Counterterrorism Dialogue in November 2019, the two governments declared their fulfillment of the MOU largely complete and committed to set shared priorities for 2020. Qatar is an active participant in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, is active in all Defeat-ISIS Coalition working groups, and facilitated U.S. military operations in the region. Qatar hosts roughly 10,000 U.S. service members on two military installations critical to Coalition efforts.

2019 Terrorist Incidents: There were no terrorist attacks reported in Qatar in 2019.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: In 2019, the Qatari government drafted new AML/CFT legislation, which was finalized and passed into law on September 11, 2019. As of late 2019, Qatari authorities were in the process of finalizing AML/CFT bylaws, as well as a new CT law that will include language on targeted financial sanctions.

Qatar maintains an interagency National Anti-Terrorism Committee (NATC) composed of representatives from more than 10 government agencies. The NATC is tasked with formulating Qatar's CT policy, ensuring interagency coordination, fulfilling Qatar's obligations to counter terrorism under international conventions, and participating in multilateral conferences on terrorism. U.S. officials met regularly with the chairman of the NATC to discuss implementation of the CT MOU and overall CT cooperation. The Qatar State Security Bureau (SSB) maintained an aggressive posture toward monitoring internal terrorism-related activities. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Internal Security Force (ISF) remained well positioned to respond to incidents with rapid reaction forces that routinely engage in structured CT training and exercises, including with U.S. agencies. Qatar's Office of Public Prosecution was active in developing its new units devoted to prosecuting terrorism and CFT cases.

As a result of the CT MOU signed in 2017, the United States and Qatar continued to partner on terrorist screening and aviation security. In 2019, MOI authorities continued to cooperate with officials from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection and Transportation Security Agency to enhance screening capabilities of the estimated 30 million travelers who pass through Hamad International Airport each year.

U.S. technical assistance to Qatari law enforcement and judicial agencies increased during 2019. The U.S. Departments of Justice, State, and the Treasury, as well as the FBI, led or participated in several capacity-building initiatives involving the MOI, the ISF, the SSB, the Public Prosecution, the Central Bank, and other Qatari agencies. A DOJ resident legal advisor has been stationed in Qatar since April 2018, providing technical assistance to Qatar's CT efforts and building prosecutorial capacity. In November 2018, Qatar began using its own funds to pay for a three-year U.S. Department of State Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) training program, including training pertinent to Qatar's preparations to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022; the primary recipients are MOI and ISF officers.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Qatar is a member of MENAFATF. Its FIU, known as the Qatar Financial Information Unit, is a member of the Egmont Group. Qatar is also a member of the Defeat-ISIS Coalition's CIFG and the TFTC.

In collaboration with other TFTC member states, Qatar in 2019 imposed one round of sanctions against individuals and entities affiliated with the Iranian regime's terror-support networks in the region.

The Qatari government passed a new AML/CFT law in 2019 and sought feedback from the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. government during the drafting process.

Qatar continued to maintain restrictions, imposed in 2017, on the overseas activities of Qatari charities, requiring all such activity to be conducted through one of two approved charities in an effort to better monitor charitable giving for terrorist financing abuse.

Countering Violent Extremism: The core of Qatar’s CVE strategy remained intensive investment in education and increasing economic opportunities for youth around the globe, largely through Qatar Foundation and related organizations, such as Silatech, Education Above All, and Reach Out to Asia. Qatar cohosted a high-level event promoting the power of sport to prevent and counter terrorist radicalization and recruitment on the margins of UN General Assembly in September 2019. Qatar has made significant strides in addressing state-sourced internal and external support for educational and religious content espousing intolerance, discrimination, sectarianism, and violence, although examples are still found in textbooks and disseminated through satellite television and other media.

Qatar was also a major funder of GCERF and sits on its Governing Board of Directors. The Qatar Fund for Development supported GCERF’s efforts to build awareness among community leaders about the impact of terrorist radicalization and recruitment, share information on how to respond to terrorism, promote peace through community engagement activities, and provide educational initiatives.

Qatar’s Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) also supported English language programming in Ministry of Education schools as a means of countering terrorist influence and messaging. MEHE facilitated extracurricular English reading and writing workshops in primary schools. In November 2019, the Qatar National Library co-hosted an “open mic” event for high schoolers to promote critical thinking, tolerance, and peaceful expression.

International and Regional Cooperation: Qatar is an active CT participant in the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Arab League. Qatar is also a member of the GCTF and a major contributor to GCERF. The country was active in GCC activities, but the Gulf dispute that broke out in June 2017 froze most GCC-wide engagements. Qatar continues to participate, however, in TFTC activities in Riyadh.