

Morocco's Counterterrorism Efforts Against New Regional Threats

- In response to new regional security risks Morocco has ramped up its already robust counterterrorism efforts both at home and abroad. Morocco's multifaceted approach to countering terrorism includes hard security measures, regional cooperation and intelligence sharing, and efforts to counter violence extremism through legislation, development, and the promotion of moderate Islam.
- In late October, Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Salaheddine Mezouar announced that Morocco will provide military, operational, and intelligence support to the United Arab Emirates to assist in its fight against terrorism as part of a bilateral military cooperation agreement between the two countries. The contribution presented by the Kingdom of Morocco will focus on operational military and intelligence aspects.
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/10/29/Morocco-vows-to-help-UAE-fight-terrorism.html>
- In addition to this bilateral effort with the UAE, Morocco is a member of the US's anti-ISIL coalition providing intelligence and operational support. On this issue, as well as other regional and global challenges, Morocco is working closely with the US, the EU, and other regional neighbors through initiatives such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership Initiative.
<http://www.state.gov/s/seci/>
http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/news/awi/newsbriefs/general/2007/02/18/newsbrief-01
 - The country played a leading role at the 5th ministerial meeting of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) held September 23 in New York, where US Secretary of State John Kerry remarked on Morocco's leadership in developing "the first global set of good practices on stopping the flow of foreign terrorist fighters," and at which several new counterterrorism initiatives were announced.
 - At a briefing of the UN Counterterrorism Committee on September 30, Yassine Mansouri, Director General of Morocco's intelligence agency, the DGED; Nasser Bourita, Secretary-General of Morocco's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Ahmed Toufik, Morocco's Minister of Islamic Affairs, presented an overview of Morocco's counterterrorism efforts and the key elements of the "Moroccan experience." The speakers highlighted Morocco's "tripartite approach" that combines hard security measures, equitable and inclusive human development, and religious moderation as key to security, peace, and stability, adding that it must always be coupled with political reforms.
 - Morocco has also taken a strong public stance against terrorism and ISIL. In an August 24 statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Morocco "denounced and condemned, in the strongest terms, the despicable terrorist crimes committed by terrorist groups against innocents of all nationalities, religions and professions, including journalists mainly in Iraq and Syria," adding that "these terrorist acts run counter Islam teachings and are a blatant abuse of universal human values."
- As part of its efforts to promote moderate Islam to combat violent extremism, Morocco has initiated a program to train imams from Mali, Libya, Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, the Maldives, and Nigeria.

- The first step in this program to promote religious moderation was Morocco's agreement to train 500 Imams from Mali, and the first group of 90 has already completed their training.
<http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/education/20131111.AFP1718/maroc-bientot-un-institut-a-fes-pour-former-les-500-imams-maliens-ministere.html>
- In May, King Mohammed VI launched the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines, and Morchidates in Rabat, which will welcome students from Morocco, Africa, and the Middle East to promote religious moderation and tolerance in the region.
<http://www.eurasiareview.com/13052014-morocco-new-institute-imams-murshidines-murshidates-training-promote-spiritual-religious-immutable-values%E2%80%8F-oped/>
- Domestically, Morocco's Parliament is currently considering a bill that seeks to criminalize training with extremists or attempting to reach their camps. The new law will allow the government to charge Moroccans engaged in terrorist activity abroad as well as those doing it inside the country. According to the draft law, those convicted of doing so will face five to 15 years in prison and fines of between \$5,800 and \$58,000.
<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/morocco-expands-laws-jihad-seekers-25616385>
- This law is just one example of the ways Moroccan authorities are working to neutralize security risks posed by ISIL and other terrorist groups. Moroccan security forces have been active in monitoring terrorist recruitment, dismantling terrorist cells, and working with regional partners to stem the flow of foreign fighters.
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/27/world/europe/spain-and-morocco-arrest-9-on-suspicion-of-terrorism.html?_r=1
- The US continues to recognize Morocco's vital role in promoting stability and security in the Sahara and Sahel. In a Joint Statement issued by the United States and Morocco following the historic visit between King Mohammed VI and President Obama in November 2013, the two leaders acknowledged the important US-Morocco partnership on the UN Security Council over the past two years for the advancement of international peace and security, including in Mali, the Sahel, Syria, Libya, and the Middle East. They also reaffirmed their commitment to deepen civilian and military cooperation in the areas of non-proliferation and counter-terrorism and their intent to continue cooperation to bolster democratic criminal justice institutions and counter the threat of violence extremism in the region.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/22/joint-statement-united-states-america-and-kingdom-morocco>

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