

KAZAKHSTAN: AUTHORITIES RECOGNIZE GROWING THREAT OF DOMESTIC TERRORISM

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Over the last couple of months Kazakh authorities introduced series of measures targeting to modify counter-terrorism policy and to prevent the development of religious extremism across the country. Recently security authorities of the republic recognized that the series of attacks over the last years highlighted inability of Kazakh security forces to tackle terrorism and extremism threats.

Such measures included series of amendments to the Counter-Terrorism Law, strengthening of security measures in some areas of the country and supplementary training and information campaigns.

Besides that Kazakh authorities announced their initiative to intensify cooperation with other countries in countering terrorism and extremism and launched a waste media campaign to inform about the terrorism threats and implementation of counter-terrorism measures.

In January Kazakhstan National Security Committee announced the initiative to establish a school in Security Academy to train security personnel to deal with terrorists, which will be a new preventative measure against terrorism. New specialists, trained in this school, should operate mainly as negotiators during hostage taking and others terrorist attacks.

Moreover, Kazakh authorities have stated that they also plan to form counter-terrorism commissions on the regional level to ameliorate application of counter-terrorism measures.

Earlier in December Kazakh governmental authorities introduced a number of amendments to the Counter-terrorism Law. According to these amendments a Counter-terrorism Center and Counter-terrorism Commission would be created in the coming months to prevent propaganda of radical Islamism in the republic.

Also in December the deputy head of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan, Kabdulkarim Abdikazimov, reported that the risk of domestic terrorism in Kazakhstan is mainly linked to the activities of the terrorist group Jund al-Khilafah (Soldiers of Caliphate).

The Committee also introduced a series of measures targeting to reduce the threat presented by this terrorist group.

Jund al-Khilafah was created in 2009 by a group of Kazakh and Afghan nationals inspired by the ideas of terrorists of Northern Caucasus, namely spiritual leader Said Buryatskiy who was killed in March 2010.

To recall, Kazakh authorities have indeed recognized the presence of terrorist networks on its territory for the first time over the last decades following terrorist attacks in the city of Aktubinsk and Atyrau region in 2011. That explains the fact the number of counter-terrorism operations and incident officially considered as “terrorist attacks” rose significantly across Kazakhstan in 2011 and 2012.

Here is the list of incidents that were classified as “terrorist acts” and the cases where investigation is still ongoing and the version of terrorist attack can not be ruled out:

- **September 12, 2012.** 5 alleged terrorists have been killed and one injured during a counter-terrorism operation in Kulsary village, western Atyrau region. Early in the morning police troops raided an apartment where the terrorists were sheltering. The terrorists refused to surrender and offered armed resistance to the police. In the exchange of fire one police officer was also injured.
- **September 5, 2012.** One person was killed when an IED went off in a country house in the town of Atyrau. Investigation revealed that the victim, Nurlybek Sakauov, was fabricating a bomb when it went off prematurely, killing him. Four other suspected terrorists have been arrested later in the town over alleged links to the incident.
- **August 17, 2012.** 12 suspected terrorists were killed and one police officer injured during a dawn raid in a village 25 kilometres outside Almaty. The suspects had been linked to an incident of a house fire provoked by an IED blast in the same district that took place on July 11 killing 8 people.
- **July 31, 2012.** A group of 4 terrorists was killed during a counter-terrorist operation in Almaty. The group of terrorists was blocked in an apartment in the residential area of the city. The terrorists offered armed resistance and were shot dead during a storming.
- **July 11, 2012.** 7 people including 2 children were killed by a powerful explosion that hit a country house in Tausamaly village of Alma-Ata district of Kazakhstan on Wednesday. The fire that was caused by the blast, completely destroyed the building. At the scene, police discovered numerous weapons and ammunition. The blast was allegedly produced by a premature explosion of an Improvised Explosive Device that was prepared by terrorists living in the house. The incident was qualified as “preparation of a terrorist attack”.
- **May 31, 2012.** The burned bodies of 14 border guards and one local citizen were discovered on Thursday night on a border mobile checkpoint in Argkankergen, on the southeastern border with China. According to Kazakh

security sources, the weapons of the guards have been also seized by the assailants.

- **December 29, 2011.** A member of extremist group, Erik Ayazbaev, was killed by the security troops during a storming of his apartment in Kyzylorda.
- **November 8, 2011.** Two police officers shot dead by a group of unknown gunmen in the city of Almaty.
- **November 12, 2011.** 7 people were killed and 3 injured in a series of attacks, perpetrated by a suspected terrorist Maksat Kariev in the city of Taraz. Kariev shot dead two security officers and seized their vehicle, then he attacked a weapon shop where he killed a visitor and two security guards and seized a number of weapons. Then he arrived in the city center where he produced several blasts with a grenade launcher targeting the headquarters of the local Security Committee, causing no casualties. Later Kariev launched an exchange of fire with the police troops and blew himself up by triggering his explosives. Two police officers were killed and three injured by the blast.
- **October 31, 2011.** Two powerful blasts hit Atyrau city. At 8:45 a.m. local time an IED placed in the garbage bin near the building of city administration exploded causing no casualties but seriously damaging the vehicles parked nearby. The blast caused no casualties.
- **August 29, 2011.** 18 suspected terrorists arrested in Atyrau. During the operation another suspected terrorist was killed. The terrorists allegedly raised funds for terrorist networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- **June 29, 2011.** Two police officers were killed in north-western Aktobe city by a group of unknown assailants attacked a police post in the outskirts of Aktobe with AK-47 assault rifles and exploded a powerful IED that completely destroyed police office.
- **July 11, 2011.** 9 suspected terrorists were killed in Shubarshi village of the western Aktobe region. The terrorists were allegedly radical Islamists, wanted for their suspected involvement in attacks carried out recently against police and security troops in the region.
- **July 4, 2011.** Two police officers were killed when a group of armed gunmen attacked a border police patrol in the village of Shubarshi village (Aktobe region).
- **May 24, 2011.** An explosive laden vehicle exploded overnight in front of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan (NSC)'s headquarters in Astana. The blast seriously damaged the building but caused no other casualties than the two passengers of the vehicle due to late hour of the incident (3.30 a.m. local time). According to sources close to the investigation, the duo, identified as Kyrgyz national Dmitry Kelpner and Kazakh national Ivan Cheremukhin, arrived in the capital a few hours earlier. The same sources added that both had earlier been sentenced for petty crimes committed in the country.

- **May 17, 2011.** A suicide bomber blew himself up early in the morning in front of the Committee of National Security building in the city of Aktyoubinsk. The suicide bomber was identified 25-year old mobster Rakhimzhan Makatov. According to the official sources, he blew up himself to avoid a trial for several crimes recently committed in the city. It should be mentioned that so far Kazakh authorities have provided very few information about the terrorists killed in these operations and their affiliation to any terrorist networks.

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According to the report on Terrorism in Kazakhstan, issued on November 27 by the Kazakh Institute of the Political studies, during a counter-terrorism raid in June 2009 in Dagestan, security troops killed 5 terrorists of Kazakh nationality. In 2011, at least 6 Kazakh nationals have been arrested in Russia on charges of terrorism.

In October during a meeting of the security authorities on measures for prevention of terrorism in Astana, police authorities stated that while 10 years ago terrorist organizations in Kazakhstan received financing from abroad, last years they became able to raise substantial funds from criminal activities, drug and weapon trafficking. The same source also revealed that while 10 years ago Kazakhstan was considered more as a “transit zone” for Islamist terrorists from other countries of Central Asia, latest incidents in the republic highlighted the presence of domestic terrorist cells.

It is worth mentioning that an increasing number of Kazakh nationals are involved in terror attacks carried out in 2011 and 2012 in Russia and in other Central Asian countries, highlighting the worrying radicalization of part of the Kazakh population, and the possible infiltration of the country by Jihadi organizations.

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