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The Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) List

Congress has shown recurring interest in the administration of the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs)—one of several terrorism-related lists that the U.S. government maintains for the purpose of imposing financial sanctions, immigration restrictions, or other penalties in pursuit of law enforcement or national security goals. At various times, Members or committees have sought to add suspected terrorist groups to the FTO list, designate drug cartels and transnational criminal groups as FTOs, or revise legislation to allow other entities to be considered as FTOs. Members at times have considered potential costs of adding groups to the list, including for commerce, diplomacy, and humanitarian operations.

Recent Developments. On February 6, 2025, Secretary of State Marco Rubio identified eight entities as FTOs—the culmination of a process set in motion by Executive Order (E.O.) 14157 of January 20, 2025, on “Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists” (see **Table 1**). The designation of these entities as FTOs took effect on February 20, 2025, when the designations were published in the *Federal Register*.

On January 22, 2025, President Trump issued E.O. 14175, “Designation of Ansar Allah as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.” The order does not immediately designate the group, commonly referred to as the Houthis, as an FTO, but signals the Trump Administration’s intention to take such action by March 2025. The first Trump Administration designated the Houthis as an FTO in January 2021—a move the Biden Administration reversed in February 2021.

Legislative Origins

Congress first established the statutory process for designating FTOs in the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA; P.L. 104-132). The AEDPA added a new provision to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), Section 219 on the “Designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations” (8 U.S.C. §1189). By designating an entity as an FTO, the U.S. government seeks to limit the group’s financial, property, and travel interests. Since the law’s enactment in April 1996, Congress has amended Section 219 of the INA three times. The amendments modified the criteria for designation and judicial review of a designation, extended the duration of a designation, and established procedures to review an FTO’s designation and amend a designation.

FTO Designation Criteria

Pursuant to Section 219 of the INA, the Secretary of State is authorized to designate an organization as an FTO if such an entity meets three criteria: the suspected terrorist group must (1) be a foreign organization; (2) engage in “terrorist activity,” “terrorism,” or retain the capability and intent to

engage in terrorist activity or terrorism; and (3) threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national defense, foreign relations, or economic interests of the United States.

Section 219 of the INA relies on the definition of “terrorist activity” in Section 212(a)(3)(B) of the INA (8 U.S.C. §1182(a)(3)(B)) and the definition of “terrorism” in Section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 (FRAA, P.L. 100-204, as amended; 22 U.S.C. §2656f(d)(2)).

The INA and the FRAA definitions place differing emphasis on what might lead to an FTO designation. The INA defines “terrorist activity” by identifying specific types of illegal or violent actions (hijackings, assassinations, etc.). This definition deemphasizes the ideological motivations or goals of the perpetrators of such activities. However, the FRAA approaches the issue from the motivations of the aggressor and the targets of the violent activity. “Terrorism,” as defined in the FRAA, is “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”

Consequences of Designation

As a result of an entity’s designation as an FTO:

- It is unlawful for a person in the United States or subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to knowingly provide “material support or resources” to a designated FTO, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §2239B.
- Representatives and members of a designated FTO, if they are aliens (non-U.S. nationals) are inadmissible to, and in certain circumstances removable (deportable) from, the United States, pursuant to Section 212(a)(3)(B) of the INA (8 U.S.C. §1182(a)(3)(B)).
- The Secretary of the Treasury may require U.S. financial institutions possessing or controlling any assets of a designated FTO to block all transactions involving those assets, pursuant to Section 219(a)(2)(C) of the INA (8 U.S.C. §1189(a)(2)(C); 31 C.F.R. Part 597).

FTO Revocation Process

According to statute, an organization’s status as an FTO may be revoked by an act of Congress or by the Secretary of State. Pursuant to Section 219 of the INA, the Secretary is required to revoke the designation if (1) “the circumstances that were the basis for the designation have changed in such a manner as to warrant a revocation” or (2) “the national security of the United States warrants a revocation.” An FTO may petition the Secretary to review its designation; the Secretary of State is required to review each FTO’s status at least every five years. An FTO also may also seek judicial review regarding its designation.

The FTO List

As of February 2025, the Secretary of State identified 76 entities as current FTOs and 20 entities as having been delisted (see **Table 2**). Since the FTO list's inception, entities have been added to and removed from the FTO list.

Table 1. Entities Currently Designated as FTOs

Date Designated	
10/8/1997	Abu Sayyaf Group HAMAS Harakat ul-Mujahidin* Hizballah Kurdistan Workers Party Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam National Liberation Army (ELN) Palestinian Islamic Jihad Palestine Liberation Front Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine PFLP-General Command Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front Shining Path
10/8/1999	al-Qa'ida
9/25/2000	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
5/16/2001	New Irish Republican Army*
12/26/2001	Jaish-e-Mohammed Lashkar-e Tayyiba*
3/27/2002	Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb* Asbat al-Ansar
8/9/2002	Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army
10/23/2002	Jemaah Islamiya
1/30/2003	Lashkar i Jhangvi
3/22/2004	Ansar al-Islam
7/13/2004	Continuity Irish Republican Army
12/17/2004	ISIS* (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)
6/17/2005	Islamic Jihad Union
3/5/2008	Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami/Bangladesh
3/18/2008	Al Shabaab*
5/18/2009	Revolutionary Struggle
7/2/2009	Kata'ib Hizballah
1/19/2010	al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula*
8/6/2010	Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami
9/1/2010	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan
11/4/2010	Jaysh al-Adl*
5/23/2011	Army of Islam
9/19/2011	Indian Mujahideen
3/13/2012	Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid
5/30/2012	Abdallah Azzam Brigades*
9/19/2012	Haqqani Network
3/22/2013	Ansar al-Dine
11/14/2013	Boko Haram Ansaru
12/19/2013	Al Mulathamun Battalion
1/13/2014	Ansar al-Shari'a in Benghazi Ansar al-Shari'a in Darnah Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia
4/10/2014	ISIS-Sinai Province*
5/15/2014	al-Nusrah Front* (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham)
9/30/2015	Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al Naqshabandi
1/14/2016	Islamic State's Khorasan Province
5/20/2016	ISIS-Libya
7/1/2016	Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent

8/17/2017	Hizbul Mujahideen
2/28/2018	ISIS-Bangladesh ISIS-Philippines ISIS-West Africa
5/23/2018	ISIS in the Greater Sahara
7/11/2018	Al-Ashtar Brigades
9/6/2018	Jama'at Nusrat Al-Islam wal-Muslimin
4/15/2019	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
1/10/2020	Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq
1/14/2021	Harakat Sawa'd Misr
3/11/2021	ISIS-DRC ISIS-Mozambique
12/1/2021	Segunda Marquetalia Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP)
2/20/2025	Cartel del Golfo Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion Cartel de Sinaloa Cartel del Noreste Carteles Unidos La Nueva Familia Michoacana Mara Salvatrucha Tren de Aragua

Note: Entity names as listed at <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>. For a full list of aliases, see *Federal Register* notices for each designation. Entries with an asterisk (*) denote FTOs whose aliases or primary names were subsequently amended.

Table 2. Delisted FTOs

Date Originally Designated • Date Removed	
10/8/1997 • 10/8/1999	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine-Hawatmeh Faction Khmer Rouge Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front Dissidents
10/8/1997 • 10/8/2001	Japanese Red Army Tupac Amaru Revolution Movement
10/8/1997 • 5/18/2009	Revolutionary Nuclei
10/8/1997 • 10/15/2010	Armed Islamic Group
10/8/1997 • 9/28/2012	Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization
10/11/2005 • 5/28/2013	Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group
9/10/2001 • 7/15/2014	United Self Defense Forces of Colombia
10/8/1997 • 9/3/2015	Revolutionary Organization 17 November
12/17/2004 • 12/9/2015	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
10/8/1997 • 6/1/2017	Abu Nidal Organization
1/19/2021 • 2/16/2021	Ansarallah (Houthis)
10/8/1997 • 12/1/2021	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
10/8/1997 • 5/20/2022	Aum Shinrikyo Basque Fatherland and Liberty Gama'a al-Islamiyya Kahane Chai
8/20/2014 • 5/20/2022	Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem

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