



Volume 4, Issue 3

April 2023

# COUNTERTERRORISM NEWSLETTER

FOR AND ABOUT THE BALKANS

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## **CT News and Information Updating and Connecting Our Partners in the Region**

*DOJ, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training  
(OPDAT) in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of  
Counterterrorism*

We introduce in this issue Peter Jongbloed, the new OPDAT Regional Counterterrorism Regional Legal Advisor based out of Sarajevo. Replacing OPDAT CT RLA Tom Saunders, Peter will offer his valuable expertise to law enforcement counterparts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia. We also report here about recent convictions of an FTF in Kosovo, and a woman repatriated to Denmark. We conclude with a review of the critical findings in the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) latest reports on issues related to countering the financing of terrorism.

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## Peter Jongbloed Takes up Post as OPDAT CT RLA for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro



We are pleased to announce that on March 17, Peter S. Jongbloed started as the Resident Legal Advisor for Counterterrorism in BiH, Serbia, and Montenegro.

Peter is a career federal prosecutor from the District of Connecticut where he most recently served as the Chief of the National Security and Cyber Crime Unit. Working closely with multiple law enforcement partners, he handled a variety of national security matters, including investigations and prosecutions of U.S. citizens seeking to travel overseas to fight for ISIS and al Qaeda. Also, with respect to national security, again working with law enforcement, he participated in investigations and prosecutions of those who threatened to harm judicial officers, elected public officials, and ethnic and religious leaders and religious properties. Peter has worked closely and regularly with local, state, and federal financial investigators following the flow of money into and out of the United States and more recently the flow of digital currency like cryptocurrency in order to detect criminal activity, such a fraud and terrorist financing. Over his career he has successfully participated in the investigations and prosecutions of a wide variety of federal racketeering cases involving members and associates of Cosa Nostra engaging in murder, loan sharking, extortion, illegal gambling, and fraud as well as local street gang members engaging in murders and shootings, drug trafficking, and firearms offenses.

Peter has served in a variety of supervisory positions in the Connecticut U.S. Attorney's Office, including as the First Assistant, Criminal Division Chief, and Organized Crime Chief. Prior to becoming an AUSA in 1987, Peter served as a law clerk in the District of Connecticut for U.S District Judge Alan H. Nevas. Peter graduated from now Quinnipiac University School of Law where he was on the Law Review and from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.

### Kosovo Convicts Second FTF Repatriated in May 2022

On February 1, 2023, a Pristina Basic Court Special Department trial panel reached a guilty verdict for defendant Ylber Bela on charges of organizing and participating in a terrorist organization. The defendant was sentenced to five years in prison, starting from the day he was repatriated to Kosovo.

Bela (40) was repatriated last May during a joint repatriation action conducted by Albania and Kosovo. He entered a plea on the charges during his arraignment. Bela admitted travelling to Syria in 2013 to join terrorist organizations Jabhat al Nusra and ISIS.

In its judgement, the court considered as aggravating circumstances the high level of involvement in ISIS terrorist activities, his willingness and intent to join such activities, the high-risk level posed to society by the defendant's offense, all related to intent to cause a sense of insecurity and fear by participating in terrorist activities directed against life, human freedoms, and international legal order. On the other hand, the court considered the guilty plea, the defendant's young age, cooperation with the court, and his remorse as mitigating factors to the sentence.

Specifically, the court, did not grant the defendant's motion seeking credit for the time he was held in Syrian Democratic Force's interment prior to his sentence.

**Source:** Kosovo Special Prosecution Office

### Denmark Sentences Woman from BiH for Aiding ISIS in Syria

On February 28, Danish district court sentenced Elmina Aljic, a dual citizen of BiH and Denmark, to four years of imprisonment for supporting the Islamic State. The court also stripped Aljic of her Danish citizenship, meaning she likely will be deported to Bosnia and Herzegovina after serving her prison sentence.

Aljic travelled to Syria with her family in 2015. During her stay in Syria, she worked as a housewife, and thereby provided support to the terrorist organization. In 2021, she was repatriated from one of the Syrian camps along with her eight children.

The sentence and decision on revocation of citizenship can be appealed.

**Sources:** [Danish-Bosnian woman gets four-year sentence for aiding Islamic State in Syria](#)  
[Dansk-bosnisk kvinde udvises for husmorliv i IS-kalifat](#)

## CTED Reports: Assessment of Gaps in Implementing Key Countering the Financing of Terrorism Provisions of Security Council Resolutions

In 2021 and 2022, the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) conducted thematic assessment of shortcomings in implementation of key financing of terrorism (CFT) provisions of relevant Security Council resolutions and published two reports discussing its findings. The assessment is based on information collected during visits to 13 Member States with an aim of identifying priority areas in which States would benefit from capacity-building efforts, targeted technical assistance, and specialized expertise.

According to the reports, one of the identified gaps pertains to insufficient understanding of terrorism-financing risks. In this regard, the reports find that some Member States have not yet conducted assessment of national terrorism-financing risks or that their national risk assessments (NRA) are not sufficiently comprehensive. The reports further note that some NRAs are not supported by reliable statistical data and that the States do not update their NRAs on a regular basis. Recommendations for addressing the identified shortcomings include, among others, providing support for conducting regional terrorism-financing risk assessments and employing a multi-stakeholder approach when analyzing the existing and evolving risks of terrorist financing.

The reports identify gaps in the statutes criminalizing terrorism financing. Some of the shortcomings in this area include a failure to explicitly criminalize financing of foreign terrorist travel, a too narrow definition of “funds,” requirements that financing of individual terrorists must be linked to a specific terrorist act, disproportionate sanctions, etc. However, these loopholes “are being progressively addressed and are currently primarily technical in nature, requiring limited adjustments in legislation or mere clarifications in judicial practice.”

The CTED reports further explain that “investigating and prosecuting terrorism financing remains challenging on many levels, from technical expertise to international and inter-agency cooperation. In this regard, the reports highlight that the number of successful prosecutions is overall low. Conducting parallel financial investigations in terrorism cases is not mandatory, and many States choose not to investigate and prosecute these charges, especially where there is no apparent link to a specific terrorist act. Generally, states do not conduct financial investigations of foreign terrorist fighter. The reports further note that financial intelligence units (FIU) are not included in existing inter-agency platforms used for exchanging information on terrorist threats and investigations, and that inter-agency cooperation has shortcomings. As a result, “very few terrorism financing related reports submitted by FIUs to relevant law enforcement authorities trigger further action, including criminal investigations.” Another challenge detected in the reports is lack of safeguards to allow for financial intelligence to be effectively converted into evidence that can be used to secure terrorism-financing convictions. Finally, FIUs and other relevant authorities generally lack technical capacities and expertise to detect, disrupt, and investigate terrorism financing cases. To address these challenges, the reports recommend providing training on terrorism financing investigations and prosecutions to law enforcement, prosecutors and judges; strengthening the capacities of all relevant authorities involved in countering terrorist financing; facilitating the exchange of experiences with other Member States on enhancing inter-agency cooperation on countering terrorist financing; and providing software and other relevant tools for analysis of financial transactions.

In relation to asset-freezing mechanism, the reports observe that the legislative framework for implementing asset-freezing measures pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) is, in some States, either non-existent or underused and insufficiently operationalized. In other States, the assessment revealed deficiencies in implementing freezing measures effectively and without delay; reviewing national designations and de-listing; and formulating and communicating designation notices. Freezing virtual assets is also a problem area because the States generally lack the practical knowledge and experience to implement such measures. The reports recommend that States develop manuals on implementing freezing measures and also exchange experiences and good practices.

The reports identify several gaps in preventing the terrorist abuse of money value transfer services, informal financial networks, and cash couriers. It is noted that some States do not conduct risk assessments with respect to new payment methods and financial instruments and that they lack operational capacities to effectively detect and prevent the use of hawala-like systems for terrorism financing purposes. Other problems include gaps in monitoring compliance of mobile money operators, inadequate border and customs control measures, and insufficient bilateral and international cooperation. With regard to the latter, the reports underline that “States lack cross-border cooperation and coordination to disrupt and dismantle networks involved as cash couriers and in illegal trade across borders that finance terrorism,” and that States should enhance their information exchange with foreign counterparts given the cross-border nature of most informal money transfers.

The CTED reports further warn against gaps in addressing terrorism financing risks related to virtual assets and crowdfunding platforms. These include, among others, inadequate regulatory frameworks for virtual assets, failure to extend AML/CFT regulation to crowdfunding platforms, inadequate guidance to reporting entities, and lack of experience/capacity to investigate terrorist with the use of virtual assets. Recommended assistance includes providing support with drafting and enacting AML-CFT regulatory framework with respect to virtual assets and facilitating exchange of experiences and best practices in this regard, as well as providing training programs and tools to investigate terrorism-financing cases that involve cryptocurrencies and other emerging payment technologies.

Additional identified gaps include the failure to conduct risk assessment of abuse of the non-profit organization (NPO) sector for terrorism financing purposes, and the failure to establish mechanisms for targeted risk-based monitoring or supervision of the NPO sector. In some States, gaps in the NPO regulatory framework and donations transparency measures have also been detected.

Finally, the reports note loopholes in analyzing and detecting links between organized crime and terrorism financing. In this regard, it is noted that most States do not have legal frameworks, practices, or resources in place to proactively investigate these linkages and whether the proceeds of relevant organized crime cases were intended or used for terrorism financing. To address the identified gaps, the reports recommend providing training and other forms of assistance “to enhance the capacity of the relevant authorities to detect and deter links between terrorism, its financing and organized crime.”

**Source:** [CTED Thematic summary assessment of gaps in implementing key countering the financing of terrorism provisions of Security Council resolutions](#)