



United Nations Security Council  
Counter-Terrorism Committee  
Executive Directorate (CTED)

# COUNTER-TERRORISM AND BORDER MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

## TECHNICAL AND CAPACITY- RELATED GAPS

CTED



TRENDS  
ALERT

# CONTENTS

- 03 Key findings**
- 04 Background**
- 04 Methodology**
- 06 Introduction**
- 07 Main Challenges**
- 14 CTC Assessment Recommendations**

# KEY FINDINGS



The lack of electricity, basic infrastructure, and information and communications technology at some border posts hampers States' efforts to secure borders and the areas surrounding them.



Limited inter-agency coordination, international cooperation, information-sharing, and human and technical resource capacities create hurdles in Member States' efforts to secure their borders.



Many Member States in Africa require investment in technology and infrastructure, training for border security personnel, inter-agency coordination and regional cooperation to more effectively counter the threat of terrorism.



Effective border management requires a strategy setting out roles and responsibilities for each agency involved in the management of borders and ensuring complementarity among all stakeholders.



International cooperation and partnerships, including with the private sector, can play a crucial role in strengthening border security in Africa.



Member States should develop and implement all border management measures in a manner that fulfils their international counter-terrorism commitments and obligations under international law, including human rights and refugee law.

# BACKGROUND

This Trends Alert was prepared by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) in accordance with Security Council resolution 2617 (2021), in which the Council reaffirms the essential role of CTED within the United Nations to identify and assess issues, trends and developments relating to the implementation of Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017) and other relevant resolutions.

CTED Trends Alerts are designed to increase awareness, within the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee and among United Nations agencies and policymakers, of emerging trends identified through CTED's engagement with United Nations Member States on their implementation of the relevant Council resolutions.

# METHODOLOGY

Between 2018 and 2023, the Counter-Terrorism Committee conducted assessment visits to 15 Member States on the African continent. The Member States visited were Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, and Uganda.

The resulting reports contained, on average, 40 recommendations to each Member State on steps to improve implementation of Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism. In this Trends Alert, CTED reviews and summarizes those challenges and recommendations related to border management. The political and security situation has changed in some Member States on which the assessment reports are based. This could result in variations between current shortfalls and needs and those previously identified and could impact international engagement to support their needs. The Trends Alert excludes challenges and recommendations specific to weapons in the context of border management as CTED intends to address that issue in a later report.

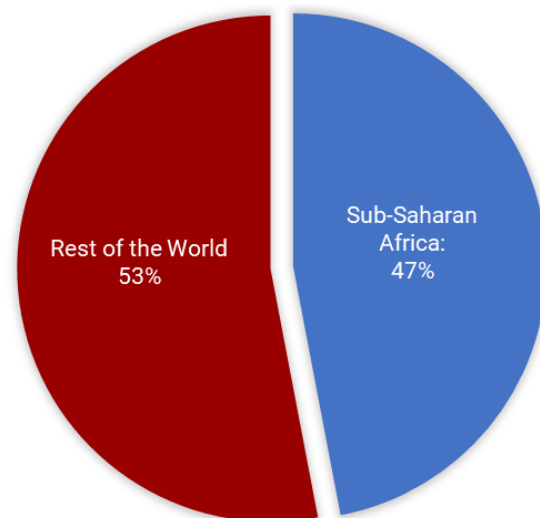


# INTRODUCTION

In 2023, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 47 per cent of global terrorism deaths.[1] Although the Security Council has identified border security and management as a key principle in countering terrorism since the adoption of its landmark resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions, many Member States in Africa require increased capacity to bolster the effectiveness of their borders to counter terrorism.

For border management to be effective, border-crossing posts need to be operational and supplied with electricity and Internet connectivity. Equipment needs to be well-maintained and information-sharing mechanisms need to be operational.

This Trends Alert is the second of two publications highlighting the most common challenges Member States in Africa face in managing and securing their borders, in line with resolution 1373 (2001), 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017) and other relevant resolutions. The first Trends Alert, “Counter-Terrorism and Border Management in Africa: Fundamental and cross-cutting challenges”, highlights the foundational issues affecting the management of borders in the context of counter-terrorism.



*Percentage of Global Terrorism Deaths (2023)*  
*Source: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023 GTI report*

This second Trends Alert reviews the technical and capacity-related issues Member States in Africa face in their attempts to manage borders in the context of counter-terrorism.

---

[1] Vision of Humanity, “Deadliest Terrorist Groups in 2023”, Institute for Economics and Peace.

# MAIN CHALLENGES

Bureaucratic, resource and technical challenges impede Member States' ability to secure their borders and prevent the movement of suspected terrorists for terrorist purposes. This section provides an overview of the key challenges and recommendations made by the Counter-Terrorism Committee between 2018 and 2023 regarding border security in Africa.

1

## **Electricity and basic information and communications technology at border posts and offices**

### **Electricity supply at border posts**

Member States in Africa reported interruptions in and lack of electricity supply, Internet connectivity or 3G mobile communications at several border posts, as well as limited identity document verification and passenger screening capabilities. Partial or absent electrification at border posts was largely owing to socioeconomic factors which are addressed in the Trends Alert "Fundamental challenges in enhancing border security and management in the context of counter terrorism in Africa".

### **Information and communications systems and technologies**

Numerous entry points to some Member States were not equipped with adequate information and communications technology (ICT) equipment and capabilities, including hardware, software, and staff trained to use ICT-based systems. Several points of entry were either not connected to the Internet or had poor Internet quality, slowing or prohibiting data-sharing with other border posts or security services. In some Member States, updates to traveller data were made twice per year or less, limiting the effectiveness of the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) in these contexts.[2] Authorities were most often using the offline Mobile INTERPOL Network Database (MIND) at the borders.

---

[2] Developed by the International Organization for Migration in 2009, MIDAS is a high-quality, user-friendly and fully customizable border management information system for States in need of a cost-effective and comprehensive solution.

The International Criminal Police Organization's (INTERPOL) I-24/7 communications system,[3] available at the INTERPOL National Central Bureaux (NCBs) in all Member States, were often located in capital cities.

Although the system can be extended beyond NCBs, it was not operational in certain airports and many land border posts owing to a lack of intra- and inter-agency coordination and cooperation, including at the decision-making level, or insufficient Internet connection. Front-line officers in certain Member States were either without access to electronic data through NCBs or had a paper list of names to enter manually into databases.

***Numerous entry points to some Member States were not equipped with adequate ICT equipment and capabilities, including hardware, software and staff trained to use ICT-based systems.***

In some contexts, traveller data were sent to central offices by post. The names of foreign terrorist fighters who had been issued with recent INTERPOL notices or who had recently been added to the Member States' own national databases may therefore not be flagged by front-line officers at the border.

---

[3]This is a secure communications system, which Member States use to contact each other, and the INTERPOL General Secretariat. It also allows them to access INTERPOL databases and services in real time, from both central and remote locations.



2

## **Technical skills and capacity to detect and investigate illicit cross-border activity**

Most CTED assessments missions include a visit to border posts. CTED found that in a large number of border posts, there was a shortage of technical resources, skills and information to enable the identification of individuals associated with terrorism. Even in border posts that had the means to collect biometric and biographical data, the majority of travellers were still not screened.

### **Shortage of technical resources and specialized equipment**

Police, immigration and customs officials in several Member States lack well-maintained basic intrusive and non-intrusive screening equipment, mobility equipment, and personal protection equipment. A few Member States were advised to increase security with high-power scanners for cargo and to secure training for staff.

***Border posts were often staffed by local police who did not have border management training or experience in preventing and countering terrorist travel or detecting cross-border cash couriers for terrorism-financing purposes.***

At least four of the 15 visited Member States had no basic equipment or expertise to detect document fraud at any border posts. In addition, officials at border posts did not always have the ability to verify the identities of travellers against civil and national registration databases or were not always furnished with the most updated list of unique security features for identifying the machine-readable travel documents of other Member States. For most States, bureaucratic red tape or the high costs of procuring and maintaining equipment in border posts have prevented the installation or use of essential equipment. In one Member State, a delay in customs clearance stalled the delivery of equipment that would have created a digital filing system to store and share criminal data, including on known and suspected terrorists crossing borders.

## **Skills and technical capacities to facilitate border security**

CTED found that staff stationed at borders were often inadequately trained. Border posts were often staffed by local police who did not have border management training or experience in preventing and countering terrorist travel or detecting cross-border cash couriers for terrorism-financing purposes. Border officers also did not have analytical knowledge of the threats at their borders. Although entities like the International Organization for Migration provided specialized training to border police staff in the use of MIDAS, regular staff rotation between border posts and police stations, diluting the knowledge base, was highlighted as a significant problem in at least two of the 15 visited Member States.

## **Weak policies and practices for detecting and reporting cross-border cash flows**

CTED identified several common shortfalls in measures to detect terrorism financing, including a lack of legal provisions imposing sanctions for false declaration; a lack of declaration procedures for large cash movements; ineffective recording and reporting systems for declared or identified cash; and a lack of training for border officials in profiling and investigating the origins of suspicious funds.[4] [5] One Member State reported to CTED there had been no false or suspicious cash declarations in the year preceding the assessment visit despite large volumes of cash moving across their borders.

## **Challenges in the handling of refugees in the context of counter-terrorism**

The CTC has emphasized the need to distinguish challenges relating to refugees and displaced persons from terrorism-related threats. Member States bordering conflict zones were often managing heavy asylum-seeker and refugee flows, stretching border management resources, and some States lacked capacity to effectively screen refugees and asylum-seekers to determine terrorist threats through interviews and digital checks. In addition, in many situations of large-scale influx of persons seeking asylum, Member States often accorded refugee status to all applicants from a particular country of origin, on a prima facie basis without consideration of possible terrorist links. This means that individual refugee status determination, and therefore consideration of possible exclusion for participation in criminal (including terrorist) activity, was not conducted.

---

[4] CTED, "Thematic summary assessment of gaps in implementing key countering the financing of terrorism provisions of the Security Council resolutions", December 2021. Available at

[www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/cted\\_2021\\_cft\\_gaps\\_assessment.pdf](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/cted_2021_cft_gaps_assessment.pdf).

[5] Ibid., December 2022. Available at [www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/thematic-summary-assessment-gaps-implementing-key-countering-financing-terrorism-provisions](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/thematic-summary-assessment-gaps-implementing-key-countering-financing-terrorism-provisions).

Monitoring compliance with removal orders for persons whose asylum claims have been rejected was often inadequate, with some deported individuals making multiple attempts to return. Moreover, capacity-related challenges made it difficult for some Member States to apply their obligations under international refugee law in the screening and refugee-determination process in a timely manner.

### **3 National and cross-border institutional arrangements in border security**

Administrative, institutional and staffing challenges affected border checks in several of the Member States.

#### **Human resource limitations**

In almost all Member States visited, the authorities responsible for border security were understaffed and it was noted as a specific concern in at least four visited Member States. CTED also noted examples where border police units were not a stand-alone entity and in a few of these, officials from different agencies deployed at joint border posts did not report to border security officials. Complicated secondment and rotation requirements and high staff turnover rates added further challenges and resulted in border teams with inconsistent experience levels.

#### **Inadequate inter-agency coordination and international cooperation**

Although some good practices existed in the region, including joint inter-agency patrols, or the East African Community One-Stop Border Post,[6] several Member States had limited or inconsistent coordination across agencies involved in border security.

---

[6] The East African Community One-Stop Border Post Act (2016) addresses the need for a wider spectrum of border cooperation. Pursuant to the Act, a One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) is defined as a border post at which all traffic stops only once in each direction of travel. OSBPs are operational on a 24-hour basis at five border crossings (Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania), which include joint arresting centres and joint enforcement. The Counter-Terrorism Committee considers this to be good practice. All OSBPs house all the agencies (customs, immigration, security and police) that are key to integrated border management. The OSBPs have helped to strengthen cross-border cooperation with agencies of adjoining States, including through joint border meetings, enhanced information-sharing, and joint training in verifying fraudulent documents and implementing border-control practices, such as targeted interviewing techniques.

CTED found coordination between customs officers stationed at borders and financial intelligence units was often insufficient, resulting in challenges in detecting illicit financial movements. Similarly, there was limited cross-border cooperation to target illicit cash couriers that may be used to fund terrorism. In at least two States where financial intelligence units provided information to customs officials at borders, it was not being utilized by the customs officials.

Inadequate legal frameworks without clear roles and mandates to enable cooperation and information-sharing between relevant agencies further hampered inter-agency cooperation in some Member States. CTED noted that some customs administrations lacked security mandates, such as an ability to seek information on or make seizures in suspected terrorism-financing cases, and therefore were unable to coordinate their efforts with agencies involved in counter-terrorism.[7]

CTED further observed instances of legislation prescribing a system that was incompatible with inter-agency coordination efforts. For example, one Member State allowed the police to authorize entrants but, at some borders, the customs authorities taxed travellers before their arrival was authorized.

#### **4 Lack of a border management strategy and action plan**

Member States were at different stages in developing and implementing border management strategies defining the responsibilities and powers of implementing authorities. Almost all Member States lacked a comprehensive or fully implemented national border management strategy with human rights protections.

Member States often had border management strategies that were not comprehensive and needed to develop practices and policies for implementation, including ensuring human rights compliance.

---

[7] CTED, "Thematic summary assessment of gaps in implementing key countering the financing of terrorism provisions of Security Council resolutions", December 2022. Available at [www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/thematic-summary-assessment-gaps-implementing-key-countering-financing-terrorism-provisions](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/thematic-summary-assessment-gaps-implementing-key-countering-financing-terrorism-provisions).

## Access to and interoperability of traveller information databases in real time for screening

The Counter-Terrorism Committee noted most Member States it assessed either lacked or had insufficient interconnectivity between national databases and international databases of traveller information. For instance, lists of lost and stolen travel documents were not accessible to all relevant national agencies and INTERPOL's lost and stolen travel lists were not regularly fed into national systems. Member States often lacked systems that capture and centrally store biometric and biographical data, including fingerprints, limiting identification of assumed identities.

Member States also did not have the capacity to make full use of INTERPOL tools. For example, border security officers had limited access to the Fixed INTERPOL Network Database (FIND)[8] or MIND.[9] In one Member State, only the international airport had access to INTERPOL databases, despite the country having several official land entry points and an international port. Another State had no access to FIND at all, and MIND was used only during special operations, while another State used neither MIND nor FIND in its operations. In several Member States, access to the INTERPOL I-24/7 system was limited to officials in the NCB and although NCBs send information to immigration and border services, the latter did not have access to the full INTERPOL Nominal Database.[10]

Owing to institutional structures which limit the flow of threat information required to perform aviation security functions, Member States faced hurdles in establishing preventative mechanisms to address threats to civil aviation. Some of these difficulties pertained to advance passenger information (API) and passenger name record (PNR) systems.[11] In many cases, passenger manifests were not regularly received or used and better operating procedures were needed for them to be effective.

---

[8] A search tool for querying INTERPOL Nominal, Stolen Motor Vehicle, Stolen and Lost Travel Documents, and revoked documents databases, FIND helps to strengthen national and international security by enabling front-line law enforcement agencies to perform real-time checks, thereby enabling Member States to receive an instant response to a query.

[9] The main difference between MIND and FIND is that FIND allows access to a continuously updated online database, whereas MIND provides access to an offline database, periodically downloaded in an updated form every 24-48 hours.

[10] This is a database consisting of personal data and the criminal history of people.

[11] API data are generated during check in. PNR data are generated during the booking or buying of an air ticket. The guidelines for API/PNR were developed by the World Customs Organization/International Air Transport Association/International Civil Aviation Organization.

# CTC ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Counter-Terrorism Committee has recommended that Member States address the following areas in a manner that fulfils their international counter-terrorism commitments and obligations under international law, including human rights and refugee law.

## Refugee management



- Distinguish challenges relating to refugees and displaced persons from terrorism-related threats.
- Strengthen capacity to conduct refugee status determination in a manner consistent with international standards, including as relates to exclusion for terrorism-related activities, with appropriate follow-up and information-sharing with third States, consistent with obligations under international law.

## Centralization of databases for information-sharing



- Establish or strengthen common platforms to share national watch lists, criminal data information, biometrics and data on lost and stolen travel documents in real time, among front-line officers and agencies with a security mandate.
- Strengthen intra-agency, inter-agency and interstate cooperation and information-sharing on border management, including through databases.
- Create centralized directorates for border control agents, to enable more appropriate human and financial resources for the deployment of specialized agents along borders.
- Ensure access to the INTERPOL I-24/7 network for all national law enforcement agencies in charge of combating terrorism and securing border crossings.

## Inter-agency coordination and international cooperation



- Extend joint patrolling to some critical border areas or green borders. [12]
- Ensure that customs authorities cooperate and exchange information with relevant authorities on the detection of cash associated with cross-border terrorism financing.
- Improve legal and procedural systems for declaring cash.
- Enhance the capacity of competent authorities to intercept cash couriers linked to terrorism financing.
- Conduct immigration checks before customs taxes are imposed.

## Integrated border policy and management



- Draft and implement integrated border management strategies, including an operational implementation plan defining the roles of the agencies and their coordination mechanisms.
- Work with neighbouring Member States and adopt the one-stop border posts approach for integrated information and border management.
- Develop a human-rights centred and gender-sensitive approach to border control policy and procedures, including increasing the number of female personnel.
- Implement a migration information management system adapted to remote areas with limited connectivity, interoperable with relevant systems and databases in real time.

---

[12] These are land boundaries between officially recognized Border Crossing Points (BCPs).

## Basic information and communications technology



- Equip and maintain all land border posts with a telephone network, lamps, microscopes and computers, to collect of biometric and biographical data.
- Ensure Internet connection speeds of at least 1 Mbps (one megabit per second)
- Digitize paper files; collect and share biometric data of known terrorists.
- Adopt appropriate human rights safeguards, such as protection of privacy and data in the development and implementation of biometric tools.

## Training and capacity development



- Provide national authorities with tailored capacity-building training to analyse threats and to detect and halt the smuggling of migrants, the illicit cross-border movement of currency and bearer negotiable instruments as well as to inspect documents at border posts.
- Raise awareness among judicial authorities about national and international counter-terrorism instruments on region-specific, cross-border terrorism trends and about forensic analysis.
- Strengthen international cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences involving a cross-border aspect and promote international judicial cooperation with foreign jurisdictions.
- Purchase and maintain technical equipment to detect document fraud at border points and airports.
- Build capacities in passenger data analysis and place officials in airports to conduct interceptions based on API/PNR analysis or behavioural detection and provide feedback to refine risk indicators.





United Nations Security Council  
Counter-Terrorism Committee  
Executive Directorate (CTED)

[www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc)  
[www.twitter.com/un\\_cted](https://www.twitter.com/un_cted)