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## Overview

### **“Foreign Terrorist Fighters – Challenges for South East Europe: Integrative and Complementary Approach to Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism”** (IRC-N5-CF-16)

**Date** 22-24 November 2016

**Location** RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, Rakitje, Republic of Croatia

**Background** On 7-8 October 2015 RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, together with the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized a regional Conference titled “Foreign Terrorist Fighters - Challenges for South East Europe“, which was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The event aimed to provide a platform for a first regional exchange of views and experiences with regard to the threat of FTF in South-Eastern Europe and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) in compliance with all obligations under international law, including international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

One of the event conclusions was that timely and actionable information sharing is crucial. States should make better use of existing mechanisms and examine the possibilities for establishing new modalities to improve information sharing, especially in regard to border crossings.

Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) constitute one of the major threats to international and regional security. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) defines FTFs as individuals who travel or attempt to travel to a state other than their states of residence or nationality “for the purpose of perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts, or the providing or receiving of terrorist training”.

It is necessary to establish a better system of cooperation when it comes to border management in order to be able to better identify and interview foreign terrorist fighters at entry and exit border checks in countries of origin, transit and destination. The recent migration crises have shown that most of SEE countries are not ready to cope with the challenges of border security in terms of identification of potential foreign terrorist fighters.

It is also obvious that closing the borders is not an adequate answer in the attempt to fight FTF. Therefore, a sustainable agenda regarding this topic should be set up.

The second conclusion from the Sarajevo Conference was that effective strategies for the rehabilitation and reintegration of those who engage in violent extremism and/or return from foreign battlefields must be a part of the states' responses.

“The air raids have damaged the [Daesh’s] oil infrastructure, a key revenue source, and the territorial setbacks have stripped the group of populations to tax and assets to seize, analysts say. All of this, they say, appears to have forced the group to reduce salaries

and benefits of their fighters. Members of the ‘Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently’ group, which monitors the [Daesh], say a rising number of foreign members of the militant group have requested help to flee Syria. The requests have been made secretly because the [Daesh] regularly executes foreigners who attempt to escape.”<sup>1</sup>

We can assume that many European citizens who left to fight for different terrorist fractions will try to return to their countries of origin even if they are aware of the fact that they will be prosecuted in accordance with the domestic law.

In addition to the returnees from the warzones, there are also those individuals (so called “homegrown” extremists) who actively work on recruiting fighters and spreading propaganda of violence within the country.

**Purpose & Objectives**

RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, will organize an activity with the purpose of addressing the possible solutions and best practices in border management with the focus on identifying possible FTF on their way to and from the warzones. During the event we will also try to identify possible ways and means to establish adequate short and long-term rehabilitation and reintegration programs for those individuals who have been identified and prosecuted as FTF. Development and adoption of such programs, based on positive experience, will be one of the main goals of our future efforts in this area.

**Participants**

The participants should come from the institutions which are dealing directly with this subject matter (representatives of the Border Police, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Security/Interior, Penitentiary Systems, etc.)

**Methodology**

The event is designed as an expert forum and it will be conducted in the form of conference panel discussions. The Conference working language is English. Interpretation will be available upon advanced request.

**Point of Contact:**

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<sup>1</sup> “Islamic State is no longer so formidable on the battlefield.” The Washington Post. By Hugh Naylor, February 6, 2016. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/islamic-state-is-no-longer-so-formidable-on-the-battlefield/2016/02/06/26d6c8e4-c6a7-11e5-b933-31c93021392a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/islamic-state-is-no-longer-so-formidable-on-the-battlefield/2016/02/06/26d6c8e4-c6a7-11e5-b933-31c93021392a_story.html)