

Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC)
(also known as: **Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat; and Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat**)

The following information is based on publicly available details about the GSPC. These details have been corroborated by material from intelligence investigations into the activities of the GSPC. ASIO assesses that the details set out below are accurate and reliable.

The GSPC is listed as a proscribed terrorist organisation by the United Nations and by the governments of Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Current status of GSPC

The GSPC was formed in 1998 by Hassan Hattab (aka Abu Hamza) who led a splinter group from the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in protest against the killing of civilians carried out by the GIA. The GSPC renounced attacks against civilians following the split from the GIA but has nevertheless been implicated in attacks resulting in civilian deaths. However, the number of these deaths has been far fewer than those perpetrated by the GIA.

The GSPC quickly became Algeria's largest and most dangerous terrorist group. The GSPC's stated targets are Algerian military, police and government interests however civilians have been killed in various attacks including bombings and roadside ambushes. Tactics used by the GSPC include attacks at false roadblocks and raids on military, police, and government convoys.

The GSPC has publicly stated its commitment to global jihad. In January 2004 the GSPC released a statement claiming its jihad in Algeria was part of the international jihad led by Usama bin Laden. In June 2004 the group released a statement declaring "war on all foreigners and foreign interests in Algeria". On 28 September 2005 media carried a statement by the GSPC which described France as the group's "number one enemy". Recent statements have also linked the GSPC to targeting of US military installations in North Africa and the sub-Saharan region.

In a statement on 11 September 2006 marking the anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States, al-Qa'ida's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri officially announced the alliance between al-Qa'ida and the GSPC. The GSPC subsequently made a statement on 13 September 2006 pledging allegiance to Usama bin Laden. These statements made by the group and al-Qa'ida indicate the GSPC is evolving from a domestically focussed group to one with a global Jihadist ideology.

The GSPC has officially rejected the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, an Algerian government initiative offering amnesty for all persons convicted of insurgency related crimes.

The GPSC has been involved in up to 70 terrorist attacks, including bombings, grenade attacks, ambushes, and kidnappings against the military, police, and civilians since first being proscribed by Australia on 14 November 2002.

The GSPC continues to recruit new members, and has also undertaken the training of individuals from nearby countries with a view to them returning to their home countries to carry out attacks. The GSPC has continued to undertake attacks against civilian targets including bombing markets, attacking vehicles and killing the occupants, and beheading civilians. During 2005, the GSPC also attacked foreign interests outside Algeria including an attack on a remote military outpost in Mauritania for which the group claimed responsibility and implied it would fight its enemies regardless of their location.

The GSPC's primary source of funding comes from its involvement in the black market, engaging in smuggling, protection rackets, and money laundering. The GSPC's rejection of indiscriminate killing of civilians gained the favour of al-Qa'ida, which provided financial and logistical support during the early stages of its formation.

Objectives

The GSPC's primary goal is to overthrow the Algerian government and install an Islamic regime.

Leadership and membership

The GSPC is currently led by Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud (aka Abdelmalek Droukdal). Another central figure and leader of the southern Algerian regional GSPC group sometimes referred to as the Free Salafist Group (GSL) is Khaled Abu al-Abbas (aka Al-Mukhtar bin Bilmukhtar, aka Mokhtar Belmokhtar possible real name Al-Mukhtar Bin Mohammad Bilmukhtar), a former Algerian soldier with experience in Afghanistan.

By 2000, the external networks of the GIA across Europe and North Africa had been taken over by GSPC. Reporting on the number of members of the GSPC varies between 500 and 5000.

GSPC engagement in terrorist attacks

Terrorist attacks for which responsibility has been claimed by, or reliably attributed to, the GSPC, have included:

- 1 Apr 2004: The GSPC claimed responsibility for the assassination in Algiers of the Imam with the El Harrach mosque, Abdennacer Abou Hafs, who was shot on 10 March;
- 21 Jun 2004: Car bombing of an electricity plant in Algiers;
- 7 Jul 2004: GSPC militants ambushed and killed of an official from a local aggregate extraction quarry in Abouda;
- 18 Sept 2004: A homemade bomb was defused by security agencies in a café located in Erraghen;

- 23 Oct 2004: Attack on a vehicle transporting fans to a soccer match in Algiers, killing 16;
- 23 Apr 2005: Militants attack a village in Ain Defla Province, killing two members of a family;
- 3-4 June 2005: The GSPC attacked a Mauritanian army outpost, killing fifteen Mauritanian soldiers and wounding seventeen others;
- 1 Sept 2005: GSPC rebels killed the Mayor of Ammal in his car;
- 30 Sept 2005: GSPC militants beheaded a civilian, 8kms from Ain Rich;
- 1 Oct 2005: A bomb was detected and defused at Bouassem primary school in Beni Zmenzer, Beni Douala district;
- 6 Oct 2005: Suspected GSPC gunmen intercepted a car in Ouled Salah east of el-Milia, killing three civilians and injuring two others;
- 16 Jan 2006: GSPC rebels cut the throat of a civilian after an interrogation outside his home in Sidi Daoud;
- 13 Feb 2006: GSPC rebels kidnapped a civilian in Chabet el-Ameur who was later released on 15 Feb after ransom was paid;
- 24 Mar 2006: Local member of the municipal people's assembly and former mayor shot dead outside his home in Benchoud;
- 28 Mar 2006: Two people, one a cousin of a former GSPC emir, were shot dead in the village of Ain al-Hamra;
- 1 Apr 2006: The GSPC shot dead a civilian at Haga, for reportedly collaborating with security forces;
- 4 Jul 2006: A bomb exploded near a Legitimate Defence Group post in Larbaa, Batna Province;
- 5 Jul 2006: A bomb exploded in Martyrs Square in Ammal injuring three people; and
- 6 Jul 2006: A mobile phone triggered a bomb at the Tidjellabine vehicle market killing two people.

Conclusion

The Criminal Code provides that for an organisation to be listed as a terrorist organisation, the Attorney-General must be satisfied that:

- (i) the organisation is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur); or
- (ii) the organisation advocates the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur).

On the basis of the above information, ASIO assesses that the GSPC is directly preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of terrorist acts. It is submitted that the acts attributable to the GSPC are terrorist acts as they:

- (i) are done with the intention of advancing a political cause, namely, the creation of an Islamic state in Algeria.
- (ii) are intended to coerce or influence by intimidation the governments of foreign countries, including Algeria and France, and/or intimidate sections of the Algerian and French public; and
- (iii) constitute acts which cause serious physical harm to persons, including death, as well as serious damage to property.

This assessment is corroborated by information provided by reliable and credible intelligence sources.