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Is ISIS Islamic? Why This Is the Wrong Question to Ask

By Todd Green

Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/todd-green-phd/is-isis-islamic-why-this-_b_6920600.html

Just how Islamic is ISIS? That's a question that we can't seem to avoid as of late. It was a question at the center of Graeme Wood's controversial article in *The Atlantic*, and it's a question that looms largely over political debates concerning ISIS. When President Obama avoided labeling ISIS as "Islamic terrorism" during last month's counterterrorism summit, he was attacked by many on the right and even some on the left for being naïve if not dishonest.

By contrast, the Bush administration showed little hesitancy in labeling al-Qaeda as Islamic. Phrases like "Islamic radicalism" and "Islamofascism" were fairly ubiquitous in the Bush administration's rhetoric during the war on terror, and the language stuck in spite of efforts by Muslim American organizations to persuade the administration to be more careful in using language that reinforced a connection between Islam and terrorism.

But what's really behind this debate over whether to label organizations such as ISIS as Islamic? I think this obsession to identify ISIS as Islamic says much more about us than about ISIS. These political debates divert our attention from having a deeper, more honest (and more difficult) conversation about all of the factors that give rise to terrorism. This includes just how central politics is to motivating the actions of organizations such as ISIS.

It's not difficult to find scholars and others who have worked with intelligence agencies who argue that the best way to explain terrorism is to look to political factors. Religion does play a role in terrorism, to be sure, but it's more often a way of justifying or channeling a political vision. Religion is rarely the driving force behind terrorism.

Osama bin Laden, for example, may have invoked Islam to justify al-Qaeda's actions, but even a cursory examination of his public statements reveals just how frequently he cited political circumstances as the rationale behind his violent intentions and actions. The history of Western interventionism in Muslim-majority contexts, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the U.S. exploitation of energy resources in the Middle East, the legacy of European

colonialism - bin Laden referenced all of these as reasons driving the larger mission of al-Qaeda.

As we learn more about ISIS, it's increasingly clear that politics is central to its mission as well. Marc Sageman, a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and former CIA Operations Officer, argues that ISIS uses religion to advance a political agenda, not vice-versa. Didier Francois, the French journalist held captive by ISIS for ten months, confirms this observation. During his captivity, he realized just how little interest ISIS had in debating Islam or the Qur'an. The ISIS militants holding him didn't even have a copy of the Qur'an. They were interested in debating politics, not religion.

As for why young men from the West sometimes run off to join ISIS, there's increasing evidence that even in these instances, religion comes into the picture only after the fact. The most obvious example of this pertains to Mohammed Ahmed and Usuf Sarwar, two young British Muslims who traveled to Syria to fight for ISIS, but before leaving, ordered copies of *Islam for Dummies* and *The Koran for Dummies*. But beyond these two, there is little evidence that those who run off to join ISIS are well versed in Islam. Many are alienated young men in search of a cause and a sense of meaning and identity.

Obsessing over whether ISIS is Islamic enables policymakers and politicians to avoid any serious consideration of the role that politics plays in terrorism, including the role that U.S. policies have played in contributing to a climate that is favorable to terrorism. For example, we can't understand the rise of al-Qaeda apart from U.S. support of the Afghan mujahideen, and indirectly the Arab mujahideen, during the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989).

And any explanation of the rise of ISIS that ignores how the U.S.-led war in Iraq enabled al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) to establish a foothold in the country is an explanation that is more invested in rewriting history than taking the U.S.'s role in history seriously. After all, ISIS emerged out of AQI and fed on the

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perceived injustices suffered by many Sunnis in Iraq in the aftermath of the Iraq War. As Juan Cole notes, some of these injustices include sectarian conflicts that were triggered by the Bush administration's decimation of Iraq and its decision to create a government that punished many Sunni Iraqis and placed them at the whims of pro-Iran Shiite fundamentalists. The U.S. is a part of the story of how terrorist organization such as al-Qaeda and ISIS came to be. But many politicians are obsessed with pinning the Islamic label on al-Qaeda and ISIS because doing so keeps the focus on Islam as the one and only cause of terrorism. It thereby

reinforces the longstanding narrative that terrorism has nothing to do with us, with our military interventions in the Middle East, with our addiction to oil, and with our support for autocratic regimes.

What we need at this point are politicians who have the intellectual and moral courage to move beyond questions such as "Is ISIS Islamic?" and who can recognize this question for what it is - a thinly veiled form of Islamophobia intended to heighten our fears of Islam while absolving the U.S. of its own responsibility in contributing to the rise to ISIS.

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Somali pirates shifting location towards India

Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/somali-pirates-shifting-location-towards-india-manohar-parrikar/articleshow/46653521.cms?intenttarget=no>



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Beaten back in their usual area of operations, Somali pirates are "shifting their location" towards India, but the country is watchful to deal with such threats, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar today said. "Today's threats are not traditional. Somali pirates, after being neutralised by various countries' navies, are shifting their locations

towards India. Because their (shipping) lanes are heavily guarded, they have moved 30-40 nautical miles, although they still are 450 nautical miles away from India. "They may not be next to India but... We are watchful and careful," Parrikar said at an international conference on 'India & the Indian



Ocean: Renewing the Maritime Trade & Civilisational Linkages', organised by the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS) jointly with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).

Calling for greater cooperation between the neighbouring countries, he said, "The Indian Ocean can be an enricher and also a destroyer, hence we should also be prepared for disaster and develop strong relationships and communication with neighbouring countries to avoid any kind of disaster."

Pitching for a creation of a common platform for the Indian Ocean rim region, he further said, "We are in a common grid and are tied to each other. If India strengthens, being the focal point and located strategically, it can facilitate others." He also said that India's strength lies in non- violence, but it can be practised only by those that are strong.

Stressing that the Indian Ocean region is "very important for us", Parrikar pointed out that it

"accounts for more than 50 per cent of the world's oil reserves and more than 45 per cent of the world's gas reserves".

Somali pirates have been a threat to international shipping in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, especially in the Gulf of Aden, which is a busy route, and have made millions of dollars in ransom by seizing ships.

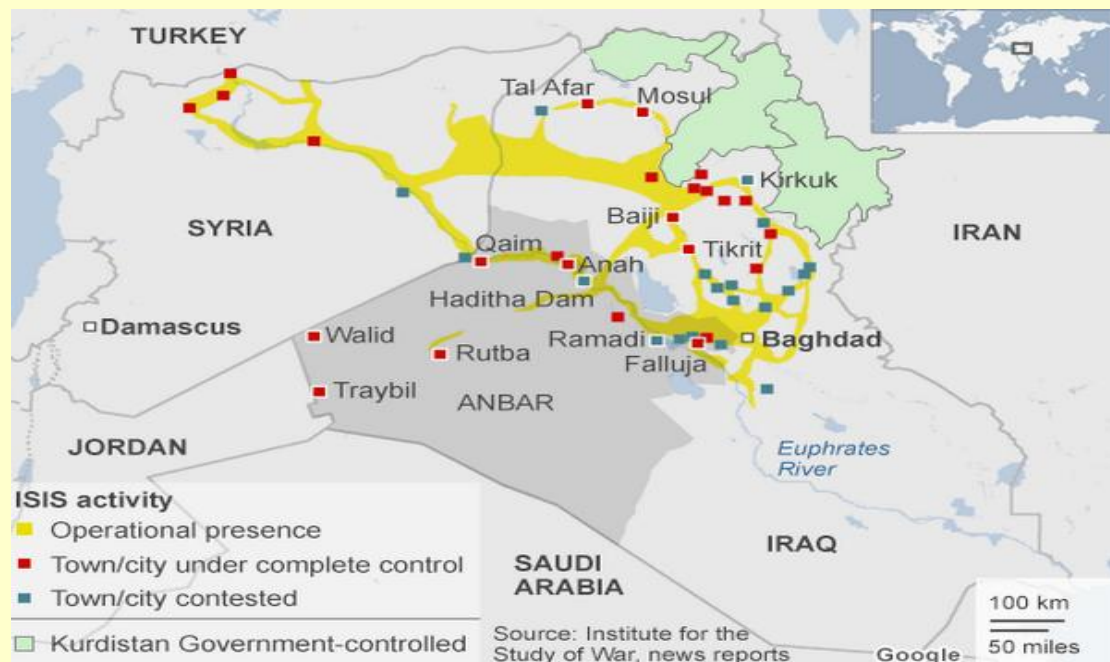
In 2011, there were 439 pirate attacks and 45 merchant vessels hijacked worldwide, of which 237 attacks and 28 hijackings occurred in the Gulf of Aden, off the Somali coast.

The Combined Task Force -- a multi-national coalition task force -- took on the role of fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia by establishing a Maritime Security Patrol Area (MSPA) within the Gulf of Aden.

The increasing threat posed by piracy has been a matter of concern for India since most of its shipping trade routes pass through the Gulf of Aden.

The 9 biggest Myths about ISIS

Source: <http://www.vox.com/cards/isis-myths-iraq/crazy-irrational>



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Myth #1: ISIS is crazy and irrational

If you want to understand the Islamic State, better known as ISIS, the first thing you have to know about them is that they are not crazy. Murderous adherents to a violent medieval ideology, sure. But not insane.

Look at the history of ISIS's rise in Iraq and Syria. From the mid-2000s through today, ISIS

and its predecessor group, al-Qaeda in Iraq, have had one clear goal: to establish a caliphate governed by an extremist interpretation of Islamic law. ISIS developed strategies for accomplishing that goal — for instance, exploiting popular discontent among non-extremist Sunni Iraqis with their



Shia-dominated government. Its tactics have evolved over the course of time in response to military defeats (as in 2008 in Iraq) and new opportunities (the Syrian civil war). As Yale political scientist Stathis Kalyvas explains, in pure strategic terms, ISIS is acting similarly to revolutionary militant groups around the world — not in an especially crazy or uniquely "Islamist" way.

The point is that, while individual members of ISIS show every indication of espousing a crazed ideology and committing psychopathically violent acts, in the aggregate ISIS acts as a rational strategic enterprise. Their violence is, in broad terms, not random — it is targeted to weaken their enemies and strengthen ISIS' hold on territory, in part by terrorizing the people it wishes to rule over.

Understanding that ISIS is at least on some level rational is necessary to make any sense of the group's behavior. If all ISIS wanted to was kill infidels, why would they ally themselves with ex-Saddam Sunni secularist militias? If ISIS were totally crazy, how could they build a self-sustaining revenue stream from oil and organized crime rackets? If ISIS only cared about forcing people to obey Islamic law, why would they have sponsored children's festivals and medical clinics in the Syrian territory they control? (To be clear, it is not out of their love for children, whom they are also happy to murder, but a calculated desire to establish control.)

This isn't to minimize ISIS' barbarity. They've launched genocidal campaigns against Iraq's Yazidis and Christians. They've slaughtered thousands of innocents, Shia and Sunni alike. But they pursue these horrible ends deliberately and strategically. And that's what really makes them scary.

Myth #2: People support ISIS because they like its radical form of Islam

You have probably heard that ISIS has a degree of popular support among some Iraqi and Syrian Sunni Muslims. That's true: without it, the group would collapse. People sometimes assume that this says something about Islam itself: that the religion is intrinsically violent, or that Sunnis would support the group because they accept ISIS's radical interpretation of the Koran.

That's all wrong, and misses one of the most crucial points about ISIS: the foundation of its power comes from politics, not religion.

Let's be clear: virtually all Muslims reject ISIS' view of their faith. Poll after poll shows that violent Islamist extremism and especially al-Qaeda are deeply unpopular in Muslim-majority countries. The bulk of ISIS' victims are Muslims — many of them Sunnis (ISIS is itself Sunni). A popular revolt among Iraqi Sunnis, beginning around 2006, played a huge role in defeating ISIS's predecessor group, al-Qaeda in Iraq. That revolt was inspired, at least in part, by anger at ISIS's attempt to impose its vision of Islam on Muslims who disagree.

ISIS's vision of Muslim life is pretty alien to actual Islamic tradition. Fundamentalist Islam — like most religious fundamentalisms — is a modern phenomenon. Fundamentalist groups, frustrated with modern politics, harken back to an idealized Islamic past that never actually existed. The al-Qaeda strain of violent radicalism owes more to 20th century writers like Egyptian Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb than the actual post-Muhammed caliphate.

So if Sunnis disagree with ISIS' theology and don't like living under its rule, why do some of them seem to support ISIS? It's all about politics. Both Syria and Iraq have Shia governments. Sunni Muslims aren't well-represented in either system, and are often actively repressed. Legitimate dissent is often met with violence: Bashar al-Assad gunned down protesters in the streets during the 2011 Arab Spring demonstrations, and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki reacted violently a 2013 Sunni protest movement as well.

So Sunnis understandably feel oppressed and out of options. Some, then, seem to be willing to wait and see if life under their fellow Sunnis in ISIS is any worse than it was before. ISIS, for its part, appears to be attempting to exploit this concern: that's why it's set up community, child-care, and medical services in some of the Sunni communities it controls.

That doesn't mean ISIS is morally better than Assad or Maliki: they group is still hyper-violent and genocidal. It's just that outreach to Sunnis is part of their politico-military strategy.

Myth #3: ISIS is part of al-Qaeda

The key thing to understand about ISIS and al-Qaeda is that they are competitors, not allies, and certainly not part of the same larger group.

ISIS used to be al-Qaeda in Iraq. But the group split apart from al-Qaeda in February 2014 because



it wouldn't listen to al-Qaeda HQ's commands, including orders to curtail its violence against civilians. (That's right: it was too violent for al-Qaeda.) This ISIS-AQ divorce is a key reason why ISIS is so unremittingly violent, yet many people still lump the two groups together.

For years, al-Qaeda was the clear leader of the global jihadist movement. The loose network of militant groups, internet forums, and "lone wolf" individuals saw al-Qaeda as the gold standard — and many pledged allegiance to it or established some kind of junior-partner working relationship.

When ISIS broke off, it upended everything. By taking a chunk of territory the size of Belgium in the heart of the Arab world, ISIS had come much closer to the end-goal of an Islamic caliphate than al-Qaeda ever did. All of a sudden, it didn't seem so clear that Islamist groups around the world should pledge themselves to al-Qaeda. ISIS fought openly with Jabhat al-Nusra, which is al-Qaeda's Syria branch — and outperformed it on the battlefield. Today, ISIS controls far more territory in Syria than Jabhat.

This ideological competition drives ISIS to be more violent. "They're in competition with al-Qaeda, and they want to be the leader," JM Berger, the editor of Intelwire and an expert on violent extremism, said. According to Berger, one way they do that is by broadcasting images of their military prowess worldwide. In the sick, screwed up world of Islamic extremism, images of massacres are a show of strength.

When ISIS executed American journalist James Foley and put the video on YouTube, or when it declared its intention to wipe out Iraq's Christians and Yazidis, it's not doing it just because they can, although among individual militants indulging a sick desire is certainly part of it. At a broader level, this part of ISIS's plan to beat al-Qaeda and spread the ISIS brand globally.

The worst part: There's some evidence this plan is working. Even before ISIS's rapid advance in June, ISIS was wresting groups in Tunisia and Libya away from al-Qaeda's allegiance to their own. There have been ISIS-linked suicide bombings as far afield as Malaysia.

Myth #4: ISIS is a Syrian rebel group

It is true that ISIS opposes Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria, and the two constantly

fight one another in Syria. But calling ISIS a "Syrian rebel group" misses two critical facts about ISIS. First, it's a transnational organization, not rooted in any one country, with lots of fighters who come from outside the country and are motivated by global jihadist aims as well as the Syrian war specifically. Second, Assad and ISIS are not-so-secretly helping each other out in some crucial ways, even as they fight. ISIS and Assad are frenemies, not full-on opponents.

For one thing, ISIS predated the Syrian civil war. It started as al-Qaeda in Iraq in the mid-2000s and, after that group was defeated by Iraqis and American forces around 2008, reformed in the same country. Between 2008 and 2011, ISIS rebuilt itself out of former prisoners and ex-Saddam era Iraqi army officers. ISIS did not grow out of the Syrian rebellion: it took advantage of it.

Now, it's true the war in Syria benefitted ISIS tremendously. It allowed ISIS to get battlefield experience, attracted a ton of financial support from Gulf states and private donors looking to oust Assad, and a crucial safe haven in eastern Syria. ISIS also absorbed a lot of recruits from Syrian rebel groups — illustrating, incidentally, why arming the "good" Syrian rebels probably wouldn't have destroyed ISIS.

In a weird way, this has all benefitted Assad. The Syrian dictator has vigorously pursued a divide-and-conquer strategy during the war. He's tried hard to push the sectarian angle of the civil war, making it into a life-or-death struggle for his Alawite (Shia) and Christian supporters against the Sunni majority. ISIS' extremism has helped convince Alawites that defecting the rebels means the destruction of their homes and communities.

And Assad has also used ISIS to divide his other opponents: the moderate Free Syrian Army, other Islamist groups, and the United States. One way he's done that is by focusing Syria's military efforts on the moderate Syrian rebels, leaving ISIS relatively unscathed. By allowing ISIS and other Islamist groups to become stronger at the expense of other rebels, Assad made it much harder for the US to intervene against him without benefitting the rebels. And ISIS and moderate rebels have begun fighting against one another, further dividing the war in a way that's beneficial to Assad.

In essence, Assad and ISIS seem to have made an implicit deal:



ISIS temporarily gets a relatively free ride in some chunks of Syria, while Assad gets to weaken his other opponents. The two sides still hate each other, but both benefit from the status quo.

Myth #5: ISIS is only strong because of Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki

There's a theory that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is solely, or mainly, responsible for ISIS's resurgence in 2014. It's true that Maliki's policies enabled ISIS's rise. But blaming him alone misses the real drivers of sectarianism in Iraq — and the complicated, multi-faceted sources of support ISIS enjoys.

Maliki did a number of things that unintentionally enabled ISIS' rise. He used Iraq's counterterrorism laws to imprison Sunni dissenters. He exploited laws that prohibit Saddam-era officials from holding office (a number of those officials had been Sunni) to boot Sunnis out of the upper echelons of the government and military. He arrested peaceful Sunni protestors, and aligned himself with non-governmental Shia militias that had slaughtered Sunnis during the post-invasion civil war. And that's only a partial list of Maliki policies that turned Sunnis against the Iraqi central government, and thus toward ISIS.

But it is simply incorrect to assign most of the blame for ISIS's rise to Maliki. For one thing, Sunni anger at Iraq's government, a quasi-democracy that empowers the Shia majority, runs much deeper than this one man. "Even if Maliki weren't in power, there are some Sunni grievances that any Shia government would have problems with," Kirk Sowell, a risk consultant and full-time Iraq watcher, says.

To take one example, many Sunnis wrongly believe that they're the largest demographic group in Iraq. This belief, spread during Saddam's time to justify Sunni minority rule, leads Sunnis to see any government they don't head up as fundamentally unjust. Neither Maliki nor his also-Shia successor, current Prime Minister-delegate Haider al-Abadi, can fix that. More to the point, ISIS isn't just an Iraqi problem. Its base in Syria today is just as, if not more, important than the land it controls in Iraq. They've gotten funding from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait, and wink-wink-nudge-nudge help from Syria's Bashar al-Assad.

The really important takeaway here is that Maliki's political defeat does not mean ISIS will wither away, nor that Baghdad political reforms

could solve this problem alone. The Abadi government will need to undertake deep, structural reforms if it wants to address Sunni grievances. The Sunni community will have to reject ISIS and come to terms with the Shia majority. And even if all of that happens, ISIS will still have its base in Syria.

Myth #6: ISIS is afraid of female soldiers

A bizarre meme going around claims that ISIS is really afraid of fighting all-female Kurdish military units. The theory is that ISIS fighters believe that if a woman kills you, you don't get to go to paradise.

The truth is that ISIS' approach to women is much more complicated — and troubling — than Western stereotypes about Islamists would suggest. ISIS has its own female brigades, and the group uses them to enforce its deeply misogynistic ideology.

The "ISIS is afraid of female fighters" theory comes from a stray quote in a Wall Street Journal piece about Kurdish advances against ISIS. It quotes a female Kurdish soldier as saying "the jihadists don't like fighting women, because if they're killed by a female, they think they won't go to heaven." Note that it's not an ISIS fighter, a scholar, or necessarily someone who's interrogated an ISIS fighter: just a random Kurdish soldier, who may not be super-familiar with ISIS's ideology.

What we actually know about ISIS's approach to women, however, paints a rather different picture. ISIS has all-female battalions, called "al-Khansaa" and "Umm al-Rayan," that operate in Syria. ISIS female fighters wear full burqas and carry rifles; they exist to force other women to comply with ISIS's vision of sharia law. "ISIS created [them] to terrorize women," Abu al-Hamza, a local, media activist, said in an interview with Syria Deeply.

ISIS's use of women is part of a rising trend of jihadist women claiming roles in violent Islamic extremist groups. "There is a process of female emancipation taking place in the jihadi movement, albeit a very limited (and morbid) one," Thomas Hegghammer, an expert on violent Islamism at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, told The Atlantic. "Many of them are eager to portray themselves as strong women and often make fun of the Western stereotype of 'the oppressed Muslim woman.'" ISIS is dedicated to oppressing women, and uses rape as a



weapon to terrify the population into submission in territory it controls. Somehow, perversely, it has managed to enlist large numbers of women to help in that awful effort.

Myth #7: The US can destroy ISIS

You've probably heard it a million times: if only the United States stepped up its bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria or did more to help moderate Syrian rebels, it could destroy ISIS. Indeed, the administration's big new escalation in Syria and Iraq, announced on September 10, is explicitly aimed at destroying ISIS.

The reality, however, is disappointing: There is no magic American bullet that could fix the ISIS problem. Even an intensive, decades-long American ground effort — something that is politically not on the table, anyways — might only make the problem worse. The reason is that ISIS's presence in Iraq and Syria is fundamentally a political problem, not a military one.

American aircraft are very good at hitting ISIS targets out in the open: on roads or in the desert, for example. That's why US air support was extremely effective in clearing a path for Kurdish and Iraqi forces to retake the Mosul dam in mid-August.

But American airpower is much less useful in dense urban combat, where it's also likely to cause unacceptable amounts of civilian casualties. In response to a stepped-up American bombing campaign, ISIS could hunker down in fortified city positions. That would force the Iraqi army and Kurdish forces to engage in bloody street-to-street combat. Historically, the Iraqi army has a bad track record in those fights. It spent a good chunk of early 2014 trying to dislodge ISIS from Fallujah, a city near Baghdad. It failed to permanently push them out, and killed a lot of Sunni civilians in the process.

What if the US also stepped up its campaign in Syria, arming the Syrian rebels and bombing ISIS positions? A pretty comprehensive review of research on arming rebels, by George Washington University's Marc Lynch, suggests that wouldn't have helped even back at the beginning of the civil war. The "moderate" Syrian rebels are too diffuse, and fighters shift in and out of alliances with ISIS and other radical Islamists.

The US plan to intervene in Syria against ISIS today short of a full invasion requires enlisting either Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, who

benefits from ISIS's existence, or the moderate Syrian rebels, who are disorganized and hard-pressed by Assad already, to coordinate a major offensive. That seems improbable, to say the least.

Even if the United States reinvaded Iraq to destroy ISIS — which there is no indication it would do — there's no guarantee that even this would succeed. The United States did defeat al-Qaeda in Iraq in the late-2000s, but it had lots of Iraqi help. The Bush administration's 2007 troop surge would have failed if the Sunni population wasn't already turning against al-Qaeda there.

"I take the somewhat modest position that the action of 6 million Iraqis may be more important than those of 30,000 American troops and one very talented general," Doug Ollivant, the National Security Adviser for Iraq from 2005 to 2009, told me. Without changing Sunni views of ISIS and the Iraqi government, a stepped-up US ground presence might only further infuriate the Sunni population.

The key structural causes of ISIS's rise, the multi-sided Syrian war and Iraqi sectarian tension, cannot be solved by American bombs alone. The US can block ISIS's advances in some places, as it is doing in Iraqi Kurdistan, but eliminating ISIS is outside its power.

Myth #8: ISIS will self-destruct on its own

You occasionally hear, especially from supporters of the Obama administration's cautious policy, that ISIS will eventually destroy itself. ISIS's view of Islamic law is so harsh that no population would want to live under it for long, so a Sunni revolt against ISIS is inevitable. And ISIS will overreach: its desire to expand to new territory exceeds its actual military power, meaning that a devastating counterattack is inevitable.

This is certainly possible. But ISIS is not headed in that direction yet. That's because ISIS is both smarter and stronger than many people give it credit for.

ISIS learned from the defeat of al-Qaeda in Iraq, its predecessor group. Though ISIS still insists on imposing its extremist interpretation of Islamic law in the territory it controls, it also sets up institutions that look a lot like a proto-government. They've installed health care clinics, run public forums where ISIS operatives socialize with adults, held activities for children, policed



neighborhoods, and collected taxes

The point of this, Washington Institute fellow Aaron Zelin wrote in September 2013, is to "lay the groundwork for a future Islamic state by gradually socializing Syrians to the concept." According to Zelin, "ISIS has shown that it wants to avoid repeating the mistakes that its predecessors made in Iraq." Since occupying Mosul in June, Iraq's second-largest city, ISIS's behavior has been similar (though not identical).

ISIS, then, is balancing its ideological desire to be brutal against its strategic imperative to maintain the support of local populations. It's still as evil as it always was — just smarter about it.

To make matters worse, ISIS has never been stronger in military terms. The incorporation of former officers with Saddam-era Iraq, plus years of fighting in Syria, has made ISIS more tactically astute than most of its battlefield opponents. In June, it captured enormous amounts of advanced American weaponry dropped by the retreating Iraqi army. And its ranks have swelled in the wake of all of its victories: one estimate, from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, claimed that ISIS recruited 6,000 fighters in *July 2014 alone*. That's obviously a ballpark estimate, but it almost certainly reflects real growth inside ISIS. The bottom line: ISIS does not appear at all bound to simply fall apart on its own. To defeat the group, Iraqis and Syrians would need to do something done to separate ISIS from its base of support in Iraq and Syria. And ISIS needs to be broken on the battlefield, if only to stop the recruiting drive created by its aura of invincibility

Myth #9: ISIS is invincible

Reading the news of ISIS's conquests in Iraq and Syria, and even its recent foray into Lebanon, you might get the sense that ISIS is unstoppable. That it'll sweep Iraq, and really, truly, establish an extremist Islamic state in Iraq and eastern Syria.

This isn't true. ISIS is smarter and more effective than it used to be, and it's too strong to collapse on its own, but it's still quite vulnerable. The Iraqi government, with Kurdish and American help, really could make major inroads against ISIS.

In June, when ISIS was sweeping Iraq, there were panicked predictions that Baghdad was about to fall to ISIS's advance. It didn't. ISIS

didn't even try to take the city, likely because it knew it couldn't dislodge the huge concentrations of Iraqi troops there — or hold a majority-Shia city that would never accept it.

Iraqi demographics place a natural limit on ISIS's advance. Even high-end estimates of ISIS's strength — 50,000 troops — make it much smaller than the Iraqi army or Kurdish peshmerga. It'd be impossible for ISIS to take and hold majority Shia areas, where they'd be totally unable to build popular support. The Islamic State's borders in Iraq are limited to northern and western, Arab-majority, Sunni-majority Iraq.

That's a damning problem for ISIS. All of the major oil wells, which provide 95 percent of Iraq's GDP, are in southern Iraq or Kurdish-held territory in the northeast. ISIS can't advance on the Shia south, and a joint US-Kurdish campaign is reversing its gains in Kurdistan. ISIS has huge financial reserves for a militant group — maybe up to \$1 billion dollars. But that's a relatively small amount for a government, and any attempt to actually govern northwestern Iraq in the long run would lead to economic disaster

It'd be a permanent downward economic spiral — like Gaza, basically," Kirk Sowell, a risk analyst and Iraq expert, says. An ISIS mini-state is just not sustainable.

When you pair the inevitable economic crisis in ISIS-held Iraq with ISIS's brutal legal system, it seems like Sunnis will eventually tire of the group. That discontent may not be enough on its own to end the group's rule, especially if it still believes the Iraqi central government would be worse for them. But it creates an opening for Iraqi Prime Minister-delegate Haider al-Abadi to reach out to disaffected Sunnis. He might be able to make allies among Sunni tribal militias.

Meanwhile, ISIS may alienate some its core Iraqi allies: militias who support a Saddam-style Sunni dictatorship. They're generally secular and no fans of ISIS's vision of Islamic law, and are only allied with it to fight the government. If ISIS's Sunni allies turn against it, and the government does a better job making its rule look attractive, ISIS may lose the Sunni population — and most of its gains in northern Iraq. Again, that's not inevitable, and will require some tough political changes in Baghdad, but the point is that ISIS is far from invincible.



ISIS's hold in Syria, though, would be much, much harder to dislodge. It's hard to imagine either Assad or moderate anti-Assad rebels mounting an effective military campaign against ISIS in the near term. But rolling back ISIS in Iraq, and containing it to Syria, would be a major victory, though an incomplete one as it

would leave ISIS with a chunk of Syria. Still, this would limit the group's reach in the Middle East and blunt its global appeal. And when Syria's civil war finally does end, whenever that happens, eliminating ISIS will be the winning side's first priority.

Indonesia holds conference on anti-terrorism measures as concern grows over fighters joining Islamic State

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-24/indonesia-holds-conference-on-anti-terrorism-measures/6342636>



Concern is mounting in

Indonesia over the number of people leaving the country to fight with Islamic State (IS) militants and other groups in Iraq and Syria. As pressure increased on the Indonesian government to take action, it called experts to a conference on how to tackle IS and terrorism. A security consultant speaking at the conference warned terrorism now posed a bigger global threat than when the World Trade Centre was attacked in New York. Professor Angel Rabasa of the RAND Corporation in the United States said the world had not faced a threat this big since planes flew into buildings in the United States in 2001. "A threat that looking back two or three years ago, almost nobody had predicted," he said.

Media player: "Space" to play, "M" to mute, "left" and "right" to seek.

He said Islamic State had been far more successful than Al Qaeda, building a following through social media sites like twitter.

IS shares propaganda videos to tens of thousands of followers, he said, "who would then create new pages and links, so it's almost impossible to stop".

"The videos are uploaded on YouTube for further viewing," Mr Rabasa said.

Singapore based terrorism expert Professor Rohan Gunaratna agreed Islamic State's social media strategy was one of its strongest weapons.

He also blamed western intervention in the Middle East for creating an environment for terrorist groups.

But he told the anti-terrorism conference he had faith in Indonesia's ability to again crush terrorist networks, as it had done since the **2002 Bali bombings and 2004 Jakarta embassy attacks.**



Is ISIS Building A Drone Army?

Source: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/03/18/is-isis-building-a-drone-army.html>

The self-proclaimed Islamic State—also known as ISIS or ISIL—has added drones to its arsenal, and for the first time, the U.S.-led coalition took one of their drones out, officials announced Wednesday.

"Near Fallujah, [Iraq,] an airstrike destroyed an ISIL remotely-piloted aircraft and an ISIL vehicle," said a Wednesday press release from the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), which

speaks on behalf of the 62-member U.S.-led coalition conducting strikes in Iraq and Syria.

This week, the unmanned drone had been conducting surveillance nearby, U.S. military officials told The Daily Beast. The drone was then loaded into a vehicle, which was subsequently destroyed—along with the drone—by coalition forces on Tuesday.



Some at the Pentagon were quick to dismiss the threat of ISIS drones, noting there was a big difference between what ISIS could have purchased off of Amazon.com (as such drones are apparently available there), and the Reapers and Predators deployed by coalition forces.

While experts agree, they also warn that ISIS could convert this kind of technology into something deadly.

“ISIS surely has surveillance drone capability. It is nowhere near what [the coalition] has, but [the] civilian use drone market is so big, and

U.S. military officials told The Daily Beast that they believe the drone in question is one of several owned by ISIS but that fighters only recently started seeing them appear on the frontlines. They believed the unmanned drones are used to conduct surveillance, possibly in real time.

“This is a new trend as far as I know,” CJTF spokesman Army Capt. John Moore told The Daily Beast.

The first evidence of ISIS using some kind of overhead surveillance came nearly a year ago when the group released a video called



live-linked camera technology so common, it really is inevitable that ISIS will have surveillance drones,” says Christopher Harmer, a senior naval analyst with the Middle East Security Project at the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for the Study of War.

“They don’t have reusable attack drones, but I think it is just a matter of time before they jury-rig surveillance drones into flying IEDs. Basically, they could turn them into little kamikaze drones.”

Officials could not say whether it was a coalition drone that took out the ISIS drone or whether the U.S. or its allies used more conventional firepower. They also said they could not provide any details about the specific kind of drone destroyed, other than to describe it as something that could be bought commercially.

“Clanging of the Swords, Part 4.” The hourlong video opens with images shot over a city in western Iraq. There is nothing in the piece to suggest that ISIS had real-time surveillance capability, but it definitely had the tools to take video images from the air.

Iraqi security forces and Shiite-dominated militias are currently engaged in heavy fighting against the Islamic State in the central Iraqi city of Tikrit, where ISIS appears to be losing its footing. But ISIS has maintained its grip on the western Iraqi province of Anbar, where Fallujah sits and the hit on the drone occurred.

The first use of drones by armed jihadi groups appears to be by Hezbollah, which reportedly began launching drones in 2005, courtesy of Iran, according to a cable released by Wikileaks. In the 2005 missive,



the then-U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, Jeffrey Feltman, reported that a source had informed the U.S. that "Syrian intelligence was involved in the decision to launch the Mirsad-1 [UAV]

over Israel." The following year, during its war with Hezbollah, Israeli Air Forces said it shot down several Hezbollah drones.

Georgetown's Elliott Colla Blames the West for ISIS' Desecration of History

By Winfield Myers

Source: <http://www.meforum.org/5137/colla-blames-west>

March 25 – Elliott Colla, associate professor of Arabic studies at Georgetown University, has joined the herd of Middle East studies professors who insist that Islam has nothing to do with widespread destruction of antiquities by the Islamic State (ISIS).

understand the specific rationale behind their disturbing attacks, but for now, we really do not know very much.

Later in the essay Colla returns to this theme and grudgingly acknowledges the similarities between ISIS and the Sunni iconoclasts of Wahhabi Saudi Arabia:

[B]ecause there seems to be a doctrinal element to ISIS's practices, it does seem right to think of it as iconoclasm rather than vandalism. The austere Sunni ideology of ISIS (like that of Wahhabi Saudi Arabia) is one that thinks of itself as iconoclastic in the most basic sense of the word.

As does anyone familiar with the subject. Near Eastern archaeologist Alexander Joffe has noted, "the Islamic State made it perfectly clear its motivations derived from Islam." MEMRI's translation of an ISIS spokesman's comments as he

stands in front of ISIS members smashing ancient Assyrian statues at the Mosul Museum should remove the doubt of even a see-no-evil professor of Middle East studies:

The Prophet Muhammad shattered the idols with his own honorable hands, when he conquered Mecca. The Prophet Muhammad commanded us to shatter and destroy statues. . . . Since Allah commanded us to shatter and destroy these statues, idols, and remains, it is easy for us to obey, and we do not care [what people think], even if this costs billions of dollars.

By ignoring such clear evidence, Colla is at pains to explain why the Western view of museum artifacts as universally important -- as sacred to everyone, albeit in a secular sense -- is so foreign to those



Rather than appealing to Islamic texts or traditions to defend Islam, however, Colla deploys a two-fold strategy of feigning ignorance about ISIS and contextualizing their horrific acts within the intellectual and material legacy of Western colonial archaeology. As a result, in whitewashing Islamism Colla degrades the worth of ancient civilizations and their artifacts while training his moral outrage on Western colonialism, particularly the archaeological digs it sponsored and the museums these enterprises filled.

Regarding his argument from ignorance, writing at his blog on March 5, Colla claims:

What ISIS is doing [sic] the museums and antiquities sites under its control has yet to be verified, much less explained on a local basis. When we know enough about ISIS, we will be in a position to better



who have been "excluded" not only from Western sensibilities about the past, but the museums themselves.

At issue, he implies, are not irreplaceable objects from antiquity, but Western colonialism's redefinition of the histories of the very people whose past Westerners literally recovered from the dusts of time. Rather than assigning or accepting what he regards as the Western or Westernized value of such objects, Colla insists we view them through the eyes of poorly educated locals upon whom Western elites foisted their foreign ideas -- just as Colla is doing now:

For most of the modern period most of the world's largest museums have been off limits to most people. While institutions like the British Museum relied on state subsidies, they excluded the vast majority of British citizens by way of dress codes, entrance fees or by simply limiting their opening hours to times when most people had to be at jobs.... [T]he Egyptian Museum in Cairo may be located in the bustling heart of Cairo, but it has always catered mainly to the tastes, needs and narratives of European, not Egyptian, visitors.... Could ordinary Egyptians be blamed when, in their struggle to live, they failed to venerate the objects which colonial overlords put on pedestals in halls that were off-limits to them?

Colla transfers these assumed beliefs from "ordinary Egyptians" to ISIS's operations throughout the region to explain their actions, targeting as they do not simply pre-Islamic pagan artifacts, but the very concept of valuing the past itself:

Nor are they [ISIS] entirely wrong to cry "religion" when they hear absolutist claims about transcendent value, even those made by secularists and self-professed atheists.

That uneducated people may view museums and their contents with apathy or even disdain is hardly news. Nor are acts of vandalism against the remains of earlier civilizations. Roman ruins were pilfered for their materials for centuries -- one thinks of the Coliseum's missing façade. But "ordinary Egyptians," along with "ordinary" Iraqis, Syrians, and others, aren't given to storming museums, or the pyramids, or Nimrud, or myriad other antiquities armed with sledge hammers and bulldozers seeking to destroy objects

supposedly graced with transcendent value by "colonial overlords" or Westernized rulers.

Colla's convoluted worldview reaches its apogee of the absurd, if not the obscene, in his conclusion, where he equates the wanton destruction of antiquities in the name of Islam (not against any "absolutist claims" by Western and Westernized elites) with the toppling of the year-old statue of Saddam Hussein by U.S. Marines -- whom he labels "U.S. militants" -- in Baghdad's Firdos Square on April 9, 2003. He writes:

Finally, before Americans issue more blanket condemnations of ISIS's ugly form of iconoclasm, we might do well to put our own selves back into the history of toppling statues in Iraq. Weren't we championing iconoclasm and broadcasting it on our own television screens not so long ago? Didn't we, as victors, begin our celebrations by toppling the sacred objects of our enemies? Is it that we, the civilized, abhor the wanton destruction of all objects and histories, or just some?

With unintended irony, Colla applies to a new Stalinist-style statue of a tyrant who "modeled himself" on the bloody Soviet dictator the same "transcendent value" accorded antiquities by the colonials he condemns. Weren't such propagandistic works "put on pedestals" (literally in this case) and, in a perverse reversal of being "off-limits to the populace," made the objects of their forced adulation? Applying his concepts to the West, from which they are derived, did the long-suffering citizens of communist nations commit iconoclasm when they took their revenge on their tormentors in the only way most of them could, by toppling statues of Lenin, Stalin, and other glorious heroes of the Revolution? Should the totalitarian regime of North Korea fall, will Colla condemn its starving masses for "toppling the sacred objects of [their] enemies" if they pull down and destroy the monuments to a dynasty of evil men?

Colla writes that, "If iconoclasm is a sign of barbarism, and if the appreciation of artifacts is a sign of civilization, we would do well to get our own story straight."

Try this: ancient artifacts from any culture are the invaluable patrimony of mankind, while the schlock propaganda of modern dictators -- and those who don't



know the difference -- deserve our unreserved contempt.

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ISIS' Balkan Networks

By Gordon N. Bardos

Source: http://acdemocracy.org/isis-balkan-networks/?utm_source=ISIS%27+Balkan+Networks&utm_campaign=ISIS%27+Balkan+Networks+-+By+Gordon+N.+Bardos*&utm_medium=email

The appearance of ISIS flags flying over a Bosnian village a few weeks ago made headlines across Europe.[1] Last week's discovery of a plot involving four Bosnian nationals and an Arab trying to smuggle a bomb from Bosnia to Sweden,[2] and a German police raid on the Sahabe mosque in Stuttgart frequented by Bosnian émigrés, through which "the majority of people" from southwest Germany pass on their way to Syria,[3] provide further stark reminders of the international growth and spread of Balkan Islamist extremist networks over the past two decades. Berlin's *Der Tagesspiel* recently claimed that Bosnia is one of the largest recruiting stations for the "Islamic State" in Europe,[4] and various estimates concur that Balkan countries (per capita) are by far providing the largest number of European volunteers for the Iraqi and Syrian jihads.[5]

European Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria (per million people)

- Bosnia & Herzegovina – 92
- Kosovo – 83
- Albania – 46
- Belgium – 40
- Sweden – 32
- Denmark – 27
- France – 18
- Netherlands – 15
- Austria – 13
- Norway – 12
- United Kingdom – 12
- Germany – 8
- Italy – 2
- Spain – 2

(Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 2015) [6]

In September 2014, the CIA estimated some 700 Balkan volunteers had become foreign fighters in these conflicts. This could be a

conservative estimate; an Italian journalist who has studied the movement, Domenico Quirico, recently claimed that these are "just the optimistic official figures issued to avoid spreading panic,"[7] and security specialist Ilir Kulla has suggested that the number of jihad volunteers from the region could be "in the thousands" if one includes individuals from the Balkan diaspora.[8] Some sixty have already died in Iraq and Syria, and dozens of others have returned to their home countries. The question now facing security officials is whether these individuals—many of whom have passports giving them visa-free travel throughout the EU's Schengen zone—will return tired violence, or as ticking human time bombs looking for an opportunity to spread jihad across Europe.

Estimated Number of Balkan Jihadi Volunteers in Iraq and Syria (by country)

- Albania – 140
- Bosnia – 350
- Kosovo – 150
- Macedonia – 20
- Montenegro – 30
- Serbia – 3

Total: 693

(Source: Central Intelligence Agency, September 2014)

Providing volunteers for ISIS, however, is only one aspect of the problem. The militant Islamist infrastructure that has developed in southeastern Europe over the past two decades has developed cells and branches throughout the world, and now provides an organized, dedicated network of extremists who recruit, finance, indoctrinate and train individuals (and sometimes entire families) intent on joining the global jihad. In some cases, European ISIS volunteers even



get their first training sessions in the region. In September 2014, Albanian foreign minister Ditmir Bushati revealed the discovery in Albania of terrorist training camps for individuals joining the jihads in Iraq and Syria,[9] and such camps have been operating in Bosnia since the 1990s.[10]

After almost a decade of inaction, last year a concerted international effort finally began to disrupt and dismantle the Balkan militant Islamist infrastructure across Europe. The first stage began with a drive to arrest suspected ISIS recruiters. Over the past twelve months, Albania, Bosnia and Kosovo have arrested dozens of individuals for facilitating and financing the transport of volunteers through Turkey and on to Syria. This effort has extended beyond the region as well; for instance, in what was billed as the largest operation in the history of Austrian state security, last November police rounded up over a dozen ISIS recruiters, including a Sandžak Wahhabi named Mirsad Omerović, aka “Ebu Tejma,” who alone is accused of recruiting over 160 young people from across Europe to join the Iraqi and Syrian jihads.[11] His Bosnian colleague Bilal Bosnić, dubbed “ISIS headhunter in Europe” by Italian media[12] (and who some twenty years ago during the Bosnian jihad had been an indigenous member of the Al Qaeda unit in Alija Izetbegović’s army, the “El Mudžahedin” battalion), was arrested in September and is awaiting trial.

Another Bosnian Wahhabi leader, Nusret Imamović, probably sensing a crackdown was imminent, fled Bosnia for Syria in December 2013 where he joined the Al Nusra Front. In September 2014 the U.S. State Department named Imamović a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. Also earning the designation was Kosovo jihadi Lavdrim Muhaxheri, who achieved notoriety by posting pictures of himself on Facebook decapitating prisoners, long before Mohamed Emwazi, aka “Jihadi John,” had become infamous.

The confrontation with Balkan extremists linked to ISIS has reached this side of the Atlantic as well. In February, the FBI arrested six individuals in Missouri, Illinois and New York who were part of an alleged Bosnian-American ISIS support group. One of those arrested, Ramiz Hodžić, was, like the aforementioned Bosnić, also a veteran of the El Mudžahedin unit. Another member of this group, a former St. Louisan named Ramo Pazara (who served

as deputy to “Islamic State” emir Omar al Shishani) was killed in Syria in September 2014.

Alongside this drive to incarcerate jihad recruiters, a second stage in the battle against ISIS’ network of Balkan sympathizers and supporters has been to update the legal and judicial framework in many of these countries. All of the states of southeastern Europe have enacted new legislation and criminal regulations making it illegal for individuals to participate in foreign conflicts, or to recruit or finance volunteers for such conflicts. Throughout the region, official Islamic institutions (and many Muslim politicians) have also spoken out forcefully, condemning the barbarism of the “Islamic State” and urging young people to avoid participation in unsanctioned conflicts.

While this crackdown against ISIS’ Balkan networks is welcome, it is still too early to tell whether it has staunched the outflow of jihad volunteers from the region. It also remains to be seen whether the current counterterrorism strategy in place goes far enough to degrade and destroy the region’s militant Islamist infrastructure in any meaningful way. Two other important measures remain to be taken—first, breaking up the financing channels that sustain these networks, and second, neutralizing the propaganda network ISIS and similar extremist movements have in the region. Unfortunately, these measures may prove to be the most difficult parts of the effort.

The militant Islamist movement in southeastern Europe is financially sustained by a large network of NGO’s which straddle the line between some legitimate charity work and, more surreptitiously, providing monetary and logistical support for the global jihad. Mainly supported by wealthy Middle-Eastern patrons and certain affluent sections of the Balkan diaspora in Europe, over the past twenty years hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent to sponsor Wahhabi proselytism, the building of mosques and madrassas that promote Saudi-style religious indoctrination, and to support the foundation and maintenance of mosques, outposts and villages run by Islamist extremists. Although there was a brief window after 9/11 when the U.S. and the EU exhibited the political will and devoted the intelligence resources needed to breakup these financial networks,



unfortunately over the past few years the international commitment to combating this problem has dissipated.

A second necessary next stage in breaking up ISIS' network of Balkan sympathizers and supporters is dismantling the propaganda machinery the militant Islamist movement has developed in the region that plays such a large role in attracting and brainwashing new recruits. This propaganda apparatus continues to operate virtually unhindered, producing a constant flow of hate speech, incitements to violence, and the most extreme interpretations of Islamic doctrines. The targets of such intolerance are predictable: Americans, Jews, gays, liberals, cartoonists, and people of other religions. And what one finds on these websites provides very chilly reading.

Visitors to the numerous Balkan Islamist extremist websites can find things such as a learned explanation for why burning captives alive is permissible under Islam (accessed some 7300 times),^[13] or see pictures of the execution of alleged homosexuals—by throwing them bound and tied off of a tall building—in the “Islamic State” province of Nineveh.^[14] A September 2014 posting on the Bosnian extremist website *Put Hilafeta* (“Way of the Caliphate”) shows a jihadi with an AK-47 juxtaposed against a picture of the U.S. president. The caption reads “A Message to Obama: We Will Attack You in Your Country!”^[15]

Ethnic and religious intolerance is the cornerstone of the militant Islamists' belief system. Jews (and Israel) are of course an especial target of the militant Islamists; as the Bosnian terrorist/Syrian jihad volunteer Bajro Ikanović explained in a recent interview, “The goal for all of us is death, especially in the battle against the Jews. Syria is not at all important to us. Our goal is Jerusalem.”^[16] A Kosovo imam named Sefket Krasnici recently claimed that Mother Theresa (herself a Macedonian-born Albanian nun), “belongs in the middle of Hell because she did not believe in Allah, the prophet and the Koran ...”^[17]

Incitements to violence and justifications for Islamist violence are also frequently on evidence. Two imams currently imprisoned in Albania on suspicion of recruiting some seventy ISIS volunteers, Abdurrahim Balla and Bujar Hysa, recently endorsed the Charlie Hebdo attacks, writing “this is considered an act of war . . . The act that happened in France,

if it is proved that was carried out by Muslims, because of the cartoons, it's considered a good deed that will be rewarded by Allah.”^[18] (Coincidentally, Nasser bin Ali Ansi, the man who claimed credit for the Charlie Hebdo attacks on behalf of Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP), was himself a Bosnian jihad veteran.)

In a similar vein, a few weeks ago the Bosnian-Danish extremist Adnan Avdić (who himself has been linked to terrorist attacks in both Denmark and Bosnia) spoke at the gravesite of the gunman who killed two people in February's Copenhagen attacks on a synagogue and free speech seminar, saying “As Muslims, we support him. The worst terrorists are those that dishonour the prophet. It is the Danish cartoonists that are responsible for inciting to terrorism. They are the real terrorists, not this guy. He was a hero.”^[19]

Some militant Balkan Islamists are even more clearly psychopathic. In Kosovo, a radical imam named Zeqrija Qazimi has posted a sermon on YouTube in which he tells followers that “The blood of the *kaffir* (infidel) is our sweetest drink.”^[20] One of Qazimi's acolytes, a young man named Patriot Matosi, died in Syria in August 2014. With good reason, the current head of the Islamic Community in Bosnia, Husein Kavazović, recently said “These are dangerous people. They belong in a mental institution.”^[21]

The influence such individuals have on impressionable young people should not be underestimated. In March 2014, a young man from Kosovo, Blerim Heta, became “the Balkans' first suicide bomber,” killing himself and approximately two dozen other people in Baghdad. Heta's family claimed his radicalization process started in April 2012 when he began attending sermons by the aforementioned Krasniqi and other radical clerics.^[22] A few months later, a young Bosnian jihad volunteer, Emrah Fojnica (who had been Mevlid Jašarević's companion on the day the latter attacked the U.S. embassy in Sarajevo in October 2011), carried out a similar suicide-bombing attack in Baghdad. Both Jašarević and Fojnica had set out from Nusret Imamović's stronghold of Gornja Maoča on the day of the attack.

Fortunately, the majority of southeastern Europe's Muslim populations finds ISIS' barbarity abhorrent and rejects such



extreme interpretations of their faith. Nevertheless, ISIS' Balkan networks and the militant Islamist infrastructure in southeastern Europe as a whole should not be ignored. Although relatively small, these networks have a demonstrated capacity to move indoctrinated jihadis and lethal weaponry between Europe and the Middle-East. As the EU's *Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2014* has noted,[23] the threat to the EU from extremists returning from Middle-Eastern jihads is likely to

"increase exponentially" in the near future—and ISIS' Balkan networks are a key link in this dangerous chain. It is encouraging that at least some European officials are beginning to recognize the danger. As Italian interior minister Angelino Alfano noted on a visit to Tirana in January "This part of the world, the Balkans can be considered a shelter for terrorists. For Europe, this area is of strategic importance." [24]

► Notes are available at source's URL.

Dr. Gordon N. Bardos is president of SEERECOM, a strategic advisory and political risk analysis firm specializing on southeastern Europe.

U.K. debates whether Britons helping ISIS as medics are terrorists

Source: <http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150327-u-k-debates-whether-britons-helping-isis-as-medics-are-terrorists>

March 27 – **Counterterrorism officials are debating how to categorize nine British students who had been studying medicine in Sudan, and recently travelled to Syria to work as medics for the Islamic State (ISIS). Are they terrorists? Have they even committed an offense?** How officials treat this latest group of Westerners joining ISIS should they return to the United Kingdom may encourage or discourage others who are contemplating joining the fight in Syria and northern Iraq.

"It's a difficult judgment to make, it really does depend on the nature of their involvement and whether that constitutes a form of terrorist activity," a British counterterrorism official told the *Guardian*.

According to the U.K. Home Office, participating in a foreign conflict could be an offense under criminal and anti-terrorism laws. Further clarifying, the office added that, "fighting in a foreign war is not automatically an offense, but will depend on the nature of the conflict and the individual's own activities." **With that understanding, Britons could possibly travel to Syria for a few months and return home without fear of prosecution.**

Furthermore, British police have made an effort to distinguish **girls who travel to ISIS territories to become jihadi wives and homemakers from men who take up arms**

on the battlefield. Just a few weeks ago, Metropolitan police head of counterterrorism, Mark Rowley, told members of parliament on the home affairs committee that the three London schoolgirls who went to Syria would not be prosecuted if they returned because there is no evidence they had committed any terrorist offense. The girls are different from someone "running around in northern Iraq and Syria with Kalashnikovs" who later apologized for committing terrorist offenses, Rowley explained.

Intelligence experts are aware that this perspective on Britons who travel to join ISIS could be used by returning fighters hiding under the cloak of humanitarian work.

The nine British medics should be prosecuted with full force of the law, some terrorism experts say, arguing that offering medical assistance to wounded ISIS fighters is as militarily effective as being a fighter on the frontlines. "They appear to be providing material support which is just as combat effective as if they were providing direct assistance on the battlefield. They should be treated in the same way as if they belonged to a fighting unit," said Shashank Joshi, senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute.

The *Guardian* notes that Britons have been permitted to give medical assistance to designated



terror groups in the past. In 2010 the Red Cross staff in Afghanistan taught the Taliban basic first aid, even though 103 U.K. service personnel were killed that year in the Afghanistan War. Explaining its decision, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) cited the Geneva conventions which note that medical care should be given to all people injured in a conflict, regardless of their position in the conflict.

The medical students upon their return to the United Kingdom could claim that their support of ISIS fighters abides with the Geneva conventions' treaties governing the humane treatment of soldiers incapable of fighting; but it should be noted that ISIS is a non-state actor, and therefore unlikely to be protected by the conventions' treaties.

Britons openly fighting against ISIS on behalf of Kurdish rebels — some linked to terrorists groups — are generally commended. British Prime Minister David Cameron has said there is a fundamental difference between fighting for the Kurds and fighting for ISIS. Yet, many Britons on the battlefield with rebels fighting against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad have been arrested under counterterrorism laws on their return to the United Kingdom.

The nine British medics can hope to be treated differently. "Let's not forget about the fact that they are doctors, they went there to help, not to fight," said Turkish opposition politician Mehmet Ali Ediboglu, who has kept contact with the medics' families.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Although the debate is interesting it has no real content. If authorities start improvising "little windows" excusing certain IS-related behaviors then the ball will be lost in the bleachers. What is exactly the point of the last paragraph of this article???

As Yemen sinks deeper into chaos, just whose wars are we fighting in the Middle East?

Source: <http://www.terrorismwatch.org/2015/03/as-yemen-sinks-deeper-into-chaos-just.html>

The air strikes launched by Saudi Arabian planes against Houthi rebel positions in Yemen may represent a significant escalation in the country's increasingly bitter civil war. But the most significant damage caused by Riyadh's surprise military intervention could concern the fate of the Obama administration's delicate negotiations with Iran over the future of its nuclear programme.

The Saudis' decision to come to the aid of Yemen's beleaguered president, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, is in retaliation for Iran's mounting support for the Houthi rebels, which earlier this month saw Tehran ship an estimated 185,000 tons of weapons to anti-government forces. Iran, the region's Shia superpower, regards supporting the Houthis, a minority Shia group in Yemen, as a useful means of targeting Saudi Arabia's conservative Sunni ruling family.

To this end, the elite Quds force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards has been providing weapons and other military support to the rebels for the past four years, helping the Houthis to overrun large swathes of the country, including the capital Sana'a, which was captured earlier this year. For decades the

Saudis have regarded Yemen's Sunni-dominated government as a loyal ally in their long-standing rivalry with Tehran, a dispute that has escalated alarmingly as a result of claims that Iran is attempting to acquire nuclear weapons.

Iranian attempts to wage a proxy war in the Saudis' backyard have resulted in a number of recent rebel successes, to the extent that the entire country is now in danger of falling under Houthi control, with all the implications that would have for Saudi Arabia's security.

The Saudis will argue that, with President Hadi being forced to flee from his makeshift refuge in the former British colonial port of Aden, they had no alternative but to intervene to save the country from falling victim to their bitter Shia rivals. Nevertheless, the fallout from their actions is likely to be felt far beyond the confines of the Houthi positions in Sana'a that were on the receiving end of the Saudi-led air strikes.

For not only have the air strikes plunged the region into an openly sectarian Shia-Sunni regional war, with an estimated 10 Sunni states supporting the Saudi



offensive to prevent Yemen from becoming a Shia client state of Iran. Saudi Arabia's military intervention could also have serious repercussions for Washington's attempts to conclude a ground-breaking peace deal with Iran over its nuclear programme by the end of this month, particularly as Tehran is now accusing the US of orchestrating the Saudi offensive in Yemen.

"America, which leads the fire mongering in the region, has supported this act," announced Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the head of the Iranian parliament's national security and foreign policy committee. "Saudi Arabia would not get involved without America's permission."

In the Swiss resort of Lausanne, where talks resumed yesterday morning between John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, and his Iranian opposite number, Mohammad Javad Zarif, on the nuclear issue, there was confirmation that the dramatic escalation of the fighting in Yemen could have a negative impact on the discussions, with the Iranian delegation demanding that Mr Kerry use his influence to prevent the outbreak of an all-out Arab-Iranian conflict.

Any tensions that develop between the two negotiating teams over the Yemen crisis will play into the hands of the hardliners in Tehran, who are already voicing their opposition to any deal with Washington, claiming that Mr Zarif is walking into a carefully laid American trap.

Houthi fighters ride a patrol truck in Sanaa (Photo: REUTERS/Khaled Abdullah)



Strains between moderates and hardline defenders of the Islamic revolution are nothing new in Iran, and have hindered numerous Western attempts to mend relations with the ayatollahs over the past three decades. During the Eighties, efforts to negotiate the release of Western hostages, such as Terry Waite and John McCarthy, were stymied by the refusal of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Iranian revolution's founding father, to countenance making a deal with a country he dubbed "the Great Satan". Similar attempts at a rapprochement during the Nineties following the election of the reformist

Mohammad Khatami as president failed because his efforts were constantly undermined by hardliners in the Revolutionary Guards.

Now, despite claims made last weekend by Hassan Rouhani, the current leader, that the outlines of a deal with Washington might be possible by the end of this month, conservatives in parliament are already lining up to denounce their government's efforts to resolve the issue once and for all, thereby paving the way for the West's punitive economic sanctions to be lifted. One prominent member of the majlis accused the government of accepting Washington's claim that Iran's nuclear programme is not designed for peaceful purposes.

The irony is that, were it not for the dramatic escalation in the Yemeni conflict, the deepening level of cooperation between Iran and the US in other parts of the Arab world would be sufficient to prove the hardliners' concerns were groundless. For example, about 1,500 miles further north from the fighting in Yemen, the US-led coalition is actively supporting attempts by Iranian-backed Shia

militias to recapture the strategically important city of Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's former stronghold, which was seized by Sunni extremists fighting for Islamic State last summer.

As Iranian-backed paramilitaries continued their ground offensive, US planes have bombed key targets, forcing Isil fighters to withdraw, and raising the prospect that pro-government forces will soon succeed in reclaiming control of their first major Iraqi city from Sunni insurgents.



Apart from forging closer cooperation on the battlefield, there are other indications that the Obama administration is keen to develop a more constructive relationship with Tehran. The publication of Washington's annual National Intelligence Estimate this month, which lists the numerous threats America faces around the globe, makes no mention of either

whether it concerns the development of nuclear weapons or the fate of failed or failing states like Yemen.

The rift in Islam

The split between Sunnis and Shias begins with the death of the prophet Mohammed in 632 AD, and the battle to succeed him as the



Iran or Hizbollah, the Iranian-backed Shia militia in southern Lebanon that has provoked frequent clashes with Israel.

For many years both have featured prominently on the list, but this year they have been quietly dropped in the hope that this gesture will persuade Tehran that the Obama administration is serious about resolving the nuclear issue by peaceful means.

Now there is a real risk that carefully laid groundwork with Tehran could be undone as a result of the fighting in Yemen, a conflict that has been provoked, to a large extent, by Iran's unwelcome meddling in the Arabian peninsula. For the truth of the matter is that, no matter how much the Obama administration would like to put its relations with Iran on a more even footing, Iranian interests in the Middle East are in direct conflict with those of the West,

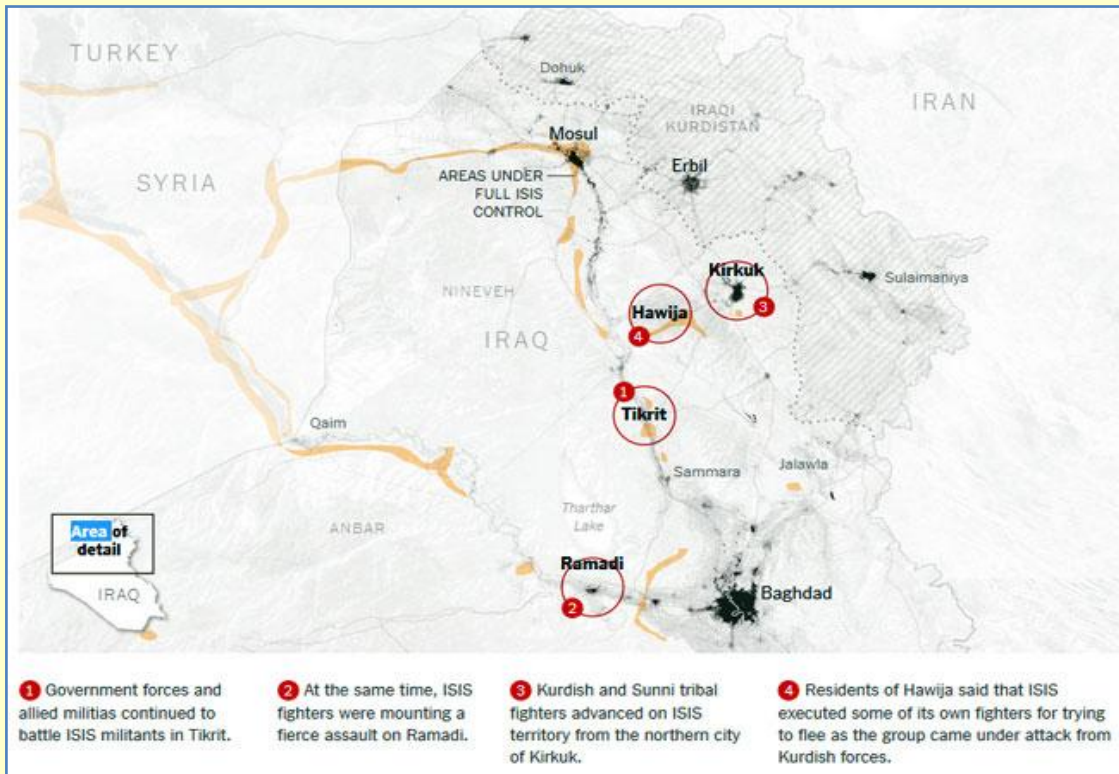
first Muslim caliph. Sunnis say his brother-in-law Abu Bakr was the rightful heir; Shias say it should have been his cousin and son-in-law, Ali. It came to a head at the Battle of Karbala in modern-day Iraq in 680 AD with the death of Ali's son Hussein at the hands of the Sunni army – an event which is still commemorated today.

Sunnis are the largest group, comprising around 85 per cent of Muslims and spread across the Islamic world from Pakistan to North Africa. Shias are a minority in most places – they were persecuted under the caliphs and the Ottomans – but hold power in Iran, where theirs is the state religion, and Iraq, where they form around two thirds of the population. The conflict has ebbed and flowed for centuries now; it won't end soon.

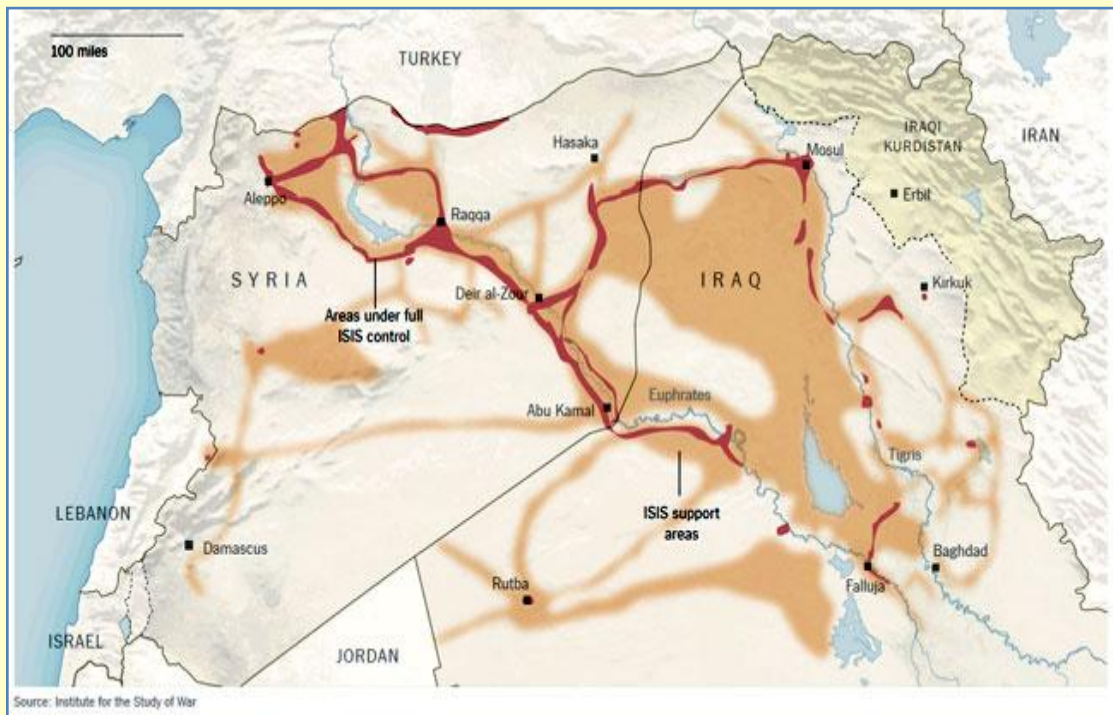


NY Times – The progress of Islamic State in graphics

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com>



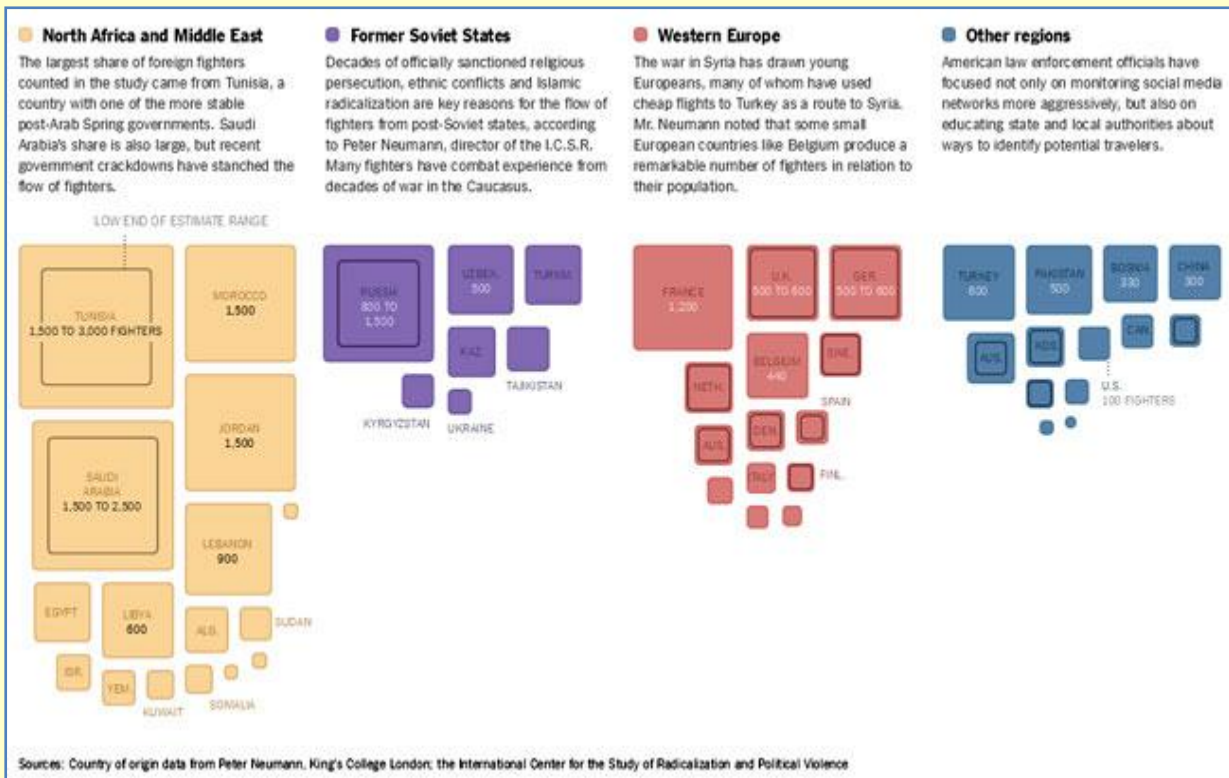
Fighting against Islamic State during the first 15 days of March 2015.



Islamic State in Iraq and Syria controls grounds bigger than many countries.

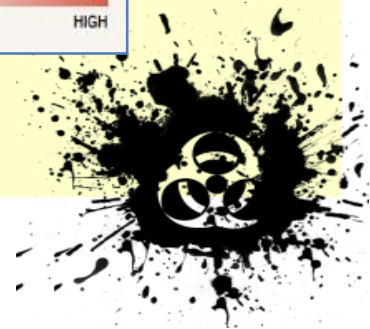
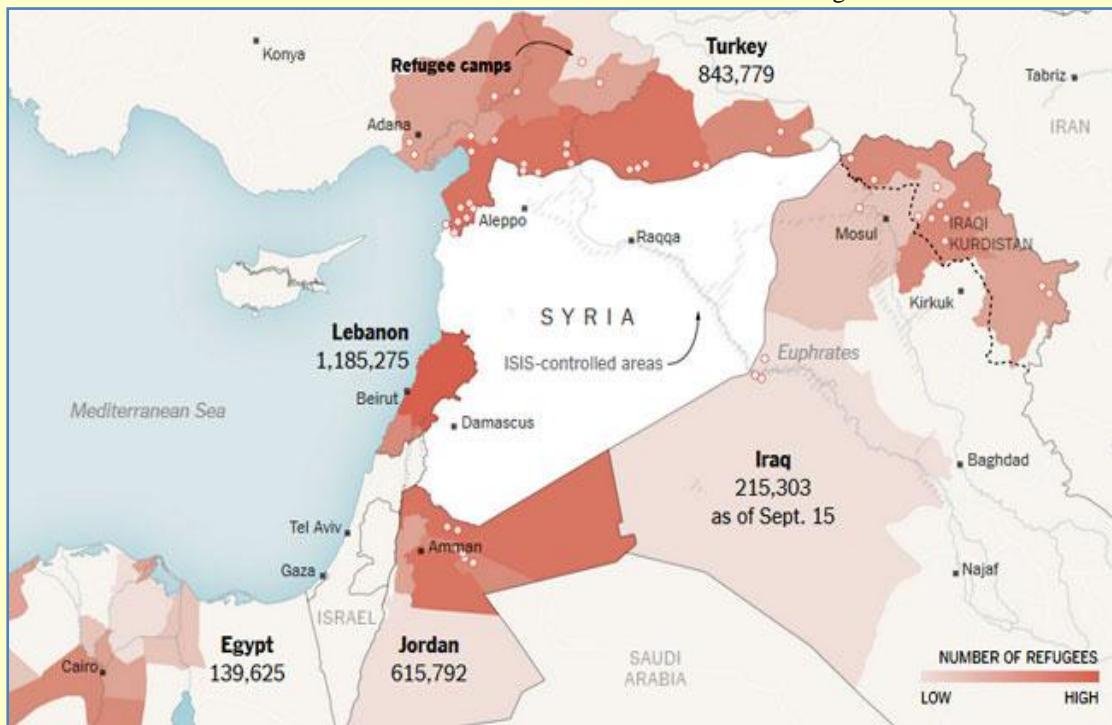


Foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq



Airstrikes against Islamic State – Refugee flows

Since 2012, more than 3 mil refugees left Syria. Most crossed borders with Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan and less fled to Iraq and Egypt. Only 12% of them lives at major refugees' camps while a big numbers survive in shelters in various towns and villages.



Commercial flights over combat zones



Russia's FSB to assist Brazil in ensuring security at Rio Olympics

Source: <http://tass.ru/en/sports/785189>

March 26 – Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) will give assistance to the counterpart security agencies in Brazil in ensuring public security at the Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016,



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Russian teams for the forthcoming Olympics told TASS on Thursday.

On Thursday, the commission devoted its regular meeting at the Ministry of Sports to preparations for the summer games in Brazil in 2016 and the winter games in South Korea in 2018.

"Extensive attention was given to ensuring the security of our really big delegation that will be staying Brazil for a long enough period of time," Nagornykh said. "That's why FSB experts who will



Yuri Nagornykh, the deputy minister of sports who chairs the commission for preparing

tackle the job in cooperation with Brazilian counterparts attended the meeting."



At the beginning of the year, the director of the antiterrorist department of Agencia Brasileira

terrorists - all this increases the level of threat," said Sallaberry.



de Inteligencia (the Brazilian Intelligence Agency, ABIN), Luiz Alberto Sallaberry, admitted that **the terrorist threat at the future Olympics had moved to a higher level after the terrorist acts committed by Islamic fundamentalists in Paris in January.**

"We have no terrorist cells, but there are certain people who can lend assistance to such groups or aid logistically," he said in an interview with the Brazilian news portal G1.

Sallaberry said Brazilian security services were closely watching the lone wolves who did not belong to any particular terrorist grouping but were overwhelmed by extremist ideology.

"We are to host the Olympic Games (from August 5 to 21, 2016), bringing together athletes, high-ranking guests and fans from countries that have become priority targets for

In February, a delegation of the Russian Ministry of Sports, the National Olympic Committee, and the Federal Medical and Biological Agency made a familiarization trip to Brazil.

"Our representatives visited all the Olympic facilities and now we have full understanding of the conditions in which the Olympic tournaments will be held," Nagornykh said. "Contacts with all officials of the Rio'2016 Organizing Committee were established."

"Proceeding from the data we received, we'll adjust the issues related to the final stage of preparations for the Games," he said. "We're working together with the sports federations in each Olympic sport to select facilities for the teams that would like to have the last phase of training right inside Brazil."

NY gang boss resurfaced at Florida mosque, sending radicalized jihadists overseas

Source: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/03/28/ny-gang-boss-resurfaces-as-terrorist-recruiter-at-florida-mosque-say-feds/>



Marcus Dwayne Robertson, 46, a former U.S. Marine known to his supporters at his Orlando-based Fundamental Islamic Knowledge Seminary as "Abu Taubah," is suspected of sending young proteges abroad for terror training.

A Muslim extremist who once led a murderous New York gang dubbed "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and then resurfaced decades later as a radical imam at a Florida mosque is begging for help funding his legal defense against charges he committed tax fraud to, according to authorities, finance terror training for his followers.

Marcus Dwayne Robertson, 46, a former U.S. Marine known to his supporters at his Orlando-based Fundamental Islamic Knowledge Seminary as "Abu Taubah," is currently being held in a local jail on a gun conviction. He faces sentencing on April 30 on a



2014 conviction of tax fraud, but more serious charges could be coming, given that prosecutors say he used the money to send his radicalized followers to Africa to learn how to kill Americans.

"The United States believes that the defendant is still an extremist, just as he was in the early 1990s," prosecutors said in recent court filings. "The only differences are that the defendant is now focused on training others to commit violent acts as opposed to committing them himself and the violent acts are to occur overseas instead of inside the United States." Robertson, according to recent Facebook posts, will continue to proclaim his innocence to all remaining allegations against him.

"The Prosecution is attempting to characterize me as a 'Teacher of Terrorists.' ... They are attempting to twist my statements to fit into a terrorist plot. In reality, they know I am not a terrorist teacher," Robertson wrote on his web site.

In his younger life as the leader of the "Forty Thieves" gang, Robertson "murdered several individuals; participated in assassination attempts; used pipe bombs, C-4, grenades, other explosives, and automatic weapons; participated in a robbery resulting in a hostage situation; and attempted the murder of police officers," according to federal prosecutors.

Court records and wiretap transcripts from 2011 to 2015 provide a gripping tale of Robertson's life, and that of one student, Jonathan Paul Jimenez, who Robertson allegedly instructed to file false tax returns to obtain a tax refund to pay for travel to Mauritania, Northwest Africa, for study and violent jihadist training.

Robertson's Orlando-based Fundamental Islamic Knowledge Seminary is not taking students while he fights charges against him. (Screengrab)

The tax fraud case led to the prosecution of Jimenez, who reportedly knew Robertson for 11 years and, by his own admission, trained with the imam for a year in preparation for his travel to Mauritania, where he would study and learn to kill U.S. military personnel.

Robertson denies sending Jimenez overseas "to commit violent jihad," but prosecutors produced several wiretapped conversations from 2011 that they say prove Robertson trained Jimenez "in killing, suicide bombing, and identifying and murdering United States military personnel."

According to court records:

- Jimenez stated he and Robertson discussed suicide bombings. Robertson told Jimenez if one could "go to a place where there's seven top generals, it would be permissible to use a suicide bomb to kill them."
- Jimenez said Robertson wanted him to "fight to kill" and taught him it is obligatory to kill military officers, specifically generals, because they "can lead an army." He said Robertson had instructed him on how to kill people "in a good manner" and how to "do it with kindness."
- Jimenez said he was "getting ready for that grave, baby," and Robertson was preparing to make him a "killer" after he completed the religious aspects of his training.

FBI investigators said Robertson's computers held documents from the U.S. Military Academy's Combating Terrorism Center, such as "How to think like a terrorist" and the "Militant Ideology Atlas," American military reports on interrogation, polygraphs, psychological operations; survival kits issued to Army aviators and a diagram of names connected to Global jihad.

Jimenez pleaded guilty August 28, 2012, to making a false statement to a federal agency in a matter involving international terrorism and conspiring to defraud the IRS, and was sentenced April 18, 2013, to 10 years in federal prison.

Bill Warner, a private investigator in Sarasota, Fla., and anti-Muslim extremist activist, has been tracking Robertson since 2009. He claims that in addition to the most recent crimes, Robertson has "links to Al Qaeda going back to at least 1993 in New York City" and also previously was associated with Omar Abdel Rahman, the so-called "Blind Sheik" whose Muslim extremist group is blamed for the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993. Rahman, convicted of seditious conspiracy with nine others, is serving a life sentence at the Butner Federal Correctional Institution in North Carolina.

In early 1991, Robertson joined with other former Muslim security guards to form a robbery gang they called the 'Forty Thieves' with Robertson as the leader known as "Ali Baba." They robbed more than 10 banks, private homes and post offices at gun point, shot three police officers,



and attacked one cop after he was injured by a homemade pipe bomb, Warner said.

Government records confirm Warner's allegations and add that Robertson personally gave more than \$300,000 of stolen funds to mosques he attended. After he was arrested in 1991, Robertson cut a deal with prosecutors, and served just four years in prison while his cronies remain behind bars to this day.

Robertson faced more jail time after he was arrested in August, 2011, for illegally possessing a firearm and was sent to the John E. Polk Correctional Facility, in Seminole County, Fla., where he is still being held.

Just after pleading guilty to the firearms conviction in Jan. 2012, federal authorities charged him in March, 2012, with conspiring to defraud the IRS.

Robertson, who said he's lived in New York, Florida, California, Japan, Mauritania in Africa and Egypt, claims he is a professor who has lectured at universities around the world, including American universities.

Videos of his lectures show him preaching against gays, "devil worshipers," non-Muslims and such American pop culture icons as cartoon SpongeBob SquarePants, who he says is "gay."

Robertson claims to have served in the elite counter-terrorism unit Joint Special Operations Command before leaving the military as a conscientious objector. A spokeswoman for the National Archives confirmed his service from May 16, 1986 to May 1994, in the U.S. Marine Corps 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company as a field radio operator, but records indicate he was released from active duty in March 1990, discharged in the rank of corporal. Records show he was trained in radio telegraph, scuba diving, marksmanship, parachuting, terrorism counteraction, surveillance, infantry patrolling and finance.

While Robertson is jailed in Orlando, classes at his Fundamental Islamic Knowledge Seminary are on hold, but through friends and one of his wives, he continues to publish pleas for help.

On Wednesday, a wife named Umm Taubah, thanked supporters, but announced their fundraising efforts were hurt when, on March 24, their GOFundMe account was taken down because "administrators claimed we violated the rules by soliciting funds for a suspected terrorist."

The U.S. Attorney's office and attorneys for Robertson were contacted for comment, but none would comment.

Now ISIS clamps down on mothers having 'un-Islamic' Caesarean births

Source: <http://www.terrorismwatch.org/2015/03/now-isis-clamps-down-on-mothers-having.html>

Islamic State is clamping down on Caesarean operations in the latest attack on what it



perceives to be decadent Western practices. Doctors working for ISIS have been ordered to charge 15,000 Syrian pounds for a Caesarean

childbirth operation, the equivalent of two months salary for the average Syrian worker.

Under the harsh new rules enforced by the terror group, doctors who carry out the operations without charging the fee will now face unspecified punishments.

The Islamic State order stipulates that the new charges are aimed at deterring hospitals from carrying out routine Caesareans.

Some clerics consider the procedure too Western and decadent. But the high fees will force women who can't afford the operations to endure

painful childbirth.

A written order published in the northern Syrian province of Deir



az-Zor states: 'in order to assist the believers from the sons of Islam who are working in the medical corps to support their brothers from the poor and others besides them from the Muslim populace, and with the desire to keep the course of medical work removed from arbitrary whim.'

It adds: 'This is to be considered as tantamount to a written order and all who contravene it will be held accountable in the Dar al-Qaḍa [IS judiciary] with attendant consequence.'

There is growing opposition among Islamic clerics to Western trends in gynaecology developments and in particular to mothers who wish to have a pain-free childbirth sometimes referred to as 'too posh to push'.

One scholar has recently claimed that the rise in Caesarean operations in the Middle East is part of a plot against Muslim mothers.

The wives of ISIS fighters like these will struggle to get pregnant again if they have a Caesarean, according to one cleric who calls the procedure a 'plot against Muslims'

Sheikh Muhammad ibn Saalih al Uthaymeen has ruled that Muslim mothers shouldn't need any decadent pain-relieving assistance in the delivery of their babies.

are too keen for birth to take place by surgical means, which is known as a Caesarean.

'I am afraid that this may be a plot against the Muslims, because the more births take place in this manner, the more the skin of the abdomen is weakened and pregnancy becomes more dangerous for the woman, and she becomes unable to get pregnant.'

He adds: 'Some of the people who work in private hospitals have told me that many women come to the hospitals and their specialists tell them that there is no alternative to a Caesarean, then they go to this private hospital and give birth naturally.'

ISIS is trying to build a modern health service, reportedly with help from these nine British medical students who have apparently travelled to Syria to work in hospitals in Islamic State-held areas

Leaders of the Islamic State have tried to build a modern health service and have appealed to doctors from all over the world to travel to Syria and Iraq to join their medical teams.

Earlier this year the Islamic State announced the opening of the Faculty of Medicine in Raqqa, in northern Syria, where doctors are trained in just three years.



In his ruling published on an Islamic website he says: 'I would like to take this opportunity to point out a phenomenon that has been mentioned to us, which is that many obstetricians, male and female, in the hospitals

IS took control of Raqqa more than one year ago, to become one of the group's main strongholds in the region, imposing a so-called 'Islamic curriculum' on educational facilities in the city.

Many Western jihadists have based themselves in this part of the region. Last week it was reported that nine British medical students travelled to Syria to work in hospitals in Islamic State-held areas.

Four women and five men entered the country, keeping their plans secret from relatives until shortly before they crossed the border from Turkey.

Karzai: Islamic State is not in Afghanistan

Source: <http://www.cnn.com/id/102543026>

March 29 – **The Islamic State does not have a presence in Afghanistan because it lacks the necessary support, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai told CNBC.**





"As far as ISIS is concerned in Afghanistan, so far it's only a slogan," Karzai told Martin Soong on 'The CNBC Conversation'. "[There's] a lot of media hype in Afghanistan, [but] there is no physical evidence of them per se."

But that doesn't mean the Islamic State won't make its way into Afghanistan. "You'll see that one day a white flag of the Taliban is turned into the black flag of ISIS. The individuals may remain the same, but the change of name is something that can occur easily," the former president said. However, for that change to occur the Islamic State would require a support base. "ISIS as an organization the way they were in Iraq, the way they were in Syria, is not going to have an impactful body without an organized element of support behind them," he said. "Without that they will not be [in Afghanistan]. With that support they may find a place there." Where the Islamic State's current backing comes from remains unclear, but Karzai said it's "definitely not Iran, because Iran is fighting [ISIS]".

The war on terror

Conflict can only be settled through negotiations as militaristic means rarely yield a solution, Karzai said referring to the war on terror and ongoing conflict in Yemen. "We have an example in Afghanistan," he said. "We've been engaged in a [military] campaign – some in the West call it a war on terrorism – for so many years, but eventually it is going to take negotiations to bring about a settlement, and that's what I'm hoping for in Yemen [too]". A change in policies is the key to overcoming terrorism, he said, not military campaigns. "The rise of the so called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is the direct result of events in Iraq. The U.S. invasion of Iraq, the collapse of the regime there, and then the anarchy that followed [and] the sectarian violence – it's directly the result of that." "I believe very strongly that...there has to be a change in policies," he said. "The U.S. and its Western allies must bring about a change in their approach to fighting extremism [and] terrorism."

U.S. troops in Afghanistan

Karzai disagrees with U.S. President Barack Obama's decision on Tuesday to slow the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The current complement of 9,800 U.S. troops will remain in Afghanistan through the end of 2015, according to a statement from the White House. The original plan was to reduce the number to around 5,500 by year-end. "The U.S. was in Afghanistan for 13 years to fight the Taliban and to fight Al Qaeda and to fight radicalism. And today we have exactly the same fight going on as we did 13 years ago," he said. "The war on terror has failed to bring an end to terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan."



"One hundred and fifty thousand U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Pakistan did not defeat [the terrorists], so how can 10,000 defeat them?" he said.

It's not the presence of troops that will make a difference, Karzai said, "there has to be a change in policies."

Not against US relations

While Karzai doesn't agree with the U.S.'s approach to fighting terrorism, he does value Afghanistan's relationship with the country. "I am not against relations with the U.S. I very much want a very deep, very strong, very strategic relationship with the U.S. But I don't believe that the presence of the U.S. military in Afghanistan is going to help the country or the war on terror the way it has been dealt with so far," he said. A difference in values was at the heart of Karzai's long-standing refusal to sign a bilateral security agreement with the U.S., he said – a decision that soured ties between the countries. "I began to feel that there was a fundamental difference in values [between Afghanistan and the



U.S.]. I felt that the war on terror that the U.S. had come to Afghanistan to fight... was not conducted the way it should have been," he said.

"The talk was in one direction, but the walk was in another direction. The talk was towards Pakistan and sanctuaries in Pakistan, but the action was taking place in Afghanistan against Afghan civilians," he added.

Mental health

Karzai dismissed claims by U.S. officials and intelligence sources that he is under treatment for a bipolar condition because he is a manic-depressive.

"They were wrong," Karzai said.

"This is an example of how propaganda was conducted... to tarnish my image and weaken

me and throw me into insignificance," he said. "But it had the reverse effect in Afghanistan. The more I was attacked, the more I found a place with the Afghan people."

Political comeback?

The former Afghan president has ruled out the possibility of a political comeback.

"I've done my time," he said. "It would be a failure on my part and on the part of Afghanistan if I were to return."

"We must have a new generation of Afghans. We must have new presidents [and] continuity of the political process of our constitution rather than stagnation," he said.

"My return... would be stagnation, and that's not good for Afghanistan."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Let us keep this article and read it again the day that Talibans will officially announce their alliance with Islamic State! Then the axis Boko Haram – IS in Libya – Al Shabaab – IS in Syria & Iraq – Taliban might raise second thoughts...



Global Incident (interactive) Map

Source: <http://www.globalincidentmap.com/map.php>



A grid of buttons for different map categories: GlobalIncidentMap.com, Amber-Alert Map, HAZMAT Situations Map, Forest Fires Map, Disease Outbreaks Map, Gang Activity Map, Border Security Issues, Presidential Threat Map, Terrorism Event Predictions, New - Quakes Map, Drug Interdictions Map, Non-Terror Aviation Incidents, NEW - Food/Medicine Incidents, NEW - Human Trafficking





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techniques, threat resolution
technologies and processes,

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- Body Cavity IEDs
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- Physical Search Protocols
- Animal Olfaction
- Suicidal Terrorism
- Drug Trafficking
- Museum Security
- Airport Facilitation
- Prison Crime
- Concealable Weapons
- Discrimination & Ethical Issues



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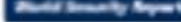
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TSA's Secret Behavior Checklist to Spot Terrorists

Source: <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/03/27/revealed-tsas-closely-held-behavior-checklist-spot-terrorists/>



Transportation
Security
Administration

Fidgeting, whistling, sweaty palms. Add one point each. Arrogance, a cold penetrating stare, and rigid posture, two points. These are just a few of the suspicious signs that the Transportation Security Administration

The checklist ranges from the mind-numbingly obvious, like “appears to be in disguise,” which is worth three points, to the downright dubious, like a bobbing Adam’s apple. Many indicators, like “trembling” and “arriving late for flight,”

Signs You Might Be a Terrorist

- Exaggerated yawning
- Excessive complaints about the screening process
- Excessive throat clearing
- Widely open staring eyes
- Wearing improper attire for location
- Whistling as the individual approaches the screening process
- Gazing down
- Exaggerated or repetitive grooming gestures
- Face pale from recent shaving of beard
- Rubbing or wringing of hands

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directs its officers to look out for — and score — in airport travelers, according to a confidential TSA document obtained exclusively by *The Intercept*.

The checklist is part of TSA’s controversial program to identify potential terrorists based on behaviors that it thinks indicate stress or deception — known as the Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques, or SPOT. The program employs specially trained officers, known as Behavior Detection Officers, to watch and interact with passengers going through screening.

The document listing the criteria, known as the “Spot Referral Report,” is not classified, but it has been closely held by TSA and has not been previously released. A copy was provided to *The Intercept* by a source concerned about the quality of the program.

appear to confirm allegations that the program picks out signs and emotions that are common to many people who fly.

A TSA spokesperson declined to comment on the criteria obtained by *The Intercept*. “Behavior detection, which is just one element of the Transportation Security Administration’s (TSA) efforts to mitigate threats against the traveling public, is vital to TSA’s layered approach to deter, detect and disrupt individuals who pose a threat to aviation,” a spokesperson said in an emailed statement.

Since its introduction in 2007, the SPOT program has attracted controversy for the lack of science supporting it. In 2013, the Government Accountability Office found that there was no evidence to back up the idea that



“behavioral indicators ... can be used to identify persons who may pose a risk to aviation security.” After analyzing hundreds of scientific studies, the GAO concluded that **“the human ability to accurately identify deceptive behavior based on behavioral indicators is the same as or slightly better than chance.”**

The inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security found in 2013 that TSA had failed to evaluate SPOT, and “cannot ensure that passengers at United States airports are screened objectively, show that the program is cost-effective, or reasonably justify the



program’s expansion.” Despite those concerns, TSA has trained and deployed thousands of Behavior Detection Officers, and the program has cost more than \$900 million since it began in 2007, according to the GAO.

The 92-point checklist listed in the “Spot Referral Report” is divided into various categories with a point score for each. Those categories include a preliminary “observation and behavior analysis,” and then those passengers pulled over for additional inspection are scored based on two more categories: whether they have “unusual items,” like almanacs and “numerous prepaid calling cards or cell phones,” and a final category for “signs of deception,” which include “covers mouth with hand when speaking” and “fast eye blink rate.

Points can also be deducted from someone’s score based on observations about the traveler that make him or her less likely, in TSA’s eyes, to be a terrorist. For example, “apparent” married couples, if both people are over 55, have two points deducted off their score.

Women over the age of 55 have one point deducted; for men, the point deduction doesn’t come until they reach 65.

Last week, the ACLU sued TSA to obtain records related to its behavior detection programs, alleging that they lead to racial profiling. The lawsuit is based on a Freedom of Information Act request the ACLU filed last November asking for numerous documents related to the program, including the scientific justification for the program, changes to the list of behavior indicators, materials used to train officers and screen passengers, and what happens to the information collected on travelers.

“The TSA has insisted on keeping documents about SPOT secret, but the agency can’t hide the fact that there’s no evidence the program works,” said Hugh Handeyside, staff attorney with the ACLU National Security Project, in a statement announcing the lawsuit.

Being on the lookout for suspicious behavior is a “common sense approach” that is used by law

enforcement, according to TSA. “No single behavior alone will cause a traveler to be referred to additional screening or will result in a call to a law enforcement officer (LEO),” the agency said in its emailed statement. “Officers are trained and audited to ensure referrals for additional screening are based only on observable behaviors and not race or ethnicity.”

One former Behavior Detection Officer manager, who asked not to be identified, said that SPOT indicators are used by law enforcement to justify pulling aside anyone officers find suspicious, rather than acting as an actual checklist for specific indicators. **“The SPOT sheet was designed in such a way that virtually every passenger will exhibit multiple ‘behaviors’ that can be assigned a SPOT sheet value,” the former manager said.**

The signs of deception and fear “are ridiculous,” the source continued. “These are just ‘catch all’ behaviors to justify BDO



interaction with a passenger. A license to harass.”

The observations of a TSA screener or a Behavior Detection Officer shouldn't be the basis for referring someone to law enforcement. "The program is flawed and unnecessarily delays and harasses travelers. Taxpayer dollars would be better spent funding real police at TSA checkpoints," the former manager said.

A second former Behavior Detection Officer manager, who also asked not to be identified, told *The Intercept* that the program suffers from lack of science and simple inconsistency, with every airport training its officers differently. **"The SPOT program is bullshit," the manager told *The Intercept*. "Complete bullshit."**

Germanwings flight 4U9525: a victim of the deadlock between safety and security demands

By Yijun Yu

Source: <http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150330-germanwings-flight-4u9525-a-victim-of-the-deadlock-between-safety-and-security-demands>

March 30 – It seems incredible that a pilot of a passenger airline could be locked out of the cockpit. But analysis from the cockpit voice recorder recovered from Germanwings flight 4U9525 after it ploughed into the Southern Alps in France has revealed that this is what happened and that one of the two pilots had been trying to get into the cockpit before the crash.

An initial explanation that the pilot at the controls was incapacitated, perhaps from a heart attack, has since given way to an alternative given by French investigators: that the co-pilot in the cockpit — named in reports as Andreas Lubitz — deliberately prevented the captain from entering in order to destroy the aircraft.

Following the September 11 attacks in New York in 2001, passenger aircraft cockpit doors have been reinforced in order to be made secure, and even bulletproof.

Access to the cockpit must be locked during flight, preventing passengers from forcing entry onto the flight deck so that pilots can safely fly the aircraft and manage any situation without worrying about potential hijackers. For the safety of the pilots the cockpit door must open

at the pilot's command from the flight deck, for example when there is no apparent risk of malicious attack. The outside of the cockpit door is secured by a keypad, to which the crew have the codes. But the request from the keypad to open the door must be confirmed by the pilot who remains inside.



It has become apparent that these two aspects — safety and security — are not always achievable at the same time. In the event of an incident like this, they even work against each other.

A trade-off between safety and security
People often confuse "security" and "safety." In Chinese the two words are exactly the same. However, conceptually they are different.

Security offers protection from intentional attacks, while safety is to prevent from natural accidents. While some security incidents can be accidental, or made to look accidental, some element of usually malicious intent is involved. The trade-off in both security and safety risks in this context is hard



because the probability of accidents can be modelled while human intention cannot. One could try to estimate the probability of someone having bad intentions, especially pilots, but in the end it's not possible to square one with the other — it is to compare apples with oranges. With the ultimate goal of protecting the lives of those on board, the processes by which the cockpit door is open and closed is crucial. Closing the door is not always right, even though the flight may be threatened by potential terrorists. That a pilot on the flight deck must open the door to his fellow officer outside the door is not beneficial if the crew remaining on the deck inside are incapacitated or unwilling to do so.

Timing and context is key

Feature interaction manifests itself in the way hardware and software interacts, such as in the design of lifts, vehicles or even smart homes. In order to avoid problematic interactions priority needs to be assigned to those features that are paramount — on aircraft, this is protecting the lives of passengers. The key to this is context and timing.

How can the electronic, robotic controller of the cockpit doors collaborate with the human crew member desperately looking for ways to gain entry to the flight deck? Knocking, or even smashing down the door is not enough — because potential terrorists may do the same, and so these eventualities will have been catered for in the initial design.

Yijun Yu is Senior Lecturer, Department of Computing and Communications at The Open University.

Calls for rethinking cockpit door security policy

Source: <http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150330-calls-for-rethinking-cockpit-door-security-policy>

March 30 – Following the 9/11 attacks, the European Air Safety Agency (EASA) and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), in an effort to make hijackings more difficult, told commercial airlines to adopt systems which would prevent the takeover of passenger planes. “The systems differ according to each plane and airline to avoid a standard and prevent would-be terrorists from knowing how they work from one carrier or plane to another,” said an aviation specialist to Agence France-Presse. Germanwings planes require

In this case, an adaptive user interface mechanism, which has been used to simplify complicated software systems, could enhance the usability of an otherwise complex security system. Mobile payment systems, such as Apple Pay, have demonstrated it's possible to simplify the interface to otherwise complex security systems. For example, users do not need to carry credit cards yet can still properly certify their transactions. Such time-saving elements to verify security could be, in such a contingency as this, a life-saving feature.

Control of the cockpit door must be adaptive to context of the situation, providing a means to bypass the risk of a situation where flight crew is locked out of the cockpit. Had the robotic door controller understood there was a reason the pilot at the controls could not confirm the entrance of the pilot outside — by registering a malfunctioning ejection seat, for example, or reading dying vital signs from a heart monitor — it could override the security requirements and allow the pilot to reenter the cockpit.

We need to reassess the risks and arguments around safety and security in the context of aviation, and find ways of bringing together hardware, software, and the flight crew themselves — perhaps through health monitoring devices — in order to ensure that both these demands work together, and do not become a threat in themselves.

an access code to open a cockpit door from the outside, but the doors could also be manually locked from inside the cockpit.

News that co-pilot Andreas Lubitz of the Germanwings flight 4U95251 deliberately locked the flight captain out of the cockpit as part of what is now considered a murder-suicide case, has raised concerns over whether the post-9/11 cockpit door safety policy is too secure, posing a more serious threat to civil aviation than terrorism.



The *International Business Times* reports that European airlines have now introduced a policy requiring a second crew member to be in the cockpit at all times. **The two-pilot system is expected to add another layer of safety.** "If you think about the mindset of a pilot wanting to deliberately crash an aircraft, having another person sitting in the cockpit may make them rethink their actions," said Dr. Anil Padhra, senior lecturer in aviation studies at Kingston University.

Padhra later added, though, that the Germanwings flight 4U95251 incident could still have occurred even if airlines required two people in the cockpit at all times. "Possibly, because if the pilot wanted to deliberately crash the aircraft — and wanted to do so even with a senior cabin crew member inside the cockpit — what he could have done is physically abused the cabin crew member and incapacitated him," she said.

The recovery of the plane's Black Box voice recorder revealed that the captain tried to kick

the cockpit door down, but the door was too strong. Some in the industry now say that the Germanwings incident highlighted to problems with cockpit doors that can be locked from the inside, and that consideration should be given to allow the door to be opened from the outside in certain circumstances.

Padhra is not convinced that rolling back the locked door policy is the best solution moving forward. "If you change that, you are removing a layer of safety that prevents passengers from getting into the cockpit," she said. "It's a question of which way you go — do you go to the left or do you go to the right? It's a difficult one."

On whether suicidal pilots are a greater risk than terrorism, "The reality is that if you speak to many of the aviation safety experts in the industry, they will tell that the threat of terrorism or inappropriate action from passengers is far, far greater than the threat of a pilot acting alone in a cockpit to deliberately crash the aircraft," Padhra said.

Driver Killed as Stolen Car Enters N.S.A. Campus

Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/31/us/nsa-maryland-gate.html?_r=0



The scene of a shooting near the National Security Agency entrance gate in Fort Meade, Md., on Monday. Credit NBC4Washington, via Reuters

March 31 – The two young men who spent the night at a nearby motel with an older man and stole his car on Monday morning may not have known exactly where they were going. But they

sped into a special highway exit reserved for employees of the National Security Agency.



The agency, the country's largest and most secretive intelligence organization, is protected



by its own police force on a sprawling Maryland campus and is on permanent alert against intruders. The encounter ended with both men shot, one fatally, by agency security personnel, the authorities said.

"There's still a lot of investigating to do," said a

which was perhaps why the driver did not obey orders from N.S.A. officers to stop. They said both young men were wearing women's clothing.

Officials identified the wounded passenger in the stolen car as Kevin Fleming, 20, of Baltimore. The name of the driver, who was pronounced dead at the scene, was not disclosed by late Monday.

Government officials in Europe and the United States have been especially wary of terrorist attacks in recent months, with

the Islamic State and the Yemen branch of Al Qaeda both calling on devotees in the West to lash out. But surely none of the myriad counterterrorism briefings for the N.S.A. staff had prepared security officers for this: two men, dressed as women, driving up to the



law enforcement official who was briefed on the episode. "But it seems very possible that they didn't set out to go to N.S.A." Officials said they found cocaine and at least one firearm in the stolen Ford Escape S.U.V.,

N.S.A. employee checkpoint at Fort Meade, off Interstate 295, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Initial reports suggested that the men were shot as they tried to



crash the secure entrance. But in a statement on Monday afternoon, Jonathan Freed, an N.S.A. spokesman, **described a more complicated encounter.**

Mr. Freed said the car approached an N.S.A. gate shortly after 9 a.m., and “the driver failed to obey an N.S.A. police officer’s routine instructions for safely exiting the secure campus.”

“The vehicle failed to stop, and barriers were deployed,” he said. After that, the car

But as investigators pieced together the prelude to the fatal encounter, they found a far more banal sequence of events.

The law enforcement official, who said he was not authorized to speak on the record about the continuing inquiry, said the owner of the Ford Escape had picked up the two younger men on Sunday night and taken them to a motel in Elkridge, Md.

On Monday morning, when the car owner, who is about 60 years old, was in the motel



“accelerated toward an N.S.A. police vehicle blocking the road. N.S.A. police fired at the vehicle when it refused to stop.”

The two men’s vehicle crashed into the police car, the statement said. One N.S.A. police officer was injured in the crash and was taken to a hospital.

“The incident has been contained and is under investigation,” said Col. Brian P. Foley, Fort Meade garrison commander. “We continue to remain vigilant at all of our access control points.”

An F.B.I. spokeswoman, Amy J. Thoreson, said at midday, “We do not believe it is related to terrorism.”

For much of the morning, however, the sketchy news reports from N.S.A. suggested the possibility of a terrorist assault. Dozens of emergency vehicles rushed to the scene. Guards with automatic weapons patrolled the area. Television networks dispatched helicopters to film the chaotic scene from above.

bathroom, the two younger men decided to steal the Escape. Where they intended to go was uncertain, but they exited I-295 at the special N.S.A. exit, which is closed to the public.

F.B.I. agents were on the scene for several hours on Monday, interviewing witnesses along with the N.S.A.’s police force, and a bureau forensic team was collecting evidence at the crime scene, Ms. Thoreson said.

The National Security Agency, which eavesdrops on foreign communications, has always tried to operate out of public view, though with about 35,000 employees it is the largest United States spy agency. It has drawn unprecedented public attention since 2013, when a former N.S.A. contractor, Edward J. Snowden, released thousands of classified documents and accused the agency of violating the privacy of Americans and foreigners.

The agency’s campus was open to car traffic for decades. But after



the 2001 terrorist attacks, security was tightened, and access, through gates operated by armed guards, is now limited to employees and pre-cleared visitors.

Monday's episode was the second this month involving gunfire at the agency. A Beltsville, Md., man, Hong Young, a 35-year-old former prison guard, was arrested March 3 in connection with a series of

random shots fired near public and commercial buildings, including one at the N.S.A.

The police said no one was seriously hurt in those episodes, though at least one man was grazed by a bullet while walking near a mall. In that case, too, the authorities say there was no evidence of terrorism; relatives and officials say Mr. Young appears to have been suffering from mental illness and had no political motive.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Initial reportage from the incident strongly indicated that this was not a

The screenshot shows a news article on the Voice of America website. The article title is "FBI: Fatal Shooting Near NSA 'Not Related to Terrorism'". Below the title is a photograph of the NSA building with a sign that reads "U.S. NATIONAL CENTRAL CYBER SECURITY AGENCY". To the right of the article is a "FEATURED VIDEOS" section with a video thumbnail titled "Film Tells Story of Musicians in Mali Threatened by Jihadists". The article text below the photo begins with "terrorist incident. In this article there is an indication that it might be a terrorist action. Overall just another proof that the unexpected always happens! Next time could be a VBID spreading death and horror..."

Defining Terrorism Down

By Jonathan Keiler

Source: http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2015/03/defining_terrorism_down.html

March 30 – The left has made a business of defining deviant behavior down, as famously noted by Daniel P. Moynihan decades ago. This generally serves its purposes by normalizing antisocial behavior that despised Western societies have carefully defined and limited over centuries of state-building. This has the result of rendering traditional categories of miscreant behavior as essentially meaningless, and opening up all sorts of antisocial actions to the left's favorite moral distillation, i.e., everything's relative.

Terrorism is no different. When it comes to terrorism, the left tends to define it in tendentious ways that protect favored actors, which is why most mainstream media refer to terrorists variously as militants, gunmen, or

fighters, and their acts those of resistance as desperation or workplace violence.

The Washington Post follows this pattern, generally preferring to call all manner of Arab or Islamic terrorists as militants, from Gaza to Grozny, though these groups clearly engage in military/political terrorism in violation of international norms and law. But ever willing to push the envelope further, Post columnist Eugene Robinson recently opined that the destruction of Germanwings Flight 9525 by a mentally ill German pilot was an act of terrorism. Now to be fair, when discussing Robinson, it's never clear whether he is pursuing a coherent agenda -- leftist or otherwise -- or just blathering to



fill his required op-ed quota of 1400 words a week. And occasionally he has to do something other than defend the divinity of Barack Obama.

But let's give Robinson the benefit of the doubt, because as absurd as it seems, this ludicrous ideation fits in perfectly with the leftist project in general. Defining the destruction of Flight 9525 as terrorism effectively removes any last vestige of logic or substantive meaning to the term. Robinson seems to be saying that any act of mass killing can be terrorism if you want it to be, or not -- after all it's relative. Thus, when it comes to real terrorism, Hamas rocketry for example, Robinson is a fierce advocate of moral equivalence and "proportional response" (which he of course misunderstands). During last summer's war in between Hamas and Israel, he put the onus of moral failing on Israel, as in this piece in which he studiously avoided calling Hamas actions "terrorism" or that radical Islamist organization "terrorist." It is clear that the term "terrorism", at least in large segments of the mainstream media, and the public at large, no longer has any meaning whatsoever. Media types and politicians of a particular left-leaning bent, feel free to simply define terror as they deem fit.

And, of course, this is happening everywhere. Essentially, the invented controversies over the shootings of young African American men in places like Ferguson, Missouri and Sanford, Florida are of a similar ilk. In each case, a drug-addled (a fact heavily underplayed by the media) young black man violently assaults an armed white man, who kills his assailant in self-defense. The left defines the act of self-defense terrorism -- part and parcel of a pattern of directed violence against young black men. While the initial assaults themselves are excused.

In the Middle East, Hamas sends terrorist teams into Israel by tunnel and sea to kill and maim any Jew that they can find, while their comrades lob rockets deliberately at Israeli population centers. These acts are defined as "attacks" or "fighting" or "resistance" by "militants" while Israeli responses in self-defense are defined by leftists like Robinson as morally reprehensible, or even by idiotic leftist actors (and others) as "state terrorism."

A recent report by the FBI dramatically expanded the number of "mass shootings" in the United States -- tweaking the statistics by essentially conflating the definitions of "active

shooter" and "mass killing." They are not at all the same thing, but hey, it's all relative right? The FBI's redefinition fits the left narrative because "mass shootings" are the result of too many guns, while simple murders conducted by "active shooters" might be the result of merely angry or crazy people. And the destruction of Flight 9525 was not the work of a madman, but an act of terrorism, because Mr. Robinson says so.

Put all this together and the shootings at Fort Hood are finally clarified. An Army psychiatrist carrying "Soldier of Allah" business cards storms into a military clinic filled with soldiers and medical personnel he doesn't know, and while yelling "Allahu Akbar" slaughters 13 people and wounds 30 more. Is this an act of Islamist terror? Or is it a "mass shooting" and an act of "workplace violence" caused by guns and the stress treating people who are stressed? Is it different from the case of a crazed German airline pilot with a history of severe mental illness, who without any evident political agenda, crashes a passenger plane into a mountainside, in an act of terrorism (According to Mr. Robinson)?

Let's analyze this conundrum from the leftist perspective. The first case is not terrorism, because the perpetrator was a seemingly assimilated Muslim American (a protected group), and therefore a presumed victim (of latent and active discrimination), who was psychologically hobbled (by post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by other people), whose concerns were ignored by his employer (the U.S. Army). In the case of the airline pilot, he was a white European (always suspect), and German (even worse -- though not Jewish, which would have been more suspicious still), who killed more people (that's bad), some of whom were children (much worse), while engaged in an environmentally harmful activity (when carried out by ordinary people, not celebrities). In Robinson's own take on the Fort Hood shootings, he carefully avoided calling the killer (Nidal Hasan) a terrorist, and blamed the Army for failing both Hasan and his victims.

This might be funny if it wasn't so tragic and sick. Worse, it represents the actual relativistic, nihilist philosophy of our current administration, plus a good portion of the Congress, the Supreme Court, and the mainstream media, of the world's most powerful and



important nation. If we accept that the destruction of Flight 9525 was an act of terrorism, we should just get rid of the word entirely. But for the left, that won't do. They still need this term that they have

rendered virtually meaningless, to tar people and nations that they don't like, for an audience of increasingly uninformed citizens, who don't really seem to care.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Just another "academic" approach of defining terrorism! The essence of "terrorism" comes from "terror" (intense, sharp, overmastering fear) that is irrelevant from the 'origin' of the "person" producing this horrible feeling or the number of people killed. Political views are also irrelevant and dangerous.



3,000 Jihadists Have Made Home in Europe's Balkans

Source: <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/03/30/report-3000-jihadists-have-made-home-in-europes-balkans/>

Islamist Black flags are waving in Bosnia, just a step away from Italy and far nearer than neighboring Libya. A "potential candidate country" for the European Union, Bosnia shares a long, unguarded border with Croatia, an EU member since 2013.

Estimates place some 3,000 Salafist extremists in the heart of the Balkans, near the border between Bosnia and Croatia, not counting the many who have already enlisted in the "holy war" in Syria and Iraq.

The Balkans are an area of particular concern to the Italian government, because of their geographical proximity and historic ties to radical Islam.

Last week, Italian Special Forces executed the final stage of a counterterrorist operation known as "Balkan Connection," breaking up an ISIS terrorist cell in northern Italy involving connections to Albania.

Two Albanians—38-year-old Alban Elezi and his nephew Elvis—have been charged with recruiting militants for international terrorism along the Balkan route, while the third, Elmadi Halili, a twenty-year-old Italian citizen of Moroccan origin, is being held for spreading propaganda for the purpose of abetting international terrorism, after publishing a 64-page pro-Caliphate document on the internet.

"Bosnia is no exception to the threat of foreign jihadi militants," said Roger Corrias, the Italian Ambassador in Sarajevo. Official state estimates speak of 160 Bosnians traveling to the Middle East to join the Islamic State, with US estimates decidedly higher at 340.

"Geographical proximity, a fragile rule of law and a deep economic crisis are elements in Bosnia that call for double attention," said Corrias. "The Italian Government is aware of it



and acts on two levels: security and European prospects for the country."

In the former Serbian village of Osve, lost in the hills of central Bosnia, a black flag flies emblazoned with the *shahada*, or Muslim profession of faith. The flag is very similar in appearance to those of Al Nusra Front, the offshoot of Al Qaeda operating in Syria and Lebanon. There a man laments the death of his son, a suicide bomber in Iraq.

"I am not happy over the loss of my son, but his death came about by the will of Allah," Hamdo Fojnica explained to the Italian daily *Il Giornale*. His 23-year-old son Emrah, with *nom de guerre* Khattab, blew himself up in Iraq. His father admits: "It is terrible to lose a child, but if Allah decides that his two brothers should also go to Syria I couldn't say no."

Europe has never taken root in Gornja Maoca, the most prominent Salafi enclave in eastern Bosnia. In early



February, the symbol of the Caliphate began to be seen here and there, and then disappeared. Now black flags with the scimitar and *shahada* can be seen waving atop houses and mosques.

From these simple houses among the remote forests have come the likes of Nusret Imamovic, one of the foreign leaders among the Al Qaeda ranks listed as a “global terrorist” by the United States. Gornja Maoca was also home to Mevlid Jaarevic, who was sentenced to 18 years in prison after shooting up the US embassy in Sarajevo with a Kalashnikov in 2011.

“I am convinced that they will conquer Rome,” said Esad Hecimovic, a journalist from Sarajevo and expert in Islamic extremism. “You don’t understand that the real danger is closer

than Libya. The threat does not just affect Bosnia, but also Italy and Europe,” he said.

The area of Velika Kladusa in Western Bosnia was the stronghold of the Islamist preacher Bilal Bosnic, who ended up behind bars last September for incitement and recruitment for jihad.

One of Bosnic’s young wives, wearing a full veil, declared: “I have nothing to say but that you should embrace Islam. My husband is in jail unjustly. We live for Allah and we are ready to die for him.”

A few miles from his home, in a remote area of Bosanska Bojna, Bosnic bought an 8-acre plot of land to build a majid, or Salafi prayer center. The prosecutor in Sarajevo found that in the course of two years, 200 thousand dollars had arrived from a mysterious benefactor in Qatar.

Most 2014 Muslim-American terrorism cases involved Americans going to Syria

Source: <http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150331-most-2014-muslimamerican-terrorism-cases-involved-americans-going-to-syria-report>

A new report issued last week by the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security shows that terrorist plots involving Muslim-Americans accounted for only a small fraction of the threats to public safety in the United States.

The center’s annual report offers systematic evidence on the issues of terrorism and homeland security. The Triangle Center says that the 2014 report shows that growth in terrorism cases involving Muslim-Americans can be attributed to individuals seeking to

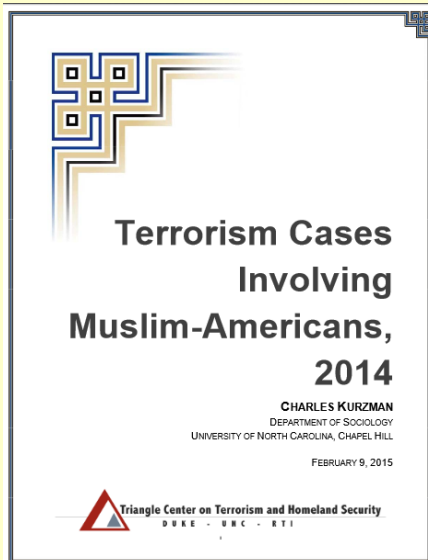
devoted to this concern,” said Charles Kurzman, a professor of sociology in UNC-Chapel Hill’s College of Arts and Sciences and author of the report. “Despite concern about the radicalizing effect of the civil wars in Syria and elsewhere, violent extremism continued to attract a miniscule number of adherents among Muslim-Americans in 2014.”

“We have not seen mass radicalization of Muslims in the United States,” Kurzman told VOANews. “That’s worth taking note of.”

Kurzman said that the numbers of Muslim-American terrorism suspects have, in fact, been declining, and over the last couple of years there have been almost no plots aimed at the United States. Most of those arrested recently on suspicion of terrorism were attempting to travel to Syria or Yemen to join terrorist groups there.

David Schanzer, director of the center and an associate professor of the practice at Duke University, said it comes as no surprise that the brutal Syrian civil war is stimulating a small number of American youth to attempt to join the fighting.

“This report is striking, however, for the data showing that hardly any Muslim-Americans — about eight per



join terrorist groups in Syria. Of the twenty-five Muslim-Americans associated with terrorism in 2014, six plotted or engaged in violence in the United States. This number equals the lowest total since 2008.

“That’s far less than one would guess from media coverage and government resources

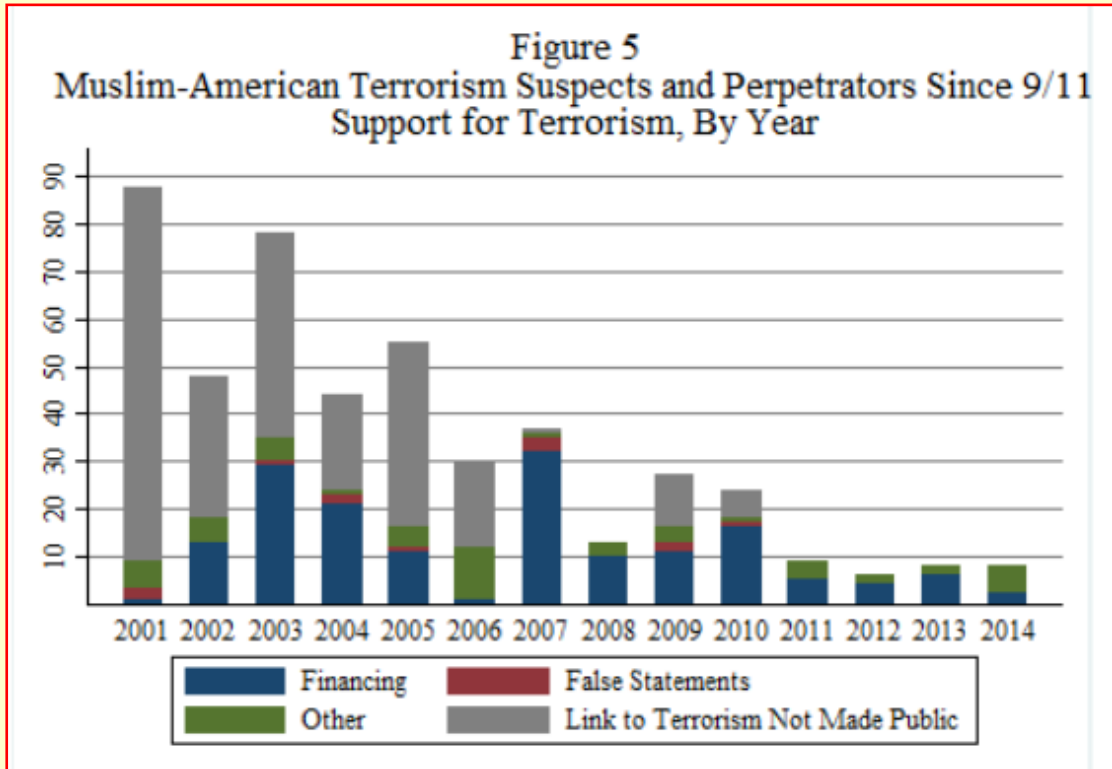


year — have been involved in terrorism offenses against targets inside the United States since 9/11,” Schanzer said. **“This terrorism has caused 50 deaths in over 13 years, whereas 136 people were killed in mass shooting incidents in the United States in 2014 alone.”**

Schanzer added that while federal authorities

called terrorism since 2001. This is out of an estimated population of three million Muslims in the United States.

The study found that while terrorism has caused 50 deaths in the United States during 2001-2014, during the same 13-year period more than 200,000 were murdered in the United States.



spend “a disproportionate amount of energy” thinking about domestic terrorism, local police departments across the country have other things on their minds.

“They very much realize that the things that are threats to public safety in their communities are much more things like drugs, gangs, domestic violence,” he said.

VOANews notes that although comparisons are not easy, other studies suggest that right-wing violence claimed more lives in the U.S. than terrorism committed in the name of Islam (see, for example, Peter Bergen and David Sterman, “U.S. right wing extremists more deadly than jihadists,” CNN, 15 April 2014).

The study examined a total of 250 American Muslims who have been arrested for — or who have engaged in — acts that can be

U.S. security authorities say that large-scale terrorist attacks have been prevented because of the broad security structure which was set up in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001.

Kurzman says that his findings suggest a “mismatch” between other public safety issues, such as car accidents or the easy availability of firearms, on the one hand, and the attention given to the possibility of homegrown terrorism on the other.

“We are stuck into this security mindset, where we have a zero-tolerance policy for this kind of violence and a much higher level of tolerance for other threats,” he told VOANews.

The Triangle Center is a collaborative effort among Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and RTI International.

— Read more in Charles Kurzman, *Terrorism Cases Involving Muslim-Americans, 2014* (Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, 9 February 2015); and Michael Jensen et al., *Profiles of Individual Radicalization*

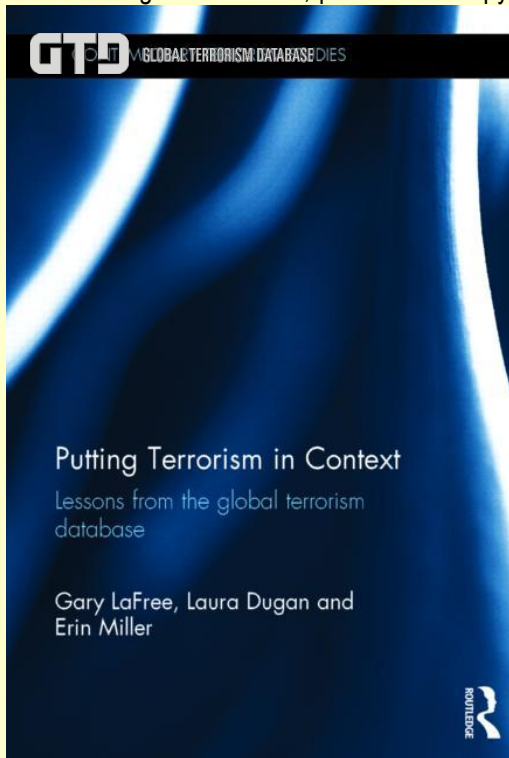


in the United States: Preliminary Findings (START, University of Maryland, January 2015).

Global Terrorism Database researchers say overall terrorism trends often defy conventional wisdom

Source: http://www.start.umd.edu/news/global-terrorism-database-researchers-say-overall-terrorism-trends-often-defy-conventional?utm_source=START%20Announce&utm_campaign=d8c3076b2b-START_Newsletter_March2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a60ca8c769-d8c3076b2b-14081393

March 30 – In late 2001, following the September 11th terrorist attacks, researchers at the University of Maryland obtained a large database originally collected by the Pinkerton Global Intelligence Services (PGIS). The database contained information on terrorist attacks dating back to 1970, printed hard-copy



on a series of index cards. The researchers, funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), digitized the data, making corrections and adding additional information wherever possible. This eventually led to the creation of the [Global Terrorism Database](#), START's massive, open-source database containing information on over 125,000 terrorist attacks worldwide, used widely by the counterterrorism professionals, policymakers, academics, reporters and members of the public all over the globe.

On Wednesday, March 25, START director Gary LaFree, GTD Program Manager Erin Miller and GTD co-principal

investigator Laura Dugan presented findings from their new book, "Putting Terrorism in Context: Lessons from the Global Terrorism Database." The book was released in December and provides a "comprehensive empirical overview of the nature and evolution of both modern international and domestic terrorism."

The idea to write a GTD book emerged early on in the process of creating the database, but LaFree, Miller and Dugan only recently had the time and resources to do so. "We wanted to write a book for a very long time," Dugan said. "Something written at the undergraduate level, which would serve as the 'quintessential citation' on matters of global terrorism."

LaFree began the lecture by discussing trends over time regarding data about the frequency of attacks in different countries/cities, and by different perpetrator groups. He also introduced the concept of "black swan" events, which are high-impact, unpredictable attacks (9/11, for example). According to LaFree, these events are not always reflective of larger trends in data and can often create misleading impressions about the typical location(s), perpetrator(s), or lethality of a terrorist attacks.

Dugan spoke next, and dove deeper into the data to help better explain the broad trends that LaFree examined. Again, Dugan pointed out that the GTD data often defies traditional thinking about terrorism.

For example, while many might think that the perpetrators of terrorist attacks are usually obvious, GTD data show that about half of all attacks cannot be linked with confidence to a specific person or group. Furthermore, of the terrorist organizations for whom attacks are attributed in the GTD, approximately 60 percent are short-lived, meaning the groups last for less than one year. Additionally, the most commonly-used weapons in GTD events are explosives and firearms, with the biggest terrorism targets being



private citizens and property. Many of these facts, Dugan says, surprise the general public, as the complex or exotic attacks that frequently capture the imagination of the media and entertainment industry are frequently atypical. Dugan also talked about tactical innovations in terrorism being similar to the early-adopter S-curve seen in the 'diffusion of innovations' theory, developed by Everett Rogers in 1962. Once a tactic gains traction, it becomes favored among increasing numbers of terrorists for a short period of time before plateauing. To demonstrate this analysis, she compared the diffusion of suicide terrorism, chemical and biological attacks, and aerial hijackings. Finally, Miller spoke about the lethality of terror attacks, and the complexity of differentiating between international and domestic terrorist attacks. Contrary to popular belief, Miller says a majority of the terrorist attacks since 1970 have been non-lethal, adding the caveat that a small number of cases, like the September 11th attacks, can have a disproportionate impact on the lethality statistics. Also contrary to commonly-held wisdom, the prevalence of international terrorist

attacks in which an individual crosses a border to conduct an attack does not seem to be increasing over time as a percentage of total attacks worldwide. As has been true in the past, most attacks are conducted by domestic actors against domestic targets.

While all three researchers were confident in their findings that conventional wisdom does not reflect the overall trends in data due to the impact of "black swan" events, they were also quick to mention that the criteria for inclusion in the GTD, and even the definition of terrorism itself, is complex to apply. Detailed information is often unavailable in open sources. As Dugan put it, "The GTD is a powerful set of data...from which we can glean a lot of information about specific terrorist organization and what they do. However, it is a vast database and we are always making corrections and improvements." The book deals candidly with the limitation of the GTD, as well as its capabilities.

Putting Terrorism in Context: Lessons from the Global Terrorism Database is currently available for purchase in hardcover, and a paperback version will be released in late 2015.

Dr. Gary LaFree is Director of START at the University of Maryland and a professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from Indiana University in 1979. LaFree is a fellow of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) and served as President of the ASC in 2005 to 2006. He has also served on the Executive Committee of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Crime, Law and Justice Committee and NAS's Division of Behavioral and Economic Sciences and Education. He was named a Distinguished Scholar Teacher at the University of Maryland in 2012. Much of LaFree's research is related to understanding criminal violence, and he is the senior member of the team that created and now maintains the Global Terrorism Database.

Erin Miller manages the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) at START headquarters at the University of Maryland. Miller earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania in 2002 and a master's degree in criminology and criminal justice from the University of Maryland in 2005. She is currently a doctoral candidate in the department of criminology and criminal justice at the University of Maryland. Her dissertation research investigates patterns of decline among terrorist organizations and movements worldwide using innovative statistical analysis of data from the GTD. She has taught statistics courses at the University of Maryland and has delivered invited lectures on the GTD and the methodological implications of terrorism research. Her research interests include data collection, research methods, statistical methodology, retaliatory violence, desistance from violence, terrorism and theory and policy evaluation. Miller has been a part of the GTD team since 2004. Her role has included improving the consistency of the data, adding key variables to the database, developing efficient and effective data collection strategies, training new staff and producing accessible analysis that provides context for current events in terrorism and counterterrorism. In her capacity as GTD project manager she frequently consults with end-users of the database, including researchers, policy makers, journalists and students. Miller is a co-principal investigator on the Statistical Annex Data Collection and Analysis for the U.S. State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism. She has served as key personnel on a number of START research projects related to the GTD including most recently the Integrated United States Security Database (IUSSD), Terrorism in Southeast Asia and Border Crossings, and Terrorist Attacks on the United States: Lessons for Protecting against Dangerous Entrants.



Laura Dugan is an associate professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland and is an active member of the National Center for the Study of Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism. Her research examines the consequences of violence and the efficacy of violence prevention/intervention policy and practice. She also designs methodological strategies to overcome data limitations inherent in the social sciences. Dr. Dugan is a co-principal investigator for two important ongoing event-based datasets: the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and the Government Actions in Terrorist Environments (GATE) dataset. The GTD is the most comprehensive source of terrorist incidents, as it records all known attacks across the globe since 1970. The GATE data record government actions related to terrorists and their constituencies for a select set of countries since 1987. Dr. Dugan's research has been published in top journals in criminology, sociology, political science and public policy. She received her Ph.D. in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University in 1999, her M.A. in statistics from Carnegie Mellon University in 1998, her M.A. in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University in 1995 and her B.F.A. in applied media arts from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania in 1987.

Terrorism and Political Violence

Caroline Kennedy-Pipe University of Hull, UK

Gordon Clubb Leeds University

Simon Mabon Lancaster University

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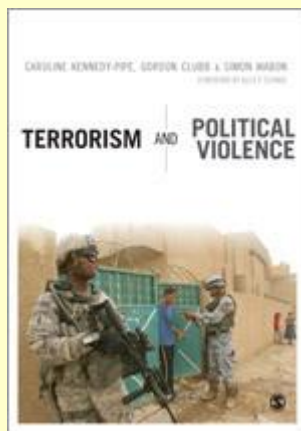
This book introduces you to the key issues in contemporary studies on Terrorism. Its interdisciplinary approach provides a unique intellectual rigour which introduces readers to cutting-edge research.

Bringing together chapters contributed by members of the Terrorism and Political Violence Association network, it offers an insight into a variety of traditional and critical perspectives. It also equips Undergraduate and Postgraduate students with the study skills needed to succeed in coursework and assignments, especially dissertation work.

Drawing on the expertise of TAPVA members, this book:

- Explores contemporary issues, such as drone warfare, state violence, children and political violence, cyber-terrorism and de-radicalisation.
- Features case studies drawn from a range of international examples, lists of further reading, key concepts and questions for use in seminars and private study.
- Provides you with study skills content designed to help you complete your dissertation.

This is the perfect textbook to guide you through your studies in terrorism, political violence, international security and strategic studies.



Reviews

This edited volume represents a collection of contributions from highly experienced academics to those at the beginning of their academic career. It covers a very broad spectrum of topics concerning terrorism and political violence, from a multitude of theoretical concepts, tactics and positioning, from how terrorism emerges through to how it ends, and how to approach the study and research of the topics. The book represents a rare opportunity for an all-in-one, up-to-date and informative source on these aspects that impact upon our contemporary lives, which makes it an invaluable source for many – researchers and students through to those with an interest in the matter.

Dr. Greg Simons

Uppsala University and Swedish National Defence College



This text is very good but is not relevant to the programme.

Mr Matthew Hirst

Arts, Business and Social Science, University Campus Suffolk

Mar 26 2015

Nice addition to the syllabus. Won't be a core reading, but recommended. Interesting chapters, but will be hard to "sell" chapters from graduate students on well established topics if there are so many advanced scholars out there who have worked on the topic.

Dr Tobias Bohmelt

Department of Government, Essex University

Mar 16 2015

China has an ISIS problem

By Kyle Mizokami

Source: http://www.theweek.com/articles/541531/china-isis-problem?utm_source=thefiscaltimes&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=partnership

Seven Chinese nationals were recently detained in Turkey as they attempted to enter Syria. The Chinese, described as hailing from the traditionally Muslim province of Xinjiang, were detained by border guards.

The incident has highlighted China's growing problem with its own Muslim minority. Chinese officials are worried radicalized Uighurs traveling abroad to train and fight will return with skills that could bolster China's domestic insurgency.

This is a small problem that will become a much bigger problem in the near future.

Xinjiang Autonomous Region is China's westernmost territory. Twice as large as Texas, it was incorporated into China in the 18th century. The Uighur people, the traditional dominant ethnic group, are Central Asians of Turkic origin and predominantly Muslim.

They are also unhappy. Since 1955, the Chinese government has ran a settlement program for other Chinese — particularly Han Chinese — to migrate to Xinjiang. Native Uighurs feel their homeland is being colonized by outsiders, their culture is now the minority and there are fewer economic opportunities for them as there are for recent arrivals. Uighurs have also felt pressure on their Muslim faith.

The result has been a growing Uighur insurgency that has allegedly carried out terrorist attacks not only in Xinjiang but the rest of China. The Chinese government blames Uighur terrorists not only for attacks against Han Chinese and government facilities within Xinjiang and also an attack in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in October 2013 and a mass knife attack at Kunming train station that

killed 29 and left 140 injured. China claims the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) is responsible, a radical group that advocates an independent East Turkestan incorporating part of Xinjiang.

Chinese Uighurs have been going abroad to train and fight. Aspiring jihadis travel overland to Vietnam or Thailand, then on to the Middle East. More than 800 have been stopped in Vietnam in one year alone. China has even set up a special police unit nicknamed "4.29" to stop human traffickers in southern border states neighboring Southeast Asia.

Chinese Jihadists were first reported in Syria in 2012, and in September of last year one was captured by the Iraqi military.

China's state-run tabloid *Global Times* reported in December that **300 Chinese nationals were fighting in Iraq and Syria.** In 2014, Islamic State leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi criticized Chinese rule in Xinjiang and asked Beijing's Muslims to pledge allegiance to him instead.

Chinese jihadists aren't just traveling to the Middle East. Last year an Israeli foreign policy analyst warned a Chinese delegation to Israel that 1,000 jihadis were training at a Pakistani military base. Chinese have also been detained in



Indonesia seeking out extremist Islamic groups.

The insurgency in Xinjiang, bolstered with ex-former fighters, would make the Chinese government's job of pacifying the region much harder. The prospect of having to face returned fighters with military experience and training in laying improvised explosive device and suicide attacks is deeply concerning to Beijing.

The jihadist movement represents a major challenge to China's Communist Party rule. Terrorist attacks strike at one of the Party's core mandates, the preservation of order. It also cuts against the Party's survival instincts: the government worries such attacks would show that rebellion against the government is possible, even violent rebellion, and encourage other groups with grievances to push back against Party rule.

In addition to attacks inside Xinjiang and throughout the rest of China, jihadists are well positioned to conduct attacks against China's energy infrastructure. Much of China's natural gas — which the government plans to more than double in an attempt to combat pollution

— passes through Xinjiang on its way from Central Asia. Attacks on natural gas pipelines and facilities could have a negative impact on China's economic growth.

China's response to this problem has been ham-handed. A recent call by Chinese leader Xi Jinping to increase economic opportunity for Uighurs is probably too little, too late. **The government instituted bans on beards and veils on city buses in Xinjiang, a move that could only further alienate the general population.** China's state media has stepped up reports that Uighurs traveling to the Islamic State have been used as cannon fodder, or executed for desertion.

The Chinese government is completely opposed to all of the insurgents' demands and even if it wasn't, negotiations with jihadists seldom go well. China's crackdown on Uighurs is only adding fuel to the revolt, and the increasing number of extremist movements worldwide means greater opportunity to fall in with radicals. China's ISIS problem is not going away any time soon.

Kyle Mizokami is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in The Daily Beast, TheAtlantic.com, The Diplomat, and The National Interest. He lives in San Francisco.

National Guardsman Plotted Mass Murder of 150 Soldiers in USA

Source: <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/national-guardman-plotted-mass-murder-150-soldiers-usa#>



Illinois Army National Guard Readiness Center in Joliet, Illinois (Photo © Reuters)

March 29 – A National Guardsman and his cousin have been arrested for plotting to attack US soldiers on a base in Illinois. If it had gone according to plan, up to 150 people could have been killed.



Hasan Edmonds, 22, was an Illinois National Guardsman serving with the 634th Brigade Support Battalion as a supply specialist. Jonas Edmonds, 29, planned to use Hasan's uniform to enter the Joliet Armory, where Hasan's National Guard unit was based. There he would attack using grenades and AK-47s.

For his part, Hasan intended to fly out to Cairo and from there attempt to join the Islamic State, where he intended to use his military training to assist the Islamist terror group.

Originally both men had intended to fly out to Syria, but Jonas has a previous conviction for armed robbery and therefore doubted he would be able to leave the country.

Hasan was arrested on Wednesday night while trying to board a plane at Chicago Midway International Airport. Jonas was arrested two hours later at his home in Aurora, Illinois.

Both men have been charged with conspiring to provide material support and resources to a foreign terrorist organization. They face up to 15 years imprisonment each.

Hasan joined the National Guard in August 2011, according to Lt. Col. Brad Leighton, an Illinois National Guard spokesman. He was responsible for ordering uniforms and other equipment.

The FBI coordinated with the National Guard on the case, leading to Hasan's work being altered to deny him access to any sensitive

information or potentially dangerous equipment.

The FBI became aware of the plot after Hasan communicated with an undercover agent posing as an Islamic extremist via Facebook. They discussed Hasan's plan to travel to Syria and carry out attacks there.

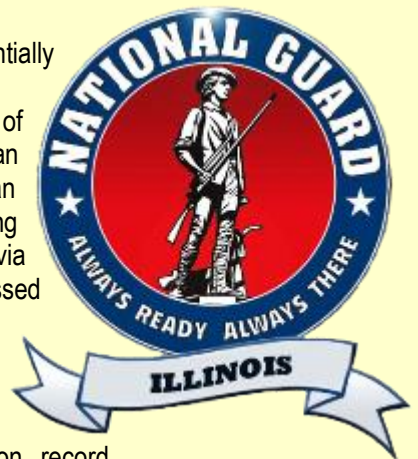
Documents submitted to court by the prosecution record Hasan as saying: "With the U.S., no matter how many you kill they will keep coming unless the soldiers and the American public no longer have the will to fight. If we can break their spirits we will win."

He went on to express admiration for the attack on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in January which killed 12 people and then five others in a related attack.

Hasan is allegedly recorded saying "Honestly we would love to do something like the brother in Paris did."

Jonas Edmonds went on to contact another undercover operative last month, also on Facebook, with whom he discussed plans to attack the Joliet military facility.

The pair met with that informant last Monday, leading to their arrest.



ISIS and al-Qaeda in Mauritania?

Source: <http://i-hls.com/2015/03/isis-and-al-qaeda-in-mauritania/>

March 30 – **Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State together at al-Qaeda-run training camps in**



(ISIS) could be working the Sahara Desert in Mauritania, where at least eighty recruits from the United States, Canada, and Europe are being indoctrinated into radical

jihad and training for attacks that could reach the West.

"The situation in Mauritania is powder keg very few people are talking about," said Verryan Khan, editorial director for *the Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium (TRAC)*, which had a source on the ground in Mauritania who visited the camps and

obtained documentation.

Mauritania's roughly three million people are concentrated on the coast, around the capital of Nouakchott, while the rest of the vast country is arid desert and sparsely inhabited. This is where the al-Qaeda training camps are based.



“This is not a travel destination,” Khan said. “The only reason someone would come here from a Western country is to train for terrorism.”

Videos and photos of the camps obtained by TRAC show signs in English, providing some evidence of Westerners’ presence. “The fear of returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq is high, but Mauritania-trained fighters are not even on anyone’s radar,” said Khan.

Besides the two main al-Qaeda camps, Mauritania has about 1,000 madrassas, most of which face little or no government monitoring. Experts told *i-HLS* this little to no control or oversight is effectively an “incubator” for these institutions to be used as propaganda and training centers. This is in line with Khan’s description.

According to *Home Land Security News Wire*, the al-Qaeda training camps received a boost with the release of five terrorists formerly imprisoned in the Nouakchott Central Prison, this after a January 24 prison riot in which two guards were taken hostage.

Islamic State's 32 Global Affiliates

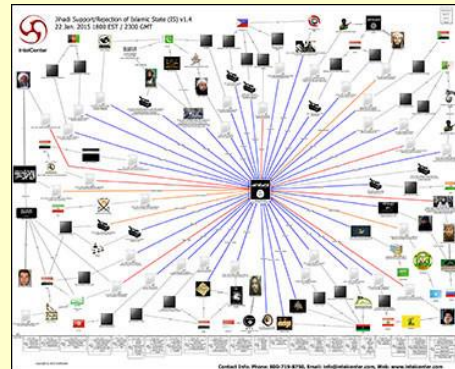
Source: <http://intelcenter.com/maps/is-affiliates-map.html>



Following the creation of the Islamic State (IS), Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi called for jihadi groups around the world to pledge allegiance to IS. Below are lists of jihadi groups that have pledged allegiance/support **as of 31 Mar. 2015.**

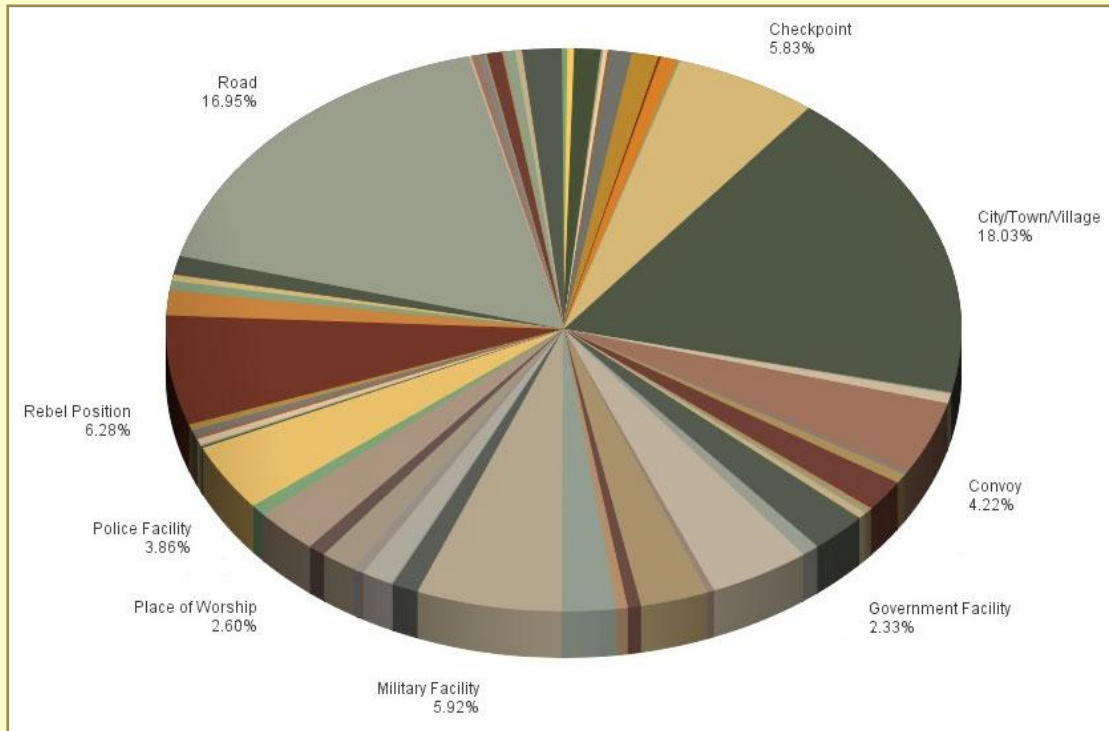
SUPPORT/PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO IS

- al-I'tisam of the Koran and Sunnah [Sudan] - 1 Aug. 2014 - Support
- Abu Sayyaf Group [Philippines] - 25 Jun. 2014 - Support
- Ansar al-Khilafah [Philippines] - 14 Aug. 2014 - Allegiance
- Ansar al-Tawhid in India [India] - 4 Oct. 2014 - Allegiance
- Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) [Philippines] - 13 Aug. 2014 - Support
- Bangsmoro Justice Movement (BJM) [Philippines] - 11 Sep. 2014 - Support
- al-Huda Battalion in Maghreb of Islam [Algeria] - 30 Jun. 2014 - Allegiance
- Heroes of Islam Brigade in Khorasan [Afghanistan] - 30 Sep. 2014 - Allegiance
- The Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria [Algeria] - 30 Sep. 2014 - Allegiance
- Jundullah [Pakistan] - 17 Nov. 2014 - Support
- Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) [Pakistan] Statement - 25 Sep., dated 12 Sep. 2014 - Support
- Islamic Youth Shura Council [Libya] - 22 Jun. 2014 - Support
- Jaish al-Sahabah in the Levant [Syria] - 1 Jul. 2014 - Allegiance
- Faction of Katibat al-Imam Bukhari [Syria] - 29 Oct. 2014 - Allegiance
- Jamaat Ansar Bait al-Maqdis [Egypt] - 30 Jun. 2014 - Allegiance
- Jund al-Khilafah in Egypt [Egypt] - 23 Sep. 2014 - Allegiance
- Liwa Ahrar al-Sunna in Baalbek [Lebanon] - 30 Jun. 2014 - Allegiance
- Islamic State Libya (Darnah) [Libya] - 9 Nov. 2014 - Allegiance
- Lions of Libya [Libya] (Unconfirmed) - 24 Sep. 2014 - [Support/Allegiance]
- Shura Council of Shabab al-Islam Darnah [Libya] - 6 Oct. 2014 - Allegiance
- Mujahideen Indonesia Timor (MIT) [Indonesia] - 1 Jul. 2014 - Allegiance
- Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSCJ) [Egypt] - 1 Oct. 2014 - Support
- Tehreek-e-Khilafat [Pakistan] - 9 Jul. 2014 - Allegiance
- Okba Ibn Nafaa Battalion [Tunisia] - 20 Sep. 2014 - Support
- Mujahideen of Yemen [Yemen] - 10 Nov. 2014 - Allegiance
- Supporters for the Islamic State in Yemen [Yemen] - 4 Sep. 2014 - Allegiance
- al-Tawheed Brigade in Khorasan [Afghanistan] - 23 Sep. 2014 - Allegiance
- Supporters of the Islamic State in the Land of the Two Holy Mosques [Saudi Arabia] - 2 Dec. 2014 - Support



- Ansar al-Islam [Iraq] - 8 Jan. 2015 - Allegiance
- Leaders of the Mujahid in Khorasan (10 former TTP commanders) [Pakistan] - 10 Jan. 2015 - Allegiance
- Boko Haram [Nigeria] - 7 Mar. 2015 - Allegiance
- Jund al-Khilafah in Tunisia [Tunisia] - 31 Mar. 2015 - Allegiance

Top 10 Locations for Terrorist Attacks in 2015



50

Source: <http://intelcenter.com/reports/charts/incident-locations-2015/index.html>

During the period there were 2,123 incidents tracked by IntelCenter of which 1,118 had a classifiable location. City/Village/Town ranked the highest largely due to attacks by Islamic State (IS) and Boko Haram on entire cities, villages and towns. Rebel Position came in third due to fighting among rebel groups in Syria.

Rank	Location	# of Incidents	Percentage
1	City/Village/Town	201	18%
2	Road	189	17%
3	Rebel Position	70	6%
4	Military Facility	66	6%
5	Checkpoint	65	6%
6	Convoy	47	4%
7	House	46	4%
8	Police Facility	43	4%
9	Market	31	3%
10	Place of Worship	29	3%

Methodology Note: City/Village/Town reflects attacks where the entire location was under attack and not when a single attack occurs on a road inside of a city. Rebel Position reflects attacks by rebels on another rebel groups position. Incident Location reflects



where the attack occurred which may or may not reflect the actual target of the attack. While IntelCenter makes every attempt to identify all incidents, the nature of reporting makes that nearly impossible. These numbers should be viewed as minimums with the total number likely higher where it could be expected to be so. The original source data for all incidents shown here is located in the IntelCenter Database (ICD) Incident Component.

The IntelCenter Database (ICD) allows users to easily create charts tracking tactics and targeting along with many other metrics related to terrorist and rebel groups. As of 12 Mar. 2015, the ICD has detailed records on more than 129,000 incidents. IntelCenter also provides analytical support services on terrorist and rebel tactics and targeting.

Free Analytical Reports, Charts & Maps

A very good source of graphical information on terrorism issues

<http://intelcenter.com/reports-charts.html>

Radical Islamists are attending terror training camps in rural Wales

Source: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/top-cop-radical-islamists-attending-5443300>



Getty - Heaven: But Ceredigion is being used by potential terrorists

A top terror cop has warned that radical Islamists are using rural Wales as a training camp.

The Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU) say it is aware that locations in Ceredigion, Powys and Pembrokeshire have been used for training purposes.

Detective Constable Gareth Jones, a counter-terrorism officer with the unit has warned that issues surrounding terrorism were not confined to large cities.

He said it was vital that residents informed authorities of any intelligence and information regarding terrorist activities, saying that fighting terrorism was not just down to the police.

DC Jones said a link between Michael Adebowale, one of the men convicted of the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby, and the former European Institute of Human Sciences at Highmead, near Llanybydder was well known.





Met Police - Murderer: Michael Adebowale

Adebowale studied Arabic at the institute which is understood to have been set up by Iraqi clerics. He said: "This chap attended the Institute for Human Sciences for quite some time.

"Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys (map) have been used for radicalisation training.

"These people do turn up and take part in seemingly ordinary activities, but they do have an ulterior

motive.

"This does happen in Ceredigion."

Islamic terrorism in Wales stretches back before the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001.

Three years before that day the hook-handed cleric at the Finsbury Park mosque was sending extremists to the Brecon Beacons to train.

And two of the 7/7 London bombers bonded on a white water rafting trip in North Wales in 2005.

In December 2010 it was not terrorists coming into Wales, but homegrown extremists living in the capital Cardiff, when three men were arrested for plotting to bomb the London Stock Exchange.

The three would-be terrorists from Cardiff were arrested as part of an Al-Qaeda inspired gang who plotted a 'Mumbai-style' series of terror attacks on Britain.

Omar Latif, 28, Gurukanth Desai, 30, and Abdul Miah, 25, were photographed holding a series of secret meetings with Mohammed Chowdhury and Shah Rahman in a country park in Wales.

And in the summer of 2014 extremism in Cardiff made headlines worldwide when Nasser Muthana and Reyaad Khan featured in an Islamic State recruit video.



Jihadi e-book advises sleeper cells

Source: <http://tbo.com/list/military-news/jihadi-ebook-advises-sleeper-cells-20150330/>

March 30 – In chilling detail, a new jihadi e-book obtained by The Tampa Tribune spells out for sleeper cell members how to wage war against the U.S. and its allies from inside the country, and how to remain secret while doing so.

Offering suggestions that terrorism experts say range from troubling to goofy, a new jihadi e-book obtained over the weekend by The Tampa Tribune tells how Islamic sleeper cells

can remain under the radar and attack when necessary.

"How To Survive In The West: A Mujahid Guide (2015)," describes itself as "a guide for the Muslims who are living in a majority non Muslim land" that "will teach you how to be a secret Agent who lives a double life, something Muslims will have to do to survive in the coming years."



Written in English by an unnamed author, the e-book says it teaches how to be an “undercover agent.”

“In this book, you will be taught these skills,” it says in its introduction. “You will be taught how to lead a double-life, how to keep your Secret life private, how to survive in a threatening land, how you can Arm and strengthen the Muslims when the time for Jihad comes to your country, and neighborhood. **In simple terms, from this guide book — you will**

learn how to be a Sleeper-cell

which activates at the right time when the Ummah needs you.”

Though it is unclear how widely, if at all, the e-book has been disseminated, it is worrisome to terrorism experts as much for who it is aimed at as what it contains.

The e-book “is more of a propaganda piece aimed at inciting Muslims in Europe to act as lone wolves in support of the Islamic State,” said Kerry Myers, a former FBI supervisory special agent who specialized in bomb forensics

and assisted operations in Afghanistan. “The ‘tradecraft’ (if you can call it that) is very elementary and poor. What is true is not new and what is new is not true. The alleged ‘tradecraft’ is equivalent to that followed by low-level, uneducated, street-level, dope dealers in any urban city — if even that good.”

Now teaching terrorism financing at the University of South Florida, Myers said, “The biggest danger I see in this is as propaganda tool potentially inciting an attack like we recently had in Paris or Tunisia.”

Ben Venzke, CEO of IntelCenter, which tracks jihadi groups, has a similar take.

“The most concerning of all though is not the manual itself, but rather the environment in which the manual and those like it exist,” Venzke said. “The threat posed by an effective and broadly distributed terrorist training manual a decade ago pales in comparison to today. The jihadi terrorists’ enthusiastic and

aggressive adoption of ‘lone wolf’ or ‘homegrown terrorists’ operating by themselves or in small groups, while continuing their directly managed plots, has completely changed the threat framework. These individual actors are hearing and responding to the call.”

The e-book does not appear to be available online and was obtained as a PDF. It offers

information about a wide range of subjects, from breaking allegiances to earning money to making modern weapons, bombs, mobile detonation devices from cell phones, how to avoid detection, how to use the Internet without raising suspicion and what to do “when you are spied on and get raided.”

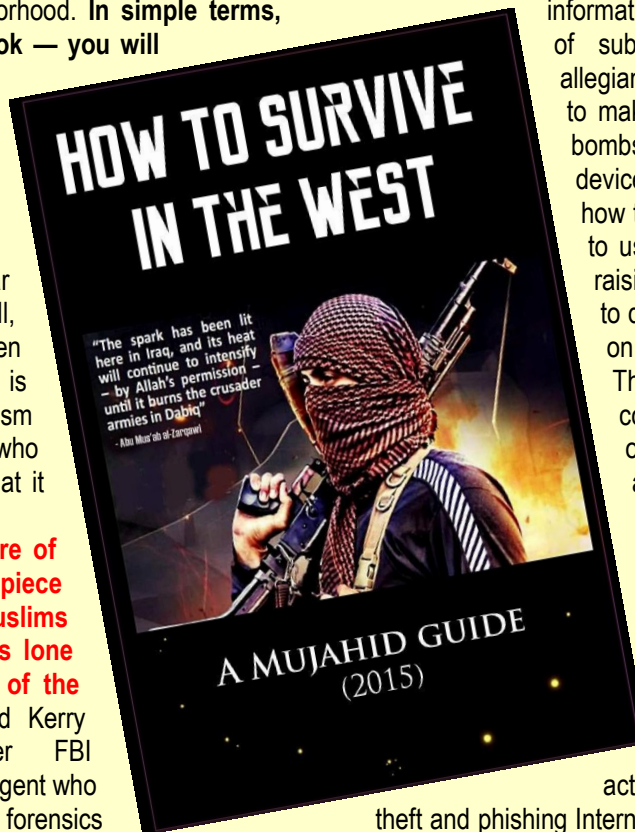
The book presents a couple of case studies on how to pull off attacks, including a look at the Charlie Hebdo assault in Paris, and suggests that it is better to use high-powered rifles instead of bombs. It calls for readers to engage in criminal activities like credit card

theft and phishing Internet scams. It also offers advice on basic espionage tradecraft, both in detecting surveillance and carrying it out, and includes information about how to use social media and how to find jihadi Twitter accounts that have previously been suspended.

Following that advice leads to a number of formerly suspended jihadi accounts that have been revived under new names.

“How To Survive In The West” also includes advice on how to best hide financial assets to keep from raising suspicions as well as basic combat techniques for how to enter and clear rooms, and how to spot and avoid surveillance. Jihadi training manuals have been around for a long time, Venzke said, and al-Qaida has made a splash in the recent past with its Inspire magazine.

But even though “the information being explained even when basic or even thought to already be obvious is damaging to



counterterrorism efforts since it reinforces to terrorists how to operate intelligently and reduce the likelihood of exposure,” said Venzke, adding the fact that the e-book includes the Charlie Hebdo attack is troubling. “The use of contemporary examples and pulling the various threads together into a cohesive message all work to make the message stick,” he said. “In this instance, not a good thing.”

It was likely written by someone associated with the Sunni insurgent group Islamic State, and probably by someone in Great Britain, said Clint Watts, a former executive officer of the Combating Terror Center at West Point. Watts, who was also a former FBI special agent, and is now senior fellow at the Homeland Security Policy Institute at George Washington University and a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said he drew his conclusions after reading a copy sent to him by the Tribune.

“This is either an ISIS member or an ISIS supporter, putting down some basic guidance,” said Watts, using an acronym for the Islamic State group.

Watts surmises that the author is British from the syntax and spelling in the e-book.

Many of the suggestions in the e-book are “goofy,” Watts said, including using lemon water to write secret messages and for would-be spies to watch the Jason Bourne series of movies for tips. Unlike Venzke, Watts said that some of the information in the e-book could lead readers into trouble because it is so simplistic.

Osama “bin Laden’s guys were not like this,” Watts said. “In general, they were not trying to

turn all recruits into secret agents, as that brings undue scrutiny, because they are not trained.”

What is troubling, Watts said, are the e-book’s diagrams for a device that triggers explosives using a mobile phone and the call for criminal activity, something Watts said al-Qaida preferred to avoid to keep from winding up on law enforcement’s radar.

The e-book urges Muslims to undertake violent jihad because “you will be imprisoned for your faith now or in the future, then ask yourself if you will be able to maintain your Iman (faith) there. Those who go on the offensive earlier on will learn how to react in different situations, and will more likely receive martyrdom (shahadah) instead of long-term imprisonment.”

The e-book is likely aimed at Sunni Arabs, said Lora Griffith, a former senior CIA operations officer with extensive experience in the region, **That’s because it states that the Prophet Muhammad “promised us we will win and finally take over Europe’s capital — Rome, but only after we have taken Persia (Iran),” a Shia nation.**

The two sects of Islam have waged often violent conflict and are engaged in bloody combat in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere, notes Griffith, who now lives in Tampa. And Iranians are Persians, not Arabs, Griffith said, further explaining her supposition.

Like Myers and Venzke, Griffith finds the tome troubling because “it reaches out to disaffected people. The book is not very sophisticated, but there are people who will be attracted to it.”

Terrorism: The Rise of Homegrown Jihadists in Europe

By Dr. Melissa Schnyder

Source: <http://inhomeandsecurity.com/terrorism-the-rise-of-homegrown-jihadists-in-europe/>

March 19 – A string of recent terror events including the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, the attacks in Copenhagen at a free-speech event and synagogue, and the anti-terror raids in Belgium that brought down a potential plot to kill police officers illustrate the threat of

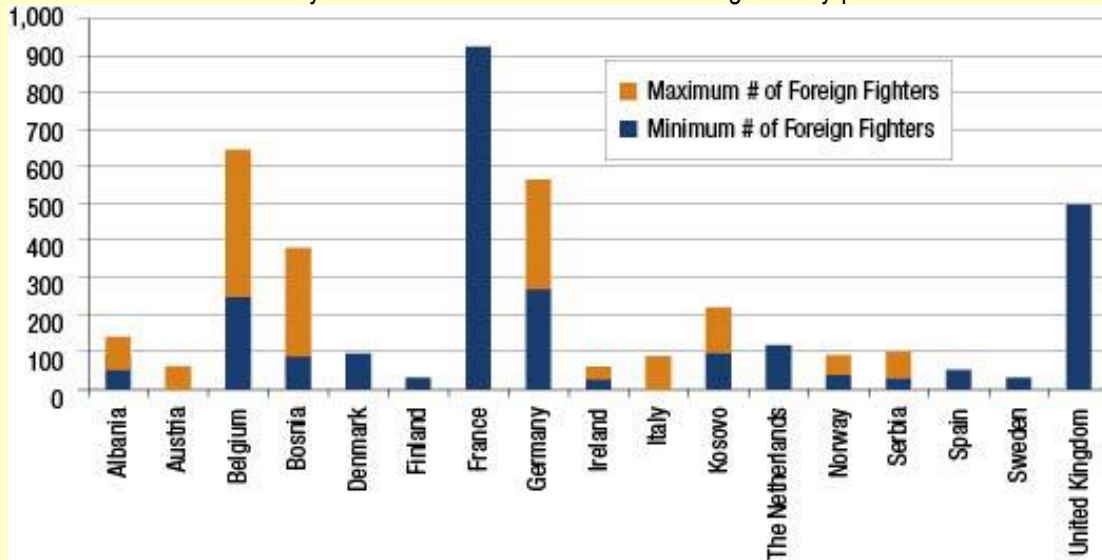
homegrown jihadism in Europe. This threat has become an increasing concern for European governments, which are devoting resources to monitor thousands of their own citizens who leave Europe for Syria to train and fight alongside the terrorist group ISIS.



A growing fear is that many of these recruits eventually return home to plan terrorist attacks on European soil. Although citizens of many countries across Europe have left home to wage jihad, a recent report by Brookings indicates that France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands account for the largest percentage of European nationals who have fled to Syria.

from returning foreign fighters is real, and the impact is likely to be substantial.

In an article for *Bloomberg Business*, Ian Lesser, the senior director for foreign and security policy at the German Marshall Fund in Brussels, explained that “for some European countries, this problem of foreign fighters and their potential role in terrorism inside Europe is their leading security problem.” The fear is that



Counting Foreign Fighters

Some estimates place the total from Western European countries to be close to 2,000 individuals, perhaps more. France, for example, is estimated to have had roughly 900 of its citizens enter Syria to join ISIS, and the corresponding figure for the United Kingdom has been placed at roughly 500 nationals.

The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR) has examined the figures on a per capita basis, concluding that after adjusting for population, the most affected European countries are as follows:

- Belgium: up to 27 foreign fighters per million residents
- Denmark: up to 15 foreign fighters per million residents
- The Netherlands: up to 9 foreign fighters per million residents
- Sweden: up to 9 foreign fighters per million residents
- Norway: up to 8 foreign fighters per million residents
- Austria: up to 7 foreign fighters per million residents

As these figures show, the scale of the problem remains relatively small overall. At the same time, the danger of a potential terrorist threat

as transnational terrorist networks develop and strengthen, the threat of terrorist attacks on European soil orchestrated by European citizens becomes more and more likely.

The Decision to Become a Foreign Fighter

Many point to countries’ integration approaches, which reflect how well ethnic minorities including Muslim populations tend to be incorporated into the civic, economic, and political life of the state as a root cause of interest in becoming a foreign fighter. For example, in her book *Terrorism within Comparative International Context*, Maria Haberfeld found that Muslims in Europe experience “extreme alienation from the dominant culture,” and that this sense of alienation was not specific to any one socio-economic class. In an article for CBS news, David Schanzer, the director of the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security at Duke University, highlighted the approach to integrating its ethnic minority populations as one reason why we see fewer foreign fighters from America compared to Europe.

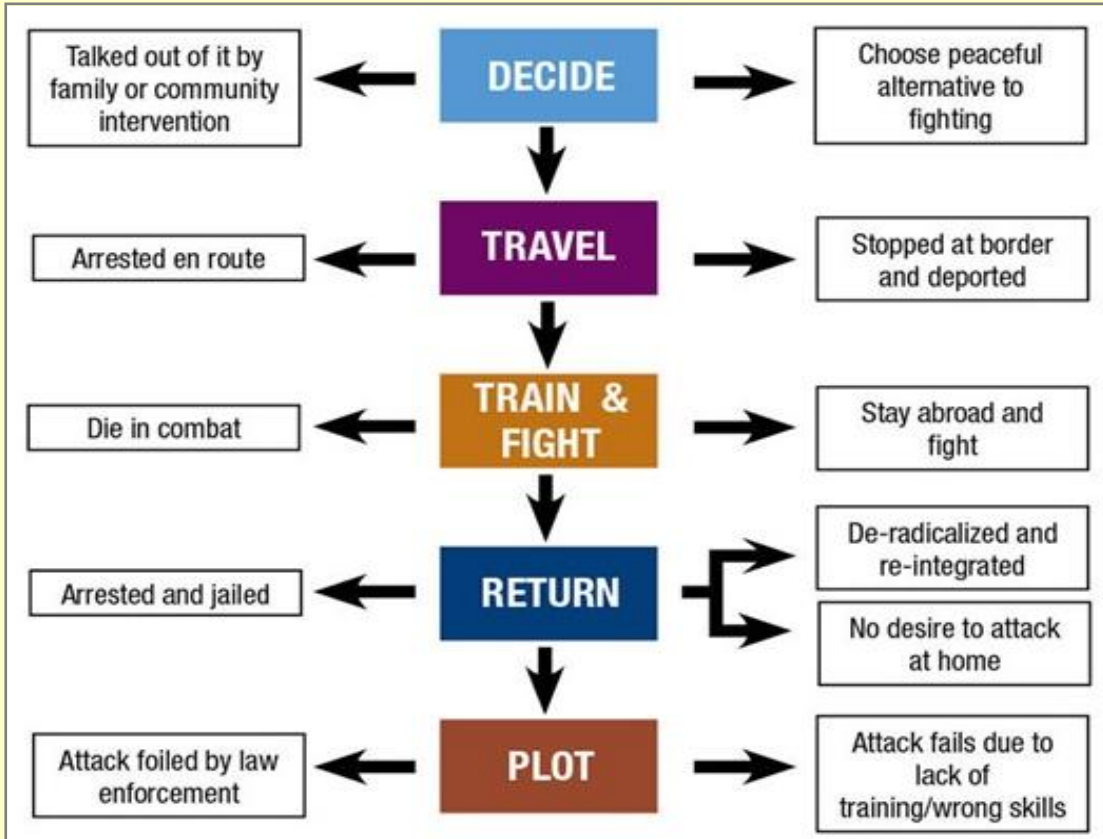
One way to assess this more concretely is to look into how the integration policies of different



European countries actually correlate with their respective numbers of foreign fighters. It is also worthwhile to examine economic factors to see if factors like youth unemployment and gross domestic product per capita can help account for the decision to leave one's home country to fight abroad.

participation policies may be a good place to start.

Countries with favorable labor market mobility laws promote equal access to the full labor market, education system and employment services, while favorable political participation laws support the development of an active civil



I undertook a very simple correlation analysis to look into these factors. I found a weak relationship between a country's economic indicators and the number of foreign fighters, suggesting that economic factors may not be driving the decision. Integration policies were, in fact, stronger factors. European countries where labor market mobility and political participation policies are more open and favorable toward the inclusion of ethnic minorities tend to experience fewer instances of foreign fighters. To be clear, this does not mean that more restrictive policies are directly causing a rise in the number of Europe's foreign fighters, but it does suggest that integration policies are worth examining as a potential contributing factor.

In conclusion, much more research is needed that examines why some countries experience much higher rates of foreign fighters than others. Labor market mobility and political

society among a country's ethnic minority populations. This suggests that European states that are more accommodating of their Muslim populations, with robust methods of promoting economic, political and civic inclusion, likely face less of a risk of home grown jihadism than countries that adopt more restrictive policies in these areas.

Dr. Melissa Schnyder is an associate professor of International Relations at American Public University, where she teaches courses on international organizations, European politics, comparative politics and international relations theory. She researches the role of non-state actors in influencing international political processes and outcomes. Her forthcoming book, *Activism, NGOs and the State*, examines transnational and domestic networks of organizations in Europe working for migrant inclusion.



Kenya al-Shabaab attack

Source: <http://www.terrorismwatch.org/2015/04/kenya-al-shabab-attack-victims-bodies.html>

At least 147 people died when al-Shabab militants stormed Garissa University in north-eastern Kenya, near Somalia.

The mortuaries in Garissa have been unable to cope, and many of the students killed came from other parts of the country.

Four of the gunmen involved were killed by security forces.

The BBC's Anne Soy saw ambulances leaving the Garissa campus on Friday. Hundreds of survivors are also being sent home, and our correspondent saw students with suitcases boarding buses.

Burials for the Muslims killed in the attack are expected to start taking place.

A dusk-to-dawn curfew has been imposed across north-eastern Kenya.



Christians targeted

The masked attackers rampaged through the campus at dawn on Thursday, shooting and shouting "we are al-Shabab".

A second-year student who hid for 10 hours in a wardrobe is one of about 500 survivors still being held at a military facility, where they are undergoing counselling.

Her father drove for four hours from Nairobi when he was unable to get hold of her during the siege. He told the BBC about his desperate search for his daughter at the mortuary, hospital and military airstrip. Late in the afternoon, when he had almost given up hope, he got a text: "Dad call me". They have yet to be reunited but his relief is palpable.

Questions are being asked about the university's security. One survivor, who hid in bushes for five hours, told the BBC that students had raised the issue at the end of last year, **but only two armed guards had been provided**. One of the few students from the local community, he said he would never set foot on the campus again.

The heavily armed gunmen killed two security guards first, then fired indiscriminately at students, many of whom were still asleep in their dormitories. They singled out Christians and shot them, witnesses said.

Eric Wekesa, a student at Garissa, told Reuters he locked himself in his room before eventually fleeing.

"What I managed to hear from them is 'We came to kill or finally be killed.' That's what they said."

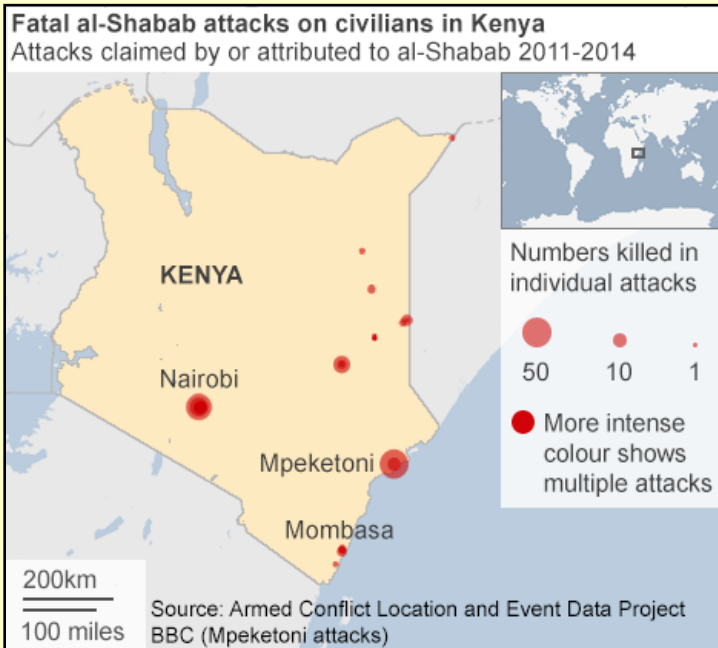
How attack unfolded

1. Militants enter the university grounds, two guards are shot dead
2. Shooting begins within the campus
3. Students attacked in their classrooms while preparing for exams
4. Gunmen believed isolated in the female dormitories
5. Some students make an escape through the fence

More than 20 security officers were killed by a sniper at the university, the BBC's Caroline Karobia reports.



The gunmen were eventually cornered in a dormitory by Kenyan security forces. Four of them died when their suicide vests detonated. A fifth gunman was reportedly arrested.



More than 500 students managed to escape. Al-Shabab, which is linked to al-Qaeda, said it carried out the attack. The group says it is at war with Kenya, which sent troops to Somalia in 2011 to fight the militants.

Al-Shabab was also blamed for the Westgate Mall massacre in Nairobi in 2013 in which 67 people died. Kenyan authorities are to hold an emergency meeting to assess security in the region. There has been criticism that Garissa should have been better protected.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta ordered "urgent steps" to ensure police recruits could begin training immediately. "We have suffered unnecessarily due to shortage of security personnel," he said.

The government has offered a reward of \$53,000 (£36,000) for the man it says planned the killing - Mohamed Kuno, a former Kenyan schoolteacher, now thought to be in Somalia.

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud

condemned the attack, in a statement quoted by Somali state radio. He said it showed the need for a co-ordinated effort against al-Shabab militants. "I am sure we will defeat these terrorists. Kenya is a brotherly nation that has extended its support to us, which the terrorists don't want. The aim of the terrorists is to dispirit us, but they will not succeed in that," he said.





Should we worry – or not yet?

The first successful crossing of Mediterranean Sea by Islamic State!



ISIS could become the pirates of the Mediterranean and bring havoc to European waters after taking coastal towns in Libya

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2959848/Warning-ISIS-pirates-Mediterranean-bring-havoc-European-waters-taking-coastal-towns-Libya.html>

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- Islamic State already working with human traffickers, Italian officials said
- Experts believe they have access and knowledge to 'wreak havoc' in Med
- Mediterranean Sea accounts for 15 per cent of the world's shipping activity
- ISIS threatened to send 500,000 migrants to Europe and hide among them
- It murdered 21 Egyptian Christians on Libyan beach - 220 miles from Italy
- In the gruesome video of execution, one militant vowed to 'conquer Rome'

Unholy Relationship

Source: <http://i-hls.com/2015/04/unholy-relationship>



Apr 3 – Lieutenant General Kenneth E. Tovo, deputy commander of the U.S. Southern Command, said in his address to the Congress Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, that Hezbollah is working with Mexican cartels.

According to the *Yucatan Times* Tovo explained during the hearing that Hezbollah, “which has long viewed the region as a potential attack venue against Israeli or other Western targets, has supporters and sympathizers in the Lebanese Diaspora communities in Latin America, some of whom are involved in lucrative illicit activities like money laundering and trafficking in counterfeit goods and drugs.”

“I think it is fair to say that there is a good amount of profit that Lebanese Hezbollah makes off of illegal trafficking,” Tovo added.

The *Yucatan Times* article tells of a meeting taking place in May 2011 between an Iranian-American car salesman, Manssor Arbabsiar, from Corpus Christi, Texas, and a man he believed to be a member of the Mexican cartel Los Zetas. Arbabsiar offered the man US\$1.5

million to murder the Saudi ambassador to the United States.

Over the next four months in 2011, Arbabsiar, a spy for the Royal Forces, which is a special operations unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards of Iran, and another person presented as his “cousin”, met in Mexico with an undercover agent of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) whom they thought to be a member of Los Zetas.

The DEA agent asked that they deposit the money in a bank controlled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Soon after, in September 2011, Arbabsiar was captured with the help of Mexican authorities, and charges were brought against him for trying to assassinate a diplomat.

Also relating to this unholy relationship, in October 2014 U.S. Marine General John Kelly, commander of the Southern Command, said in a speech at the National Defense University in Washington: “we know that some of the [cocaine] money that comes out of the United States is laundered into the coffers of Hezbollah.”

This Lethal Laser Could Cripple ISIS and Other Enemies

Source: <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/2015/03/08/Lethal-Laser-Could-Cripple-ISIS-and-Other-Enemies>

With their great range and accuracy, laser weapons don't just destroy things. They can disrupt targets non-lethally, making them increasingly tantalizing to the defense industry.



A powerful fiber-optic laser system in development by Lockheed Martin is showing a lot of promise. In its first field test it disabled a small truck from well over a mile away, the company announced this week. **Called ATHENA — short for Advanced Test High Energy Asset — the system is being built to protect military forces and infrastructure.**

ATHENA burned through the small truck's engine with pinpoint precision. The truck wasn't driving normally but was propped up on a platform with its engine running for the test, Lockheed said. Nonetheless, it's apparently the highest power documented by a laser weapon of its kind.

The High Energy Laser Mobile Demonstrator (HEL MD) onto which ATHENA was mounted.

“Fiber-optic lasers are revolutionizing directed energy systems,” Lockheed's chief technology officer, Keoki Jackson, said in a statement. “This test represents the next step to providing lightweight and rugged laser weapon systems for military aircraft, helicopters, ships and trucks.”



ATHENA uses a technique called "spectral



beam combining" in which multiple laser modules together form a single high-quality beam. The technology is based on Lockheed's earlier \$32 million ADAM (Area Defense Anti-

Munitions) system, built to shoot down enemy rockets in mid-air. Other companies, including Boeing, have also been working on laser systems.

The cost effectiveness of using lasers is part of their appeal, aside from their accuracy and precision. **While firing a surface-to-air missile costs roughly \$400,000 a pop**, say Navy accountants, consider this: The Navy's experimental **laser LaWS** (Laser Weapons System), which has been tested with success aboard the USS Ponce in the Persian Gulf and is authorized for use in self defense, costs a mere **59 cents a shot** to deploy.

As for ATHENA laser's strength, an everyday pointer laser is about one milliwatt. ATHENA's 30-kilowatt laser is about 30 million times that.

Warning over Islamic radicalisation in England's prisons

Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-32194671>

Staff shortages are making it harder to tackle Islamic radicalisation in England's prisons, the former head of the National Counter Terrorism Security Office has warned. Chris Phillips said shortages meant extremists were not properly monitored, enabling them to recruit others.

A parliamentary report has said jail safety was compromised by staff cuts. Justice Secretary Chris Grayling rejected the claim and said a "very careful watch" was kept on the issue.

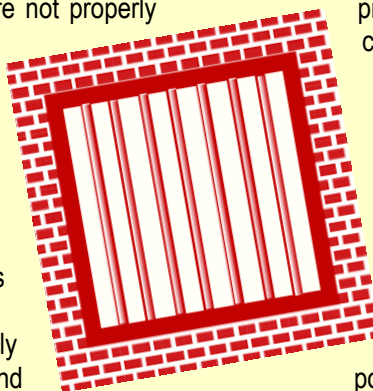
"Prison overcrowding is at virtually its lowest level for a decade, and we have increased spending on measures to prevent radicalisation," he said.

"We will never be complacent about the issue." Mr Grayling said he had found "no evidence" that Mr Phillips' claim was correct, adding that the former detective chief inspector had left the civil service four years ago.

There are more than 12,000 Muslims in jails across England and Wales and the latest official data shows that more than 100 Muslims are in jail for terrorism offences in Great Britain. The worry particularly concerns converts to Islam, as research from the former chief inspector of prisons, Dame Anne Owers,

suggests they are more vulnerable to extremism.

But her report also said suspicion of Muslim prisoners could be both unfair and counter-productive, fuelling resentment and causing even more trouble.



'Haystack of extremists'

Mr Phillips, who used to lead the National Counter Terrorism Security Office, a police unit that works closely with the government on its counter-terrorism strategy, said: "What we have actually is a prison population that's growing.

"We have less officers generally in prisons than ever before and we also have less police officers to deal with them, so what we have is a growing haystack of extremists where we still have to find the single needle that's going to go off and do something really nasty.

"But of course we've got less people to go and look for them as well so it's a really difficult thing for the police service and prison service to deal with."

Home Secretary Theresa May rejected the claim that staff shortages were hindering efforts to stop Islamic radicalisation in



prisons, adding that the government was looking at "and continue to look at" preventative measures. Mrs May has already said she wants new "extremism officer" roles in prisons to deal with radicalisation.

And the government has said all high-security jails have units who work with the security services to root out extremism. It also said there were faith-based interventions, led by a team of expert imams.

An ex-prisoner's view

Ex-prisoner John Shelly said: "Over the last few years there's been a real sort of noticeable change of people becoming radicalised and getting themselves involved in violent situations - and being coerced into doing that by some of what you might call the more prominent Muslims that are inside for various offences."



He spent time in more than 40 jails including HMP Whitemoor, a prison with a large Muslim population. Last year, chief inspector of prisons Nick Hardwick said some of its inmates who had been convicted of terrorism offences were trying to influence and pressurise others.

Mr Shelly, who was released from prison a few months ago after serving a 15-year sentence for armed robbery, said prisoners would often "join the extremists" because they were promised protection.

He claims to have seen prisoners plotting acts of terror as well as endorsing groups such as Islamic State and al-Qaeda.

He said: "Extremism - it's grown and grown by the day and they've found themselves in a situation where they can't separate anyone because wherever they separate them to, they're just mixing them with other people who have the same view and same sort of message."

Mr Phillips said: "The answer is to get into the prisons and to make sure the most susceptible people are kept away from those that might turn those into extremists and, at this moment, we cannot even keep drugs out of prison, we can't keep mobile phones out of prison, so clearly there is not enough staff to do that."

Muslim former prisoner Hassan said he had been unfairly discriminated against, however.

"I was inside for 14 years, and a lot of people became Muslim through me," he said. "You're looked at as, 'Oh, a lot of people are becoming Muslim because of this man, he must be recruiting,' and it's far, far from the truth. They think you're a radical or a fundamentalist."

Stephen O'Connell, president of the Prison Governors' Association, told the BBC that the threat from radicalisation in prisons was "real" but he said he was not aware that it had got any worse over the last year because of staffing changes.

"I understand the correlation between staff numbers and prisoner numbers but when it comes to dealing with extremists, we are talking about a small number of prisoners with some very dedicated resources to actually managing those," he said.

The Justice Select Committee recently criticised the government for cutting the number of prison officers by almost 30%, a reduction of 12,530 staff, between 31 March 2010 and 30 June 2014.

The committee's report also said the prisoner-to-staff ratio rose from 3.8 in September 2010 to 4.9 in September 2014.

It claims that this has led to a significant deterioration in safety - with fewer staff to monitor inmates.

And former Lord Chief Justice Lord Woolf recently said that Britain was heading for a crisis within prisons because of overcrowding and staff shortages.

The government denies that.

But the explosive mix of radicalisation, fear over discrimination and staffing pressures could spell even greater trouble inside the country's jails.

The latest prison population statistics from the Ministry of Justice show there were 85,681 people in jail in the week ending 27 March, up from 85,252 in the same period last year.



Malaysia passes tough terrorism law to deal with 'Islamic State' threats

Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/world/asia/malaysia-passes-tough-terrorism-law-to-deal-with-extraordinary-threats/>

Apr 07 – **Malaysia's parliament on Tuesday passed a tough anti-terrorism bill to deal with "extraordinary" threats posed by terror entities such as the Islamic State (IS), a move denounced by opponents as a harsh blow for civil rights.**

After 15 hours of heated debate, the parliament passed the 'Prevention of Terrorism Bill' without any amendments.

The bill will allow those involved or commissioned to carry out terrorist acts to be detained for years and have their movements restricted.

Members of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition vociferously defended the necessity of preventive measures to deal with "extraordinary" threats posed by terror entities such as the Islamic State (IS).

Opposition lawmakers, however, argued that some provisions in the bill were against human rights and civil liberties.

The decision came hours after authorities arrested 17 people who were planning terror strikes in the Muslim majority country.

Earlier, Deputy Home Minister Wan Junaidi Jaafar told reporters that the arrests of the 17 Malaysians, including two who had just returned from Syria, showed that the law was needed and would prevent things from happening rather than wait for things to happen.

Ruling party members said the law had enough provisions to safeguard the rights of everyone.

Opposition member N Surendran questioned the need for a two-year detention period without trial as countries with bigger threats such as the UK and the US had shorter detention periods.

He argued that the existing Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (Sosma) had sufficient detention periods.

"Although POTA states that no person shall be arrested for their political beliefs or activities, it also states that the decision of the Prevention of Terrorism Board cannot be challenged unless it is on procedural matters," he added.

Several opposition MPs said they planned to table their own version of POTA, omitting the

provisions on detention without trial and the anti-terrorism board.

They also proposed that the High Court should have the power to decide if a suspect should be remanded.

Opposition lawmakers attempted to push in three proposed amendments to the bill but were rejected.

Home Minister Ahmad Zahid gave an assurance that POTA would not be abused and no one who had political differences of differing opinion would be detained under this law.

"This is the transparency of the present government where we allow the freedom of political differences," he said.

The bill is expected to be passed due to the ruling regime's majority in parliament.

The terrorism act has heightened worries in Malaysia over a deepening crackdown on civil liberties launched by the government in the wake of a 2013 election setback.

Dozens of government critics have been hit with sedition or other charges after criticising the regime.

Meanwhile, the police said that the 17 militants detained by them were planning to create an Islamic State-like regime in the country.

The suspected militants in a bid to achieve their goal had planned to kidnap VIPs and raid banks to fund terror activities, Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar said.

"We received information that they were also planning to raid several army camps and police stations to boost their weapons cache.

"The locations identified as the cell's terror targets were in Kuala Lumpur and the administrative capital of Putrajaya," he said in a statement here.

Khalid added that among the 17 detained on Sunday were two Armed Forces personnel and an Indonesian militant, believed to be a former member of the Jemaah Islamiah terror group.



Those detained are reportedly aged between 14 and 49.

The latest arrests bring the number of those detained for suspected IS links to 92 since February 2012.

Local media reports, quoting unnamed intelligence sources said, the suspected militants had planned terror attacks on several landmarks in the city as they felt that Malaysia was a secular and non-Islamic state.

The leader, a 45-year-old former member of the terror group Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM), went to Syria in August 2014 and returned to Malaysia in December.

The trader has reportedly received weapons training in Afghanistan from 1989 to 1990 and was also involved in a conflict in Sulawesi in November 2000.

Among those held were a religious teacher, two civil servants, a security officer and the leader, a former Internal Security Act (ISA) detainee.

The source described the arrests of the terror cell members as vital to thwart any attack in Malaysia.

“Most of the 17 are hardcore believers in IS ideology,” the media reports quoting the source said.

Al-Shabaab Attack on Garissa University in Kenya

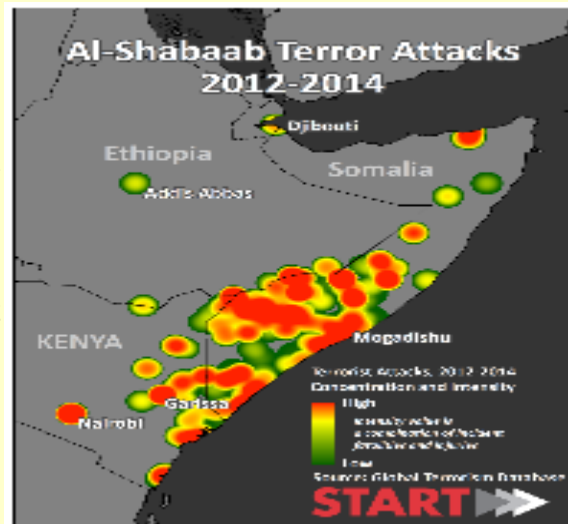
Source: http://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/STARTBackgroundReport_alShabaabGarissaU_April2015.pdf

On Thursday, April 2, gunmen attacked Garissa University in eastern Kenya, near the border with Somalia. The attackers killed 147 and injured 79 before detonating suicide vests when cornered by security forces. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, which is believed to have been planned by Kenyan, Mohamed Kuno.

START has developed this background report highlighting:

- attacks attributed to al-Shabaab,
- attacks on educational institutions, and
- mass-casualty attacks.

► Read the full report at source's URL.



Al-Shabaab is implementing a "plan as we go" strategy

Source: <http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150410-alshabaab-is-implementing-a-plan-as-we-go-strategy>

Apr 10 – **In the past two years, al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab has lost territory, ports, checkpoints, and key leaders to the African Union force in Somalia, which is supported by the United States. They have no armored personnel carriers like Nigerian-based Boko Haram, poppy fields like the Taliban, or oil fields like the Islamic State, still the Somali-based group has been able to launch deadly attacks in and out of Somalia.**

Recently, the group managed to kill 147 people at Garissa University College in Kenya.

To many counterterrorism experts, al-Shabaab is implementing a “plan as we go” strategy, which relies on decentralized teams of gunmen

who, on their own, determine who and where to attack. “I call it the dumbing down of terrorism,” said Matt Bryden, a political analyst and director at think tank Sahan Research. **“They keep it simple. They’re lightly armed, highly disciplined and relatively well trained.”**

“They’ve definitely lost some of their major revenue flows,” he added. “But they’ve managed to survive a lean season.”

At its peak between 2007 and 2010, al-Shabaab ruled a large portion of Somalia, about the size of Denmark. “They were doing something like state building,” said Stig Jarle Hansen, author of



“Al-Shabaab in Somalia. “They were administering territory. They were delivering services,” all while suppressing the local population by enforcing their interpretation of Sharia. Al-Shabaab began to lose its control of territory when the United States launched an almost \$1 billion campaign that trained and equipped African Union forces to carry out missions against the group.

Still al-Shabaab militants are proving to be resilient. The *New York Times* notes that in conventional military terms, al-Shabaab is losing. The group has been forced to vacate territories, and is no longer able to bring in millions of dollars in revenue from operating ports and local trade, as it did a few years ago. Nevertheless, as the recent attack in Kenya has shown, al-Shabaab continues to grow in scope and ambition, spreading its violence and ideology outside Somalia.

Hansen acknowledges that defeating al-Shabaab will require more than military intervention. “It’s not an easy game,” he said. “You have to have a people-centric strategy. You have to bring security to the villages in Somalia and stop corruption within the Kenyan security services. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard over the past five or six years, ‘al-Shabaab is dying, al-Shabaab is dying.’ Al-Shabaab is not dying,” he said. “Case closed.”

For the past two years, al-Shabaab has increased its attacks on Western and Christian populations in Kenya. At the 2013 Westgate mall attack, militants asked shoppers questions about Islam to separate Muslims from non-Muslims before shooting the non-Muslims. At the Garissa University College attack, students were also separated by religion. The *Times* points out that Garissa University College had one of the largest concentrations of non-Muslims in that part of Kenya, and it is relatively close to the Somali border, not far from where al-Shabaab militants still circulate. In claiming responsibility for the Garissa attack, an al-Shabaab spokesman said the college was part of Kenya’s “plan to spread their Christianity and infidelity” in a Muslim area.

Without money and military equipment to fight African Union forces, al-Shabaab relies on small units to spread fear. The group has already made strides in recruiting youths in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Djibouti, said Bryden. Decentralization makes it more dangerous. “That makes it more resilient to decapitation strikes.” For that reason, analysts believe military might alone will not destroy al-Shabaab. “There has to be a political vision across this region to tackle al-Shabaab,” Bryden said.

“Right now, that doesn’t exist.”

What ISIS Learned From Pedophiles

By Jamie Dettmer

Source: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/04/09/what-isis-learned-from-pedophiles.html>

The jihadis build fantasy relationships, play on a child’s suspicion of parents, and lure their young targets into a world of shared ‘secrets.’

The so-called Islamic State is recruiting Western kids with techniques pedophiles use to groom underage sexual prey. The jihadis are pushing harder than ever, and alarm is growing in Europe, especially Britain, where last weekend police announced they had arrested a 14-year-old boy and 16-year-old girl on terror charges.

The two teens were picked up in northern England towns near by Manchester. It remains unclear whether they were planning to follow in the footsteps of at least 600 Britons and join the self-styled Islamic State in Syria or were



scheming to carry out a terror attack in Britain. They were held on the catchall charge of “preparing acts of terrorism.”

The arrest of these minors— police have so far not named them—prompted a senior Muslim lawyer to warn Monday that hundreds of British teenagers are



in danger of being radicalized because they see the terrorists as “pop idols.” Nazir Afzal, a former top prosecutor, told Britain’s *Guardian* newspaper that recent departures to Syria show “many more children” are vulnerable to “jihadimania” than was previously thought.

“The boys want to be like them and the girls want to be with them,” he said. “That’s what they used to say about the Beatles and more recently One Direction and Justin Bieber. The propaganda the terrorists put out is akin to marketing, and too many of our teenagers are falling for the image.”

He added: “The extremists treat them in a similar way to sexual groomers—they manipulate them, distance them from their friends and families, and then take them.”

Mia Bloom, a security studies professor at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and co-author of an upcoming book on jihadist recruitment of youngsters, says ISIS groomers are becoming ever more skilful at exploiting the vulnerabilities and confusion of Western teenagers, and Bloom, too, says they are luring them with techniques straight out of the pedophile playbook. They match online recruiters with prey in terms of age and nationality and gender—except with the older boys, who tend to be targeted by older Western women recruits, who seek to develop a romantic bond.

“The very young girls, say under 16 years old, tend to be on social media with other British women who are already in the Islamic State,” says Bloom. “It would be kind of creepy for the older male jihadists to be chatting online with teenage girls and might frighten them off. So the Western women already in Syria are acting as intermediaries, or what is known as ‘deviant peers,’ to encourage the possible recruits to let down their guard.”

Then they make the potential recruits feel that their enlistment is consensual. “There is this back and forth on social media to develop a rapport, to distance them from their families.” And to indulge teenage fantasies, they play with their sense of alienation and their urge to keep secrets.

Bloom singles out the importance of Aqsa Mahmood, a 21-year-old who was raised in a well-heeled Glasgow suburb and attended an exclusive Scottish girls’ school before joining ISIS last year. She has been named by British police as one of ISIS’s best online female recruiters, although her family say that in a

recent communication to them she denied any involvement in recruiting three British schoolgirls who fled their east London homes in February and, without being challenged, flew from a London airport, crossing days later into Syria close to the Turkish border town of Urfa. Last month, the FBI and U.S. Homeland Security Department issued a joint public alarm warning that ISIS’s marketing is resonating with young Western Muslims. The alert advised local and state agencies that ISIS is having success with social media recruitment campaigns.

In recent months a growing number of Western teenagers have either fled their Western homes to join ISIS or have had their plans disrupted when they tried to travel to Syria to join ISIS and to fight for the group or to marry a jihadist. In March, a high school student from Northern Virginia was taken into custody for assisting a friend to travel to Syria.

And last October three Syria-bound suburban Denver girls ranging in age from 15 to 17 were intercepted in Frankfurt and returned to the States. The two Somali sisters and a Sudanese friend stole cash from their parents to buy their plane tickets and until their departure had seemed typical American Muslim teenagers focused more on movies and mall expeditions than fundamentalism and jihad.

There are no firm figures on the number of Western teenagers who have fallen prey to ISIS. At least 15 minors from Belgium have been documented by Pieter Van Ostaeyen for the website Jihadology as having joined ISIS. The youngest, Younes Abaaoud, was just 13 years old when he left Brussels along with his 27-year-old brother last spring.

Earlier this year a 13-year-old French boy, now known as Abu Bakr al-Faransi, originally from Strasbourg, earned the unfortunate distinction of becoming the youngest jihadist (so far) to die fighting for the Islamic State in Syria. He was killed while on patrol near the western Syrian city of Homs and was described by a jihadist to French author David Thomson as “a good child and determined.”

As de-radicalization experts and psychologists grapple with the mindset of young Westerners lured into jihadist ranks, there is still no consensus among Western counter-terrorism experts on how to combat the jihadists’ sophisticated use of the Internet and their skill in radicalizing,



grooming, and recruiting. The jihadist recruiters use a variety of online platforms: They make initial contact on Twitter and Facebook, then direct would-be recruits to other social media sites like Sharespot or Kick for the grooming to continue.

Radicalization can be accomplished in weeks. And every time it happens it has enormous shock value.

According to Bloom, online recruitment seems especially successful when it comes to teenage girls. Online recruitment has not been so obvious with young teenage boys—those who have been recruited online have been in their late teens or early 20s. Most of the teenage boys from Western countries who have turned up in Syria have accompanied their older brothers or arrived with whole family units. “I have not seen many instances where it is the 14-year-old boy who has been recruited online,” says Bloom.

Western governments have tried to employ online countermeasures—in the U.S. authorities have enlisted Islamic rap groups to help and they mounted a social media offensive against ISIS and al Qaeda aimed at ridiculing the militants’ sophisticated messaging with blunt sarcasm. But doubts have persisted since about the effectiveness of the offensive and whether the State Department is the right messenger.

Former British prosecutor Afzal argues governments need to mobilize young Muslim

professionals to “show these potential radicals what their lives could be.” He adds: “They don’t want to hear from men with long beards, they don’t want to hear from faith leaders... We need to engage with the sorts of young people who can stop radicalization at source. It’s a bit like drug addiction. Telling them ‘It’s bad for you’ or calling the police on them is not going to solve the problem, unless it is too serious to wait. The message would have much more power if it came from recovering ‘addicts’ and other youths from their own communities that they can see as role models.”

Bloom agrees, arguing disillusioned returning fighters should be used to carry the counter-jihadist message.

And, she argues, contradictions within ISIS’s own propaganda should be highlighted. There is a big difference between the group’s Arab-language and English-language marketing, especially for women. “The English-language propaganda often implies they will have an exciting lifestyle, they will be like a Disney princess. But they will never have that kind of role in the caliphate—the moment they arrive they are married off. So they think it will be exciting and adventurous and they will be able to contribute. I think there is an element with some of these girls, and it is perverted of course, that they will be able to help with Syrian children or something, they think they will be doing something altruistic.”

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Jamie Dettmer is an American-British journalist and broadcaster. He has worked for The Times of London, Newsweek, Sunday Telegraph, Washington Times, New York Sun, the Scotsman and The Hill. He has reported from Europe, Latin America and Africa, the Indian sub-continent and Russia and has covered Capitol Hill, U.S. politics and national security and the American intelligence community. Currently, as well as reporting on the Mideast for the Daily Beast, he broadcasts also for Voice of America.

Perimeter breaches at US airports

Source: <http://news.yahoo.com/ap-investigation-details-perimeter-breaches-us-airports-164154483.html>

Several hundred times over the last decade, intruders have hopped fences, slipped past guardhouses, crashed their cars through gates or otherwise breached perimeter security at the nation’s busiest airports — sometimes even managing to climb aboard jets.

One man tossed his bike over a fence and pedaled across a runway at Chicago O’Hare, stopping to knock on a terminal door. Another rammed a sports-utility vehicle through a

security gate at Philadelphia International and sped down a runway as a plane was about to touch down, forcing officials to hold takeoffs and landings.

At Los Angeles International, a mentally ill man hopped the perimeter fence eight times in less than a year — twice reaching stairs that led to jets. In Fort Lauderdale, Florida, a man who was on the run after stabbing a



plumber scrambled over a barbed-wire fence and dashed into an empty plane. In all, an Associated Press investigation found 268 perimeter security breaches since 2004 at



airports that together handle three-quarters of U.S. commercial passenger traffic. And that's an undercount, because two airports among the 31 that AP surveyed didn't have data for all years, while Boston's Logan refused to release any information, citing security concerns.

"Disturbing," Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said in response to the AP report during an "Ask the Mayor" segment on KNX-AM radio, noting that he wasn't surprised at his airport's 24 breaches because it is one of the largest in the nation.

"All it takes is one person who can get through and do something," he said.

Until now, few of these incidents have been publicly reported. Most involved intruders who wanted to take a shortcut, were lost, disoriented, drunk or mentally unstable but seemingly harmless. A few trespassers had knives, and one man who drove past a raised security gate at O'Hare in January had a loaded handgun on the vehicle console. He told police he was bypassing train tracks.

None of the incidents involved a terrorist plot, according to airport officials.

The lapses nevertheless highlight gaps in airport security in a post-9/11 world where passengers inside airports face rigorous screening to prevent attackers from slipping through, and even unsuccessful plots — such as the would-be shoe bomber — have prompted new procedures.

"This might be the next vulnerable area for terrorists as it becomes harder to get the bomb on the plane through the checkpoint," said airport security expert Jeff Price.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent to upgrade fencing, cameras and other detection technology along airport perimeters. Many have dozens of miles of fencing, but not all of that is frequently patrolled or always in view of security cameras.

Airport officials insist their perimeters are secure. They declined to discuss specifics, other than to say they have layers that include fences, cameras and patrols. Employees are required to ask for proof of security clearance if a badge is not obvious. Other measures may include ground radar and infrared sensors.

If a person hops a fence but is immediately caught, "the system did work," said Christopher Bidwell, vice president for security at Airports Council International-North America, representing airport operators.

At the world's most fortified airports, the outermost security layer has been enough. Tokyo's Narita and Israel's Ben Gurion airports report no perimeter intrusions. At Ben Gurion, officials said they spend more than \$200 million annually on perimeter security.

In the U.S., airport authorities said it is neither financially nor physically feasible to keep all intruders out.

"There is nothing that can't be penetrated," said LAX Police Chief Patrick Gannon, noting that even the White House has struggled with perimeter security; last year an intruder with a knife climbed a fence and made it inside the executive mansion before being arrested.

The AP's analysis was prompted by a high-profile breach last spring that resulted in one 15-year-old's improbable journey to Hawaii. Yahya Abdi climbed a fence at San Jose International Airport, hoisted himself into a jet's wheel well and survived an almost six-hour flight. Abdi, who lived with his father and stepmother, said he was trying to get back to his mother, a refugee in Ethiopia.

Afterward, San Jose airport spokeswoman Rosemary Barnes said breaches are more common than people realize.

Through public records requests, news archive searches and interviews, the AP created the most comprehensive public accounting of perimeter security



breaches from January 2004 through January 2015 at San Jose and the nation's 30 busiest airports. The analysis excluded incidents inside

the airport, such as when a passenger went unscreened through a security checkpoint or walked out the wrong exit door.

Among the findings:

- At least 44 times, intruders made it to runways, taxiways or to the gate area where planes park to refuel or load passengers. In seven cases, including Abdi's, they got onto jets.
- Seven airports in four states accounted for more than half the breaches, although not all provided data for all years examined. San Francisco International reported the most, with 37. The others were the international airports in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, San Jose, Miami and Tampa, Florida.
- Four years had more than 30 breaches each: 2007, 2012, 2013 and 2014. The most was 38, in 2014 and 2012; the fewest 12 in 2009.
- Few airports revealed how long it took to apprehend suspects, saying this detail could show security vulnerabilities. Available information showed most arrests happened within 10 minutes. Several people went undetected for hours or never were caught — including a Charlotte, North Carolina, stowaway who was found dead in 2010 after he fell from a wheel well when the landing gear opened on approach to Boston.

"Too often ... we don't really have an idea of how long the individual has been roaming around the airport," said U.S. Rep. Eric Swalwell, a San Francisco Bay Area Democrat who began focusing on airport perimeter security after the Abdi incident.

While the Transportation Security Administration is responsible for screening passengers and baggage, individual airports are responsible for securing perimeters, typically with a mix of private security guards and airport police. The TSA reviews airport plans, conducts spot checks and can levy penalties. The agency said that from 2010 through 2014, it issued \$277,155 in fines for 136 perimeter breaches.

Airports are supposed to inform the TSA of such lapses, but the federal Government Accountability Office in 2009 found not all incidents were reported. In 2011, a TSA report shared with a congressional subcommittee counted 1,388 perimeter security breaches since 2001 at the 450 airports that TSA regulates.

Details from that report are not publicly available, and nearly a year after the TSA granted expedited status to AP's Freedom of Information Act request for incident data, it has released nothing. The agency declined to comment on AP's findings, and pointed to previous statements that perimeter security is the responsibility of each airport.

In a news conference called Thursday in response to AP's findings, the spokesman for San Francisco International suggested that his airport had the most breaches because it

disclosed everything, whether the breach was intentional or accidental.

Spokesman Doug Yakel said the airport has beefed up security and that while its airfield is safe, "The goal is always zero" breaches.

U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., said she's been asking the TSA and airport officials since the San Jose case

to "work together and resolve this alarming situation" and added: "Enough is enough, let's get it done."

Former TSA director John Pistole said that fences, patrols and alarms are effective. "Overall, people should feel confident that terrorists and bad guys aren't able to exploit it, recognizing it's not a perfect system," said Pistole, who retired in December.

Among the breaches, an elderly woman who apparently thought she was at Sears drove through a security gate at the Philadelphia airport. Also in Philadelphia, two party-goers drove through a gate to ask an officer for directions.

At Washington Dulles and Tampa International, two men were caught skateboarding on tarmacs.

In Chicago, Marlow Sahron Land Jr. tossed his bike over a fence in 2010, rode it across taxiways and at least one runway, then knocked on a terminal door; a



gate agent let him inside. Witnesses told arresting officers that he looked "wacked out." Land pleaded guilty to misdemeanor attempting to resist arrest, spent six months under court supervision and paid a \$190 fine.

Other intruders posed greater dangers or brought operations to a halt when they came too close to planes about to take off or land.

At Philadelphia International, Kenneth Mazik rammed his SUV through a gate in March 2012 and sped onto the runway as a plane carrying 43 people was about to land. Air traffic controllers told 75 aircraft to circle and held 80 on the ground for about half an hour. He faced a rare federal prosecution and served 16 months, paying a \$92,000 fine. Part of his defense was that he was high on the attention deficit drug Adderall.

At the nation's busiest airport, Hartsfield-Jackson in Atlanta, three different intruders reached runways — in 2007, 2012 and 2014. One was an aggravated assault suspect who came within 50 feet of a plane that had landed as he was pursued by police.

In Phoenix in 2006, a pilot told air traffic controllers he "nearly collided with a pedestrian" as he was taking off. Fence jumper Jesus Duarte Verdugo told authorities he wanted to take a shortcut to a bus stop "because I was being lazy," adding he had done so three days earlier without getting caught.

Among the intruders, Christopher McGrath stands out.

Eight times between April 2012 and March 2013, police caught McGrath after he got over the fence at LAX on a mission to board a flight. In an affidavit, FBI special agent David Gates said McGrath demonstrated how he used his travel bag to protect himself from the barbed wire.

He never was armed but twice reached the stairs leading to jets, once with a bunch of bananas he hoped a pilot would accept in return for a ride to Australia. It wasn't clear from police reports whether the planes were empty or full. Another time he hid for hours, later telling the FBI he had spent the night behind a trash bin before an airport employee discovered him.

McGrath's repeated break-ins helped airport police address vulnerabilities: They trimmed a tree branch he had used to get over the fence. When McGrath kept returning following short stints in local jail, LAX police turned to federal

prosecutors. Last year, a federal judge found him not guilty by reason of insanity on a charge of entering an airport area in violation of security requirements. He remains at a medical lockup in Missouri.

In an email, McGrath told the AP that he had gone to Southern California to live as a transient because of the good weather, but after his belongings were stolen he wanted a fresh start. He said he targeted planes bound for Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and New Zealand.

The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, which oversees Kennedy, LaGuardia and Newark airports, refused to provide a full accounting of perimeter breaches, but did provide additional details on incidents reported in the media.

But high-profile incidents have made the news. In one, a man whose watercraft ran out of fuel swam to shore in 2012, climbed an 8-foot fence at Kennedy and crossed two runways before asking an airline employee for help. The airport came under fire because a \$100 million system of surveillance cameras and motion detectors failed.

While the AP examination focused on larger airports, perimeter breaches are also a problem at smaller airfields where security measures are less rigid. In 2012, for example, a SkyWest Airlines pilot suspected of killing his ex-girlfriend threw a rug over a razor-wire fence at the airport in St. George, Utah, and stole an empty 50-passenger jet, which he crashed as he taxied near a terminal. He then shot and killed himself.

Airport perimeter security firms sold \$650 million worth of fences, gates, sensors and cameras in the decade following the 9/11 attacks, according to industry analyst John Hernandez. He projects a drop in spending from \$69 million in 2012 to \$47.5 million in 2017.

Israel's Ben Gurion Airport, which had a string of Palestinian attacks on planes in the 1970s, measures include two fences with a radar system between them, cameras and hundreds of armed agents, according to Shmuel Zakay, the airport's managing director.

In the U.S., officials said there is neither the appetite nor funding to create fortress-like perimeters. And no solution is foolproof, according to airport security experts. One common refrain: Show me a 10-



foot fence, and I'll show you an 11-foot ladder. Outfit cameras with software that is supposed to help identify intruders, and there may not be enough staff to monitor incoming images. Or security personnel might waste time chasing false alarms triggered by something as trivial as a plastic bag caught on a fence.

"Most airports that have invested in new technologies spend a lot of time responding to false alarms," said Renee Tufts, security manager at Philadelphia International.

Companies routinely pitch airports to buy technology that may or may not make them

safer. To help distinguish, a nonprofit called the National Safe Skies Alliance assesses technology at the request of airports. Its president, Scott Broyles, said airports have to weigh the potential threat of harm from a perimeter breach against the hefty cost of building elaborate defenses.

Airports calculate that what they have done keeps passengers safe.

Said airport security expert Price: "It's one of those issues that I think until something really bad happens, not much is going to change."

How the West Contributed to Islamic Extremism

By Alon Ben-Meir

Source: <http://www.terrorismwatch.org/2015/04/how-west-contributed-to-islamic.html>

The intensified public discussion about the root causes of violent extremism has focused mainly on the socio-economic and political conditions that exist in Arab countries and among Arab communities in Europe and the US, which provide a breeding ground for extremism. But to effectively counter violent extremism, we must also carefully consider how the development of events in the wake of World Wars I and II has impacted the psychological disposition of the Arab population throughout the Middle East.

Starting with the arbitrary division of the region by Western powers, the wars, revolutions, and scores of violent conflicts that followed have added layer upon layer of deep resentment and hatred of the West, and the puppet Arab leaders that were installed to serve their Western masters.

The following provides a brief historic, panoramic view of what the vast majority of the Arab population has experienced which has informed their perception of the world around them, left an indelible mark on their psyche, and framed their beliefs and behavior.

President Obama stated at the Summit of Countering Violent Extremism that "the Muslim world has suffered historical grievances... [and] does buy into the belief that so many of the ills in the Middle East flow from the history of colonialism or conspiracy."

Whether the colonial powers were only partially or fully to blame is hardly relevant because the Arab masses continue to believe that

colonialism was behind the ills and suffering they endured. From the perspective of the majority of the Arabs, the developments of major events that followed the two World Wars simply confirmed their perception.

Even before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Britain and France reached a secret pact in 1916 (the Sykes-Picot Agreement) to divide Ottoman-held territories in the Middle East between the two powers irrespective of sect, ethnicity, and religious affiliations. Dividing the 'pie' between them was viewed as exploitive, arrogant, and dismissive of the welfare of the indigenous populations, ushering in decades of strife and turmoil.

The creation of most of the Arab states following World War II hardly changed the plight of the Arabs living in these countries. The French and the British appointed governors, kings, and emirs who ruled with iron fists, further intensifying hatred toward the Western powers and toward the authoritarian regimes under which they groaned.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was regarded as yet another Western conspiracy. The humiliation of the Arab armies by the nascent Israeli forces, the loss of substantial territory, and the creation of the Palestinian refugees have added a further layer of deep resentment. The Israeli occupation, which led to the rise of Hamas and Hezbollah, continues to feed the Palestinians a daily ration of indignity to this very day.

The 1953 overthrow of the freely-elected Mosaddegh government in Iran, engineered by the CIA



and British intelligence because of the parliament's decision to nationalize the oil industry, was seen as the most flagrant intervention in the internal affairs of a Muslim state. The installation of the Shah, a Western puppet, and his ruthless treatment of his subjects was never forgotten by the Iranians and still remains a source of anger and antipathy toward the US.

When Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was hailed as a nationalist hero, rose to power in Egypt and dared to challenge the West's dominance and 'ownership' of the Suez Canal, the French and British, in cahoots with Israel, answered with war.

The war with Egypt once again trampled Arab pride as the retaking of the Canal and the occupation of the Sinai by Israel was viewed by the Arabs as a blatant manifestation of the West's vulgarity of self-entitlement and Israel's hunger for more Arab land.

And then came the 1967 Six Day War. In 144 hours, Israel conquered Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian territories more than three times its own size. Though their defeat on the battlefield was humiliating, it was the psychological defeat that shattered the Arabs' self-esteem.

Although the 1973 Yom Kippur War salvaged Egypt's national pride (Egyptian forces were allowed to remain on the East side of the Suez Canal, which provided Anwar Sadat a political victory), it did little to allay the Arabs' humiliation as Israel continued to occupy Arab land on three fronts.

The 1979 Iranian revolution marked the first major Muslim country to revolt against the United States, sending a clear message to Arabs and Muslims that the West will no longer impose its whims with impunity. Unsurprisingly, the Mullahs' victory did not change the core resentment and hatred toward the West.

Although the 2001 Afghanistan war was arguably necessary to destroy al Qaeda following the 9/11 attack, the prolongation of the war, its destruction, and the death toll were and continue to be seen as consequences of the West's never-satisfied appetite for dominating Muslim/Arab lands.

The Afghanistan war produced a new generation of militant Muslims that operated both with and independent of al Qaeda, ready to challenge Western powers and the autocratic Arab regimes that want to maintain the status quo.

Notwithstanding how much Saddam Hussein was reviled for his ruthlessness, the vast majority of Arab youth viewed the 2003 Iraq War as an unprecedented assault on the Arabs' heartland and people.

Iraq was essentially dismantled, pitting Sunnis against the Shiite majority; tens of thousands were killed and violent Islamists converged into Iraq, which eventually led to the birth of ISIS while poisoning a new generation of young Arabs with intensely anti-Western sentiments.

The Arab Spring, which ushered in great hope and promise for the future, turned out to be a cruel winter. The US and the EU have selectively interfered in the various Arab Spring countries without any clear strategy, believing that pushing democracy down the throat of the people would provide a panacea for their political ills.

All considered, the vast majority of the Arab people accept their lot in silent desperation. But the relatively small minority who are engaged in violent extremism rose to defy by whatever means both Western powers and the authoritarian Arab regimes.

These jihadists differ in age, financial ability, education and family prominence, they do not fit a single profile nor do they follow a single path to extremism. However, they all have one thing in common: hatred of the West and their corrupt leaders.

They no longer believe that their governments will heed their call for change; they believe Western influence is a curse and only jihad can change their destiny and the course of history. Religious extremism and the deliberate distortion of Islamic teaching provided the outlet that could justify any violent action to remedy decades of servitude and subjugation. Dying while fighting the enemy is extolled as martyrdom, the ultimate sacrifice that opens the gates of heaven and offers true freedom and dignity, of which they were deprived on earth.

Though the use of force is at times necessary to destroy an irredeemable foe such as ISIS, it is critical to recognize that no amount of military force can eradicate ideology and religious conviction.

A multitude of measures are necessary to counter violent extremism, including education, economic assistance, job opportunities, integration, addressing grievances, engagement in social



activities, and much more. But to successfully combat this long-term, Western power must act on a number of fronts to set the stage for reconciliation.

Reconciliation must begin by recognizing and admitting to past mistakes. Regardless of the extent of the West's abuse and exploitation of Arab resources and people, acknowledging its long history of misguided policies is critical to establish a dialogue which is still largely missing in the strategy of countering violent extremism.

The West can offer a model of democratic government, but must not impose it arbitrarily. The Arab states will find their own way to reconcile religion with the form of democracy they choose, and the West must honor the outcome of fair and free elections.

The West owes many of the Arab states, especially those with overwhelmingly poor populations such as Egypt, the financial and technical support needed to embark on sustainable economic development projects that empower the people. Poor, hungry, and despairing youth need food even before freedom, and job opportunities, healthcare, and education before meaningless elections.

The US must never cease its effort to diffuse the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and bring an end to the occupation, which provides a continuing source of extremism. In doing so, the US addresses one of the Arabs' foremost grievances against it, while strengthening Israel's national security.

Finally, since the West and the Arab states have a common interest in degrading, if not

eliminating, radical militants, their collaboration must be strategic in order to avoid the potential of creating a new crisis. Does the US know what the fate of Syria and Iraq will be once ISIS is defeated, and how that will impact the Sunni-Shiite 'war' spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and Iran?

None of the above is meant to suggest that the Arab states have been merely the victims of imperialism. They have and continue to contribute to the plight of their people. The Arab world is rampant with inequality, gross human rights violations, and tens of millions of poverty-stricken young men and women with little prospect of finding a meaningful purpose to their lives.

If the Arab leaders want to end the scourge of violent extremism, they must assume some responsibility and not simply blame the West for their grievances and decades of socio-economic and political dislocation and despair. Unless they invest now in economic development, education, healthcare, and opportunities for growth, and allow for social and political freedom (albeit gradually), the radicalization of the young will only be intensified and the unforgiving storm will continue to sweep one country after another.

To be sure, countering violent radicalism will be a long and costly campaign. It will take foresight, courage, and wisdom to learn from past mistakes. Together with the West, the Arab states must chart a new course of trust and mutual respect to tackle the herculean job that lies ahead.

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The Middle East Turmoil and Israel's Security

By Efraim Inbar

Source: <http://www.meforum.org/5174/israel-middle-east-security>

The Middle East is in great turmoil. The statist order that underpinned the region for a century has collapsed. Several states have lost their monopoly over the use of force and are no longer able to provide law and order. This is especially true of Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and Syria. Even Egypt, the only historic Arab state, has had difficulties effectively enforcing its sovereignty over its territory.

Many of the militias challenging these state entities have a radical Islamist ideology, reflecting the rise in appeal of political Islam in the Arab world. In contrast to the leaders of these states, who are inefficient and corrupt, the Islamists actually deliver services to the people and have a reputation for being brutal but honest. However, the likes of Al Qaida in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) or the so called Islamic State (IS) are hardly the proper agents for modernizing their



environments and their popularity dooms the Arab world to continuous ignorance and poverty. For this and other reasons, Israel will need to remain vigilant in the years ahead.

Outside Looking In

The decline of the Arab world has been paralleled by the rise of non-Arab Muslim



powers – Turkey and Iran. Both countries fare better on development indices and display nowadays an ambitious foreign policy fueled by imperial and Islamist impulses. Under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his 'zero problems' approach to foreign policy, Turkey has gradually distanced itself from the West. In 2003, for example, Ankara rejected the United States' request to open a "northern front" against Iraqi forces. More recently, Turkey has opposed sanctions levied by the United Nations and the West against Russia and Iran. For its part, Iran has successfully advanced its nuclear program despite the displeasure of the international community. Comparatively, recent developments in the Middle East and beyond have also allowed Tehran to establish a 'Shiite Crescent' stretching from Tehran to the eastern Mediterranean. This has provided Iran with countless opportunities to project power into the Middle East and Balkans, much to the chagrin of Saudi Arabia and others. Indeed, the successes of Iranian Shiite proxies in Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus and Sanaa underscore the Tehran quest for hegemony in the Middle East. By contrast, US influence around the Middle East appears to be in decline, primarily as a result of the Obama administration's foreign policy outlook. Correcting Washington's

overextension in the Islamic world is indeed necessary, but insensitivity to the concerns of its allies such as Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia is destructive to the regional balance of power.

TIME Magazine Cover: Middle East Turmoil – June 22, 1970

In this respect, Washington's efforts to strike a deal with Iran that basically legitimizes its nuclear breakout status and awards Tehran the role of the regional policeman will be viewed by Cairo, Riyadh and Jerusalem as a colossal strategic mistake. The inevitable result will be further nuclear proliferation as none of these countries are likely to want to stay behind in uranium enrichment capabilities. Moreover, the regional instability could lead to more bloodshed. Relying on a radical and revisionist regime in Tehran to provide stability is the height of strategic folly.

The View from Jerusalem

The implications of the Middle East's ongoing turmoil for Israel's security are mixed. Like Iran and Turkey, a democratic and politically stable Israel is also a rising non-Arab power and a player in the regional balance of power. The power differential between Israel's national might and its neighbors has further increased, given that it has managed to prosper economically and develop a high-tech powerful military.

In addition, the strong armies of Iraq and Syria have disappeared, decreasing the chances for a large-scale conventional encounter with Israel. Moreover, the pro-Western Sunni states such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia see Israel as an ally against a rising Iran, as well as against radical Islamist movements. This also comes at a time when the United States is viewed in many quarters as a less dependable ally.

By contrast, low intensity challenges might intensify. The domestic problems plaguing weakened Arab states make them increasingly susceptible to radical Islam and more prone to terrorist violence. As their leaders lose their grip over state territory and borders become more porous, armed



groups and terrorists gain greater freedom of action. Moreover, as weakened states lose control over their security apparatus, national arsenals of conventional (and non-conventional) arms become increasingly vulnerable, which may result in the emergence of increasingly well-armed, politically dissatisfied groups that seek to harm Israel. For example, following the fall of Gaddafi, Libyan SA-7 anti-air missiles and anti-tank RPGs have reached Hamas in Gaza. The IS even fights with American weapons captured from the Iraqi army.

Similarly, in the event of the Assad regime collapsing, Syria's advanced arsenal of conventional weapons could easily end up in the hands of Hizballah or other radical elements. This, in turn, raises the prospect of an emboldened Hizballah and Hamas – both of whom are Iranian proxies located along Israel's borders – renewing their campaigns of violence. In recent years, the fallout from the Arab Spring has helped to detract attention away from the Palestinian issue. In addition, the Palestinian Authority's (PA) ability to harm Israel in order to reignite international interest is also very limited. As a result, a weak PA has come under increasing pressure from the popular Hamas. A Palestinian strategic miscalculation, leading to the eruption of another round of violence, is a possibility that Israel cannot ignore. Nevertheless, so far Israel has been successful in containing the threats from sub-state groups and in limiting their potential damage.

The emergence of an uncertain and unstable strategic environment is conducive to strategic surprises. Israeli intelligence is challenged by a plethora of new actors and leaders whose modus operandi is far from clear. Israel has a large and sophisticated intelligence apparatus. Yet it is not immune to surprises. Therefore, it would be wise to prepare for worst-case scenarios, rather than succumb to rosy assessments.

Looking West (in more ways than one)

The turmoil in the Arab world is also changing the strategic landscape in the Eastern Mediterranean basin, where elements of radical Islam are gaining control. Tunisia, Libya, Sinai in Egypt, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey all play host to groups with Islamist

tendencies, thereby threatening the currently unrestricted access to this area by Israel and the West.

Approximately 90 percent of Israel's foreign trade is carried out via the Mediterranean, making freedom of navigation in this area critical for Israel's economic well-being. Moreover, its chances of becoming energy independent and a significant exporter of gas is linked to Israel's ability to secure free passage for its maritime trade and to defend its newly discovered hydrocarbon fields, Leviathan and Tamar. These developments require greater Israeli efforts in the naval arena. Indeed, Israel is engaged in building a robust security system for the gas fields and has procurement plans for additional vessels.

As with other parts of the Middle East, the assessment in Jerusalem is that the key factor in the developing regional balance of power is Iran's nuclearization. This would be a "game changer" that only Israel has the capability to prevent. Netanyahu's recent electoral victory left in power the only leader that might have the political courage to order a military strike to obstruct the Iranian progress towards acquiring nuclear weapons. Indeed, his victory was quietly welcomed in the capitals of the moderate Arab states that are terrified of Iran and have little time for Obama. Saudi Arabia and Egypt are good examples.

Accordingly, Israel is watching with growing bewilderment the endeavor of the Obama administration to implement a "grand bargain" with Iran. This puts Jerusalem on an inevitable collision course with its most important ally. Israel continues to benefit from a large reservoir of sympathy among the populace of the United States, and most notably within the Republican controlled Congress.

Yet, while Obama is not popular, as president he can extract heavy costs in the military, diplomatic and strategic arenas. The remaining 22 months until he leaves office must be weathered with minimum damage to the American-Israeli strategic partnership, particularly if Israel chooses to make good on its threat not to allow Iran to become a nuclear power. With this in mind, the American-Iranian nexus is the most dangerous challenge for Israel's national security in the near future.



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ISIS Releases List Of Punishable Crimes That Includes Everything from Drinking To Terrorism

Source: <http://www.ijreview.com/2015/04/294269-isis-releases-list-punishable-crimes-includes-everything-drinking-terrorism/>

What do “apostasy,” “blasphemy,” “highway criminality,” theft and alcohol consumption have in common? According to ISIS, they’re all crimes in which brutal methods of punishment can be implemented by the militants.

The Times of Israel reported Friday that most offenses on ISIS’s list carry some form of the death penalty, either by public stoning, crucifixion or being thrown off tall buildings.

The Islamic State’s penal code is applied to anyone whom the organization believes isn’t following its radical interpretation of Sharia law – something they refer to as a “warning” for non-believers.

The worst crime to commit, the list states, is blasphemy against God, Islam and the Prophet Muhammad – all of which are punishable by death regardless of whether the offender repents.

Other crimes, and their respective punishments, include:



- Adultery, which is punishable by either 100 lashes and a year-long banishment or death by stoning.
 - Theft, which is punishable by having the offender’s hand cut off publicly with an industrial guillotine.
 - “Highway criminality,” which has two punishments.
 - “Killing and taking wealth” carries a “death and crucifixion” sentence, while a charge of just “taking someone’s wealth” will result in a punishment of having one’s right hand and left foot cut off.
- Drinking alcohol or slander, both of which are punishable by 80 lashes.
- “Terrorizing the people,” this is punishable by banishment.

The Times of Israel also notes that children living under ISIS control aren’t spared these brutal punishments.

Dolphins’ and Sea Lions’ Important Role in Guarding Against Terrorism

Source: <http://www.emergencymgmt.com/safety/Dolphins-Sea-Lions-Train-Navy-Deployment.html>

For a moment, the mammal and the machine are side by side on a Navy dock in San Diego. The dolphin and the drone — and their respective handlers — will spend the morning training for a possible order to deploy to the Persian Gulf or some other international trouble spot to detect underwater mines, or maybe to guard a port against a terrorist threat.

The mammal is Puanani, a bottlenose dolphin, a sleek 7 feet, 10 inches long and 427 pounds. The machine is an Unmanned Underwater Vehicle, or UUV, Kingfish version, 11 feet long, 600 pounds.

Puanani was born in the Gulf of Mexico and received initial training from the Navy in Hawaii.

The cigar-shaped UUV was built by Hydroid Inc., a Massachusetts military contractor.

Both are assigned to a mission that Navy officials say is increasingly critical: maintaining “underwater dominance” and the ability to thwart attacks aimed at the home front or at U.S. and allied ships in foreign locations. Among potential targets, officials warn, is the port at Long Beach.

The U.S. has submarines, advanced sonar aboard surface ships and high-tech scanning capability aboard aircraft — as well as listening devices beneath the waves and an untold number of technological and intelligence-



gathering assets that are classified. In San Diego, with a budget of \$28 million a

Puanani's lead trainer. "All we need is the word 'go.'"



year, the Navy has 90 dolphins and 50 California sea lions in a program run by the Space and Naval Warfare System Pacific. Nearly every day the animals train in San Diego Bay or in the ocean beyond Point Loma. There are also several UUVs.

The dolphins and the sea lions, using their keen eyesight and "biological sonar," are expert at finding mines.

The sea lions are trained to detect any swimmer who is in a restricted area. The animal clamps a "bite plate" onto the swimmer's leg and takes the attached tether back to his handler.

That's the exercise that veteran trainer Chris Harris is conducting with Joe, a sea lion who has made multiple deployments, including to the Persian Gulf.

Harris signals Joe to begin his dive. Within a minute, Joe has surfaced, followed by a Navy diver playing the part of a would-be terrorist. The diver gives a thumbs-up. Joe has done his job.

Harris gives Joe an enthusiastic attaboy and throws him a fish. "He's robust, and he's reliable," Harris said.

Puanani was sent to the Persian Gulf during the invasion of Iraq. "She is deployable any time, anywhere," said Mark Patefield,

A trained California sea lion practices attaching a clamp to a simulated mine on a dock at the Navy Marine Mammal Program training base on March 5, 2015, in San Diego, Calif. (Don Bartletti/Los Angeles Times/TNS)

Sea lions are amphibious and can essentially hop into a small boat. The dolphins are lifted in a sling.

On a transport plane or ship, the sea lions are kept in specially designed enclosures that are cool and wet. The dolphins travel in fleecelined stretchers suspended in fiberglass containers filled with water.

The UUVs are currently deployed to the Persian Gulf and to the area patrolled by the Japan-based 7th Fleet. They have also assisted in search missions, including the Challenger disaster and Hurricane Katrina. Sea lions and dolphins guard bases at Kings Bay, Ga., and Bangor, Wash., where the Navy's Trident submarines that carry nuclear weapons are located. The Persian Gulf is a particular focus of the U.S. because of threats by the Iranians to mine the waterway.

Someday the UUVs may replace the mammals in the mine-detection mission.

Until then the two share the assignment.



“The mammals are the best at what they do,” said Mike Rothe, manager of the marine mammals program. “They’ve evolved over thousands of years to have a remarkable sonar. We’ve been developing the UUVs for several decades.”

The first dolphin trained in mine detection was Notty in 1960. President John F. Kennedy liked the idea of using sea creatures for military purposes, and the program expanded.

Dolphins and sea lions helped guard the ammunition piers at Cam Ranh Bay during the Vietnam War. Sharks and whales were found to be untrainable.



Each training day begins with an assessment of the animals’ attitude, appearance and appetite. “Every day we interact with the animals,” Harris said.

The program has male and female dolphins, and thus an occasional birth occurs. The sea lions are all neutered males. The newest sea lions are the nine caught off of San Nicolas Island in 2013.

Dolphins and sea lions can dive to depths of several hundred feet and, unlike humans, do

not suffer from the potentially fatal condition known as the bends when they surface. They are natural hunters, although getting them ready to deploy can take several years. “You need to build up trust,” Patefield said. Dolphins are prone to respiratory problems, sea lions to cataracts. A dolphin had kidney stones removed recently. Army veterinarians are assigned to care for the mammals.

In the 1974 movie “The Day of the Dolphin,” the dolphins were stolen by extremists who wanted to use them to blow up the president on his yacht.

For decades, the Navy has said its marine mammals are not offensive weapons and are not trained to carry explosives. A presidential commission came to the same conclusion.

During the 1996 Republican convention in San Diego, dolphins were assigned to guard GOP yachts.

During training or deployments, nothing forces the dolphins and sea lions to return to the handlers’ small boats. But they have learned where their food is dispensed.

“They are large, smart, socially complex mammals with a mind of their own,” said Mark Xitco, supervisor of the program’s scientific and veterinary support branch. “We can’t force them to do anything they don’t want to do.”

Nitro, a dolphin who was considered a mine-hunting “star” at the recent multinational exercise off of Hawaii, was making squeaking sounds on a recent morning.

“That’s a good sign,” said Nitro’s lead trainer, Amanda Naderer. “He’s ready to go to work.”

Man taken into custody after landing single-person aircraft on Capitol grounds

Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/15/politics/aircraft-lands-on-capitol-grounds/index.html>

A mailman from Florida wanted to make a big, bold point about the corruption that results from money in politics.

So Doug Hughes boarded a small personal aircraft called a "gyrocopter" and flew an hour from Maryland into restricted airspace

over Washington and landed on the West Lawn of the Capitol building.

In tote: letters for every member of Congress urging them to reform campaign finance laws.



Hughes caused a melee Wednesday afternoon when he flew his gyrocopter, undetected by NORAD, to the nation's capitol. U.S. Capitol

A rural letter carrier with a message

Hughes was first identified by the Tampa Bay Times, who had a reporter following him as he



Police converged as he landed, and the White House said President Barack Obama was

planned and executed his protest flight. CNN has also spoken to a friend of Hughes about



briefed on the situation. It was a bizarre incident that riveted the city and shut down the U.S. Capitol for part of the day. According to the U.S. Capitol Police, the aircraft was observed landing at about 1:30 p.m. and the operator -- Hughes -- was immediately taken into custody. A bomb squad investigated the gyrocopter but nothing hazardous was found. Law enforcement then took the gyrocopter to a secure location, according to the Capitol Police. Hughes was arrested and transferred to central cellblock in Washington, with charges pending. The wife of Doug Hughes confirmed to CNN that her husband was the pilot of the aircraft. A federal law enforcement officer also confirmed the name to CNN.

the pilot's protest flight. Hughes has been a rural letter carrier with the U.S. Postal Service since 2003, according to a USPS official. The Postal Service Office of Inspector General is in contact with postal management on the matter. The official would not comment on Hughes' status with USPS following the incident, any disciplinary issues during employment or if anyone at USPS was aware of his plans.

The man's idea began to take shape after his grown son committed suicide by driving his car into another driver, Ben Montgomery, the Tampa Bay Times reporter who broke the story of the gyrocopter flight, said



in an interview on CNN's "The Lead" with Jake Tapper.

"He told us that he felt like his son did something stupid, but he had made a point," he said. "He learned a lesson out of that. And it was, if you want to make a point, you've got to do something big, as sad as that seems."

Montgomery said Hughes knew he could have been killed -- in flight or by Capitol Police.

"He was ready for that. He's been thinking about this for 2.5 years. He's pictured every scenario you could possibly imagine," Montgomery said.

Hughes intended to deliver letters to each member of Congress lobbying them to reform campaign finance laws and get money out of politics.

Part Paul Revere, part P.T. Barnum

"And his mission was to do something big, the sort of mix of P.T. Barnum and Paul Revere, as he described himself," Montgomery said.



According to a law enforcement source, Hughes flew out of Gettysburg airport where apparently his vehicle and trailer are still located. The Secret Service has sent a team from a local field office to investigate.

Hughes was interviewed by the Secret Service in 2013 after a tip was received that he wanted to land his gyrocopter at the Capitol or the White House.

According to his interview with The Tampa Bay Times, Hughes said he was honest with his replies at the time, admitting he owned a gyrocopter.

The Times also reported the Florida mailman planned the flight to protest the Supreme Court decision in Citizens' United case and the

influence of outside money in politics. He told the Times that he wanted to deliver mail to lawmakers outlining his complaints.

A tip to the local paper and calls to the Secret Service

The paper reported that it called Secret Service and Capitol Hill police before he flew. The reporter who spoke before the flight has been tweeting from Washington as the postal worker landed.

But the Secret Service denied that they had been notified.

"Media reports indicating that the Secret Service Tampa field office was alerted earlier today by a citizen to the subject's intentions are false," said spokesman Brian Leary in a statement.

"On October 4, 2013, the Secret Service obtained information from a concerned citizen about an individual [Hughes] purporting their desire to land a single manned aircraft on the grounds of the United States Capitol or the White House," Leary said. "That same day, the information was reported to law enforcement partners at the U.S. Capitol Police."

Leary said the next day, Hughes was interviewed by Secret Service agents in Ruskin, Florida, and "a complete and thorough investigation was conducted."

A friend of the pilot who says he's known the man for years tells CNN that "there's nothing on the helicopter that is dangerous" and that the this flight was meant to send a message to Congress

about campaign finance reform.

"He has no weapons or anything else," said Michael Shanahan. "I know him personally. He's like a pitbull when he has an idea. He wants to wake up the country."

Shanahan said the pilot called him before he took off.

"He's upset that politicians can be bought and sold at auction, and I agree with him. That's the point he's trying [to make]" Shanahan said. "Happy he made it alive. I want to thank the people who decided not to kill him."

According to the Federal Aviation Administration, the area was restricted airspace that Hughes



did not get special permission to fly in. Rep. Bennie Thompson, the top Democrat on the House Homeland Security Committee, was awaiting a briefing from the Capitol Police on the gyrocopter that landed on the West Front, but told CNN he had "deep concern" about it and the fact that the Secret Service knew about the pilot, Doug Hughes.



"Obviously we should have kept a little closer tabs on him, especially within the prohibited airspace," Thompson said.

"It shows that we still have some areas that are vulnerable and while we can have prohibited airspace it shows that certain kinds of flight patterns are still problematic, and a really bad guy could have caused significant harm if had been armed with explosives or things like that," he said.

The Mississippi Democrat also said he thought there was a break down in notifying members about a potential threat. He didn't get any kind of notice about the breach from the Capitol Police and learned about it when a staffer told him to look out his window at the West front. The Capitol building lockdown has lifted and the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms told CNN that everything is under control. The Capitol Police said they had reopened temporary street closures and resumed normal operations. At the moment of its landing, however, the Capitol was thrown into chaos.

◀ Editor's Comment

Outside of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing room, a half-dozen police were running through the hallways, speaking into their radios about a lockdown. In the room waited Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who had stopped by for a photo op and was posing a challenge for officers discussing safe ways to get the prime minister out of the building if necessary.

House Homeland Security Chairman Mike McCaul was on the first floor of the Capitol with aides when the building was briefly locked down, but he hadn't heard about the incident until CNN asked him. He decided to go outside and see the aircraft for himself, and Capitol Police let him through, despite the lockdown.

What does Iran really want in Yemen?

By J. Matthew McInnis

Source: http://www.aei.org/publication/what-does-iran-really-want-in-yemen/?utm_source=paramount&utm_medium=email&utm_content=AEITODAY&utm_campaign=041515



Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and other senior leaders loudly condemned Riyadh's ongoing Operation Decisive Storm against the al Houthi rebels last week, and the shape of Iran's counter-narrative is now emerging. Today Iranian Foreign Minister

Javad Zarif announced a peace plan calling for a ceasefire and dialogue. But what does Iran really want?

Here are five key components of Tehran's strategy in Yemen:

- **Unravel the Sunni coalition.** The participation of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan in Operation Decisive Storm—with US backing and rhetorical support from Turkey and Pakistan—was a diplomatic victory for Saudi Arabia. New lines were drawn for spheres of influence in the region, and not to Tehran's



favor. A clearly rattled Iranian leadership has been working to undo the damage, first by helping convince Pakistan and Turkey to

Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers were captured near Aden, the full extent of Iran's involvement in Yemen is still unclear.



Getting military aid to Yemen remains difficult, as the US Navy continues interdiction of suspected Iranian arms shipments. Barring a Saudi-led ground invasion, Tehran will obscure its covert activities and hope Riyadh shoots itself in the foot.

• **Portray Iran as the more responsible power.** Iranian speeches over the past week cast the Saudis as irresponsible and Iran as the more mature and reliable regional actor. Khamenei even described the security leadership under the new Saudi king as “inexperienced youngsters” who “have come to power and replaced composure with barbarism.” Most Saudi leaders are well north of 50, but with a new 30-year-old defense minister and a sputtering military campaign, the critique resonates. Fueling doubts about Riyadh’s

withhold military support to the Saudi effort. Iran will attempt to further undermine the Saudi coalition, likely poking at long-standing fractures among the Arab states.

- **Avoid direct military escalation.** Even as Iran’s criticism of the Saudi-led coalition grows louder, Tehran has no desire to start a shooting war with Riyadh. Escalation could bring more direct involvement from the United States and further polarize the region against Iran. Policymakers should not make too much of last week’s deployment of an Iranian naval destroyer and support ship to the Gulf of Aden. These deployments are normally part of Iran’s participation in international counter-piracy operations. Tehran wants to deter Riyadh, but neither party is in a position to start a naval conflict over Yemen.
- **Facilitate Saudi failure.** Khamenei mocked the campaign on April 9, stating the Saudi’s “have no chance” and that their noses “will be in the dirt.” He may be correct. Without accurate intelligence to support military targeting and prevent civilian casualties, Saudi airstrikes have not halted the al Houthi advance, though they have helped anti-al Houthi forces make some minimal gains in the key southern city of Aden. Despite reports that two Islamic

competence will sow discord among Saudi Arabia’s allies, even if Tehran’s self-promotion as a force for regional stability is not convincing.

- **Push for a negotiated solution.** Iran recognizes Yemen may descend into an uncontrolled civil war. With Tehran already busy in Iraq and Syria, the dissolution of Yemen is not to Tehran’s advantage, no matter the damage to Saudi Arabia. Tehran’s lack of direct praise for the al Houthis following the rebel group’s coup in January has been notable. A negotiated solution remains Iran’s preferred option. Forestalling another Syria or Libya in the region may be more important to Iran than Houthi dominance in Yemen.

If forming a successful Houthi proxy was Iran’s original goal in Yemen, defeating Riyadh and its new Sunni alliance has quickly become Tehran’s top priority. Will the US put in the effort to shore up Saudi’s nascent Arab collective security force (which we have tried to make happen for decades), aid Riyadh in developing a better military strategy, and increase efforts to resist Iranian influence on the Peninsula? Or will we hedge our support and move further towards the “offshore balancing” of the major



regional powers that the Arab states fear and Iran welcomes? The choices we make on Yemen, perhaps as much as in Iraq or Syria,

may define the political and security landscape of the post-nuclear deal Middle East.

J. Matthew McInnis is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. This report was produced in cooperation with the Iran Team of the Critical Threats Project. It analyzes the most important Iran news events of the past week and provides an outlook of the regime's strategic calculus.

Islamic State claims bombing in Afghanistan that kills dozens

SIS claims first deadly bombing in Afghanistan

By Sudarsan Raghavan

Source: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/dozens-killed-in-suicide-bomber-attack-outside-an-afghanistan-bank/2015/04/18/3849f572-e59f-11e4-b510-962cfabc310_story.html



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Apr 18 – The Islamic State, or a militant group linked to it, has claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in eastern Afghanistan on Saturday that killed at least 34 people and injured 125, according to a statement that is believed to have been sent on behalf of the Syria and Iraq-based movement.

The attack marks the first time that militants working with or inspired by the Islamic State, also known as Daesh, have claimed such a violent assault in Afghanistan. The claim could not be independently verified, but if true, it would represent the farthest from its traditional operational area of the Middle East and North Africa the group has ever targeted civilians.

The suicide bomber detonated his explosives vest in Jalalabad, the capital of the eastern

province of Nangahar, outside New Kabul Bank, where Afghan government workers waited in line to collect their salaries, police officials said.

All the victims were civilians, police said.

“The suicide bomber was on foot and wanted to get inside the bank when he detonated his explosives,” said Hazrat Hussain Mashreqiwal, police spokesman for Nangahar province.

Two other bombings were reported in the city, but no additional casualties were reported. A fourth bombing took place in the Behshood district of Nangahar.

On social media, supporters of the Islamic State appeared confused by the Jalalabad attack, according to terrorism experts



who follow militant activity on Twitter and other Web sites. In previous Islamic State attacks, such as an assault on the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli, Libya, in January, supporters posted amateur videos, photos and Islamic State propaganda within a few hours of the violence. Saturday's attack could portend an even more dangerous scenario: rogue Islamic State groups that act independently, inspired by the movement, also known by the acronym ISIS.

"ISIS's presence is gaining an increased 'face' of networks and cells across the globe, as seen in France, Morocco, Australia and Spain," said Veryan Khan, editorial director for the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, a U.S.-based research group that focuses on political violence.

"These networks plan and execute attacks without any direct instruction from the ISIS top leadership," Khan said.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, though, blamed the Islamic State for Saturday's attack, underscoring growing fears that have been swirling around the country for the past few months.

"Who claimed responsibility for the horrific attack in Nangahar today?" Ghani said to local reporters during a trip to the country's northeastern Badakhshan province. "The Taliban did not claim responsibility for the attack, Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack."

A statement from a group called ISIS Wilayat Khorasan that was sent to local reporters named the suicide bomber as Abu Mohammad Khorasani. A photograph said to be of the attacker showed him seated on a prayer mat, scarf covering his face, with a Kalashnikov rifle by his side and a black Islamic State flag in the background. His nationality was not mentioned. In January, the Islamic State announced its intention to expand to Afghanistan and Pakistan and referred to the region as "Khorasan." "Wilayat" is the Urdu word for "province."

It was unclear whether ISIS Wilayah Khorasan is the Islamic State's regional branch or a militant group aligned with the movement, analysts said. U.S. and Afghan military commanders have said that the Islamic State is recruiting followers and that some disgruntled Taliban factions have aligned themselves with the group.

Last year, Shahidullah Shah, the top spokesman for the ultra-violent Pakistani

Taliban — an umbrella group of various Taliban factions — announced, along with several commanders, that he had defected and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.

On Saturday, Shah, saying that he was the Islamic State's spokesman in Afghanistan, apparently sent local reporters a statement claiming responsibility for the day's attack. He congratulated the bomber on his "fidayeen," or suicide mission.

Shah is believed to be part of ISIS Wilayat Khorasan, but what remains unclear is whether he represents the Islamic State in Afghanistan. Shah was unreachable for comment.

In February, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John F. Campbell, while testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, described the Islamic State's presence in the country as "nascent."

His comments came three days after an American drone strike in southern Helmand province killed Mullah Abdul Rauf Khadim, a former Guantanamo Bay detainee and Taliban commander who had claimed to have aligned with the Islamic State.

Saturday's bombing in Jalalabad was the third deadly attack in the city since April 8, when an Afghan in military uniform killed an American soldier and wounded several others in a suspected "insider attack." That assault also killed an Afghan soldier and wounded two others. Two days later, a suicide bomber targeted a U.S. military convoy, killing four Afghan civilians and wounding 10 others. There were no U.S. casualties.

The assault on the bank was one of three separate bombing attacks that unfolded around the city at about 8.30 a.m., said Mashreqiwal, the police spokesman. The second explosion was from a bomb that exploded outside of shrine, with no casualties. The third blast was a bomb that was found unexploded outside the National Bank of Afghanistan, and police later detonated it in a controlled environment.

The fourth attack took place in the Behshood district when a small magnetic bomb killed one and wounded two others, Mashreqiwal said.

Saturday's attack was not the first to strike Kabul Bank in Jalalabad. In 2001, a group of suicide bombers targeted the same branch, killing 38 customers who were also waiting to pick up their salaries. The Taliban claimed responsibility for that attack.



Suspicion over Saturday’s attack immediately fell on the Afghan Taliban insurgency, but the group’s spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, denied responsibility for any of the explosions. In a tweet, he said, “We condemn/deny involvement.”

Ehsanullah Ehsan, a spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban, also condemned the bombing in an e-mailed statement, saying killing civilians gave “a bad name to Islam.”

“No Muslim can even think of shedding the blood of innocent people,” he said.

The Pakistani government also quickly denounced the violence and expressed condolences to the victims, the latest sign of the growing rapprochement between Kabul and Islamabad.

Gen. Sher Muhammad Karimi, Afghanistan’s army chief, is in Pakistan to meet with his counterparts and discuss border security and other issues. Afghan officials are increasingly concerned about foreign fighters who have fled

a Pakistani military offensive and sought sanctuary in Afghanistan.

The Taliban and other militants have escalated their attacks in recent weeks as they enter the traditional spring offensive. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and other officials have warned that the nation is in for a difficult spring and summer fighting the insurgency. That concern helped persuade President Obama to slow down the drawdown of roughly 10,000 U.S. military personnel remaining in the country.

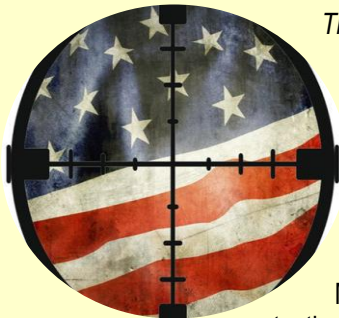
On Saturday, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) condemned Saturday’s deadly attack.

“The continuing use of suicide attacks in densely populated areas, that are certain to kill and maim large numbers of Afghan civilians, may amount to a war crime,” said Nicholas Haysom, the U.N. secretary general’s special representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA. “Those responsible for this horrendous crime must be held accountable.”

Sudarsan Raghavan has been The Post’s Kabul bureau chief since 2014. He was previously based in Nairobi and Baghdad for the Post. Haq Nawaz Khan in Pakistan contributed to this report.

Domestic terrorism: The Age of the Wolf

Source: <http://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/04/17/domestic-terrorism-age-wolf/25932347/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>



These excerpts of “The Age of the Wolf,” a recent special report by the Southern Poverty Law Center on violent extremism in the U.S. from April 1, 2009 to Feb. 1, 2015, are reprinted with permission. — Editor

At 2:22 a.m. on the morning after Thanksgiving, a man named Larry Steve McQuilliams, clad in a tactical vest and backpack hydration unit and armed with a semi-automatic AK-47, opened fire in Austin, Texas. He unleashed more than 100 rounds, first at a federal courthouse, then at the local Mexican consulate that he also tried to firebomb, and finally at the Austin Police Department headquarters.

Before he could harm anyone, the 49-year-old McQuilliams was killed by a near-miraculous pistol shot fired by an officer standing 312 feet away. When police searched his body and his van, they found another long gun, hundreds of rounds of ammunition, a map of 34 downtown

buildings that appeared to be his targets, and a book and note indicating he saw himself as a “Phineas priest,” a white supremacist who believes he’s been personally called on by God to kill his enemies.

On his chest were the black-inked words, “Let Me Die.”

McQuilliams’ note said little more than that he was acting as a “priest in the fight against anti-God people.” Because he had apparently spoken to no one about his plans and had no help, it’s unlikely that much more about him will be learned — beyond the fact that he was a “lone wolf,” the very hardest kind of terrorist to stop.

“What keeps me up at night,” said Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo, who called McQuilliams an



“American extremist,” “is these guys. The lone wolf.”

The lone wolf. Going back at least to the 1980s, that concept — a person who carries out a terrorist attack entirely on his own — has taken root on the American non-Islamic radical right and even among many jihadists. In an age of instant communications and ever more tightly knit societies, the lone wolf style of attack is vastly more likely to be successful than the kind that was once literally planned in rooms full of men, sometimes by major group leaders. People who join criminal conspiracies today are more likely than ever to be caught. As a result, there has been a long-running trend toward the lone wolf and away from group action.

A major Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) study of domestic terrorism over the last six years confirms this trend in dramatic fashion. Surveying 63 incidents culled from academic databases and the SPLC’s own files, 46 of them — fully 74 percent — were carried out by lone wolves, unassisted by others. And only one of the remaining 16 (in one case, the number of attackers is not known) was planned by a named organization. In most of those 16 cases, terrorists worked in pairs — a couple, a pair of friends, two brothers and a father and son, among them — with only six involving three or more. That means that 90 percent percent of the 62 cases where the number of perpetrators is known were the work of one or two people.

The study

Analyzing terrorism comes fraught with pitfalls. There is no hard and fast agreement on what constitutes a terrorist action. What if the attack has a political dimension, but is carried out by someone who is clearly mentally ill? Is a rampage killing spree terrorism or simply an eruption of personal hatreds? Does the murder of three police officers responding to a domestic disturbance count, even if the killer does have a long history in the police-hating antigovernment movement?

To get a sense of the shape of contemporary domestic terrorism — both from the radical right and from violent Islamists — the SPLC scoured records maintained by Indiana State University and the University of Maryland’s Global Terrorism Database, as well as SPLC’s own roster of apparent domestic terror incidents. The survey included incidents that

likely involved mental illness and arguably personal grudges, but that seemed to have an obvious political aspect. It covered terrorism inspired by antigovernment, Islamist and various forms of race or group hatred. And it encompassed both actual terror attacks and those which officials aborted.

The survey also included cases that were not terrorist plots per se, but major unplanned violence that occurred when authorities confronted volatile political extremists for any number of reasons — pulling them over for a traffic infraction or trying to serve a warrant, for instance. Less than a quarter of the incidents cited (a total of 14 cases) were unplanned and occurred after some unexpected run-in.

Incidents

The time span covered is an important one — from April 1, 2009, a few days before the Department of Homeland Security issued a prescient but ultimately controversial study warning of a “resurgence in radicalization and recruitment” on the extreme domestic right, through Feb. 1, 2015, press time. That span also very roughly corresponds to the period since Barack Obama took office in early 2009, a development that most analysts agree spurred rapid growth of the radical right.

One of the most noticeable results was the regularity of major violence or planned violence from domestic terrorists — one attack, on average, every 34 days. It’s debatable how that compares to the 1990s, when the first wave of the antigovernment militia movement swept the country. One 2013 study, by West Point’s Combating Terrorism Center, found that violence from the extreme right between 2000 and 2011 had surpassed that of the 1990s by a factor of four, but many experts agree that that seems exaggerated. What is certain is that domestic terrorism from all sources is endemic and shows no signs of abating.

The body count of victims during the 2009-2015 period is certainly less than that of the 1990s, but that is heavily skewed by Timothy McVeigh’s murder of 168 people in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. If the Oklahoma victims are subtracted, it appears that the rate of killing has remained approximately the same throughout.

The SPLC study found that 63 victims had been killed in 2009-2015 terrorist attacks, along with 16 assailants. Another recent



study, from the public-private National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, or START, counted 368 people murdered by far-right extremists between 1990 and 2013, including 50 law enforcement officers.

Without the Oklahoma victims, the START study (which did not include jihadists) shows an average killing rate of almost nine victims a year, while the SPLC study (including jihadists) finds an annual rate of almost 11.

The impact of terrorist attacks, far more than that of most other crimes, goes way beyond the number of victims. Such attacks send shock waves through targeted communities — racial groups, sexual minorities, Jews, Muslims, police and so on — and also can result, as security is ramped up, in a real loss of daily freedoms.

Other findings that emerged from the SPLC survey:

- Almost half of the attacks during the period apparently were motivated by the ideology of the antigovernment “Patriot” movement, including “sovereign citizens,” whose movement has been described by the FBI as “domestic terrorist.” A little more than that (51 percent) came from ideologies of hate, ranging from white supremacy to misogyny to radical Islamism.

- Of the 61 incidents where the weapon used is known, 59 percent of attackers used firearms, while 25 percent used explosives, including such jerry-rigged bombs as propane tanks. Five percent used both firearms and explosives. And 11 percent used other weapons, including arson fires and a private plane.

Attackers were overwhelmingly male, with just seven female assailants.

Attackers were much older as a group than most violent criminals. Various studies have shown definitively that males aged 15 to 24 are responsible for a vastly disproportionate share of violent crime. In the case of the perpetrators surveyed in this study, only about 33 percent of the 87 whose ages are known were under the age of 29, with the remainder over 30. Aside from the 20 to 29 age group, the offenders were clustered most heavily between 30 and 49 years of age, although a surprising number were older than that. This suggests that perpetrators spend many years on the radical right, absorbing extremist ideology, before finally acting out violently.

The very high percentage of lone wolf and leaderless attacks and the declining number of groups on the radical right might suggest to some that the importance of the larger radical milieu is declining. But in fact, the groups and their ideologues provide the essential ideology that motivates the lone wolves and others. Today, that ideology is far less likely to come in publications or at group meetings. Instead, it lives on the Internet, always available and always dangerous.

DHS weighs in, then out

On April 7, 2009, the team of Department of Homeland Security analysts who study non-Islamic domestic terrorism issued a confidential report to law enforcement agencies entitled “Right-wing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment.” The report, which noted the effect the economy and the election of the nation’s first black president was having on the radical right, was almost immediately leaked to the right-wing media.

There, it was pilloried, with right-wing pundits and groups like the American Legion falsely claiming that it attacked military veterans, conservatives and others on the political right. That was clearly not true — in fact, the report was remarkably accurate in its analysis and warnings (which included the assertion that the threat of lone wolves and small cells was growing) — but enough of a political firestorm was created that then-DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano renounced its findings. The team that wrote it and lead analyst Daryl Johnson were falsely accused of failing to follow DHS’ procedures and were criticized by Napolitano and others in public.

But then undeniable reality began to kick in.

Even before the DHS report’s publication — three days earlier, to be exact — the evidence was mounting. On April 4, 2009, Richard Poplowski, an extremist who believed the government was about to unleash troops against American citizens, ambushed and killed three Pittsburgh police officers responding to Poplowski’s mother’s call reporting a domestic disturbance at her home. Poplowski, who also had racist and anti-Semitic views, was eventually sentenced to death in the killings.

Three weeks later, a Florida National Guardsman named Joshua Cartwright, who had earlier expressed interest in



joining a militia group and also was “severely disturbed” about Obama’s election, shot two Okaloosa County sheriff’s deputies to death as they attempted to arrest Cartwright on domestic violence charges.

About a month after that, on May 31 — after Napolitano had withdrawn the April DHS report and apologized for its contents — an anti-abortion activist who had also been involved in the antigovernment “freemen” movement of the 1990s shot and killed Kansas abortion provider Dr. George Tiller in Tiller’s church. A few days later, on June 10, an elderly neo-Nazi named James von Brunn opened fire at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and killed a guard. He clearly intended to get into the museum and kill many more, but was himself shot and later died.

From there, the roster of human carnage continued without pause. A nativist extremist murdered a Latino man and his 9-year-old daughter; a long-time white supremacist was indicted and later convicted of sending a mail bomb that injured a diversity officer in Arizona; an angry tax protester flew an airplane into an Austin IRS building, killing himself and an IRS manager and injuring 13 others.

The federal response

But by then, almost the entire DHS team led by Daryl Johnson had left, discouraged by their treatment and DHS’ new reluctance to issue any reports because of the fear that they might become controversial. They were exhausted and perplexed by the criticisms of Napolitano, who accused them of violating vetting procedures. And Napolitano was not the only political figure that criticized Johnson and his colleagues. Then-House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio), for instance, described the DHS report as “offensive and unacceptable” and charged, without any basis, that DHS had abandoned the word “terrorist” to describe al-Qaida and instead was using “the same term to describe American citizens who disagree with the direction Washington Democrats are taking our nation.”

In the years since then, the DHS has held up or canceled a number of planned reports on domestic terrorism of various types. Even some law enforcement briefings were cancelled. At the same time, in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaida attacks, the Justice Department’s Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee was allowed to go fallow

for more than a decade. But in the aftermath of the April 2014 murder of three people at two Kansas Jewish institutions, allegedly by a well-known neo-Nazi, Attorney General Eric Holder announced that he was bringing the committee back to life. It had held no meetings, however, as of press time.

Johnson’s DHS unit was not a law enforcement agency, but it did play a key role in providing law enforcement with intelligence assessments. While it certainly could not prevent most terrorist attacks, the information it once produced was of high interest and importance to many police agencies. Former West Memphis, Ark., Police Chief Bob Paudert, whose police officer son was murdered by a father-and-son team of antigovernment extremists in 2010, has denounced the government for failing to brief police on such things as the “sovereign citizens” movement. His son’s killers were sovereigns, who reject the laws of the federal government, and Paudert believes that if his son had been briefed on them he might have lived.

The FBI has taken up some of the slack left by DHS with occasional reports on extremism. And more than 70 fusion centers — regional centers where federal, state and local law enforcement agencies share information about threats — put out occasional papers and warnings to possible targets. But those who study terrorism are still deeply worried by the virtual dissolution of the DHS team. “It was a big mistake to take those people off the radar,” said Mark Hamm, a criminologist at Indiana State University. “As soon as Barack Obama was elected, we could almost see it in the wind that there was going to be a revival of the radical right.”

Still, there does seem to be some new activity on the part of the federal government, including the planned reactivation of the Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee. The government is funding a number of studies on radicalization and other matters related to domestic terrorism. But it still remains to be seen if these initiatives and others really deal effectively with the threat.

For his part, Daryl Johnson, who warned in 2009 of the increasing move toward lone wolf and leaderless terrorism — criminal acts that are almost impossible to stop in advance because so few people are involved in their planning —



worries that the government still concentrates too much on foreign Muslim extremists, and that the recent Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris could add to that bias. He says that another extreme-right attack on the order of Oklahoma City, which was facilitated by the fact that only four people knew of the plot in advance, is entirely likely.

“We’re long overdue for a much greater attack from the far right,” Johnson said as he weighed the prospects for violence by terrorists like Larry McQuilliams, who clearly intended to kill as many people as possible. “We are long overdue.”

► Read the full report at: <http://www.splcenter.org/lone-wolf>

This report was prepared by the staff of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The principal writer was Intelligence Project Senior Writer Ryan Lenz, with contributions from Southern Poverty Law Center Senior Fellow Mark Potok. The report was edited by Mark Potok.



Terrorist Designations of Christodoulos Xiros and Nikolaos Maziotis

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson
Washington, DC
April 21, 2015

Source: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/04/240928.htm>

The U.S. Department of State has designated Christodoulos Xiros and Nikolaos Maziotis under Executive Order 13224, which targets terrorists and those providing support to terrorists or acts of terrorism. As a result of these designations, all property subject to U.S. jurisdiction in which Xiros and Maziotis have any interest is blocked and any assets they may have under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen. U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with Xiros and Maziotis, or to their benefit.



◀ **Christodoulos Xiros** was one of the chief assassins of 17 November, until his arrest in 2002. In January 2014, Xiros was serving multiple life terms at the Korydallos Prison near Athens, Greece, when he disappeared while on furlough from the prison, after being granted temporary leave to visit his family in northern Greece. 17 November was active beginning in the 1970s through the early 2000s, claiming attacks against Greek politicians and businessmen, as well as Western interests. After his escape, he

publicized a manifesto focusing on his discontent with the Greek government. Xiros was re-arrested by Greek police in January 2015 while planning to carry out armed assaults in Greece, possibly with the intent to free other prisoners. At the time of his arrest, Xiros was likely coordinating with members of Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei, a group designated by the State Department under E.O. 13224 in 2011.



◀ **Nikolaos Maziotis** is the leader of the Greek terrorist organization, Revolutionary Struggle. He was arrested with six other alleged members of Revolutionary Struggle in 2010, but went missing in the middle of his trial. In April 2014, under the leadership of Maziotis, Revolutionary Struggle claimed responsibility for a bomb blast in central Athens outside the branch offices of the Greek central bank. On July 16, 2014, Maziotis was re-arrested by Greek police after a shootout in Athens’ central

tourist district, which left four people wounded. Revolutionary Struggle was designated a



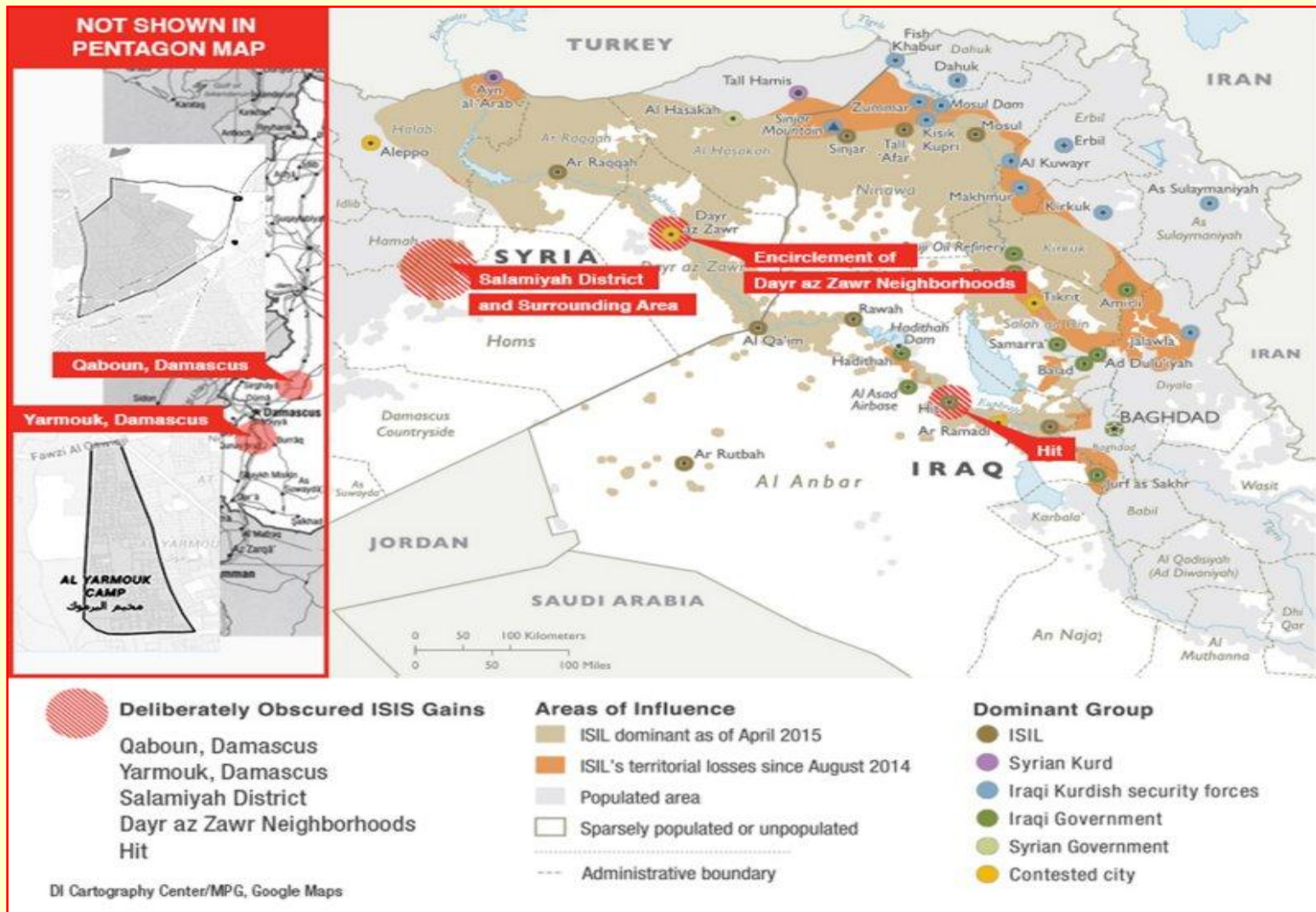
foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State on May 18, 2009 and is most well-known for a rocket-propelled grenade attack on the U.S. Embassy in Athens in 2007. The Department of State took this action in consultation with the Departments of Justice and the Treasury. We will continue to take such actions against terrorists and terrorist groups in Greece and elsewhere.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Terrorists should stay in prison. And if they suffer from serious medical issues they should be provided the appropriate medical support in jail. Too much democracy is bad for our health. Simple as that.

Pentagon Map Hides ISIS Gains

By Tim Mak

Source: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/04/22/the-pentagon-s-isis-map-is-so-wrong.html>



The U.S. military presented evidence that it was beating back the so-called Islamic State but it doesn't even count coalition setbacks. The Defense Department released a map last week showing territory where it has pushed ISIS back, claiming that the terrorist group is "no longer able to operate freely in roughly 25 to 30 percent of populated areas of Iraqi

territory where it once could." This was touted as evidence of success by numerous news outlets. Pushing ISIS back is clearly a good step. But the information from the Pentagon is, at best, misleading and incomplete, experts in the region and people



on the ground tell The Daily Beast. They said the map misinforms the public about how effective the U.S.-led effort to beat back ISIS has actually been. The map released by the Pentagon excludes inconvenient facts in some parts, and obscures them in others.

The Pentagon's map assessing the so-called Islamic State's strength has only two categories: territory held by ISIS currently, and territory lost by ISIS since coalition airstrikes began in August 2014. The category that would illustrate American setbacks—where ISIS has actually gained territory since the coalition effort began—is not included.

"Taken in isolation, the map definitely gives an impression that anti-ISIS efforts have succeeded in pushing the group back along a northern and north-eastern peripheries, but it fails in one huge respect—it fails to specifically identify territory gained by ISIS during the same period," said Charles Lister, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center.

The map also shows areas where ISIS is "dominant," as opposed to the terrorist group's operational reach—the areas where it can inflict violence.

"A far more important facet of assessing our success or failure is measuring ISIS's capacity to continue *offensive* operations and to reach beyond its lines of actual control. In that respect, I'd say ISIS has been very minimally challenged since August 2014 and its only this kind of measurement that will persuade local actors on the ground that ISIS is losing," Lister told The Daily Beast.

The Defense Department, naturally, doesn't agree. "ISIL's own doctrine says it must gain and hold territory. This map shows they are not achieving their stated goals," Pentagon spokesman Colonel Steven Warren told The Daily Beast, using the government's preferred acronym for the terror group.

But Warren seemed to acknowledge that the map isn't entirely accurate.

The document "was not meant to be a detailed tactical map—it is simply a graphic used to explain the overall situation," he said.

The entire battlefield of the ISIS war isn't depicted, however. For some reason, the Pentagon's ISIS map excludes the entire western side of Syria—which, coincidentally or not, is an area where ISIS has gained a significant foothold since the U.S.-led bombing effort began last year.

Western Syria is also an area dominated by the Syrian regime, led by President Bashar al-Assad. The United States has insisted that Assad must leave office, but has not elucidated a clear strategy for how to compel this to occur. Jennifer Cafarella, a fellow specializing in Syria at the Institute for the Study of War, said that while the map, as presented, looked accurate, she would "highlight that the map doesn't extend to include western Syria, where there is growing ISIS presence... the map cuts off, essentially ignoring ISIS in the Syrian-Lebanese border region and Damascus."

ISIS gains in the area excluded from the Pentagon's map should be noted, Cafarella continued, because "they are a forward investment for ISIS that will create long-term opportunities for further expansion into zones in which coalition airstrikes are unlikely, at least in the near term, to penetrate."

Since airstrikes began in August, ISIS has also shown its force on the northeastern suburbs of Damascus, near Qabun. More recently, ISIS made international news through a violent takeover of the area surrounding a Palestinian refugee camp called Yarmouk, which U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has described as "the deepest circle of hell."

The Department of Defense marks off the Salamiyeh district, in central Syria, as ISIS-controlled. What it doesn't note is that ISIS expanded into this area after the coalition airstrikes began, and that the so-called Islamic State is threatening the lives of the locals, who are largely Ismaili—a group of Muslims that ISIS militants view as apostates.

"While the Obama administration says that it is fighting ISIS in Syria, ISIS is actually expanding into Salamiyeh... without [being confronted by] a single U.S. airstrike," said Omar Hossino, director of public relations for the Syrian American Council, a grassroots organization that helps bolster opposition to the Assad regime. "The people of Salamiyeh are under threat of genocide, especially the Ismaili majority."

Abu Ali, the pseudonym of a resident of Salamiyeh, said in an email to The Daily Beast that ISIS operations in the area "have intensified during the recent period in Salamiyeh district, which indicate the expansion of this organization and the expansion of its military operations, at a time when it is not being shown any resistance



or an appropriate response by both the international coalition.”

“This frequency, and acceleration of [ISIS] military operations in the vicinity of the city... justifies concern,” Abu Ali continued, “as it strengthens the suspicious intersection of interests between the regime and [ISIS] to target Salamiyeh as a calculated assault on the minorities in Syria.”

In a note accompanying the map, the Pentagon describes ISIS gains in Syria to be offset by ISIS losses elsewhere in the country, a contention disputed by scholar Charles Lister.

“I’d fairly forcefully debate that assessment as being more than a bit positive,” he told the Beast.

And there are at least two other areas in Iraq and Syria where the Obama administration’s information notes ISIS control without pointing out that it happened after U.S.-led airstrikes began. In Deir Ezzor, ISIS has encircled neighborhoods and cut off thousands of people from the basic necessities of life.

“In recent months, ISIS has tightened its grip around the city of Deir Ezzor, encircling some

200,000 civilians in both the Al-Joura and Al-Qusour districts and further cutting them off from both food and medical aid,” said Evan Barrett, a political adviser for Coalition for a Democratic Syria, a Syrian-American opposition umbrella group. “Regular appeals are made from the city for support, including in the form of international strikes, but according to Syrian independent broadcasters, strikes in the province focus on ISIS oil assets and border areas far from the besieged provincial capital.”

The area of Hit district, in Iraq’s Anbar province, fell to ISIS in October 2014, well after U.S.-led airstrikes began, noted Sinan Adnan, a pseudonym for an Iraqi-American employee at the Institute for the Study of War.

And while the Pentagon’s map is generally accurate in showing territory that the U.S.-led coalition has taken back from ISIS, it omits that many of these areas still remain unpopulated by their original inhabitants.

“For the most part, Iraqi Sunnis are not being allowed back into their areas,” Adnan said “Depopulated communities would be a ripe environment for a new insurgency when and if ISIS is defeated.”

Tim Mak is the Senior Congressional Correspondent for The Daily Beast. He covers Congress, politics and national security. He previously reported on politics and defense at Politico and the Washington Examiner.



The document “was not meant to be a detailed tactical map—it is simply a graphic used to explain the overall situation,” the Pentagon spokesman said.





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