terrorism

Asia

MERS VIRUS

Mapped: The countries facing the greatest threat from terrorism

Source: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11629161/Mapped-The-countries-facing-the-greatest-threat-from-Islamic-extremists.html
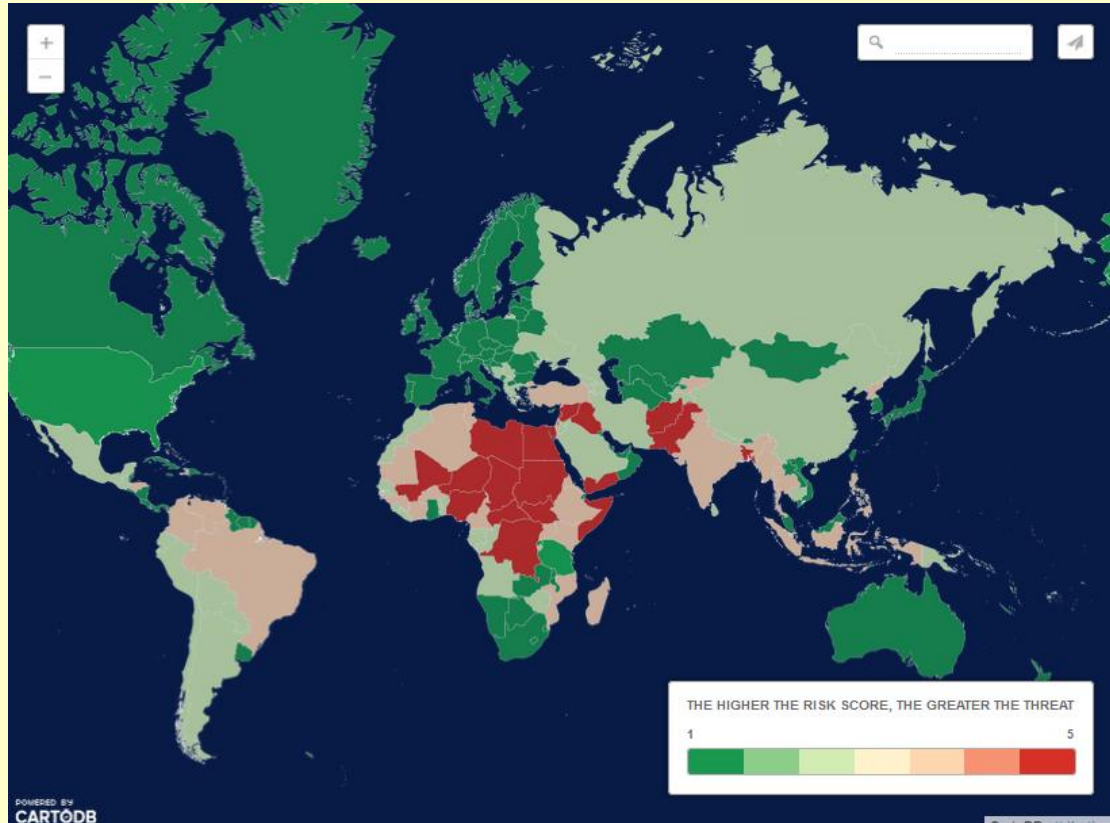
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Western countries including France, Germany and Australia are facing a greater threat from Islamic extremism than 12 months previously, a new report has warned.

The nine countries (including Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland and Norway) face increased terrorism threats, mainly because of the growing influence of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil) as well as al-Qaeda affiliates and supporters. For Estonia, the report said Russian aggression was the cause of its higher risk rating.

(The UK has a risk rating of 2, the same as last year - readers can find out this year's rating and the 2014 rating by clicking on the map).

Of the nine nations, three have recently experienced terror attacks that shocked the world and left dozens dead. In January, 17 people were killed during the Paris attacks which saw al-Qaeda-affiliated brothers storm into a satirical magazine's offices and shoot dead 12 people.

Meanwhile during the same three-day siege in the French capital, Said and Chérif Kouachi's accomplice, Amedy Coulibaly, took several people hostage in a kosher supermarket in an hours-long siege which left four dead.

Coulibaly appeared in a video from beyond the grave pledging allegiance to Isil. The gunman had also killed a policewoman the day before.

In December, Iranian Man Haron Monis – a self-proclaimed cleric – took several people hostage in the Lindt Cafe in Sydney and claimed he was carrying out an attack as a member of Isil.

Then in February, only a few weeks after the world had been stunned by the attack on Charlie Hebdo, a gunmen shot a film director attending a free-speech debate during an attack on a cafe.

Lars Vilks, a Swedish artist who had previously drawn the Prophet Mohammed as a dog in 2007 was attending when Finn Nørgaard, 55, was killed. A few hours later, the same gunman killed Dan Uzan, 37, a Jewish security guard, protecting a bat mitzvah party.

As well as the threat from Islamic terrorism, Aon Risk Solutions, the global risk management business who produce the risk report for their customers, said it was "no longer unthinkable" that there could be more armed clashes in the region near Russia after the country's military actions and greater spending on its army.

In the latest Aon Terrorism and Political Violence Map produced together with The Risk Advisory Group, the report found there had been a reduction on country risk ratings globally, but the dangers getting worse in a smaller number of countries.

Twenty-one countries including saw a reduced risk of terrorism and political violence and South America had the most positive results from the study with no nations perceived to be at increased risk.

For Tunisia to see a reduction in its threat level will be come news after the terror attack in March on the Tunis Bardo museum left 21 foreigners dead.

The 21 countries in full:

1. Albania	12. Guyana
2. Bangladesh	13. Honduras
3. Barbados	14. Kyrgyzstan
4. Bhutan	15. Mauritania
5. Brazil	16. Mongolia
6. Costa Rica	17. Morocco
7. Croatia	18. Mozambique
8. Cuba	19. Panama
9. Czech Republic	20. Tunisia
10. Egypt	21. Uzbekistan
11. Fiji	

Meanwhile, according to Aon, Lesotho, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania and Ukraine as well as the nine mentioned earlier are in more danger.

In the report, Aon increased Germany's risk rating from 1 to 2 because there was an increasing risk of terror but the anti-Islam protests led by Pegida were also cited.

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EDITOR'S COMMENT: There is something fishy in this (interactive) map. Whole Europe is dark green but **Greece** is light green – indicating biggest threat. Since when? Is the rest of Europe safer than Greece? Are there any major terrorism attacks in this country that we are unaware of? And then Brazil the country that will host 2016 Olympic Games: overall score 3 for 2015 compared to score 4 for 2014?

Exposure to media coverage of terrorist acts, disasters may cause long-term negative health effects

Source: http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150527-exposure-to-media-coverage-of-terrorist-acts-disasters-may-cause-longterm-negative-health-effects

May 27 – The city of Boston endured one of the worst terrorist attacks on U.S. soil in April of 2013, when two pressure-cooker bombs exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon. While emergency workers responded to the chaos and law enforcement agencies began a manhunt for the perpetrators, Americans fixed their attention to television screens, Internet news sites and forums, and Twitter, Facebook, and other social media.

In doing so, some of those people may have been raising their acute stress levels, with a corresponding increase in symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, a sense of emotional numbness, or re-experiencing their trauma. Such responses, exhibited shortly after exposure to a trauma, have been linked with long-term negative health effects.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) reports that a trio of researchers in psychology and social behavior and nursing science at the University of California, Irvine — supported by the Social Psychology Program in NSF's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate — released a paper last year finding that **for some individuals, intense exposure to the Boston Marathon bombing through media coverage could be associated with more stress symptoms than those who had direct exposure to the attack.** Their latest research article, published this month, finds that the likelihood of those symptoms developing also increases with multiple exposures to prior trauma.

In other words, the more hours you spend following disasters and

tragedies in the media, the more sensitized you may become.

"Media-based exposure to these large, collective traumas — these community disasters — can have cumulative effects on people," said Dana Rose Garfin, one of the paper's authors. "More prior indirect exposures are associated with higher stress responses following subsequent traumatic events."

Garfin, E. Alison Holman and Roxane Cohen Silver used survey results from residents of metropolitan Boston and New York City collected within weeks of the Marathon bombing to examine the relationship between how they responded to the attack and their media-based exposure to three previous traumatic events: the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, Superstorm Sandy, and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

"We were able to specifically explore the accumulation of exposure to collective disasters," Silver said. "We looked at three different, collective events to which people on the East Coast — and in particular New York and Boston — have been exposed."

The researchers looked at levels of acute stress in Boston and New York residents within a month after the Marathon bombing. The Boston residents were much closer to that act of terrorism, but the researchers did not find that proximity necessarily correlated with higher stress levels.

According to their report, New Yorkers already had somewhat heightened stress levels, due to their exposure to Superstorm Sandy, 9/11, and the Sandy Hook shooting, making their responses to the Marathon bombing comparable to those of Bostonians.

These findings do not imply that merely reading one article or watching a single program about a community trauma will necessarily increase stress. The research team's first paper found that acute stress symptoms increased as the number of hours per day of bombing-related media exposure in the week following the bombing increased. People who reported three or more hours per

day of media exposure reported higher stress symptoms than those who reported less than one hour per day, and individuals who reported six or more hours a day reported the highest levels of symptoms.

Their latest paper also notes that the effects of cumulative indirect trauma exposure are not universal.

"There's variability in how this happens," Holman said. "And that's another research question that has to be addressed – to understand what leads to those differences, why some people have sensitivities and others don't."

There are other limits on the findings. The data were correlational — they showed a relationship between increased media exposure to traumatic events and the development of stress symptoms, but they do not provide a direct causal link. Still, based on the evidence the researchers have reviewed thus far, coupled with the findings from a similar study they conducted about exposure to media after the 9/11 attacks, the team members have recommendations for news consumers.

"My recommendation is to turn off the TV and not expose yourself too much through social media or other media sources," Holman said. "Find out what you need to know from the news, but don't overexpose yourself."

Garfin emphasized that overexposure is the key factor.

"I wouldn't say don't stay informed or tune out the news," she said. "It's the repeated exposure to things, which probably isn't giving you new information. We're not saying turn off the TV totally. Stay informed, then go on with your daily life."

The NSF notes that the researchers are likely to yield much more in the way of results on the topic. The latest paper represents the first wave of data collection they performed. There are four more following. Their next article, they said, will examine how specific types of media — such as television or social media — are associated with acute stress levels.

Skyping with the enemy: I went undercover as a jihadi girlfriend

It was 10 o'clock on a Friday night in spring 2014 and I was sitting on the sofa in my one-bed Paris apartment when I received a message from a French terrorist based in Syria: "Salaam alaikum, sister. I see you watched my video. It's gone viral – crazy! Are you Muslim? What do you think about mujahideen?"

A journalist, I had been writing about European jihadis in Islamic State for about a year. I created a social media account, using the name Mélodie, to investigate why European teenagers were attracted to Islamic extremism. I spent hours scanning feeds filled with descriptions of gruesome plans. I had spent that night on my couch, flicking from account to account, when I came across a video of a French jihadi who looked about 35. He wore military fatigues and called himself Abu Bilel. He claimed to be in Syria.

I would later learn that he had spent the past 15 years waging jihad all over the world. But for the moment, I knew nothing of the bellicose man on my screen, proudly unveiling the contents of his SUV glove box: a thick stack of Syrian pounds, candy, a knife. He removed his reflective Ray-Bans, revealing darkly lined, black eyes. I knew that Afghan soldiers wore kohl around their eyes. Still, seeing a terrorist with eyes made up like my own was surprising. He was good-looking. He spoke perfect French, with what to me sounded like a very slight Algerian accent. He smiled broadly as he beckoned viewers and called for *hijrah*: leaving a land of unbelievers to join an Islamist country.

I usually kept a low profile on my account. I didn't preach; I simply posted links to articles or videos such as this one. My profile picture was a cartoon image of Princess Jasmine from the Disney movie Aladdin. I tended to change my profile location depending on what story I was working on. Now I claimed to be in Toulouse. I shared the video. Soon afterwards, my computer alerted me to three messages sent to Mélodie's private inbox from Abu Bilel. "Last question," he wrote, "are you thinking about coming to Syria?"

"Walaikum salaam," I wrote. "I didn't think a jihadi would talk to me. Don't you have better things to do? LOL." In reply to his question about mujahideen, I wrote: "I'm not prejudiced against fighters. Anyway, it depends on the person."

I wanted to understand how European children were falling for this propaganda, and grasp the mindset of these soldiers

I also told him I had converted to Islam, but didn't offer any details. I deliberately included spelling mistakes, and tried to use teen vocabulary. I waited for his reply with a knot in my

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stomach. This seemed too big to be true. I had interviewed mujahideen before, but never anyone over 20, and never anyone who expressed anything beyond the official propaganda.

"Of course I have a lot of things to do! But here it's 11 o'clock at night and the fighters are finished for the day. Do you have any questions about the video you shared? I can tell you about everything going on in Syria – the only real truth: Allah's truth. We should talk over Skype. I'll give you my username."

Skype was out of the question. I suggested we talk another time. Bilel understood; he'd make himself available for Mélodie tomorrow. "You converted, so… you should get ready for your hijrah. I'll take care of you, Mélodie."

Bilel knew nothing about this girl and already he was asking her to join him. I was disgusted. Going after a girl like Mélodie was so easy: I'd met a thousand girls like her, with limited education and guidance. They were vulnerable.

I wanted to understand how European children were falling for this propaganda, and to grasp the mindset of soldiers who spent their days torturing, stealing, raping, killing, and their nights staring into their computers and bragging. Perhaps this man would give me an insight. For now, however, it was getting late, and my boyfriend, Milan, was due to come round. I called to tell him I wanted to spend the night at his apartment instead. I didn't tell him how I'd spent the evening, only that I wanted to sleep next to him.

That Monday, I rushed to the magazine where I often do freelance work, eager to discuss my lead with one of the editors. I had forwarded him the video of Bilel showing off the contents of his car. He was stunned by how easily contact had been established. He agreed that this was an opportunity, but reminded me that pursuing this could be dangerous. He assigned me a photographer, André. We'd worked together for years and we made a good team. I would agree to Bilel's request to meet over Skype, and André would take pictures.

The idea of a terrorist becoming familiar with my face didn't thrill me, especially as he might come home at any moment

I needed to look 10 years younger, find a veil, and somehow slip into the skin of a 20-year-old woman. Another editor, a former reporter who would also be supervising my investigation, lent me a hijab and a black dress – a kind of djellaba. I was glad to wear the veil. The idea of a terrorist becoming familiar with my face didn't thrill me, especially not when he might return to France, his home country, at any moment.

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André arrived at my apartment around 6pm. It was one hour later in Syria. That gave us time to prepare before Bilel came online. We looked for the best angle from which to take pictures of the computer screen and keep me as indistinct as possible. We had strict orders to prioritise our safety above all else.

> Listen, it's my job to recruit people. You'll be really well taken care of here

> I'm not sure that I want to go to Syria

> You'll be important. And if you agree to marry me, I'll treat you like a queen

I pulled Mélodie's floor-length djellaba over my jeans and sweater. When I returned to the living room, André burst out laughing. "It's supposed to cover more of your forehead," he said, mocking me. He helped me readjust the hijab so it covered every strand of hair and showed only the oval of the face. I removed my rings and covered the tattoo on my wrist with foundation. Bilel was already logged on to Facebook and waiting for Mélodie.

"Are you there?" he asked impatiently.

"Are we meeting on Skype?"

"Mélodie?"

"Hello? LOL."

"Mélodie???…"

"Sorry: salaam alaikum… :) You there???"

It was time. I sat cross-legged on my sofa. It had a high back, which hid most of my apartment and any distinctive features from the camera. André had also removed a photograph from the wall. He positioned himself in a blind spot behind the sofa. My smartphone was already recording, and I had another prepaid phone, which would be Mélodie's. I'd also created a new Skype account in her name. From a YouTube video, I'd worked out how to scramble the IP address.

Bilel sent 'Mélodie' hundreds of messages every week. Composite: The Guardian

The Skype ringtone sounded like a church bell. I took a moment to breathe, then I clicked the button, and there he was. Bilel stared at Mélodie. His eyes were still accentuated with dark liner. He appeared to be Skyping from his car, using a smartphone. He looked clean, even well-groomed. He was a proud man, his shoulders pulled back and his chin thrust forward, but I sensed he was nervous. After what felt like an eternity, he finally broke the silence: "Salaam alaikum, my sister."

I made my voice as tiny, sweet and bright as I could, considering I'd smoked like a chimney for 15 years. And I smiled. "It's crazy to be talking to a mujahid in Syria," Mélodie said, impressed. "It's like you have easier access to the internet than I do in Toulouse! I share the computer with my sister, and my mum takes it away from us a lot. Even your phone is newer than mine." I was giving Mélodie a plausible excuse for future unavailability. She lived with her family, she couldn't always honour her engagements.

"Syria is amazing," Bilel said. "We have everything here. Masha'Allah, you have to believe me: it's paradise! A lot of women fantasise about us; we're Allah's warriors," he said.

"But every day people die in your paradise…"

"That's true, and every day I fight to stop the killing. Here the enemy is the devil. You have no idea. The enemy steals from and kills poor Syrians. He rapes women, too. He's attacking us, and we're defending peace."

"Is the enemy the president of Syria?"

"Among others. We have many adversaries."

In addition to Bashar al-Assad's regime, he mentioned the al-Nusra Front (an armed branch of al-Qaida), Syrians and all those he considered infidels. "Tell me," Bilel said, "do you wear your hijab every day?"

Mélodie recited what I'd heard from the girls I'd met during my research who had secretly converted to Islam. "I dress normally in the morning. I say goodbye to my mum, and when I'm outside the house, I put on my djellaba and my veil."

"Good. I'm proud of you. What you're doing is really brave. You have a beautiful soul. And you're very pretty on the outside, too."

Bilel peered lecherously at Mélodie. She asked him to show her his surroundings. He claimed to be near Aleppo. In reality, he was probably several miles from the Isis stronghold of Raqqa.

He got out of his car and his smartphone showed images of a devastated Syria. Suddenly, men's voices broke the silence

He got out of his car and his smartphone showed images of a devastated Syria. Not a person in sight. It was about 9pm there, and it was absolutely silent. Suddenly, men's thick voices broke the silence.

"Don't say anything!" Bilel ordered. "I don't want anyone to see or hear you! You're my jewel; you're pure. OK? Do you understand?"

Mélodie said she understood. I listened to the conversation. I was able to distinguish the voices of two other men. They greeted each other in Arabic, then French, which sounded like their mother tongue. They laughed, congratulating themselves for having "slaughtered them".

"Salaam alaikum. What's up?" one man asked. "Are you putting in overtime or something?"

"I'm on the lookout, brother, lookout duty … nothing special. Nothing happening here. This area is all cleared out. You know that."

The dried blood I could see on the concrete was evidence of a recent attack. Isis's black flags with white insignia floated in the distance. I listened to Bilel talk about a variety of issues, including his impatience for the arrival of his "American cargo" and "chocolate bars".

The other men were quick to congratulate Bilel. The exchange was short, but their way of addressing him suggested he was higher in the ranks than they were. A minute later, he said goodbye to his fellow fighters and spoke into the phone, worried Mélodie might have hung up: "Oh, you're still there! And just as beautiful."

I quizzed him about where he was and what he had done. "You ask too many questions," he said. "Tell me about you! What guided you to Allah's path?"

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I was dying for a cigarette. I hadn't had time to invent a history for Mélodie. I stammered, "One of my cousins was Muslim, and I was fascinated by the inner peace that his religion gave him."

"Does he know you want to come to al-Sham?"

Bilel assumed that everything had been decided. For him, Mélodie would soon arrive in Syria. "I'm not sure that I want to go," I said.

"Listen, Mélodie, among other things, it's my job to recruit people, and I'm really good at my job. You can trust me. You'll be really well taken care of here. You'll be important. And if you agree to marry me, I'll treat you like a queen."

I logged off Skype as a kind of survival reflex. Pulling the hijab down to my neck, I turned towards André, who looked dumbfounded. We stared at each other. How was I to respond? André suggested explaining that Mélodie didn't want to arrive in Syria alone – if she decided to go at all. André held out a cigarette and I took a drag. Bilel was calling again. I disabled the video connection. Bilel could continue his conversation with Mélodie, but he wouldn't be able to see her. It felt as if his face had invaded every corner of the room, and I didn't want to see it any more.

I wondered how many girls were being lured by men like Bilel right now. 'I have to hang up,' I said, 'Mum's coming home'

"My friend Yasmine is Muslim," I said, changing the subject, "and she complains about not being able to practise her religion in Toulouse. I could invite her to come with me, but I'm not sure if she's allowed, since she's a minor."

"Of course she can come!"

"She's only 15."

"I fight for sharia law every day. Here, women are supposed to get married when they turn 14. If Yasmine comes, I'll find her a good man."

Yasmine didn't exist, but I wondered how many real Yasmines were being lured at that very moment by men like Bilel. "Bilel, I have to hang up. My mum is getting home."

"I'll be here tomorrow, after the fighting, at seven. Inshallah … Good night, my baby."

I logged off. André and I were both surprised at how rapidly everything had unfolded.

Every morning that week, I awoke to find several affectionate messages from Bilel, all beginning with "my baby". I received more from him than from my boyfriend. Over the next few weeks, Abu Bilel became a full-time job. During the day, I fact-checked his claims at the office. At night, my avatar took over, conversing with him

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> When you get to Istanbul, buy a one-way ticket

> That wasn't the plan. You told me I'd be safe

> You can't talk to me like that. From now on you're going to shut up

over Skype and coaxing out new information, verifying it by tracking the latest battles online.

'Bilel's tone changed. I'd never seen him like this before.' Composite: The Guardian

I wasted a lot of time playing along with Bilel's game of seduction in order to gain his trust. By now, I had a good sense of the ways he recruited young Muslims, but wanted to know more about how Isis worked. My cover prevented me from asking direct questions, but I used Mélodie's "fascination" with the cause to probe him for details. Sometimes, I was so shocked by Bilel's words that I had to disconnect, but as I grew accustomed to these exchanges, that became less necessary. As we spoke more and more, I felt as if Mélodie became closer to Bilel, who spoke of their "marriage". No one could understand the level of stress that this double life demanded.

I carried Melodie's outfit and phone with me at all times, in case a message came through and I needed to speak to Bilel. I even found myself in a bikini by a swimming pool, talking to Bilel on the phone as Mélodie, and reassuring him I was surrounded by women and was covered up.

He badgered Mélodie every day on Skype and Facebook. At one point he was without internet access, and instead sent a tender text message at 6am every morning: "Have a good day, baby. Think of me. I miss you." My friends and co-workers started asking if I

was getting too involved. My boyfriend didn't want to know too much, but when he came home and found me in Mélodie's garb, on Skype to Bilel, I began to feel as if I was having an affair. Milan wanted me to be safe, but he didn't want to know any more details, unless I had to travel. And that suited me.

Meanwhile, Mélodie's list of virtual friends grew. Her recent posts on Facebook calling for "humanitarian" jihad elicited new friend requests and private messages. Girls began asking Mélodie for advice on the safest route to al-Sham. There were strange questions: "Should I bring a lot of sanitary pads, or can I find them there?" "Will I be able to find thong underwear there?" I didn't want to reply, but where I felt girls were planning imminent departure, I discouraged them.

It had been nearly a month. André feared that the longer we let Mélodie exist, the more I was at risk. "Until we put an end to this," he said, "you're always going to want more information." I agreed with him. Of course, I hated Bilel and everything he stood for. I wanted him out of my life; but it was hard to stop, because I felt the story was so strong. I'd put so much of myself into it that I knew my curiosity had become unhealthy.

Together with my editors, I planned the investigation's denouement. I had told Bilel that Yasmine and I would meet him in Syria. He gave me instructions: we should go to Amsterdam and then on to Istanbul, where we would pick up a prepaid phone. Once Mélodie had made contact with Bilel there, he would send details.

We were to continue on to Kilis, a Turkish city near the Syrian border. The story would end there

I really was going, but a photographer – not Yasmine – would accompany me. Bilel had told me an older woman was to meet us there. Our photographer would capture her on film. We would continue on to Kilis, a Turkish city near the Syrian border. The story would end there, with a photograph of Mélodie, from behind, looking out at the border. We were finally wrapping this up. At least, that's what I thought.

A few days later, I was in a stuffy hotel room in Amsterdam with Charly, another photographer. A video call from Bilel came in. "Salaam alaikum, my darling, are you really in Amsterdam? I can't believe it. You'll be here soon. I'm the happiest man on Earth. I love you, my wife."

I'd never seen him look so happy. Bilel was alone in an internet cafe.

"Yes, sweetheart, I'm here with Yasmine. We're flying to Istanbul tomorrow. But we have to be careful; it's not safe here. Tell me what to do."

As usual, Bilel was only half listening. "You're so pretty!" he said. "Tell me about your trip. How did you pay for your tickets?"

"I stole my mum's debit card and bought two tickets online. We brought our passports, and here we are … Can we talk about tomorrow? Yasmine is a little stressed out and she'd feel a lot better if she knew what was going to happen next."

"Oh, OK. Let me explain. When you arrive in Istanbul, you need to buy another phone. Throw away the one you got in Amsterdam. And be sure to pay in cash, not with your mum's card. Otherwise, the cops will be able to trace you."

"OK. Where will the contact be waiting?"

"Actually, nobody will be there to meet you. You'll need to buy two tickets for a flight across the country; driving would take too long."

"What do you mean, nobody will be there when we arrive? You promised!"

This wasn't the plan.

"I know, but it'll be OK. You're a big girl, aren't you, my wife? Dozens of Europeans make this trip every week. You can do this, my lioness."

"But that wasn't the plan, Bilel," I said, my voice frayed with genuine anxiety. "We've gone over this many times. You were adamant – as was I – that a woman would come to meet us. You told me we would be safe. How many times have you told me nothing is more important than my safety?"

"Listen to me," he said, his tone hardening. "You're going to shut up for a minute and let me speak. It'll be a snap. When you arrive at the airport in Istanbul, buy two one-way tickets for Urfa."

Urfa? Going there was suicide. Isis was active there.

"I think you're being unreasonably hard on me," Mélodie said. "All I ask is that you respect what you've been promising me ... At the first sign of difficulty, you abandon me. That's just great."

'I command 100 soldiers every day. I haven't even told you a quarter of the truth. I'm wanted internationally'

Bilel's tone changed. I'd never seen him like this before. "Do you think I'm an idiot? From now on, you're going to shut up. I'm part of a terrorist organisation. You can't talk to me

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like that. Don't you know who I am? I command 100 soldiers every day. I haven't even told you a quarter of the truth. I'm wanted internationally; that's why I can't even go to our cities in Turkey. I can only travel to Iraq. I'm 38, and you and your friend can't bring me down. You'd better tread lightly."

The conversation came to an abrupt end. I tore off the hijab and rose to my feet. I called my editor-in-chief and explained. She told me that the story had to end here. Urfa was too big a risk. Two French journalists sent to the region by a radio station had just been freed after 10 months of captivity at the hands of Isis. The next morning, we flew home.

Mélodie sent Bilel a Skype message from the airport, informing him that a "strange" man had questioned the girls. Yasmine and Mélodie felt they were being watched, and had decided to return to France. Mélodie would make the trip alone, but for now she didn't want to endanger her man or his brigade. She would lie low for a while in Toulouse. Given the situation, that was the best solution for everyone.

Back at home, my editors were realising just how much information I had: Bilel had revealed many details about the structure of Isis, and the way new recruits were treated. I began writing. They delayed publication while we got legal advice.

I hadn't checked Mélodie's accounts for 24 hours. I plugged in all my devices. The Dutch phone had been bombarded with messages. One line stood out: "Where are you, you little bitch? I swear to Allah, you're going to pay!"

Enough. I deactivated my avatar's virtual existence, keeping only her Skype profile. Mélodie sent a final message, apologising, so that her sudden disappearance wouldn't arouse suspicion.

I had no intention of getting back in touch with him, but I hoped to curb his anger. The more Mélodie showed remorse, the easier it would be for Bilel to move on. After all, he had more important things to do. Isis was preparing its assault on Iraq. Almost two months to the day, it would seize Mosul, Iraq's second-biggest city.

A week later, the magazine sent my article to press, under a pseudonym. For me, though, that was only the beginning. The authorities, fearing the terrorists could trace my address and my identity, have twice asked me to change my phone number. I don't live in my apartment any more. For my safety, I can no longer report on Isis and its networks. Drastic safety measures have been implemented at my workplaces.

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Recently, a journalist friend called to tell me he'd learned from a reliable source that there was a fatwa against me

The authorities asked me to keep Mélodie's Skype account open for ongoing investigations, and to keep an eye on threats toward me. I don't check it very often. Sometimes, when I do, I'm greeted by terrifying messages. They started when someone claiming to be Bilel's wife began sending intimidating monologues filled with insults.

I stopped counting the number of statements I've given to various branches of the police when it reached 254. An anti-terrorist judge asked to hear my testimony after my real identity started appearing in a number of their files. At one point, news came that Bilel had been killed, but today, multiple branches of the police have classified him as alive. They have a thick file on him. He'd committed a number of crimes in France before leaving for Syria, from theft to armed robbery. In 2003, he became an active jihadi, in the battle against the US invasion of Iraq. That's when he met Isis leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, to whom he remained close. Between 2009 and 2013, after long trips to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Libya (at the moment of Gaddafi's fall), he returned home to Roubaix in France without anybody's knowledge. He reappeared on the radar in late 2013, when he was spotted in Turkey. He has three wives, aged 20, 28 and 39. They're all with him in Syria. He is the father of at least three boys under the age of 13. The two eldest are already fighting on the front in Syria.

Recently, a journalist friend called to tell me he'd learned from a reliable source that there was a fatwa against me. I spent hours searching the web. After a while, I found a video about me. It shows me wearing Mélodie's veil on my couch. There's no audio, but it does include cartoon characters of a devil and French and Arabic subtitles. I've seen the video only once, but I remember every word. I don't think I'll ever watch it again.

Some names have been changed. Anna Erelle is a pseudonym.

Is Turkey Still Arming Islamic State?

By Burak Bekdil
Source: http://www.meforum.org/5268/turkey-islamic-state

Ali Babacan, a world-renowned economist and Turkey's mild-mannered Deputy Prime Minister, put it realistically in a recent speech: "Public trust in the justice system is in steady decline."

How could it not be? Turkey has finally become a country where prosecutors and law enforcement authorities get indicted rather than indict suspects. The latest episode unveils how Turkey's Islamist government not-so-secretly supported the radical Islamists in Syria.

Turkish security forces inspect a truck that was smuggling weapons to Syria, January 19, 2014

On Jan. 19, 2014, the Turkish gendarmerie command stopped and searched three trucks in southern Turkey, heading for Syria. Accompanying the trucks were Turkish intelligence officers, and the trucks had a bizarre cargo: In the first container, 25-30 missiles or rockets and 10-15 crates loaded with ammunition; in the second, 20-25 missiles or rockets, 20-25 crates of mortar rounds and anti-aircraft ammunition in five or six sacks. The crates had markings in the Cyrillic (Russian) alphabet.

After a brawl, a prosecutor arrested the men and seized the cargo. The search was videotaped by the law enforcement officers.

The local governor rushed to the scene and declared that the trucks were moving upon orders from then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (now President). The trucks were handed back to the Turkish intelligence agency, MIT.

One of the drivers testified that the cargo had been loaded onto the trucks from a foreign airplane at Ankara's Esenboga Airport and that "we carried similar loads several times before."

Half a year later, a military prosecutor took charge of the legal proceedings and concluded that "this incident was a military affair." Then came a total media blackout on the mysterious event. Finally, all law enforcement officers who searched the trucks, including the gendarmerie units, were put on trial on charges of "international espionage."

The Turkish government insisted that the weapons were being transported to help Iraqi Turkmen, an ethnic Turkish minority in northern Iraq. But the Turkmen deny receiving any military shipments from Turkey and, on the contrary, claimed that Turkey abandoned them in favor of the Islamic State (IS). Everyone knew who the real recipient of Turkish arms supplies was: the Islamic State.

In early May 2015, the *New York Times* reported that tens of thousands of kilograms of ammonium nitrate fertilizer, which could be turned into deadly explosives, were being transported over the border from Turkey into IS-controlled sections of Syria.

Indeed, Erdogan's administration jailed the men who wanted to jail the men for transporting arms shipments to the Islamic State jihadists.

A Turkish newspaper, *Today's Zaman*, published excerpts from the prosecutors' testimonies after their arrest. The excerpts make for interesting reading, especially for anyone who might be thinking that Turkey is part of a Western coalition fighting that Islamic State. The punch line is that some officials in Erdogan's administration had links with IS jihadists and similar organizations in Syria.

With the men delivering arms to the jihadists possibly running around freely, looking for new cargoes to deliver to the jihadists, Turkey detained four prosecutors and a gendarmerie colonel on charges of "attempting to topple or incapacitate the Turkish

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government through the use of force or coercion and exposing information regarding the security and political activities of the state."
The prosecutor who stopped the trucks said in his testimony: "If the trucks were ... carrying weapons to Syria, this cannot be described as a state secret. A criminal action cannot be described as a state secret." Right? Right.
Further notes from the testimonies:
- Missile warheads were found in one of the trucks there.
- A truck was found to have unloaded some ammunition at a border military post ... on Oct. 6-26, 2013, the ammunition had been taken across the border [into Syria], that security footage proved this and that the ammunition was taken to a camp of the hardline militant group Ahrar al-Sham.
- One of the prosecutors asked: "Does MIT [the Turkish intelligence service] have a duty to transport weapons?"
- The investigation revealed that the vehicle escorting the trucks was registered in the name of an al-Qaeda member. The

prosecutor questioned how intelligence officials could get on a vehicle belonging to an al-Qaeda member.
- The weapons in question were transported in an illegal way.
The testimonies are spectacular documents revealing how Turkey's "mild" Islamists were -- and probably are -- "fighting" their more savage ideological kin. Turkey and its NATO allies have totally different threat perceptions and goals in Syria's civil war. For the Western flank, the Islamic State and twenty or so similar jihadist groups are a major threat to peace in the region, but for Turkey they, are potential military allies to topple Erdogan's worst regional enemy, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.
Turkey, which supports the Muslim Brotherhood, would like a Sunni, Muslim Brotherhood-type of rule in Syria after Assad's downfall. To that end, Turkey is currently viewing various jihadist groups in Syria as potential political allies to Islamize Syria exactly along those Sunni, Muslim Brotherhood lines.

Burak Bekdil, based in Ankara, is a columnist for the Turkish daily Hürriyet *and a fellow at the Middle East Forum.*

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2015 Sees Dramatic Spike In Islamic Extremism Arrests

Source: http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/domestic-extremism-terrorism/c/2015-terror-arrests-30-april.html

Apr 27 – **Forty individuals living in the U.S. have been linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in 2015 thus far.** This surpasses the total of each of the past two years: 26 individuals living in the U.S. were linked to such terrorism in all of 2014 and 22 in 2013.
These numbers include individuals arrested and charged as well as individuals who died abroad allegedly fighting with terrorist organizations and individuals who have traveled or attempted to travel to join terrorist organizations abroad but who have not been arrested or charged at this time. They do not, however, include the many individuals believed to have traveled abroad to join terrorist groups who have not yet been identified by name. In March 2015, FBI Director James Comey stated that approximately 180 Americans have traveled to join the conflict in Syria and Iraq, an unknown number of whom may have joined terrorist organizations.

The number of U.S. residents linked to terrorism per year has varied considerably in the years since 2001, with an approximate average of 28 U.S. residents linked to terrorism annually between 2002 and 2014. The year with the greatest number thus far was 2009, when 58 U.S. residents were charged with terror offenses or otherwise named as having fought or died fighting with terrorist organizations abroad. At least one-third of those individuals were linked to Al Shabaab, the Al Qaeda affiliate in Somalia, which had been actively recruiting Americans.
The overwhelming majority of the cases in 2015 have involved use of the internet to access terrorist propaganda or to communicate with other extremists or co-conspirators, a testament to the role of social media and internet propaganda in the radicalization process.
Even more than in 2009, this year's increase is related to a

particular foreign terrorist organization. All but two of the Americans linked to terrorism in 2015 acted in support of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) – and one of the other two apparently supported ISIS even though he is accused of having fought with Jabhat al Nusra, Al Qaeda in Syria.

Indeed, 55 of the 66 U.S. residents linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremist ideologies since 2014 have supported ISIS – representing about 83% of the total number. This support is related at least in part to the group's sophisticated use of social media communication and recruitment, as well as the high volume of coverage surrounding its activity and the ongoing presence of conflict in Syria and Iraq.

If the average of eight individuals per month continues, the number of people living in the U.S. linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremism in 2015 can be expected to exceed the 2009 number. Such progression is likely: Reports as of March 2015 have indicated that there are open investigations into potential ISIS supporters in all 50 states. Moreover, as noted, many additional, unidentified Americans are believed to be fighting with the group abroad.

An analysis of those individuals who have been arrested in 2015 may yield greater understanding of the demographics and risk factors of Americans who seek to propagate extremism at home and abroad.

Material Support Cases
Twenty-eight of the individuals arrested in 2015 were charged with providing material support to terrorism. Of them, 18 had joined or attempted to join terrorist groups abroad. Fifteen had joined or attempted to join ISIS, one had joined Jabhat al Nusra (Al Qaeda in Syria), although he had allegedly also considered joining ISIS, and one was a longstanding member of Al Qaeda who was arrested and charged in 2015. Three of the 24 were attempting to aid other Americans in joining ISIS, and 7 were attempting to fund ISIS.

Three additional individual were not charged with material support but allegedly also planned to join ISIS and another was not charged wtih material support but allegedly worked and possibly fought with Jabhat al Nusra.

Individuals engaged in material support in 2015 generally did not work alone. However, the size of their conspiracies varied.

The largest plot involved at least 9 individuals from Minneapolis, MN. Six of the individuals were arrested in April 2015 and one in February 2015. One individual was arrested in 2014 and one, who is believed to be fighting with ISIS in Syria and actively recruiting Americans, was charged in absentia in 2014.

In February 2015, six individuals were arrested in New York, Illinois, and Missouri, for working together to fund ISIS.

The majority of the other cases involved one or two individuals, often in contact with an undercover agent they believed was a co-conspirator.

Domestic Plots
Fourteen of the individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 also planned or discussed the possibility of a domestic plot. Five of those eleven also planned to travel to join ISIS. (Four of those five were also charged with material support; one was not charged with terror charges.) Eight of the plots in 2015 were intended to support ISIS and one was intended to support either ISIS or Jabhat al Nusra, Al Qaeda in Syria. They include:

- **Christopher Lee Cornell** of Ohio was arrested in January for his alleged plot to attack the U.S. Capitol after failing to con-nect with ISIS members abroad.

- **Abdirahman Sheikh Mohamud** of Ohio was arrested in February and charged in April with joining Jabhat al Nusra. He allegedly returned to the U.S. with the intention of perpetrating an attack against a military base in Texas. Court documents indicate that Mohamud supported both ISIS and Jabhat al Nusra, although he had fought with Jabhat al Nusra.

- **Abdurasul Juraboev** and **Akhror Saidakhmetov** of New York were arrested in February and charged with material sup-port for terror. Court documents state they were attempting to join ISIS and discussing the possibility of a domestic attack.

- An **unnamed** minor from South Carolina was arrested in February and accused of formulating a plot to attack a North Carolina military base and then travel abroad to join ISIS.

- **Hasan** and **Jonas Edmonds** of Illinois were arrested in March and charged with attempting to join

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ISIS and plotting an attack against a military base.

- **Noelle Velentzas** and **Asia Siddiqui** of New York were arrested in April for allegedly purchasing bomb-making equipment with plans for an attack.
- **John T. Booker** and **Alexander Blair** of Kansas were arrested in April for allegedly attempting to undertake a suicide attack at the Ft. Riley military base.
- **Miguel Moran Diaz** of Florida was arrested in April on charges that he was a felon in posession of a firearm. Reports indicated that he planned to target Miami residents.
- **Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi** of Arizona were shot and killed when they attempted to undertake a shooting at a Garland, Texas community center.

There was only one reported domestic plot in 2014, although there were also three instances of criminal acts motivated at least in part by online terrorist propaganda that year. The spike in plots in 2015 may be partially attributed to the increase in terrorist propaganda, particularly from ISIS, calling on followers to commit a domestic attack.

Threat to the Military
As many as five of the 2015 plots targeted the U.S. military. According to law enforcement, Jonas Edmonds was targeting the National Guard base where Hasan Edmonds had trained, using Hasan's uniform and knowledge; John Booker was targeting the Ft. Riley base in Kansas; Noelle Velentzas and Asia Siddiqui discussed targeting military, government or law enforcement; Abdirahman Sheikh Mohamud wanted to kill soldiers at a military base in Texas; and the unnamed South Carolina minor had planned to undertake a shooting at a North Carolina military base.

Military installations and personnel in the U.S. have long been targets for Islamic extremist plots, although the last year that they were targeted with this magnitude was in 2011, when there were four plots directed against military institutions.

Some examples of plots against military institutions since 2011 include:
- **Mufid Elfgeeh** was arrested in 2014 for recruiting others to join ISIS and attempting to kill U.S. soldiers. Court documents indicate that he had purchased firearms with the intention of shooting members of

the U.S. military who had returned from Iraq.
- **Erwin Antonio Rios** was arrested in 2013 and charged with possession of a stolen firearm. He is believed to have been planning to murder U.S. military personnel at Ft. Bragg.
- **Amine El Khalifi** was arrested in 2012 for a plot to bomb the U.S. Capitol building. Court documents indicate he had also considered military targets.
- **Jose Pimentel** was arrested in 2011 for a plot targeting military personnel returning from abroad.
- **Rezwan Matin Ferdaus** was arrested in 2011 for planning to fly explosives-packed model airplanes into the Pentagon in order to "disable their (the American) military center."
- **Naser Jason Abdo** was charged in July 2011 with planning to bomb a restaurant frequented by Ft. Hood personnel and then to target the survivors with firearms.
- **Joseph Anthony Davis** and **Frederick Domingue, Jr**. were arrested in 2011 for a plot to attack a Military Entrance Processing Site in Seattle, Washington.

Two domestic plots against military institutions prior to 2011, the 2009 Ft. Hood shooting and the 2009 shooting at the Little Rock, Arkansas army recruiting center, resulted in casualties.

In addition, two of the individuals arrested in 2015 had themselves been members of the military:
- As noted above, **Hasan Edmonds**, a member of the U.S. National Guard, attempted to join ISIS and assisted his cousin, **Jonas Edmonds**, in formulating a plot against the base where Hasan trained.
- **Tairod Pugh**, a former U.S. Air Force mechanic, attempted to travel to join ISIS. Another individual, Bilal Abood, had served as a translator for the U.S. military in Iraq. A fourth individual, John T. Booker attempted to join the military in order to commit an attack from within, according to court documents.

In 2014 there were no known veterans arrested but court documents indicate that Colorado resident Shannon Maureen Conley joined a military high school program, the U.S. Army Explorers. Like John Booker, she allegedly signed up with hopes of gaining training and experience that she could use on

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behalf of terrorists. Conley was arrested for attempting to join ISIS.

Some examples of other veterans arrested on terrorism charges motivated by Islamic extremism include:

- **Matthew Aaron Llaneza**, arrested in 2013 on charges that he had planned to bomb a Bank of America building, had been discharged from the marines.
- **Sohiel Omar Kabir**, arrested in 2012 for attempting to join the Taliban or Al Qaeda, had served in the Air Force.
- **Craig Baxam**, arrested in 2012 for attempting to join Al Shabaab, had served in the army.
- **Naser Jason Abdo**, arrested in 2011 for plotting an attack against Ft. Hood, had served in the army.
- **Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif**, arrested in 2011 on charges that he had planned to attack a Military processing Site, had served in the Navy.

Additional examples from 2011 and earlier can be found in the ADL's report on Islamic extremism and the U.S. military.

Notably, many of the former servicemen who plotted attacks also did so against military institutions –possibly in part because they had access to and knowledge of those locations.

ISIS has issued propaganda regarding U.S. soldiers and veterans, claiming they served in Iraq on a futile mission, highlighting casualties, and noting the difficulties veterans face upon returning to civilian life. A video released April 14, 2015, for example, featured images of dead and wounded soldiers with the captions, "mutilated soldiers are coming back to your homeland close to desperation. Eyes are being lost, bodies without legs, we want your blood…." However, there is no information to indicate that such propaganda has influenced veterans and the existence of past arrests of veterans provides even less evidence for such causality.

Age

==The individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 range in age from 16 to 47.== The average age is 27.5, and the median age is 26. Individuals linked to terrorism in 2014 ranged in age from 15 to 44, with an average age of 24 and a median age of 21. Since 2010, the average age of U.S. citizens and residents linked to terrorism has been 28.6, with a median age of 26.

These numbers partially validate the understanding that individuals are most likely to engage in terrorist activity in their 20s, but also demonstrate that there is no one age demographic that can be associated with violent extremism.

The numbers also point to the large percentage of youths engaging in extremist activity. In total, twelve of the individuals in 2015 – just over 30% – were 21 years old or younger.

Two of the individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 are minors, aged 16 and 17. Five minors were detained while allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS in 2014 but charges have not been issued in those cases.

Women

Five of the individuals linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremism in 2015 were women, resulting in a total of 14 women linked to Islamic extremism since the start of 2014. Women engaging with terrorist groups is not a new phenomenon, but these numbers represent a significant increase, which may result in part from direct recruitment of women by ISIS. ADL documented 12 U.S. women in total charged with terror offenses motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in the 11 years between 2002 and 2013.

Only two of the women arrested since 2014 – co-conspirators Asia Siddiqui and Noelle Velentzas – were alleged to have engaged in a domestic plot. Four of the women were allegedly attempting to send money to foreign terrorist organizations – two in a larger conspiracy to send money to ISIS, and two in a larger conspiracy to send money to Al Shabaab. The remaining eight women reportedly traveled or attempted to travel to join ISIS. According to reports, those eight included three minors from Colorado who attempted to travel together; one minor from Chicago who attempted to travel together with her brothers; three adults, two from Colorado and one from Philadelphia, who attempted to travel individually; and one adult from Alabama who reportedly traveled individually and is currently in ISIS-controlled territory.

Families

==Of the 66 U.S. residents linked to terrorism motivated by Islamic extremism since 2014, 12 individuals were arrested together with family members.==

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Arrests of siblings, cousins, and other related individuals on terrorism charges have been similarly common worldwide. The presence of this phenomenon demonstrates an additional element of the important role that personal relationships and trust can have in the radicalization process.

Perhaps most iconic in recent years is the case of Boston Marathon bombers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Indeed, the basis for Dzhokhar's defense rested on the argument that he would not have committed the attack were it not for his brother's influence.

Radicalization and recruitment today is focused in online spaces that enable terrorists to reach, recruit and motivate would-be extremists more quickly and effectively than ever before, eliminating the need for in-person, face-to-face interactions. That does not mean, however, that such interactions no longer exist. To the contrary, they are only magnified by online reinforcement. While many individuals appear to be radicalized primarily via online means, others continue to join extremist groups – and may be statistically more likely to support or undertake extremist action – because of the influence of peers or relatives.

Examples the U.S. residents linked to terrorism together with family members since 2014 include:

- **Mohamed Abdihamad Farah**, a 21-year-old apparent U.S. citizen and **Adnan Abdihamid Farah,** a 19-year-old apparent U.S. citizen, both from Minnesota, were arrested on April 19, 2015 along with four other individuals for attempting to travel to join ISIS. Mohamed was arrested in California, where he had gone in an attempt to cross the border into Mexico where he could fly undetected more easily, while Adnan was arrested while still in Minneapolis, Minnesota. According to court documents, the two attempted to travel separately to avoid risk of detection.
- **Guled Ali Omar**, a 20-year-old apparent U.S. citizen from Minnesota was arrested and charged in the same case as the Farah brothers. Omar's older brother, **Ahmed Ali Omar**, is believed to have joined Al Shabaab in 2007. Guled also allegedly attempted to join Al Shabaab in 2012, prior to his 2014 and 2015 attempts to join ISIS. *(Because the siblings were not arrested together, Guled is not included in the figure for individuals arrested with family members).*

- **Abdirahman Sheikh Mohamud**, a 24-year-old U.S. citizen, was arrested in February 2015 and charged with having joined Jabhat al Nusra, Al Qaeda in Syria, and then returning to the U.S. to commit a domestic attack. Mohamud's brother, Abditafah Aden (Aden), is believed to have joined Jabhat al Nusra in August 2013. Court documents indicated that Mohamud communicated with Aden before joining Jabhat al Nusra himself. In September 2013, court documents indicate, Mohamud told Aden he was "proud" of him and that he wanted to "join you in the high ranks as a Mujahid (fighter)." Mohamud also allegedly discussed travel plans and other logistical information with Aden before joining him in Syria. The relationship was particularly crucial because Jabhat al Nusra often requires inside references for fighters before it allows them to join the organization.
- **Ramiz Zijad Hodzic**, 40-year-old U.S. resident residing in Missouri, was arrested together with his wife, **Sedina Unkic Hodzic**, 35-year-old U.S. resident residing in Missouri, and four other individuals in February 2015. The group is accused of sending money to aid ISIS. Court documents indicate that the group used online tools to coordinate their activity and at least some members accessed terrorist propaganda online. However, they do not seem to have become radicalized primarily as a result of online sources.
- **Hasan Edmonds**, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois and his cousin **Jonas Edmonds**, a 29-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, were arrested in March. The two were trying to travel abroad to join ISIS together with Jonas's wife and children. The cousins seemed to prioritize having the entire family join ISIS. Court documents indicate that when Jonas was not able to obtain a passport, he and Hasan began to formulate a plan to attack a military facility and planned for Jonas to "send his family and then seek *shahada* (martyrdom) here in the heart of the *kuffar* (apostate) state."
- **Mohammed Hamzah Khan**, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, was detained at the

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airport with his 17-year-old sister and 16-year-old brother in October 2014 while allegedly attempting to board a flight abroad to join ISIS. Khan and his siblings all penned similar letters to their parents asking the parents not to call the police, explaining their reasons for traveling, and expressing hope that the parents would join them in ISIS territory.

- Two sisters from Colorado, aged 15 and 17, were detained together with a friend while traveling in an attempt to join ISIS. The Sheriff's Report that documents their case indicates that, when questioned about why they had traveled, "they said, 'Family,' and would not elaborate on any other details about their trip.'"

Some of the sentiments expressed about ensuring that entire families can join ISIS together may be linked to ISIS propaganda promoting a vision of a religious utopia. As noted, in addition to multiple images of children playing and training in ISIS territory, the group also releases propaganda geared directly to women, characterizing them as essential building-blocks of a new society.

However, family members engaging in terrorism together is by no means a new phenomenon. Other incidents of U.S. residents linked to terrorism together with family members include Hor and Amera Akl, an Ohio couple arrested in 2010 for supporting Hezbollah; Paul and Nadia Rockwood, an Alaska couple arrested in 2010 for compiling a hit list of individuals; and Eljvir, Shain and Dritan Duka, brothers from New Jersey arrested in 2007 for being part of a group conspiring to attack Ft. Dix.

Religion and Ethnicity
<mark>At least nine of the individuals arrested in 2015, or just over one fifth, were converts to Islam.</mark> That percentage is comparable to the percentage in 2014.

The individuals are also ethnically diverse, proving yet again that there is no set ethnic profile for engagement with Islamic extremism. At least 13 of those arrested in 2015 are Caucasian (and non-Arab), including six Bosnian and four Uzbek natives and at least four individuals who had converted to Islam.

Seven of the individuals arrested are Somali-American. Between 2007 and 2011, there was growing concern regarding the numbers of Somali-Americans traveling to join Al Shabaab.

Such travel has now shifted in favor of travel to ISIS, with American members of Al Shabaab even encouraging their contacts back home to travel to Syria, rather than Somalia.

Criminal Background
At least six of the individuals linked to terrorism in 2015 had a prior criminal record: Jonas Edmonds had been convicted of a felony for robbing a McDonald's restaurant, Joshua Ray Van Haftan was a convicted sex offender, Miguel Moran Diaz had been convicted of cocaine trafficking, Elton Simpson had been convicted of lying to federal agents about his plans to join Al Shabaab, Nadir Soofi had been convicted of minor offenses including unlawful posession of drugs, and Leon Nathan Davis III had been convicted of drug trafficking.

Approximately 10% of the individuals arrested on terror charges motivated by Islamic extremism since 2002 had a previous criminal record.

Geographic Distribution
<mark>The arrests in 2015 have taken place in 12 states, including 7 individuals arrested in California (2 of whom were Minnesota residents), 6 individuals arrested in New York, 5 in Minnesota, 4 in Illinois, 3 in Missouri, and 2 each in Ohio, Kansas and Florida.</mark> Other states represented are Wisconsin, Florida, Virginia, New Jersey, South Carolina, Texas, Georgia and Pennsylvania. Four of the individuals linked to terrorism this year were associated with Texas, including Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi, who were from Arizona and were killed while attempting to perpetrate an attack in Texas, Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farekh, who was arrested in Pakistan but whose U.S. residence was in Texas, and Asher Abed Khan, a Houston-area man arrested in Texas for attempting to join ISIS.

Since 2002, individuals have been linked to terror charges related to Islamic extremism from at least 30 states and the District of Columbia. Certain states stand out as having had particularly large numbers of arrests. There have been at least 36 individuals arrested from Minnesota, 30 from New York and from California, and 24 from Illinois.

Appendix
A full list of individuals arrested in 2015 follows:

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- January 14, 2015: **Christopher Lee Cornell**, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Ohio, was arrested and charged with attempting to attack the U.S. Capitol building.
- February 2015: **Unnamed** 16-year-old minor from South Carolina was arrested for a plot to undertake a shooting at a North Carolina military institution and then travel to join ISIS. He was charged as a minor in possession of a pistol and sentenced in March 2015 to five years in juvenile detention, followed by counseling.
- February 2015: **Hamza Ahmed**, a 19-year-old U.S. citizen from Minnesota, was arrested for attempting to travel to join ISIS and charged with lying in a federal investigation. In May 2015 he was also charged with student loan fraud, which he allegedly used to fund his travel plans.
- February 2, 2015: **Abdirahman Sheikh Mohamud**, a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from Ohio, was arrested and charged with joining Jabhat al Nusra. Court documents indicate that Muhamud returned to the U.S. with the intention of committing a domestic attack.
- February 6, 2015: **Ramiz Zijad Hodzic**, a 40-year-old U.S. resident residing in Missouri, **Sedina Unkic Hodzic**, 35-year-old U.S. resident residing in Missouri, **Armin Harcevic**, 37-year-old U.S. permanent resident residing in Missouri, **Nihad Rosic**, 26-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen residing in New York, **Mediha Medy Salkicevic**, 34-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen residing in Illinois, and **Jasminka Ramic**, 42-year-old U.S. permanent resident residing in Illinois, were arrested and charged with sending funds to ISIS. All 6 are Bosnian natives.
- February 24, 2015: **Abdurasul Juraboev** and **Khror Saidakhmetov**, 24-year-old U.S. residents from New York, were arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS. Court documents indicate that they had discussed the possibility of a domestic plot.
- February 24, 2015: **Abror Habibov**, a 30-year-old U.S. resident from New York, was arrested in Florida for allegedly aiding Juraboev and Saidakhmetov.
- March 2015: **Unnamed** 17-year-old U.S. citizen from Virginia was arrested for aiding another individual in joining ISIS.

- March 18, 2015: **Tairod Nathan Webster Pugh**, a 47-year-old U.S. citizen from New Jersey, was arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS.
- March 26, 2015: **Hasan Edmonds**, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois and **Jonas Edmonds**, a 29-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, were arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS. Court documents indicate the two were also formulating a plot against an Illinois military facility.
- April 2, 2015: **Asia Siddiqui**, a 31-year-old U.S. citizen from Brooklyn, New York and **Noelle Velentzas**, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen from New York, were arrested and charged with plotting to undertake a domestic bomb plot.
- April 2, 2015: **Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farekh**, a 29-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, was arrested in Pakistan for allegedly having joined Al Qaeda. Al Farekh was charged in January 2015.
- April 3, 2015: **Keonna Thomas**, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen from Pennsylvania, was arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS.
- April 4, 2015: **Miguel Moran Diaz**, a 46-year-old U.S. citizen from Florida, was arrested and charged with being a felon in possession of firearms. He allegedly planned to shoot people on behalf of ISIS.
- April 7, 2015: **Dilkhayot Kasimov**, a 26-year-old U.S. resident from New York, was arrested for allegedly aiding Juraboev and Saidakhmetov.
- April 9, 2015: **Joshua Ray Van Haftan**, a 34-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, was arrested and charged with attempting to join ISIS.
- April 10, 2015: **John T. Booker, Jr.**, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Kansas was arrested and charged with attempting to undertake a suicide attack at Ft. Riley military base.
- April 10, 2015: **Alexander Blair**, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen from Kansas, was arrested for allegedly having knowledge of and possibly aiding Booker in his attack.
- April 19, 2015: **Zacharia Yusuf Abdurahman**, a 19-year-old apparent U.S. citizen, **Adnan Farah,** a 19-year-old apparent U.S. citizen, **Hanad Mustafe Musse**, a 19-year-old apparent U.S. citizen, and **Guled Ali Omar**, a 20-

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year-old apparent U.S. citizen, were arrested in Minneapolis and **Abdirahman Yasin Daud**, a 21-year-old apparent U.S. citizen, and **Mohamed Abdihamid Farah**, a 21-year-old apparent U.S. citizen, were arrested in San Diego for attempting to join ISIS. All are Minnesota residents.

- April 23, 2015: **Mohamad Saeed Kodaimati**, a 24-year-old U.S. citizen from California, was arrested for making false statements involving international terrorism. Kodaimati had allegedly served on a Shari'a (Islamic jurisprudence) court affiliated with Jabhat al Nusra and fought with Jabhat al Nusra.

- May 3, 2015: **Elton Simpson**, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen from Arizona and **Nadir Soofi**, a 34-year-old U.S. citizen from Arizona, were killed while attempting to undertake a shooting at a Texas community center.

- May 14, 2015: **Bilal Abood**, a 27-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, was arrested for lying to a federal agent. He is believed to have attempted to travel to join ISIS.

- May 21, 2015: **Muhanad Badawi** and **Nader Elhuzayel**, both 24-year-old apparent U.S. citizens from California, were arrested for attempting to travel to join ISIS.

- May 26, 2015: **Asher Abed Khan**, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, was arrested for attempting to travel to join ISIS.

- May 27, 2015: **Leon Nathan Davis III**, a 37-year-old U.S. citizen from Georgia, was charged with material support to terror for allegedly attempting to travel to join ISIS. Davis had been arrested in 2014 for violation of his parole when he attempted to board an airplane, and had been charged in February 2015 with illegal posession of weapons by a felon.

Security in the Sky? Blimps May Provide Lookout Over Washington DC

Source: http://sputniknews.com/us/20150528/1022636698.html

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The US Congress is considering having giant blimps stretching over Washington DC's skyline to act as an "eye in the sky," after authorities failed to detect a Florida mailman on a gyrocopter flying over and landing on Capitol grounds.

When Candice Miller, Chairwoman of the House Administration Committee, visited the US Customs and Border Patrol ground stations in January, she was impressed with the clarity of the surveillance provided by the Tethered Aerostat Radar System (TARS). Referring to them as "sophisticated technology," she suggested that it may actually be useful for the capital.

The giant blimps are deployed by the federal law enforcement and contain around 2,000-lb. radars in their core, meaning that they are capable of detecting aircraft at the range of 200 miles. Something that would undoubtedly prove useful for Capitol grounds, which were recently breached by a Florida mailman flying in on a gyrocopter.

Dough Hughes landed the craft on the lawn of the US Capitol Building on April 15, gaining widespread media attention, and raising the concerns of Washington authorities who believe the incident exposes serious security gaps. Lawmakers have pointed to Hughes' mission as justification for investing more into surveillance in DC's skies.

Hughes is now facing two felony charges and four misdemeanors, and is expected to return to DC court on June 22.

Capitol Police said they have been looking into the technology following the incident with Hughes.

"We actually had a briefing this morning and we look forward to briefing you in a confidential setting about some of the things we're looking at," Capitol Police Chief Kim C. Dine told Miller last week.

Referring to the complications that came about after Hughes landed his gyrocopter, Dine rhetorically asked, "Once the vehicle is identified, what you do about it?"

"But clearly, the earlier we know about it and the earlier we can identify it, the better we can make decisions about evacuations – which is a big part of how we used our systems now – and whether any use of force either by us, or DOD is appropriate."

Lawmakers have additionally considered how the giant blimps would affect Washington's iconic skyline. Some, including Miller, insist that

a lot can be done to prevent the technology from ruining the skyline's visual appeal. She noted that if they flew at higher elevations, they could remain effective and be less visible.

Rep. Mark Meadows, who also supports the idea of more aerial surveillance, agreed. "They're not huge blimps," he said. "You could do a number of things that are not visually unappealing to our visitors and yet still provide the vehicle to have additional eyes on the [National] Mall."

Five of these blimps are currently stationed at 500 to 5000 feet above South Texas, and are used by US Customs and Border Protection as part of a test run to monitor the Mexican border.

Costing between $300,000 and $350,000 a month, the technology has the surveillance capabilities of drones, but at one tenth of the cost.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Imagine what US gov could do with $300,00/month for the veterans living on the streets forgotten by their own… It is always funny to read about proposals of people in high places world wide!

US formally drops Cuba from terrorism 'blacklist'

Source: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/29/us-formally-drops-cuba-from-terror-black-list

May 29 – The United States has formally dropped Cuba from its list of state sponsors of

terrorism, the State Department announced on Friday, adding a symbolic punctuation mark to talks that aim to end decades of antagonism.

The removal of Cuba from the terrorism list eliminates an obstacle to restoring diplomatic ties between the countries after a 50-year estrangement. Cuban diplomats had urged rescission as a condition of normalizing relations, alongside the restoration of bank services for Cubans in the US.

But the removal will have a limited impact on US economic sanctions, which remain in place under the embargo that has been imposed by Congress for decades.

Rescinding the designation against Cuba is "an important step", an American official told Reuters, before qualifying that "as a practical matter, most restrictions related to exports and foreign aid will remain due to the comprehensive trade and arms embargo".

Taking Cuba off the list has two main consequences, diplomatic

and economic, said Christopher Sabatini, a Columbia University professor who specializes in Cuba studies.

"This is something that for a long time sort of stuck in the craw of the Cubans, who really resented being lumped together with countries like Iran and Syria," he said.

"So it's important on a diplomatic, transactional level, and on a financial one while it doesn't remove all the obstacles, it eases the possibility of one of Obama's principle reforms and opens up opportunities for US travellers and banks."

Sabatini said that with Cuba off the list, American banks and credit card companies would have less to fear of the risks to their reputation and finances that could be imposed by the bad publicity and potential fines of doing business with a designated sponsor of terror.

The next steps, Sabatini suggested, were discussions about freedom of movement for American diplomats in Cuba, who face tight restrictions on where they can go and whom they can meet, for fear of their fomenting dissent among citizens.

"This is a game of chess," Sabatini said. "These are not friendly countries, there are decades of distrust. But the next move is basically Cuba's for normalizing relations, and the question is will it allow for the unfettered travel of US diplomats.

"President Obama has gone out on a limb here, it's a risky move. There's very vocal opposition to these changes and they will cry foul unless these concessions are reciprocated."

While some businesses and travelers have taken advantage of the relaxed rules surrounding Cuba, major banks and financial institutions remain wary of the legal minefield put in place by the embargo.

"The embargo is still the big 800lb gorilla in the room," said David Schwartz, chief executive of the Florida International Bankers Association. "Lifting the terror designation is a help to foreign banks that are dealing with Cuba and have had that concern, and this may in their mind ease that burden.

"But although the administration is pushing to the limit of what they can do, to go any further would require lifting the embargo," he said.

In December, Obama ordered the State Department to review Cuba's presence on the terror list and report back to him within six months, as part of his administration's new policy toward the island nation.

When that review was complete, Obama wrote to Congress in April, saying the Cuban government had "not provided any support for international terrorism" in the past six months, and had "provided assurances that it will not support acts of international terrorism in the future".

In its statement on Friday, the State Department said: "While the United States has significant concerns and disagreements with a wide range of Cuba's policies and actions, these fall outside the criteria relevant to the rescission of a State Sponsor of Terrorism designation."

A handful of outspoken congressman, including Florida senator and Republican presidential candidate Marco Rubio, immediately denounced rapprochement. Rubio said that to take Cuba off the list would be a "terrible mistake", but he and allies such as representatives Pete King and Scott Garrett failed to muster congressional resistance against the rescission.

Former Florida governor Jeb Bush agreed with Rubio, his unofficial rival for the Republican 2016 nomination, in calling the move a mistake.

"Obama seems more interested in capitulating to our adversaries than in confronting them," he said

Cuba was placed on the list in 1982 for supporting communist rebels in Latin America and Africa, but the US has not accused the island nation of direct military assistance for a foreign terrorist group in years.

Recent State Department reports have criticized Cuba for offering safe haven to members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Farc, and the Basque separatist group Eta. Cuba has since distanced itself from Eta, and is currently hosting peace talks between Farc and the Colombian government.

Frank Calzon of the Center for Free Cuba, a pro-democracy group, brought up Farc as well as American fugitives who fled to Cuba in his criticism of the Obama administration.

"The president has given up the one leverage he had to obtain fugitives that murdered Americans and who are enjoying the hospitality of the Castro regime," he said.

"Cuba's listing as a sponsor of terror was renewed for years

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under this president. I think it's shameful that Mr Obama acquiesced to Raúl Castro's pressure."

Both the president and Congress were criticized by Joe Connor, an American whose father was killed by a bomb set by Puerto Rican nationalists, one of whom escaped prison to Cuba.

"We are truly living in an upside-down society," Connor said, when "Obama capitulates to the likes of Cuba and then Congress, who is supposed to represent the people, capitulates to Obama."

But the Cuban-American community has grown increasingly divided by age and politics, as evinced by other groups who voiced support for the removal.

The Washington DC-based Cuba Study Group said it was "pleased" by the rescission from the list. "For years, the arguments justifying Cuba's continued inclusion [were] becoming more political than factual," the group said, before urging Congress to lift the embargo.

"While today's announcement is important and symbolic, the US's complex web of codified sanctions still create significant obstacles which hinder our ability to assist Cuba's civil

society and thus facilitate peaceful change," its statement read.

Younger Cuban Americans have also supported rapprochement with Cuba, forming organizations such as Cuba Now, which supports greater business ties between US and Cuban companies. Ric Herrero, executive director of the group, welcomed the change of Cuba's status. Conceding "there is much to criticize about the Cuban government's repressive practices", he described Cuba's place on the list as "the result of domestic political calculations rather than factual findings".

"By lifting the designation, a cloud is lifted that will make it easier for US citizens and American businesses to embrace the new regulatory environment in support of the Cuban people."

Roots for Hope, a nonprofit led by young people in the Miami area, similarly advocates for greater interaction with Cubans, and has allied with tech companies to build internet infrastructure on the island.

The only countries that will now remain on the US terror list are Iran, Sudan and Syria.

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EDITOR'S COMMENT: This article brought me bad memories from my 2013 Houston adventure. The impostor that was supposed to hire me was a Cuban woman that came to US after winning a lotery during early Castro's era. Just remember that the magic triad in the US is: woman-minority-immigrant! And for quite a long time she was involved in HLS security business… But nobody seems to care!

▶ What is so imortant about Sudan being still in the list?

Airport screeners missed 95% of mock explosives, weapons in tests; TSA acting director removed

Source: http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150602-airport-screeners-missed-95-of-mock-explosives-weapons-in-tests-tsa-acting-director-removed

June 02 – Following reports that screenings failed to detect mock explosives and weapons, carried out by undercover agents in tests, in 95 percent of cases, DHS secretary Jeh Johnson has ordered improved security at airports and reassigned the top Transportation Security Administration (TSA) official to another role.

ABC News, citing a forthcoming report by DHS IG, reported that airport screeners, employed by TSA, did not detect banned weapons in 67 out of 70 tests at dozens of U.S. airports. Johnson, whose department oversees the TSA, was briefed last week on the trials, which were completed recently.

In one test an undercover agent set off an alarm at a checkpoint and was stopped, but TSA screeners at the checkpoint then failed to find a fake explosive device taped to his back when they patted him down.

The *Guardian* reports that Johnson said the results of the security checks were classified, but he had directed the TSA to revise screening procedures "to address specific vulnerabilities identified" in the undercover operation. He also ordered that all TSA officers and supervisors across the country be retrained and that airports'

screening equipment be tested. Johnson said there would be more random covert tests.

"The numbers in these reports never look good out of context but they are a critical element in the continual evolution of our aviation security," he said. "We take these findings very seriously in our continued effort to test, measure and enhance our capabilities and techniques as threats evolve."

Johnson said that Melvin Carraway, acting administrator of the TSA, was being reassigned to another section of DHS. The TSA acting deputy director, Mark Hatfield, would lead the agency until a replacement was appointed.

President Barack Obama had nominated coast guard Vice Admiral Pete Neffenger to be the next TSA administrator, and Johnson urged the U.S. Senate to confirm his nomination as quickly as possible.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Why do we always change the coach if a team loses a match or a championship? Why we never sent some players home for not being suitable for the team? This would be a good motivation for those remaining!

How Not To Fix Airport Screening

By Patrick Tucker
Source: http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2015/06/how-not-fix-airport-screening/114310/?oref=d-river

June 02 – On Monday, the Department of Homeland Security announced that airport screeners failed to detect 95 percent of explosives and weapons that undercover operatives were attempting to pass through security checkpoints. One tester even got a fake bomb past the screeners after the device set off a metal detector. In response, DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson pulled acting TSA chief Melvin Carraway off the job, and announced more random covert testing, more training for airport security personnel, and more random equipment checks. But one thing that DHS should not do is rush to overscreen every single passenger.

It turns out that security measures at airports often allocate too many resources to passengers who pose little risk, diverting screening time and attention from those who may be a real threat, according to Sheldon H. Jacobson, a mathematics professor at the University of Illinois, who has been doing research on aviation security for more than 20 years and is considered a leading mind in risk-based modeling for aviation. Even DHS has come around to this line of reasoning, and has implemented various programs meant to exempt low-risk passengers from stricter screening.

Jacobson says that the "worst thing" that could happen for airport security at this point is to reverse the progress made in this so-called risk-based screening, and instead subject higher numbers of people to screening that doesn't reflect the likely threat they pose.

Today's airport security overweights the risk of items and underweights the risk of dangerous people, he said, simply because the system, as a whole, still doesn't differentiate those passengers who may pose a threat from those who surely do not.

"Ultimately, we're dealing with people's intent more than items. Which concerns you more: a person who has no bad intent but who has an item on them like a knife or a gun, or someone who has bad intent but doesn't have such an item?" he said. "Most people are comfortable with the former rather than the latter. A person with bad intent will find a way to cause damage. A person without bad intent who happens to have an item on them is not the issue."

Risk-based systems can help solve that problem, but only when used correctly. The most famous and widely used is TSA's PreCheck, which launched in December 2013. It allows U.S. citizens and permanent residents who submit to a somewhat strict background check (including an in-person meeting and fingerprint scan) to receive expedited screening at airports for five years. Jacobson says the best thing policy-makers could do to airport improve security is get a lot more people into PreCheck.

"The irony is that if we do less overall screening by putting the right people in PreCheck and the people we don't know anything about not in PreCheck, the total amount of screening done will be less, the amount of technology we use will

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be less, and the total security of the system will be greater. It's completely counterintuitive."

Enrollment in PreCheck surpassed 1 million subscribers in March. But that's a far cry from the number that could be eligible. And the more people in the system, the better it works, according to Jacobson, whose research has shown that 60 to 70 percent of the passengers of any particular flight probably should be in the fast lane.

This is not to say that PreCheck doesn't have problems. In March, Kenneth Fletcher, TSA's chief risk officer, told Congress that 13 of 17 recent recommendations to improve the program by the DHS Office of Inspector General, or OIG, were "resolved" but still "open."

The big problem, despite the background check, personal travel history testimony and fingerprint scans that PreCheck enrollees submit to, is that DHS still doesn't have a firm grasp on what differentiates a low-risk and a high-risk human being.

"TSA is working to address the OIG's recommendations, such as working with the DHS Office of Policy … to establish a common definition for identifying 'lower-risk' travelers and low-risk trusted travelers across the department for consistency in application across all DHS vetting programs," Fletcher said.

Broadly speaking, Jacobson and other aviation security experts consider PreCheck a huge success. It's given birth to new and more interesting programs (not yet fully implemented) like the Dynamic Aviation Risk Management Systems, or DARMS, which uses incoming information allowing the TSA to quickly move screeners or resources where they are needed, and to develop changing threat profiles of different people or places.

But more and more people who aren't in the program are being ushered into PreCheck lines by screeners eager to hurry the process along at the nation's overcrowded airports. It sounds like an example of poor training for overworked TSA employees — but it's actually policy.

TSA calls it "managed inclusion." Christian Beckner explains it in a February 2015 issue

brief for the George Washington University Center for Cyber and Homeland Security: "TSA also now uses its Risk Assessment program and a 'managed inclusion' process to bring additional travelers into PreCheck lanes, based either on the results of Secure Flight checks prior to check-in or …" and this is they key part … "at the discretion of Transportation Security Officers while travelers are queuing at checkpoints, in part based upon how busy the PreCheck lanes are relative to the regular screening lanes."

Beckner notes that this saves time and money. "As a cumulative result of all of these efforts, currently around 45 percent of air travelers in the United States (more than 276 million in 2014) are receiving expedited screening. This growth in PreCheck has allowed TSA to reduce its screener workforce, and the agency has estimated that these staffing efficiencies will allow it to save at least $100 million in the current fiscal year."

But Jacobsen warns that allowing screeners and passengers to take shortcuts undercuts the entire point of risk-based modeling.

"Risk-based systems work so long as you stay within the parameters," he said. "If you push people into risk-based systems who don't have the risk profile to validate that they should be in the risk-based systems you are now stretching the system beyond security. …I think by putting people in PreCheck who don't belong there, we may be under-screening people. There is a great deal of analytics that goes into getting a security number for each person."

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==The problems with airport security extend beyond TSA. They represent the capabilities and limitations of this moment in history. Humanity has devised a way to ferry people around the world in a day. In order to make sure those people don't blow up the means of their conveyance, we shoot photons at their luggage and bodies. It's dumb. Risk-based modeling of passengers represents an improvement, if we would let it get off the ground.==

Patrick Tucker is technology editor for Defense One. He's also the author of The Naked Future: What Happens in a World That Anticipates Your Every Move? (Current, 2014). Previously, Tucker was deputy editor for The Futurist *for nine years. Tucker has written about emerging technology in* Slate, The Sun, *MIT*

Technology Review, Wilson Quarterly, The American Legion Magazine, *BBC* News Magazine, Utne Reader, *and elsewhere.*

Al-Qaeda theorist calls for infiltrating political systems

Source: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/al-qaeda-political-system-infiltration.html

As radical Islamic groups continue to pursue the imposition of their ideologies and grab for power around the Middle East and North Africa, a prominent al-Qaeda ideologue has called on groups working within the framework of the infamous radical group to adopt a new strategy to infiltrate legitimate regimes in the region and build their influence and power from within. The logic is that this approach will allow them to better establish a lasting presence and implement their vision. Abdullah bin Mohammed has written several articles on al-Qaeda's strategies and conducted research on jihad in the region. Among his works is "Strategic Diaries," available online, and "The Strategy of the Regional War in Syria." His Twitter account, "Strategic Affairs," has attracted some 242,000 followers.

Mohammed, an al-Qaeda member, is the ideologue representing a new path for the movement, not just a different current. Marwan Chehadeh, an expert on islamists groups, told Al-Monitor, "Mohammed is an expert on security and military affairs. I believe he's from the Arabian Peninsula and introduced some new concepts, including political guerrilla wars. Mohammed calls for changing thinking about ruling in Islam. He is against jihadi emirates."

Mohammed believes the outcome of the jihadi effort of the last three decades justifies a change in strategy. In his article "Political Guerrilla Wars," he wrote, "The jihadi group's main problem isn't finding a way to fight the international system, as al-Qaeda provided an answer to this issue. The main problem is how to be able to rule under such a system. This needs political guerrilla war." He clarified his thinking, stating, "The military calculations proved to us that an open confrontation with a strong enemy like the US is military suicide. Therefore we had to go a different way in military confrontation, and in politics an open confrontation like declaring a state is also political suicide, as the West has the power to weaken us, pressure our societies and at the end uproot us as they did in Afghanistan and

Iraq. Therefore, we have to build a new strategy that can enhance our resilience."

Mohammed cited the al-Qaeda-affiliated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group as an example, explaining that it was able to build solid alliances with other Islamic and revolutionary groups and was flexible toward the outside world. "They issued a fatwa that allowed them to participate in the democratic regime after they demanded that Sharia be a main source of legislation. Next they will start working on building their Islamic regime," he said, also using images to denounce the tendency of some groups toward beheadings, which he said gives the West a pretext to intervene militarily.

In an interview with Al-Monitor, Mohammed stated, "I discussed the idea [of a new strategy] with some jihadi leaders a year ago and had a positive interaction." He added, "As a jihadi current, we have two examples: either we continue along the path of al-Qaeda, without entering political life, or the path of [Islamic State, or IS], which declared a state and started open war on everyone. The first succeeded during the Arab Spring and then failed due to the counterrevolutions, which proved the need to take up arms, while [Abu Bakr] al-Baghdadi's [IS] gained ground after the counterrevolutions, but is now losing ground, after deciding to fight all parties together. I'm suggesting a flexible strategy that can help us live within the given environment and with new challenges. I wrote the piece ['Political Guerrilla War'] and other ones to promote this idea among jihadi supporters to prepare them to accept a solution in this regard in Syria and Yemen."

When Mohammed published his new vision on the Internet, it elicited several replies from prominent jihadi personalities, including Jabhat al-Nusra's second-in-command, Abu Mariah al-Qahtani, who welcomed the idea, praising its importance. Qahtani wrote, "Those who understand the current situation are going to value this approach. It needs to be set within a Sharia framework to enhance it." Another

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supporting voice came from Abu Mohammed al-Sadek, the mufti of Ahrar al-Sham, who wrote, "If jihadi groups failed in managing the jihad to attain their goals and adapt to changes and use these changes in whatever way possible, then they are going to stay imprisoned in a circle of failure."

The famous Jordanian-Palestinian jihadist Abu Qatada, however, expressed skepticism. "The act of jihad is what can help us reach our goals and defeat the circles of apostasy," he asserted. Abu Qatada agreed, however, that there is a need to stop publishing pictures and footage of beheadings, but said it is difficult to build alliances with Islamic groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. "The jihadi movement agreed previously to make an alliance with the Taliban, who are not Salafists, so why not with the Muslim Brotherhood? It's because of them, not the jihadi movements."

Characterizing the reactions he received, Mohammed told Al-Monitor, "It was encouraging. There were several debates and responses. The crisis al-Qaeda is facing isn't in recruitment, because the chaos in the region is increasing the number of volunteers. The problem is in the management of the [group's] presence." Mohammed said of

relevant criticism, "Those who rejected [my thesis] doubted its strategic usefulness. There were no solid dismissals."

Mohammed explained the purpose and use of his writing, stating, "I'm interested in jihad and make sure not to appear like I am writing for al-Qaeda. This might lead to my prosecution in my country." He added, "I wrote several pieces and research that were used by jihadi groups as references for student guides for preparing warriors. I also wrote, the 'War of Minds,' and this is being taught to the mujahedeen in Syria."

It is believed that Mohammed's strategy of political guerrilla war has made its way to being adopted by some of al-Qaeda's affiliated groups, primarily in Syria. Reports have suggested that the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra, might be moving toward a rebranding phase as a result of pressure exerted by allies in the region that want to legitimize the group so it can play a role in Syria's future. The idea to create the Army of Conquest (Jaish al-Fatah), with all the Islamist groups fighting under one banner legitimized by regional and international backers, might well have been influenced by Mohammed's theory.

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The Middle East Has Four Minutes To Act If Iran Fires a Missile

By Marcus Weisgerber

Source: http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2015/05/middle-east-has-four-minutes-act-if-iran-fires-missile/112720/?oref=d-dontmiss

If Iran launches a ballistic missile at the Middle East, nuclear or not, Arab states would have as little as four minutes to act before impact. Ideally, the launch would be detected, the missile tracked during its flight by radar and its trajectory then passed to an interceptor missile, which would then blast off. If all goes as planned, the interceptor would collide with the Iranian missile as it re-enters the Earth's atmosphere.

But which country would shoot down the missile? While the missile's target may be in Saudi Arabia, it would travel over UAE, Qatar or Kuwait. America's friends have sophisticated, American-made missile interceptors. But there's one problem, the equipment in one country does not talk to the equipment in another. So, the United States is renewing its push during this week's Gulf Cooperation Council summit outside Washington to get Arab states to link-up the missile interceptors and radars into a single Middle East missile shield.

"You can't just buy lots of interceptors and park them in the desert," said Thomas Karako, a missile defense expert with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, or CSIS. "You've got to stitch them together into the network and give them plenty of early warning and sensor information so they know where to shoot."

GCC members are united in their fear of nuclear missile attacks from Iran, but regional politics, military rivalries and even cyber espionage concerns have blocked them from setting up an intertwined missile defense shield akin to what NATO has built in Europe. There, alliance members have been beefing up missile defenses to protect the continent from long-range Iranian missiles.

"The difference is that you don't have NATO in the Middle East," Karako said. "Really the prerequisite to serious cooperation, to serious interoperability and integration is and always has been the lack of political integration and … security integration like you have with NATO."

Cooperation, information sharing and connecting equipment are "the crown jewels of what needs to be done on missile defense," Karako said.

That lack of strategic planning between countries has lead Gulf states to individually buy their own missile defense systems, primarily Patriot missiles and more recently longer-range THAAD interceptors. That missile defense is on the arms shopping list is considered to be the price for peace with Iran. The more Iran and the West inch toward easing restrictions on Tehran, the more Gulf states want military deterrences against their less restrained neighbor. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Kuwait all have a version of the Patriot, which is made by Raytheon. Saudi Arabia purchased $2 billion worth of Patriots last month and Qatar signed a $2.4 billion deal for interceptors in December. As Patriot orders have come in from the Middle East and elsewhere, Raytheon has funded upgrade and improvement projects for the missile.
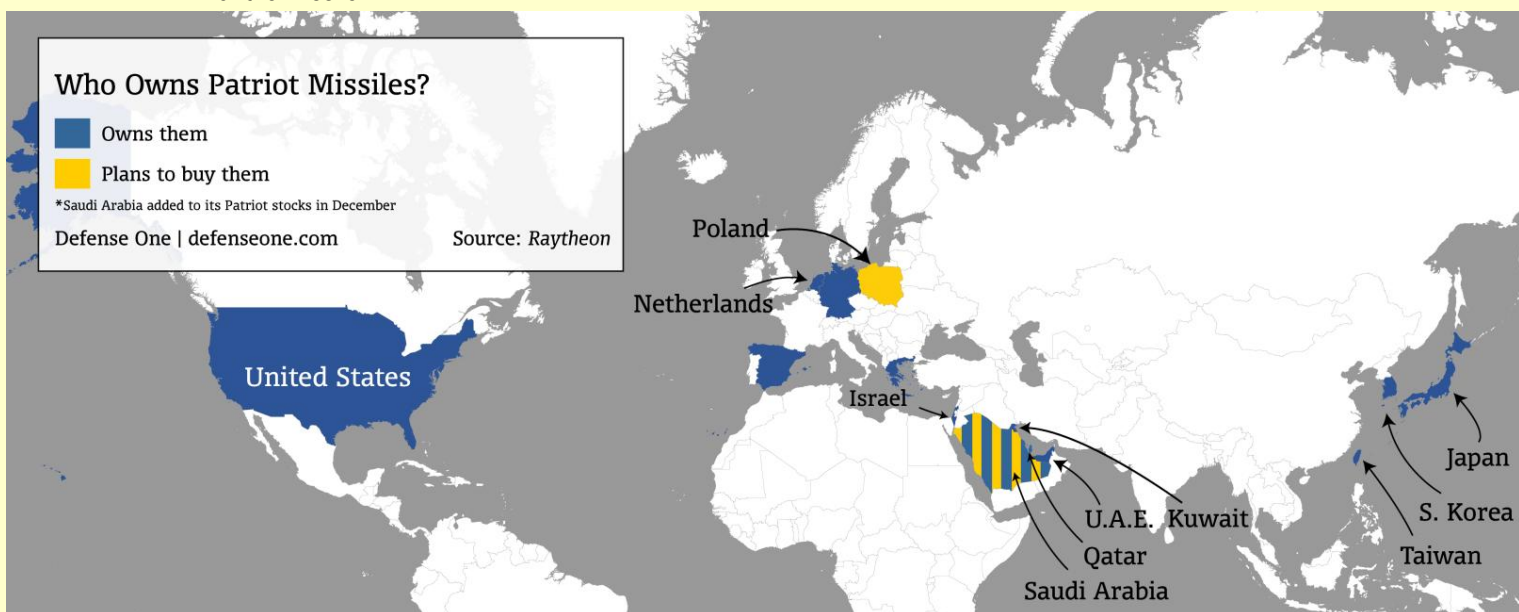
UAE also has purchased the THAAD interceptors, built by Lockheed Martin, and are supposed to get them by the end of the year. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are also reportedly interested in THAAD.

The U.S. has 10 Patriot batteries deployed in the region, including one in Jordan to defend against a possible missile attack from Syria.

But while the Gulf states have purchases top-end missile interceptors, they do not have the sophisticated radars and satellites that the Pentagon uses to track ballistic missiles.

"[T]he ability of any country in the region to defend against the missile threat pales in comparison to the ability of the [Gulf Cooperation Council] as a whole, as a collective, to defend against this threat if their systems were better integrated," Colin Kahl, Vice President Joe Biden's national security advisor, said in a call with reporters on Monday in advance of the Arab leaders summit in Washington.

"[O]ne of the things that we'll talk about is, what more can we do with our partners in the GCC to share early warning and to integrate air and missile defenses," Kahl said.

Qatar has expressed interest in buying a massive, missile-tracking radar akin to what the Pentagon uses to track objects heading toward the United States. Taiwan has purchased such a system.

"[Qatar is] especially well situated for a really big radar to look into Iran and just stare for lots of things," Karako said.

UAE has also expressed interest in buying early warning satellites. The information gathered by this type of radar would be of interest to all Gulf Cooperation Council nations, Karako said.

The Pentagon is also working to connect American missile defense equipment into an air and missile defense operations center in Qatar. The center will tie together radars, Patriot, THAAD and European air defense systems and radars, according to Raytheon, the project's contractor.

At the Camp David summit this week, U.S. officials plan to announce military exercises in the region to focus on maritime, counterterrorism and missile defense cooperation between Arab states, said Ben Rhodes, President Barack Obama's deputy national security advisor for strategic communications, earlier this week.

Marcus Weisgerber is the global business reporter for Defense One, where he writes about the intersection of business and national security. He has been covering defense and national security issues for nearly a decade, previously as Pentagon correspondent for Defense News and chief editor of Inside the Air Force. He has reported from Afghanistan, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, and often travels with the defense secretary and other senior military officials.

The S-300P surface-to-air missile system

Designation:

Russian military: **S-300P**
NATO reporting name: **SA-10 Grumble/SA-20 Gargoyle**
Class: **medium/long-range surface-to-air missile system**

Special features:

- Vertical launch
- Two missiles launched on one target
- Short deployment/redeployment time

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History:

The S-300 SAM system was developed in the 1960s-70s by the Almaz Central Design Bureau to replace the first-generation SAM, the S-75, for the country's Air Defense Forces, with a view to providing them with a road-mobile, multi-channel system to repulse massive air strikes; in service with the Russian Air Defense/Air Force (the S-300P family) and the Ground Forces (the S-300V family).

S-300PS and S-300PM systems are exported as S-300PMU and S-300PMU-1/2

First tests:
The mid-1970s

Put into service:
S-300PT (1978); S-300PS (1982); S-300PM (1993)

Operators:

Belarus
Ukraine
Slovakia
Hungary
Bulgaria
Greece
Algeria
Iran (not officially acknowledged)
Russia
Kazakhstan
Armenia
China
India
Vietnam

7.5 m
0.519 m

Specifications S-300PM (with 48N46 missiles)

Range:	**5-150 km**
Altitude:	**10 - 27,000 m**
Speed of targets engaged:	**up to 1,800 m/sec (up to 2,800 with target designation)**
Number of targets tracked:	**up to 12**
Number of targets engaged:	**up to 6**
Deployment/redeployment time:	**5/5 min.**
Number of missiles in a complex:	**up to 48**

The 48N6 surface-to-air missile

48N6 SAM specifications

Length:	**7.5 m**
Diameter:	**0.519 m**
Weight:	**1,800-1,900 kg**
Payload:	**145 kg**
Range:	**150 km**
Speed	up to 2,100 m/sec
Overload:	**up to 25G**

«RIA Novosti» © 2008

S-300/S-400: A good alternative to Patriot…

EDITOR'S COMMENT: This is a possibility but it is also war declaration and this is not a favorable option for Iran – for many reasons. **What really worries me** is what will happen if there is an accident/natural disaster/man-made action in the (opposite) Bushehr nuclear power plant? Has anyone calculated how long it will take for contaminated plum to reach UAE, Qatar and part of S. Arabia (distance to Abu Dhabi: 593km)? Do people living in these Gulf countries understand the consequences and the impact this will have on their existence and economy? And if they do, what are they doing to prepare themselves?

More than 10,000 ISIS fighters killed since August 2014: U.S.

Source: http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150603-more-than-10-000-isis-fighters-killed-since-august-2014-u-s

June 03 – **Antony Blinken, U.S. deputy secretary of state, speaking at a meeting of leaders from more than twenty countries who are meeting in Paris for discussions on how to combat ISIS, said that more than 10,000 Islamic State fighters have been killed since coalition forces started their campaign against the militant group in Iraq and Syria nine months ago**. He said there had been a great deal of progress in the fight against the Islamists, but that they remained resilient and capable of taking the initiative.

"We have seen a lot of losses within DAESH [the Arabic acronym for Islamic State] since the start of this campaign, more than 10,000," Blinken told France Inter radio on Wednesday. "It will end up having an impact."

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, echoing complaints from Iran, said earlier this week that the U.S.-led coalition was not doing enough to help Baghdad push back the insurgents.

"At the start of this campaign (we) said it would take time," Blinken said. "We have conceived a three-year plan and we're nine months into it."

The *Telegraph* reports that the U.S.-led coalition also called for the "speedy launch" of efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis, which it said was essential to tackle ISIS's advances through Syria and Iraq.

The coalition maintained that recent advances by ISIS notwithstanding, the coalition had a "winning strategy," and the leaders meeting in Paris have given their approval to Iraqi plans to retake territory from the Islamists.

Blinken, who stood in for the hospitalized John Kerry, hailed Baghdad's strategy as "the right plan both politically and militarily for Iraq at this time."

He said the coalition had made "real gains" and said the ISIS now had 25 percent less territory than when the air strikes began in August.

Experts note, however, that even after being pushed back in a few places, the militants still control an area the size of Italy across Syria and Iraq.

Retired Gen. John Allen, appointed by President Barack Obama to build a coalition against ISIS, told a Brookings Institution's U.S.-Islamic World Forum conference in Qatar earlier today that the growth of ISIS had global implications and could "wreak havoc on the progress of humanity" if unchecked.

He said the group was not merely an Iraqi problem or a Syrian problem but "a regional problem trending towards global implications."

ISIS has lost about a quarter of the populated areas it once held in Iraq, but countering its ideology might take a generation or more, he told the Brookings Institution's U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

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EDITOR'S COMMENT: It is amazing how accurate we are with death counts thousands of miles away! And with so many other victory/success numbers…

What is the Nature of The Yemen Explosion? Could it be nuclear (MOAB)?

Source: http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-war-on-yemen-americas-plans-to-use-nuclear-weapons-against-the-middle-east/5453065

I Give Up: There Is No Terrorism, There Are No Terrorists

By Daniel Pipes

Source: http://www.meforum.org/5287/defining-terrorism

When the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the world's largest news operation, decided in January not to call the *Charlie Hebdo* attackers *terrorists*, this made an impression on me.

The head of the BBC Arabic service, Tarik Kafala, explained its reasoning:

Terrorism is such a loaded word. The UN has been struggling for more than a decade to define the word and they can't. It is very difficult to. We know what political violence is, we know what murder, bombings and shootings are and we describe them. That's much more revealing, we believe, than using a word like terrorist which people will see as value-laden.

Not only can the United Nations not define this little word; one study, *Political Terrorism*, lists 109 definitions for it and debate over its meaning drives specialists to distraction. The concept just involves too many moving parts – personnel, weapons, tactics, networks, and goals. An American security specialist, David Tucker, urges those who would define it instead simply to "abandon hope" like those entering hell. His Israeli counterpart, Boaz Ganor, jokes that "The struggle to define terrorism is sometimes as hard as the struggle against terrorism itself."

If the BBC, the UN, and specialists cannot agree on what the word means, neither can politicians or the police. Does it make sense to soldier on fighting a semantic battle that will never be won? Why argue for a word that everyone agrees in confusing and some find loaded?

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Therefore, I too have stopped using *terrorism* and *terrorist* (*counterterrorism*, however, is a tougher word to drop). It's not worth the fight. Better to use words like *violent*, *murderous*, *Islamist*, and *jihadi*, words that do not generate a definitional uproar. Better not to have to waste time arguing that the U.S. or Israeli governments are not terrorists.

Worse, this argument over terrorism diverts attention from the important fact, which is ==destruction and murder.== Rather than have a debate whether an act of violence meets some theoretical threshold, let's focus on the real problems.

I have written & spoken some 200 times about terrorism; I argued over decades for its coherent use; note my *Washington Post* letter to the editor on this topic in 1984 (**photo**); as recently as last October, I co-authored an article arguing that the legal and financial implications of the word *terrorism* require that it have "a precise and accurate definition, consistently applied." My new view is that legal and financial documents should be re-written without the term terrorism.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 1984

It Wasn't 'Terrorism'

Horrible as it was, the October suicide bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut was not terrorism. It was an attack on a military installation and therefore within the internationally accepted terms of warfare.

It is a mistake to debase the word terrorism by applying it to any repugnant use of force.

DANIEL PIPES

Cambridge, Mass.

It's been five months now since these words fell out of my vocabulary, long enough to be able to report that my analyses hold up and my political efforts undimmed. In fact, I am better off unburdened of it and its vocabulary debates. You would be too.

Daniel Pipes is president of the Middle East Forum.

Iran weighs turning Hizballah's anti-Israel missiles against ISIS to save Damascus and Baghdad

Source: http://www.debka.com/article/24633/Iran-weighs-turning-Hizballah%E2%80%99s-anti-Israel-missiles-against-ISIS-to-save-Damascus-and-Baghdad

May 30 – Hizballah's General Secretary Hassan Nasrallah frequently brags that his 80,000 missiles can reach any point in Israel. He may have to compromise on this. His masters in
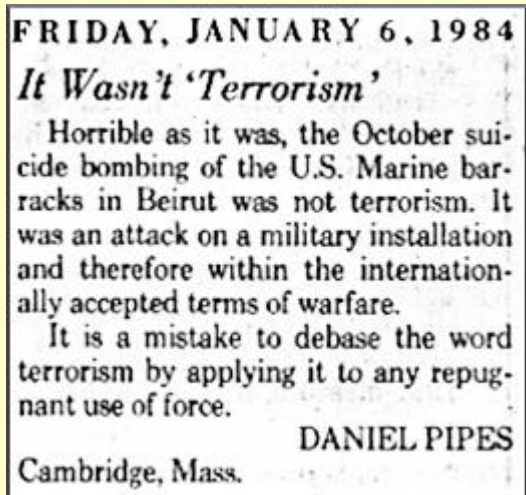
Tehran are casting about urgently for ways to save the Assad regime in Damascus and halt the Islamic State's' inexorable advance on Baghdad and the Shiite shrine city of Karbala. According to debkafile's Gulf sources, Iran is eyeing the re-allocation of the roughly 1,000 long-range rockets in Hizballah's store for warding off these calamities.

Some would be fired from their pads in Lebanon, exposing that country to retaliation, after Beirut rebuffed Hizballah's demand for the Lebanese army to join in the fight for Assad.

Iran has not so far approved the plan. But if it does go through, Iranian spy drones operating over the war zones would feed with targeting data on ISIS and rebel positions and movements to the Hizballah rocket crews manning the mobile batteries of Fajr-5s - range 400-600 km; Zelzal-2s - range 500 km; Fateh-110s -range 800 km; and Shaheen 2s - 800-900 km.

Discussions in Tehran on this option took on new urgency Thursday, May 28, when White House spokesman Josh Earnest declared that the United States "would not be responsible for securing the security situation in Iraq. Our strategy is to support the Iraqi security forces… back them on the battlefield with coalition military air power as they take the fight to ISIS in their own country," he said.

Tehran took this as confirmation that the US was quitting the war on the Islamic State in Iraq although the Obama administration's decision was coupled with a free hand for the Baghdad government to do whatever it must to deal with the peril, including calling on external forces for assistance in defending the country.

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In the Iraqi arena, Iran has thrown into the fray surrogate Shiite militias grouped under "The Popular Mobilization Committee." It is led by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who turns out to be an Iranian, not an Iraqi, and working under cover as the deputy of the Al Qods Brigades Commander Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

This grouping is too shady for President Barack Obama to accept as worthy of US air support. Therefore, the entire anti-ISIS campaign has been dumped in Iran's lap. Loath to expose its own air force planes to the danger of being shot down over Iraq, Iran is looking at the option of filling the gap with heavy missiles.

In the Syrian arena, Tehran is under extreme pressure:

1. The Assad regime can't last much longer under fierce battering from the rebel Nusra Front, freshly armed and funded with massive assistance from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. To disguise this group's affiliation with al Qaeda, the Saudis have set up a new outfit called "The Muslim Army of Conquest." In a few days it was joined by 3,000 Nusra adherents.

2. The Syrian army has lost heart under this assault and many of its units are fleeing the battlefield rather than fighting, with the result that Bashar Assad is losing one piece of territory after another in all his war sectors. Soon, he will be left without enough troops for defending Damascus.

3. Although Hizballah's leaders proclaim their determination to fight for Assad in every part of Syria, the fact is that the Shiite group is too stretched to support a wide-ranging conflict in Syria and defend its own home base in Lebanon at one and the same time.

4. Tehran is also considering rushing through a defense pact with Damascus to enable Assad to call on Iranian troops to come over and rescue him.

5. Saudi Arabia has singled out leaders of top Hizballah leaders for sanctions. This week, Riyadh impounded the assets and accounts of Khalil Harb and Muhammad Qabalan in Gulf banks. This act was taken in Tehran as a major provocation.

The names don't mean much outside a small circle in the region. However, Harb is Hizballah's supreme chief of staff whose military standing is comparable to that of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander Gen. Ali Jaafary, while Qabalan is the organization's senior intelligence and operations officer and responsible for orchestrating Hizballah's terrorist hits outside Lebanon. The Iranians are not about to let this affront go by without payback, which could come in the form of missile attacks by Hizballah on Saudi-backed groups in Syria.

Surge in Piracy Incidents in Asian Seas Requires New Solution

Source: http://www.hstoday.us/single-article/surge-in-piracy-incidents-in-asian-seas-requires-new-solution/0b9a70b3debe9aae2551ef7acee34cec.html

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The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) reported a sharp increase in the number of incidents from this past quarter (January-March 2015) in relation to the same time period in 2013 where there were 29 incidents reported; 38 have already been reported for Q1 2015.

When compared with the same period from 2014, the amount of incidents has doubled in the precarious Southeast Asian waters of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore as well as at some ports in Vietnam. The piracy attack on a Malaysian oil tanker on May 15 elevated security concerns for ships at sea or docked in this region has, leaving an urgent need to enhance vigilant security measures.

Oiental Glory, a 3,000dwt oil tanker was en-route to Tanjung Manis in the South China Sea when its course was averted by a group of 30 pirates in six small crafts who then proceeded to board the vessel, rob the crew of their personal effects and siphon 2,500 tons of bunker fuel.

This marks the seventh incident this year of fuel siphoning in Asia, a serious concern for authorities as this is a highly involved process that if performed by untrained individuals using the wrong equipment, can result in environmental disasters, fire or explosion. While all crewmembers onboard were unharmed, the increased incidents in this very busy and important shipping route has reinforced that while piracy has been contained in some areas, it is still very much alive in others.

Every year ports and merchant ships are preferred targets for

pirates because of their economic importance and vulnerability both at sea and docked due to the difficulty in securing vast, open waters and coastlines. While some strides have been made in legislation for the protection of ports and waterways, they remain largely exposed to dangerous threats.

Traditional security measures such as radars are not always effective in combatting against piracy as they are often unable to detect the smaller, wooden boats that are commonly used. A solution that is able to stand up in the corrosive and harsh environment of the sea that can detect rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs), swimmers, and wooden boats would be the most viable tool for anti-piracy counter-measures.

HGH Infrared Systems' Spynel panoramic infrared thermal imaging system is one such solution that is suitable for both port surveillance and self-protection of ships against anti-piracy. The Spynel sensors are capable of providing a wide 360° field of view with very high resolution and up to 15 km detection range for RHIBs. The proprietary built-in software, Cyclope, automatically performs detection and tracking of an unlimited number of threats while advanced algorithms with built-in sea-specific image processing allows for a low false alarm rate and differentiation between distant small boats, waves and maritime wildlife.

With an autonomous gyro-stabilized platform, the Spynel cameras can operate at sea state level 5/6-rough to very rough seas.

The Spynel systems provide maritime surveillance for a critical shipping port in the Gulf of Guinea, West Africa as well as on French Navy frigates deployed in the Gulf of Aden. Spynel can also be integrated with AIS and radar systems in place.

The Oriental Glory incident is not isolated, prompting the Safe Navigation and Environment Committee of the Asian Shipowners' Forum (ASF) to express concern on the increasing number of piracy incidents in Asian waters over the past four years.

The ASF committee is also concerned that the surge in the number of incidents could result in a situation where vested commercial interests use alarmist press reports to depict scenarios where vessels transiting the Straits of Malacca and Singapore are forced to pay additional premiums.

With zero piracy incidents reported in the former stronghold off the coast of Somalia in the first quarter of 2015, counter-piracy efforts are refocusing on Asia. As detailed in the upcoming issue of *Homeland Security Today*, most incidents in South East Asia over the past year have been carried out by armed gangs targeting small coastal tankers to steal their cargoes of fuel.

"The frequency of these hijackings in South East Asia is an increasing cause for concern. There's a risk that the attacks and violence could increase if left unabated," said Pottengal Mukundan, director of the International Maritime Bureau.

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The Terrorist Threat in China

Source: https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2015/06/the-terrorist-threat-in-china/

The Diplomat has published a four-part series by scholars from the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) on rising violence in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China, and central authorities' "war on terror," launched in response last May. Each entry is accompanied by an interactive map of nationwide incidents since 2010 and general statistics for each. Part one is a general overview of the **origins and changing nature of terrorism, the central government's controversial** **counterterrorism policies, and the international media's reluctance in using the label of terrorism** to report on Xinjiang, where government-sanctioned opacity obstructs understanding of the situation. From MERICS' Marc Julienne, Moritz Rudolf, and Johannes Buckow:

[…] The current tensions have a long history. Since China's western expansion in the 18th century and the annexation of Xinjiang, the region and the central government have
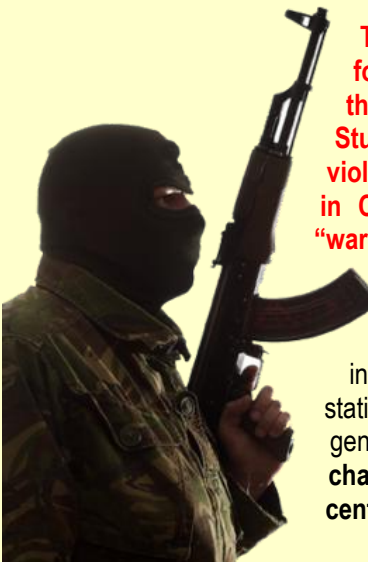
had a troubled relationship. The Uyghurs have long been fighting for the preservation of their culture against the perceived Han invasion. After a decade of resurgent expression of Uyghur culture and religion, 1989 marked a turning point for both Chinese authorities and the Uyghur population, as well as a new rise of separatist ideas. From Beijing's perspective, the Tiananmen Square incident and the increasing local (student) protests reinforced the need for tighter control of the population and the crucial establishment of stability. From the Xinjiang separatists' perspective, the defeat of the Soviet Union by the mujaheddin in Afghanistan was a source of hope and fueled radical Islamism in Xinjiang. Nevertheless, it is crucial to distinguish between the general Uyghur population (Uyghurs who are politically active in favour of more autonomy) and others who would go so far as to take part in terrorist activities.

Although Western countries have been very reticent to talk about terrorism in China, facts show that in recent years the PRC has been facing a genuine terrorism threat. However, it remains difficult to ascertain the nature and source of all alleged terror incidents that occur in Xinjiang. Very little official information is released and there are very few independent journalists on the ground. Moreover, information relayed by Chinese media and officials' statements provide hardly any evidence or verifiable figures. It is therefore a fundamental challenge to differentiate between acts of social insurgency, state repression, and terrorism within the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. In fact, the overall social and ethnic situation in China's Western region blends into a broader conflict between Uyghurs and Han Chinese. The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research even labeled the situation in Xinjiang a "limited war" in 2014.

Still, it is indisputable that major terrorist attacks have occurred recently in Xinjiang (Urumqi 2014) and elsewhere in China (Beijing 2013, Kunming 2014). […] [**Source**]

Part two **looks closer at the changing nature of terrorism in China** and how it relates to shifting global trends:

[…] Terrorist attacks have been spreading out of Xinjiang in recent years. From the 1990s to the late 2000s, the vast majority of terrorist acts were limited to Xinjiang, while the Chinese Uyghur terrorists were known to be based in Xinjiang and in relatively unstable neighboring

countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, and in Central Asia. Recently, however, China has suffered attacks in several cities all over its territory. In the most symbolic attack, a car loaded with explosives crashed into a group of tourists under the portrait of Mao Zedong in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on October 28, 2013. The most brutal attack occurred five months later, in March 2014, at Kunming railway station (in the capital city of Yunnan province) followed by two attacks at Guangzhou railway station (in the capital of Guangdong province) in May 2014 and March 2015. While the first attack obviously targeted China's symbols of power, the following ones might be explained in relation to the failed attempts by Uyghur extremists to leave China via the southern borders and join terrorist networks abroad.

[…] For years, terrorist acts in Xinjiang targeted symbols of Beijing's authority, mainly local Communist Party of China (CPC) headquarters and police stations. In recent years, terrorist acts have increasingly targeted civilians — regardless of ethnic origin — in crowded public places. This was the case with the Beijing, Kunming, and Guangzhou attacks in 2013 and 2014. Other attacks in 2014 further confirm this trend: the attack on the Urumqi railway station in April killed three and injured 79; a car bomb attack on an open-air market in Urumqi the following month killed 31 and injured 94. The number of civilian casualties has increased dramatically. [**Source**]

Part three focuses on **Beijing's changing responses to mounting violence and its underlying causes**:

[…] In politics, anti-terrorism is currently a higher priority than it has ever been before. In August 2013, the State Council established the Leading Small Group on Counter-Terrorism (反恐怖工作领导小组), which is a top-level body in charge of advising and implementing counter-terrorism work, led by the minister of Public Security. Along with the establishment of the National Security Commission (中央国家安全委员会), which is headed by Xi Jinping himself, in January 2014, this has led to the centralization and prioritization of anti-terror policymaking at the highest level.

[…] In order to fight the perceived socio-economic roots of terrorism, China has launched a number of development initiatives. Beijing is

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trying to stabilize the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region by improving the living standards of Uyghurs, creating jobs and integrating Xinjiang with the Chinese economic heartland. These efforts intensified with the proclamation of China's Silk Road Economic Belt initiative in 2013. While some of these efforts have shown positive results, others have been criticized as attempts to assimilate Uyghurs into the Han majority, or to eradicate local languages, cultural goods, or religious life.

[…] China is currently working on a new law that is to lay the legal basis for engaging terrorist threats and suspects and to create an operational legal definition of terrorism. The National People's Congress published the first draft in November 2014 and a second formal round of deliberations on the law was held in February 2015. So far, the draft law condemns as terrorist acts "any speech or activity that, by means of violence, sabotage or threat, generates social panic, undermines public security, and menaces government departments or international organisations." This very vague definition opens up the possibility for arbitrary applications and abuse. [**Source**]

Read more about concerns surrounding proposed counter-terror and national security laws.

Finally, part four looks at **Beijing's recent efforts to rally international cooperation in its fight against terrorism**—regionally through widening the scope of multilateral forums and forging new treaties, and globally by seeking to align its goals with those of Western nations:

China still focuses on bilateral cooperation to fight terrorism as a transnational phenomenon, including extradition treaties and police and intelligence exchanges. So far China has signed 36 extradition treaties (for instance with Pakistan, Thailand, and Central Asian countries like Uzbekistan) to facilitate the exchange of prisoners and suspected terrorists. The latest treaties, with Afghanistan and Iran, came into force in December 2014. In

January 2015 Afghanistan extradited to China several Uyghurs suspected of having been trained in terror camps in Pakistan.

[…] The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) serves as the main multilateral body for China's commitment to fight against terrorism. The SCO was initiated by China and formally established in 2001 together with Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan to coordinate efforts to fight "terrorism, religious extremism and separatism" in the region. Besides joint military drills (so called "Peace Missions"), which often have a counter-terrorism focus, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) provides the SCO's anti-terror efforts framework. RATS serves as a meeting platform for SCO member states' counter-terrorism agencies and facilitates intelligence sharing in the form of a joint database and blacklists of individuals and groups linked to terrorism.

[…] As China and the West face a similar threat from trans-regional Islamist terrorist networks, areas of cooperation should be identified and actively pursued. Apart from exchanges of information on terrorist groups, many European countries also have their own experiences to share with regard to fighting terrorism, emphasizing milder forms of policing and surveillance as well as cultural and educational methods of prevention.

However, there are limitations to substantial cooperation with China on anti-terrorism. […] [**Source**]

Last month, Chinese state media heralded the success of the ongoing security crackdown, claiming that authorities have disbanded 181 terrorist groups since the campaign launched. In addition to heightened security measures, religious and cultural practices have become highly regulated in parts of Xinjiang. In a blog post for the London Review of Books, author of the recently released book "China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State" Nick Holdstock notes that the declaration of success—

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common from state media regarding central policy—**appears to be aimed at assuaging anxiety among Han residents in Xinjiang, and highlights the view that policies further marginalizing religious and ethnic minorities will likely do little to help the situation**:

[…] It's routine for the Chinese authorities to trumpet the success of their policy initiatives. In this case, the aim is to reassure the growing population of Han Chinese settlers in Xinjiang that the situation there is stable. The regional authorities in Xinjiang are far more sympathetic to settlers' concerns than those of the local Uighur population. After the riots in Urumqi in 2009, which officially led to more than 200 deaths, several large protests by Han Chinese in Urumqi were treated with remarkable

leniency, even though some of the protesters singled out Wang Lequan, the regional party secretary at the time, for vilification and even death threats.

[…] Prominent voices in China are calling for a reassessment of economic policy in Xinjiang. But China's new draft security law suggests that Xi Jinping's administration is committed to criminalising dissent, even the moderate criticism offered by the Uighur intellectual Ilham Tohti, who was jailed for life last September for 'separatism'. Until Uighur communities in Xinjiang are given equal access to employment and education, and allowed the freedom of religious expression guaranteed by China's constitution, the cycle of resentment, violence and repression will continue. [**Source**]

Now the Truth Emerges: How the US Fuelled the Rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq

Source: http://news.sudanvisiondaily.com/details.html?rsnpid=250813

The sectarian terror group won't be defeated by the western states that incubated it in the first place.

The war on terror, that campaign without end launched 14 years ago by George Bush, is tying itself up in ever more grotesque

contortions. On Monday the trial in London of a Swedish man, Bherlin Gildo, accused of terrorism in Syria, collapsed after it became clear British intelligence had been arming the same rebel groups the defendant was charged with supporting.

The prosecution abandoned the case, apparently to avoid embarrassing the intelligence services. The defence argued that going ahead withthe trial would have been an

"affront to justice" when there was plenty of evidence the British state was itself providing "extensive support" to the armed Syrian opposition.

That didn't only include the "non-lethal assistance" boasted of by the government (including body armour and military vehicles), but training, logistical support and the secret supply of "arms on a massive scale". Reports were cited that MI6 had cooperated with the CIA on a "rat line" of arms transfers from Libyan stockpiles to the Syrian rebels in 2012 after the fall of the Gaddafi regime.

Clearly, the absurdity of sending someone to prison for doing what ministers and their security officials were up to themselves became too much. But it's only the latest of a string of such cases. Less fortunate was a London cab driver Anis Sardar, who was given a life sentence a fortnight earlier for taking part in 2007 in resistance to the occupation of Iraq by US and British forces.

Armed opposition to illegal invasion and occupation clearly doesn't constitute terrorism or murder on most definitions, including the Geneva Convention.

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But terrorism is now squarely in the eye of the beholder. And nowhere is that more so than in the Middle East, where today's terrorists are tomorrow's fighters against tyranny – and allies are enemies – often at the bewildering whim of a western policymaker's conference call.

For the past year, US, British and other western forces have been back in Iraq, supposedly in the cause of destroying the hyper-sectarian terror group Islamic State (formerly known as al-Qaida in Iraq). This was after Isis overran huge chunks of Iraqi and Syrian territory and proclaimed a self-styled Islamic caliphate.

The campaign isn't going well. Last month, Isis rolled into the Iraqi city of Ramadi, while on the other side of the now nonexistent border its forces conquered the Syrian town of Palmyra. Al-Qaida's official franchise, the Nusra Front, has also been making gains in Syria.

Some Iraqis complain that the US sat on its hands while all this was going on. The Americans insist they are trying to avoid civilian casualties, and claim significant successes. Privately, officials say they don't want to be seen hammering Sunni strongholds in a sectarian war and risk upsetting their Sunni allies in the Gulf.

A revealing light on how we got here has now been shone by a recently declassified secret US intelligence report, written in August 2012, which uncannily predicts – and effectively welcomes – the prospect of a "Salafist principality" in eastern Syria and an al-Qaida-controlled Islamic state in Syria and Iraq. In stark contrast to western claims at the time, the Defense Intelligence Agency document identifies al-Qaida in Iraq (which became Isis) and fellow Salafists as the "major forces driving the insurgency in Syria" – and states that "western countries, the Gulf states and Turkey" were supporting the opposition's efforts to take control of eastern Syria.

Raising the "possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality", the Pentagon report goes on, "this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime, which is considered the strategic depth of the Shia expansion (Iraq and Iran)".

American forces bomb one set of rebels while backing another in Syria. Which is pretty well exactly what happened two years later. The report isn't a policy document. It's heavily redacted and there are ambiguities in the language. But the implications are clear enough. A year into the Syrian rebellion, the US and its allies weren't only supporting and arming an opposition they knew to be dominated by extreme sectarian groups; they were prepared to countenance the creation of some sort of "Islamic state" – despite the "grave danger" to Iraq's unity – as a Sunni buffer to weaken Syria.

That doesn't mean the US created Isis, of course, though some of its Gulf allies certainly played a role in it – as the US vice-president, Joe Biden, acknowledged last year. But there was no al-Qaida in Iraq until the US and Britain invaded. And the US has certainly exploited the existence of Isis against other forces in the region as part of a wider drive to maintain western control.

The calculus changed when Isis started beheading westerners and posting atrocities online and the Gulf States are now backing other groups in the Syrian war, such as the Nusra Front. But this US and western habit of playing with jihadi groups, which then come back to bite them, goes back at least to the 1980s war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, which fostered the original al-Qaida under CIA tutelage.

It was recalibrated during the occupation of Iraq, when US forces led by General Petraeus sponsored an El Salvador-style dirty war of sectarian death squads to weaken the Iraqi resistance. And it was reprised in 2011 in the Nato-orchestrated war in Libya, where Isis last week took control of Gaddafi's home town of Sirte.

In reality, US and western policy in the conflagration that is now the Middle East is in the classic mould of imperial divide-and-rule. American forces bomb one set of rebels while backing another in Syria, and mount what are effectively joint military operations with Iran against Isis in Iraq while supporting Saudi Arabia's military campaign against Iranian-backed Houthi forces in Yemen. However confused US policy may often be, a weak, partitioned Iraq and Syria fit such an approach perfectly.

What's clear is that Isis and its monstrosities won't be defeated by the same powers that brought it to Iraq and Syria in the first place, or whose open and covert war-making has fostered it in the years since. Endless western military interventions in

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the Middle East have brought only destruction and division. It's the people of the region who can cure this disease – not those who incubated the virus.

A Terrorist Threat in Iceland?! We Investigate

Source: http://grapevine.is/mag/articles/2015/06/02/a-terrorist-threat-in-iceland-we-investigate/

June 02 – In a world of terror and violence it's nice to live in Iceland, where 70% of all crimes committed are traffic offences. Still, last winter's incidents in Paris and Copenhagen hit a little closer to home than we may like. A February report by the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police declared that "uncertainty about the terrorist threat is growing in Iceland and the other Nordic countries," and that here in Iceland, "**generally speaking, it is not possible to exclude the risk of terrorism."**

We asked a few local security pundits (see at the end of this article) what kind of terrorist threat we could be facing here in Iceland, to help get a better idea of what this means.

Is extremism on the rise?
According to the European Union's law enforcement agency, Europol, the threat level in Europe is growing, and it has not been this high in Europe since the 9/11 attacks in the US. Still, in the age of the 24-hour news cycle, it is important to question how much extremist violence is growing—and how much it seems to be the case due to the media's fixation on tragedy (irony: noted). When asked if they think extremism is becoming more of an issue in Europe and in Iceland specifically, our sources gave mixed responses.
"The fixation of some politicians and media on extremism, especially Islamic extremism, is out

of proportion and politically motivated," said Stefán Pálsson, the chairman of Samtök Hernaðarandstæðinga, an Icelandic pacifist society. Independence Party MP Ásmundur Friðriksson took an opposing view. "There's certainly a growing threat of terrorism in Europe, as the examples show. It's important that we pay close attention and stay alert regarding our own security," he said.

"It's definitely becoming more of an issue," said Pirate Party MP Helgi Hrafn Gunnarsson, finding the middle ground, "but the reactions to it scare me much more than the terrorism itself." When it comes to terrorism, he said, there's a tendency to panic: "It's not something that we should be panicking over, it's something we should be dealing with like crime."

For former NATO advisor Chris Jagger, whether extremism is on the rise is beside the point. "Those charged with the responsibility of keeping us safe are, unfortunately, overwhelmed with leads of potential terrorists," he said. "The simple fact is that the resources do not match the threat."

Are the police prepared for an act of terrorism in Iceland?
If extremism is in fact on the rise, are the Icelandic police prepared to handle an attack like the ones in Paris or Copenhagen? Ásmundur thinks not, and has been making

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his opinion on Islamic extremism clear. In fifteen hardly reassuring words @logreglan wrote via Twitter, "the police do everything they can to be prepared for any situation that may arise."

Stefán and Helgi gave very similar answers. Neither one thinks any country can be adequately prepared for random acts of terrorism, and both expressed concerns over moving towards "dystopian fascist societies" or "1984" in a pursuit of total freedom from terrorism. "We will always have some form of terrorism," Helgi said. "I don't know at what time it became reasonable to expect terrorism to just go away forever. I don't remember a time without terrorism. I don't think it ever existed, and I don't think it ever will." The National Commissioner's report expresses a need for increased investigative powers when it comes to matters of terrorism and organised crime, giving Stefán and Helgi's fear a bit more weight.

What are the best steps to prevent terrorist or extremist violence in Iceland?

The National Commissioner's report suggests the following precautions: legislation on increased police investigative powers; legislation on prohibition of travel by foreign terrorist fighters; more officers, experts and equipment; the creation of a special unit to combat terrorism; information sharing between police, social and health workers regarding individuals who may pose a threat; and a social resource for those exposed to radicalisation.

When we asked our experts about the best steps to prevent extremist violence in Iceland, the responses were a bit less STASI. "Perhaps below the radar of public perception, progress is being made across Europe in leaps and bounds towards reducing the threat from terrorism," Chris said, noting that de-radicalisation of potential terrorists after an early arrest has already proved highly successful in the UK. He also noted the importance of the authorities keeping the public involved. "From my experience prevention almost always starts with good public co-operation," he said.

Somewhat ironically, on this topic, the Independence Party MP looked to Europe for the answer, while the leftleaning pacifist took an isolationist stance. "It seems natural that the police have the tools and legislation that are considered normal in the neighbouring

countries that we want to compare ourselves to," Ásmundur said, in contrast to Stefán, who indicated that Iceland is simply too small and insignificant to be a plausible target. "How small and farflung Iceland is from the rest of Europe almost by definition makes the idea of a major terrorist attack in Iceland highly unlikely," Stefán said.

Helgi said that while serious tools are needed to combat serious crimes there is a tendency to sacrifice civil rights and liberties in the pursuit of security. "If liberal democracies intend to remain liberal democracies, they will have to bloody well live with the fact that we live in an unsafe world. We cannot have both security and liberty at the same time, there never was a time when we did. We shouldn't act as if that's possible because the moment that we do, we will lose one, if not both."

Why aren't Icelanders running away to the Islamic State?

Over the past year there have been reports of Europeans and North Americans leaving their home countries and joining the Islamic State. This does not seem to be happening in Iceland, but Ásmundur and Helgi both questioned whether we would actually know if any Icelanders had sought to join IS. Chris agreed that it is hard to say for certain that no Icelander has joined IS or has any connections to it. That being said, he believes it's unlikely because there has not been an indication of sympathies towards the cause in Iceland.

Stefán suggested it's because Iceland does not operate a military. "Armies come with glorification of militarism and ill-judged optimism towards warfare," he said. "The bigger the role of the military in society, the more young people will be drawn to that lifestyle—and are thus more likely to pursue a career as mercenaries or radical militants."

Based on their research, the National Commissioner reports that most people who join the Islamic State are young second and third generation immigrants who are looking for social recognition. Helgi sees this marginalisation as the fault of Western democracies that force assimilation out of fear that their societies might become less "French" or "German," for example. "We are an international community, multiculturalism is not optional. The only question is how you deal with it. And I submit you should

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start by acknowledging it. Stop pretending as if we have a choice."

Chris sees all this as a common myth that needs to be corrected. "It is wrong to think that only marginalised young males are joining Islamic State," he said. "It seems that individuals from all walks of life are capable of demonstrating everything from sympathy to the aims and objectives of the Islamic State on one end of the spectrum to giving their lives on the other to the cause on the other."

Should the Icelandic police be armed?

After the police were forced to return their "gifts" to Norway in November *[Ed. they still haven't]*, it is clear where most Icelanders stand on police weaponry. When asked if the Icelandic police should be armed, Stefán clearly stated that they are more than sufficiently armed as it is.

In a response to a question posed by Left-Green MP Katrín Jakobsdóttir, the Interior Ministry reported that the police have 590 guns, which seemed more than sufficient until the National Commissioner reported that there are 72,000 registered firearms in the country and "the number of unregistered weapons is unknown."

"They certainly shouldn't be armed in their everyday tasks, absolutely not," Helgi said, "it causes more problems than it solves." Chris was sceptical that more guns would act as a deterrent. "As the event in France demonstrated, protecting vulnerable people and property is not always achieved using weapons," he said. "The ideal position for a security agency is to prevent an attack well before its intended date; to do so normally requires sophisticated intelligence gathering operations."

The National Commissioner used similar reasoning in their recommendation for pre-emptive investigative powers for the Icelandic police. Iceland's neighbours have enacted such legislation in the past, but the Icelandic Parliament has repeatedly rejected the idea. The police argue that without such powers, they cannot investigate and prevent terror plots in the making, but can only respond to acts after it's too late. As Helgi and Stefán argue, when the authorities are given the power to investigate individuals who have not yet committed a crime, society walks a fine line between civil liberties and security.

Róbert R. Spanó, an Icelandic-Italian judge at the European Court of Human Rights, has argued that pre-emptive investigative powers may, unfortunately, be necessary to combat terrorism and modern forms of organised crime. However, if they are introduced, it is imperative that they are accompanied by strict regulations and oversight. The Pirate Party believes that oversight is already needed, proposing legislation for an independent police oversight committee to Parliament last month. Perhaps this will lay the groundwork for better and more responsible police investigations.

Are we safe?

The National Commissioner's report places Iceland under a moderate threat level, meaning that however unlikely a terrorist attack may be, it is impossible to exclude the possibility of one. "In my experience," Chris Jagger said, "there is no such thing as total security." So, a moderate threat level may be the best one could hope for. In the mean time, it seems the most conclusive answer is: we are not unsafe. Ásmundur put it simply: he feels safe in his everyday life as an Icelander, "but nevertheless, we have to have a discussion about the problem."

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Chris Jagger: Chris worked at the London Metropolitan Police, New Scotland Yard, and the British National Criminal Intelligence Service, before becoming a United Nations Head of Military Liaison, a NATO Advisor on Organised Crime, Border and Maritime Security and a NATO Director of National Security Vetting.

Stefán Pálsson: Stefán is the chairman of Samtök Hernaðarandstæðinga, an Icelandic pacifist society.

Ásmundur Friðriksson: Ásmundur is an Independence Party MP who has become known for taking a hard line against possible Islamist threats.

Islamic State Terrorists Using The UK Welfare System To Fund Attacks

Source: http://www.inquisitr.com/2153361/islamic-state-terrorist-using-the-uk-welfare-system-to-fund-attacks-authorities-claim/

Government officials are concerned that Islamic State supporters are abusing the United Kingdom welfare system to fund terror attacks. Investigations by officials show that hundreds of Brits are believed to have traveled abroad to fight for ISIS. Many of these individuals are believed to still be claiming taxpayer-funded benefits. **This means that British taxpayers may be helping fund the Islamic State's attacks.**

The Daily Mail reports that government officials believe the ISIS-supporters are deliberately abusing the system to gain access to as many funds as possible. The "high-level" frauds may have been paid to the Islamic State fighters for the past three years. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Fraud and Error Service has launched an investigation into the matter and say that people in Iraq and Syria have been able to successfully pocket UK benefit money despite laws against payouts to citizens living in those countries.

Detective Chief Superintendent Terri Nicholson, the assistant commander at the Metropolitan Police's counter-terrorism command unit, says he is "certain" that the Islamic State is utilizing UK benefit money to fund their terrorist activities. Nicholson says the fraud runs deep and involves online transactions as well as student loan abuse.

"We are seeing a diverse fraud, including substantial fraud online, abuse of the benefits system, abuse of student loans, in order to fund terrorism."

Though the government has not yet released specific information on the alleged illegal activities regarding the use of welfare money for terrorist funding, it was confirmed that an investigation into the matter was open.

"We can confirm that investigations have been carried out into claimants/customers fraudulently claiming benefits whilst allegedly living in Syria or Iraq."

According to the *Assyrian International News Agency*, many people are outraged at the idea that their tax money could be utilized by the terrorist group to carry out attacks. Professor Anthony Glees, an intelligence analyst in the
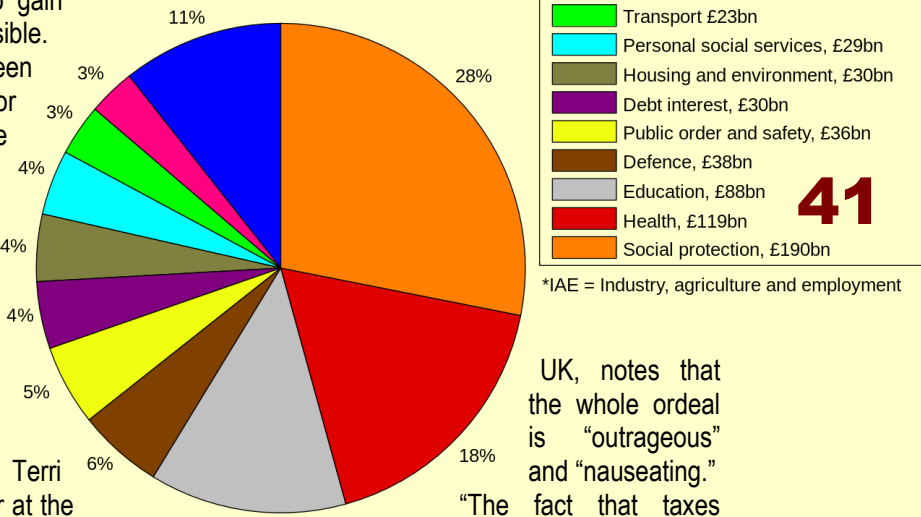
■	Other, £72bn
■	IAE*, £21bn
■	Transport £23bn
■	Personal social services, £29bn
■	Housing and environment, £30bn
■	Debt interest, £30bn
■	Public order and safety, £36bn
■	Defence, £38bn
■	Education, £88bn
■	Health, £119bn
■	Social protection, £190bn

11% 3% 3% 4% 4% 4% 5% 6% 13% 28% 18%

*IAE = Industry, agriculture and employment

UK, notes that the whole ordeal is "outrageous" and "nauseating."

"The fact that taxes gained via hard-working families across the UK is going to these sadistic killers is nauseating."

Similarly, the *Inquisitr* previously reported that the Islamic State may be using Bitcoin to move money for training, weapons, and recruitment purposes.

Government officials note that if anyone is found to have committed fraud in order to secure welfare benefits for the terrorist group, they will be prosecuted when they return to the region.

> **EDITOR'S COMMENT: The** conclusion made in the first paragraph (in red) is just stupid. Hard-working families across the UK are not paying the jihadists' training; their government is. On the other hand there are thousands of both locals and immigrants living

solely with welfare benefits without any contribution to the overall society – everybody knows that! So be pragmatic and fix things instead of trying to impress the masses!

The Threat Of Eurasian Terrorism: A Tinderbox Waiting For A Match – Analysis

By Daniel Frey

In April 2013, the Tsarnaev brothers detonated a pair of homemade bombs at the Boston Marathon, unleashing terror and chaos onto the streets of the Massachusetts capital and the suburbs nearby.

Last month, just over two years since that fateful spring day, Dzhokhar was sentenced to death. Much of the trial focused on his brother's connections to the Caucasus Emirate (IK), a jihadist organization based in the North Caucasus – a historically tumultuous and Muslim-dominated region in southern Russia. Today, members of the IK, along with disaffected citizens from the Caucasus and Central Asia, have abandoned the fight at home to join ISIS, resulting in a notable decline in terrorist violence in the North Caucasus. However, these emboldened militants could soon return from the Middle East, rekindling the threat of terrorism in the post-Soviet world.

Regional authorities speculate that ISIS might soon attempt to establish a "Northern front" in the North Caucasian republic of Dagestan. Their concerns are not unfounded; Eurasian Muslims (particularly migrant workers from Central Asia), disgruntled by political, religious, and economic disenfranchisement at home and abroad, are heeding ISIS's call to arms in increasingly large numbers. In a widely cited January report, the International Crisis Group estimated that between 2,000 and 4,000 Central Asians have left their home countries to fight for ISIS, a figure which now includes Colonel Gulmurod Khalimov, the former head of Tajikistan's elite police force. In February, Alexander Bortnikov, the Director of the FSB (a Russian security agency with historical connections to the Soviet KGB), announced that 1,700 Russian nationals, mostly Chechens, have joined the group as well.

The exodus of militants from the post-Soviet region to the Middle East (along with Russia's heavy-handed counterterrorism tactics ahead of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi) has severely weakened the Caucasus Emirate's ability to inflict damage on the Russian state. The numbers speak for themselves: according to Caucasian Knot, 1,705 people were killed or wounded due to terrorism in the North Caucasus in 2010, compared to 1,225 in 2012, 986 in 2013, and 525 in 2014. Furthermore, Russian security forces recently killed IK Emir Aliaskhab Kebekov. Kebekov had tried to steer IK militants away from ISIS, condemning defectors as traitors. With him gone, some analysts predict that the IK will lose even more fighters to ISIS in the coming months.

Although the North Caucasus has restabilized over the past year and a half due to the IK's weakened state, what we are witnessing is only the eye of the storm. In the long term, ISIS poses a very real security threat to the post-Soviet region. Some of the Eurasian militants fighting with the Islamist group will eventually return home battle-hardened and more resolved than ever, where they might commit acts of terror either as lone wolves or in coordination with local extremist groups, such as the Taliban or the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Regional governments have responded by attacking moderate Islam and political opposition in the name of counterterrorism, as has been seen in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Russian-annexed Crimea. These repressive policies are backfiring and pushing otherwise non-radical Muslims to engage in Islamist violence.

If we have learned anything from the post-9/11 security dynamic, it is that extremism is not a self-containing phenomenon – it spreads like a disease. The Boston Marathon bombings demonstrated all too painfully the threat that Eurasia-based Islamism poses not just to the Caucasus and Central Asia, but also to the United States itself. If and when Eurasian ISIS militants return home from the frontlines in the Middle East, international attention will need to be paid to the post-Soviet world –

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a tinderbox just waiting for a match.

Daniel Frey is a freelance writer with a focus on Russia and Eurasia. A graduate of Tufts University, Daniel studied abroad for a year at St. Petersburg State University and traveled throughout Russia. Also a photographer, Daniel manages a portfolio through his website, www.frey-photography.com. Daniel is fluent in Russian and currently interns at the Institute of Modern Russia. He resides in the New York metropolitan area.

Best possible antidote to radicalization: Education

Source: http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150608-best-possible-antidote-to-radicalization-education

Education is the best possible antidote to radicalization, Professor Louise Richardson told the British Council's Going Global conference in London last week.

Richardson, who was recently nominated as the next vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford, said: "Any terrorist I have ever met through my academic work had a highly over simplified view of the world, which they saw in black and white terms. Education robs you of that simplification and certitude. Education is the best possible to antidote to radicalization."

A British Council release reports that Richardson, currently principal and vice-chancellor at the University of St. Andrews, was speaking on a panel discussing radicalization and extremism in universities in the United Kingdom and beyond. She told the audience of international higher education leaders that alienation is an unsatisfying explanation as to why young people join terrorist groups.

"The most combustible situation is lack of economic opportunities for an educated workforce. The great value of universities is that we have people with the time and expertise to explore these issues," she added.

In a wide-ranging discussion on radicalization in universities and counter-terrorism measures, the audience was also told that threat levels are being exaggerated.

Professor Marie Breen-Smyth, chair in International Politics, University of Surrey, said, "There is an exaggeration of threat. Road accidents are much more of a threat to society than terrorism will ever be, even in Northern Ireland. Threat exaggeration serves a particular interest in society to make money out of counter- terrorism and security. That's not to say there isn't a threat, there is, and we need to be concerned about it, but let's get it into perspective."

Breen-Smyth told the audience that the key problem lies with violence, and not radical ideas. "I would put education in schools and universities about violence and alternatives to violence. We need to equip young people with an understanding of how to organize campaigns and impact on their worlds in a non-violent and democratic way."

It was vital, the panel agreed, that radical thought was allowed and fostered in universities. Richardson pointed out that "The idea that the world was round was once a radical idea. It's imperative we have a place that ideas can be challenged, and universities are the perfect place for that."

Professor Mohammed Farouk, vice-chancellor, Federal University, Kashere, Nigeria, said "In my experience in Nigeria in the 1970s it was almost a rite of passage for students to become radicalized, to take on issues of social justice. Today, 'radicalization' now becomes equated with terrorism, violence. I see radicalisation as more of a process that challenges the status quo, rejects the status quo and takes on existing ideas in society. Radicalization needs to be taken away from terrorism."

The panel agreed that not enough is known about what causes an

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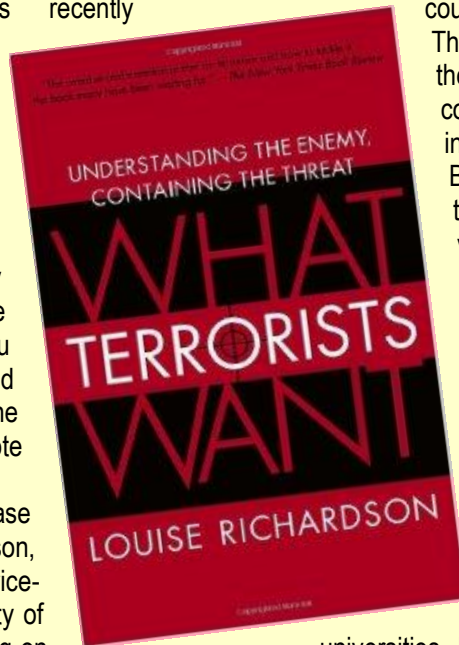
individual to become radicalized and turn to violence. Bill Rammell, vice-chancellor at Bedford University and former U.K. Minister of State for Higher Education (2005-8) said:

"Education is most effective counter force to extremism, but it's not the case that if you educate somebody you are in the clear and they don't go down the path of violence."

Mapping organized crime, terrorism hotspots in Eurasia

Source: http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150608-mapping-organized-crime-terrorism-hotspots-in-eurasia

June 08 – As organized crime plays an increasing role in funding terrorism, research at the University of Kansas aims to pinpoint hotspots in Eurasia where drug trafficking, human trafficking, and terrorism coincide.

Selected to receive a $953,500 Minerva grant from the U.S. Department of Defense's Minerva Research Initiative, Mariya Omelicheva, the study's principal investigator, along with KU geography professor Stephen Egbert and Rowan University political science associate professor Lawrence Markowitz, will examine the connections between terrorism and organized crime in Central Asia, South Caucasus, and Russia. The three-year project also will look at the conditions under which terrorist-trafficking alliances are forged and changed and the ability for governments and international organizations to monitor, prevent and dismantle the terrorist and criminal activity.

"Distinguishing this study is its systematic approach, which does not rely on anecdotal or piecemeal evidence," said Omelicheva, who is director of the KU Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies and associate professor of political science.

A KU release reports that the project, using GIS tools, will map and model the nexus between trafficking and terrorism in nine Eurasian countries. Researchers will pull the geographical coordinates of major terrorist incidents from the Global Terrorism Database, geo-reference drug seizures reported by the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime, and human trafficking data assembled from the International Organization for Migration survey. KU students will help with the mapping and analyzing of data.

A better understanding of the connection between trafficking and terrorism in Eurasia improves U.S. national security, Omelicheva said. Ultimately, the project hopes to identify trafficking and terrorism hotspots where the U.S. military can direct assets to disrupt the activity.

"Trafficking and terrorism adversely impact governance, security, stability and development in this region and beyond," Omelicheva said. "They create conditions precipitous for the rise of crime, violence and extremism in states that are U.S. partners and allies."

More than a quarter of all the drugs produced in opium-rich Afghanistan pass through Eurasia. Drug trafficking in the region has been linked to the strength of such terrorists groups as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union, and al-Qaeda. The illicit sale of weapons is common in the area, and locals are drawn into human trafficking rings either for forced labor or sexual exploitation.

"Central Asia is a hotspot for human trafficking and drug trafficking. A lot of the trafficking that is happening is for Russian and European consumption, while the Central Asian states are where most of the traffickers and trafficking victims originate," Omelicheva said.

Over the past few decades, the means by which terrorist organizations are funded has dramatically changed. The breakup of the Soviet Union eliminated the major state funders. After 9/11, the U.S. led efforts to clamp down on money laundering and other financial operations that supported terrorism. Those changes have left terrorist groups more dependent on organized crime.

"They have been either engaged in criminal activities themselves or form alliances and partnerships with criminal organizations," Omelicheva said.

==The connection between terrorism and organized crime can be a complex one==, Omelicheva said. For example, drug dealers and traffickers can be recruited while in prison to be terrorists, creating a hybrid identity.

Deciphering if acts of violence are terrorism or organized crime can be difficult. In some tumultuous areas of Central Asia, bombings or assassinations have been attributed to terrorism

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when they were actually part of a drug turf war. "If we misrepresent those type of violent activities as terrorism, we are giving the wrong idea of what is going on," Omelicheva said. "The policy implication is that funds get misplaced and we are coming up with solutions that don't match the nature of the problem."

The release notes that the KU Institute for Policy & Social Research (IPSR) assisted with the development of the grant proposal and will manage the DOD award. IPSR is the KU's designated social science research center and has ongoing research focused on human trafficking.

Could terrorists lay claim to random mishaps at Pan AM Games?

Source: http://www.torontosun.com/2015/06/07/could-terrorists-lay-claim-to-random-mishaps-at-pan-am-games

Terrorists could win a medal for their cause at this summer's Pan Am Games by doing something like taking responsibility for an accidental food poisoning outbreak at the athletes' village. **That is the type of scenario up for discussion at the 25th World Conference of Disaster Management which is scheduled to take place in Toronto, starting Monday.**

The conference will examine security, terrorism, natural hazards, climate change, privacy breaches, cyber attacks, virus outbreaks and a host of other possible threats for events like the Pan Am Games in Toronto.

The games run from July 7-26 and the Parapan Am Games take place Aug. 7-15. With 10,000 athletes and 500,000 spectators expected for the sporting spectacle, security is a priority.

But how in-depth are the threat assessments for unwelcome events, wonders Peter Power, a leading UK-based crisis management expert and consultant with Visor Consultants (UK) Ltd., which ran a London-based disaster management exercise ahead of the 2012 Olympic Games.

"These are important questions to ask at any large event. Security forms part of a wider, integrated resilience picture that's necessary when planning large events," Power says.

"Serious food poisoning, water contamination, data loss, broadcast disruption and infrastructure collapse are all problems that must be anticipated through the lens of disaster management. Their origins might be human error or just accident, but what happens when a perpetrator (terrorist) admits responsibility? The impact is still pretty much the same and

that's what counts for short-term events like this."

Power says lessons learned from the London Olympics show the need for an integrated command structure and co-ordinated communications.

"All people involved have to understand the need for a single unified command structure," he says.

With the Pan Am security budget doubling to nearly $250 million, Alan Bell, president of Globe Risk International Inc., says the key question is not how much organizers are spending, but what they're buying with their cash.

"Have decision-makers considered the full spectrum of threats that the games face?" Bell says.

"Have all threats been clearly defined and vulnerabilities identified? Or are they waiting for something to happen before they react."

The message for the need to prepare for all types of disasters is finally taking hold, says conference chairman Paul Kovacs, executive director at the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction,

"Instead of spending so much time responding and rebuilding after something bad happens, everyone agrees we need to put more effort into being prepared and preventing

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things from happening in the first place," says Kovacs.

"Disasters are growing in complexity, yet the common sense steps to prevent them remain relatively simple."

One session at the conference is "The Rise of Lone Wolf Terrorism ... is Canada Prepared?"

Speaker Andrew Majoran, general manger of The Mackenzie Institute in Toronto, will focus on whether public vigilance is sufficient to thwart lone wolf attacks and whether Canadians are educated enough to do so in light of last year's attack on Parliament Hill.

"We have one of the best intelligence agencies in the world and they work before an event can become a threat to the public. We need to look at whether society has become more vigilant as well," Majoran said.

The Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Contemporary Security Canada, which was awarded the security contract for the games, wouldn't comment on any security issues and deferred to the OPP's Integrated Security Unit.

"Our focus is safety. I don't want to speak to speak to speculation about situations that are going to be discussed in advance of the games," said Sgt. Peter Leon with the OPP's ISU.

"We have detailed comprehensive plans and what is important for the ISU is to provide a safe, secure games for the athletes, coaches, family members and people coming to see the games."

The 25th annual world disaster conference will run June 8-11 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and feature experts from 38 countries.

What if ISIS emerges in Gaza?

Source: http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2015/06/07/What-if-ISIS-emerges-in-Gaza-.html

There have been recent reports of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) insurgents in the Gaza Strip, though not to the extent of its presence elsewhere in the region such as in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. ISIS seems to have supporters in Gaza but not an official base. However, it would not surprising if it one day declared Gaza the newest administrative region of its self-styled caliphate.

This could be done by ISIS's traditional method of first garnering support in underprivileged areas with a fragile ruling system, then expanding its presence by recruiting fighters, defeating weaker enemies, and finally declaring a branch.

ISIS has an active presence in Egypt's Sinai near Gaza, where there are smuggling tunnels between the Egyptian border town of Rafah and the Palestinian territory. This could accelerate the establishment of an ISIS branch in Gaza, as could the humanitarian crisis there, which is making its people desperate and vulnerable to exploitation.

There is talk of Salafist groups in Gaza eager to become part of ISIS's Sinai branch. As such, ISIS does not need to recruit overseas fighters - in the case of Gaza, it cannot due to the Israeli and Egyptian blockades.

Opportunistic

Libya proved the group's ability to reach out to desperate locals either weary of the existing governing system, or eager to join a group they see as gaining ground or suiting their non-politicized Islamist ideology. ISIS has "opportunistic" supporters - Iraq is the best example of this.

Hamas, which is rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood, is the governing party in Gaza, but not the only faction there. Hamas and Salafists in Gaza have never seen eye to eye, with their relationship sometimes turning confrontational. ISIS is aware of this antagonism and has been trying to exploit it.

If one day ISIS has a branch in Gaza, Hamas and the Brotherhood will certainly be its ideological enemies. Meanwhile, Hamas has been cracking down on Salafists and ISIS supporters.

In reports and analyses on the Middle East, the West Bank and Gaza have often been portrayed as immune to regional influences, but developments have proved otherwise. Tension between Hamas and Salafists in Gaza has its roots in Egypt. The failure of uprisings in other Arab states has made Palestinians cautious about carrying out their own Arab Spring.

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Palestine does not only consist of Fatah and Hamas, as widely believed. In the occupied territories, there are also Salafists, jihadists, and members of Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Party of Liberation). For them, establishing an Islamic caliphate is the first step toward liberating Palestine. ISIS is offering itself as the party that can achieve that goal.

As ISIS Brutalizes Women, a Pathetic Feminist Silence
By Phyllis Chesler
Source: http://www.meforum.org/5302/isis-feminist-silence

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Oh, how the feminist movement has lost its way. And the deafening silence over ISIS's latest brutal crimes makes that all too clear.

Fifty years ago, American women launched a liberation campaign for freedom and equality. We achieved a revolution in the Western world and created a vision for girls and women everywhere.

Second-wave feminism was an ideologically diverse movement that pioneered society's understanding of how women were disadvantaged economically, reproductively, politically, physically, psychologically and sexually.

Feminists had one standard of universal human rights — we were not cultural relativists — and we called misogyny by its rightful name no matter where we found it.

As late as 1997, the feminist majority at least took a stand against the Afghan Taliban and the *burqa*. In 2001, 18,000 people, led by feminist celebrities, cheered ecstatically when Oprah Winfrey removed a woman's *burqa* at a feminist event — but she did so safely in Madison Square Garden, not in Kabul or Kandahar.

Six weeks ago, Human Rights Watch documented a "system of organized rape and sexual assault, sexual slavery, and forced marriage by ISIS forces." Their victims were mainly Yazidi women and girls as young as 12, whom they bought, sold, gang-raped, beat, tortured and murdered when they tried to escape.

In May, Kurdish media reported, Yazidi girls who escaped or were released said they were kept half-naked together with other girls as young as 9, one of whom was pregnant when she was released. The girls were "smelled," chosen and examined to make sure they were virgins. ISIS fighters whipped or burned the girls' thighs if they refused to perform "extreme" pornography-influenced sex acts. In one instance, they cut off the legs of a girl who tried to escape.

These atrocities are war crimes and crimes against humanity — and yet American feminists did not demand President Obama rescue the remaining female hostages nor did they demand military intervention or support on behalf of the millions of terrified Iraqi and Syrian civilian refugees.

An astounding public silence has prevailed.

The upcoming annual conference of the National Organization for Women (NOW) does not list ISIS or Boko Haram on its agenda. While the most recent Women's Studies annual conference did focus on foreign policy, they were only interested in Palestine, a country which has never existed, and support for which is often synonymous with an anti-Israel position. Privately, feminists favor non-intervention, non-violence and the need for multilateral action, and they blame America for practically everything wrong in the world.

What is going on?

Feminists are, typically, leftists who view "Amerika" and white Christian men as their most dangerous enemies, while remaining silent about Islamist barbarians such as ISIS.

Feminists strongly criticize Christianity and Judaism, but they're strangely reluctant to oppose Islam — as if doing so would be "racist." They fail to understand that a religion is a belief or an ideology, not a skin color.

The new pseudo-feminists are more concerned with racism than with sexism, and disproportionately focused on Western imperialism, colonialism and capitalism than on Islam's long and ongoing history of imperialism, colonialism, anti-black racism, slavery, forced conversion and gender and religious apartheid.

And why? They are terrified of being seen as "politically incorrect" and then demonized and shunned for it.

The Middle East and Western Africa are burning; Iran is raping female civilians and torturing political prisoners; the Pakistani Taliban are shooting young girls in the head for trying to get an education and disfiguring them with acid if their veils are askew — and yet, NOW passed no resolution opposing this.

Twenty-first century feminists need to oppose misogynistic, totalitarian movements. They need to reassess the global threats to liberty, and rekindle our original passion for universal justice and freedom.

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Phyllis Chesler, an emerita professor of psychology and women's studies and the author of sixteen books, is a Shillman-Ginsburg fellow at the Middle East Forum.

TSA failed to identify 73 workers 'linked to terrorism'

June 09 – On the heels of Transportation Security Administration workers flunking a security test at airport checkpoints, the results of a new audit show that -- while the agency keeps a robust system for screening commercial airport workers -- it still **failed to flag 73 airport workers "linked to terrorism."**

Apparently, TSA does not have access to all the terror watchlist information it needs to make those judgments.

"The TSA did not identify these individuals through its vetting operations because it is not authorized to receive all terrorism-related categories under current interagency watch-listing policy," the June 4 Inspector General report stated.

According to TSA data, the people in question were working for major airlines, airport venders and other employers.

The agency acknowledged that individuals in these categories "represented a potential transportation security threat," according to the report.

To test the accuracy and effectiveness of TSA's terrorism vetting procedures, the National Counterterrorism Center was asked to match more than 900,000 records of active aviation workers against its Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment database.

According to the report, the TSA had been unable to find 73 individuals "linked to terrorism" because the information the TSA received from the Department of Homeland Security Watchlist Service and

used for vetting did not contain the terrorism "codes" associated with the 73 individuals. In other words, TSA did not have the entire terror watchlist.

Some parts of the IG report, including codes, were redacted.

Overall, the report concluded, the vetting and re-vetting procedures that TSA used were "generally effective" in identifying workers with links to terrorism. Since 2003, the agency has advised airports to deny or revoke 58 airport workers as a result of its vetting process for credential applicants and holders.

The TSA had "less effective controls" in place to ensure airports have a robust verification process for a credential applicant's criminal history and authorization to work in the United States.

The report advised the TSA to "request and review additional watchlist data, require that airports improve verification of applicants' right to work, revoke credentials when the right to work expires and improve the quality of vetting data."

The IG investigation is just the latest in a series that have called out the TSA for massive security breaches at some of the country's largest airports.

Last week, news broke that undercover federal agents had a 95 percent success rate at sneaking fake bombs and other banned weapons past airport security checkpoints during multiple tests.

Acting TSA Administrator Melvin Carraway was re-assigned less than 24 hours after the report went public. The Senate homeland security committee plans to hold a hearing on the TSA security issue on Tuesday.

In an op-ed piece published Monday, Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., wrote that last week's full report should be made available to the public. Parts of it had been redacted.

"The publicly available facts are disturbing, but the classified details are even worse," he wrote in USA Today. "Millions of families will soon fly to summer vacations, but if moms knew what members of Congress have learned behind closed doors, they would march on Washington demanding an urgent, top-to-bottom reevaluation of airport security."

In the column, Sasse said the findings were troubling for passengers who rely on the TSA to prevent terrorist attacks.

"Until last week, Americans were led to believe that jihadi terrorists could never again weaponize commercial airliners. After last week, it is time to rethink that."

Not mincing words, he wrote, "We are not safe. It is time to start effectively protecting U.S. flights from those hell-bent on killing us."

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The rise of Islamism in Minnesota's Somali community

Source: http://www.jerusalemonline.com/news/world-news/around-the-globe/counter-terrorism-expert-the-rise-of-islamism-in-minnesotas-somali-community-13926

Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, a counter-terrorism expert who is also the author of the book The Banality of Suicide Terrorism, told JerusalemOnline in an exclusive interview that there is presently a rise in radical Islamist beliefs among the Somali community in Minnesota in the United States: "It has become the epicenter of recruitment. Obviously, the FBI and other agencies are very concerned about it because they have arrested a series of people over the years. As early as 2005, you had Al Shabab recruiting and it has transformed into recruiting for Islamic State. They are monitoring it closely."

She professes that the United States is making efforts to counter this trend: "They are working with the community and they are creating jobs

for the disenfranchised youth, trying to facilitate better cooperation not to have these kids go over to Syria. It is quite difficult because a portion is not doing well economically. You have a lot of problems with single mother families where the women are uneducated and there is no father in the home to give better direction."

Hartevelt Kobrin strongly believes that in order to counter radical Islamist beliefs among the Somali community in Minnesota or any other Muslim community whose beliefs are based on an honor shame culture, one must recognize the linkage between domestic violence and political violence: "Violence is learned in the home by age

three. It is buried in the personality and then it becomes triggered later when the one who gets radicalized has a weak personality structure that is vulnerable to recruitment via online recruitment or a charismatic leader in the community. The beginning of radicalization is early. The Center for Social Cohesion in the UK in 2008 did geo-mapping and they found where there is jihadism, there is a lot of domestic violence."

She noted that in Minnesota in 1994, local gynecologists found that many Somali women experienced female genital mutilation: "It is big trauma for a young girl. It is not well discussed. This becomes much more difficult later on when she goes on to have children. This causes unconscious rage that can be played out. It affects female self-image. It causes self-hatred and plays out later on with recruitment to jihadi activities. This is part of what is happening in the community. There needs to be an effort to confront early childhood practices as the mother makes the brain of the baby. This is the time frame when one enquires empathy."

According to Hartevelt Kobrin, feelings of hatred, a lack of human empathy, and the sense of a need to have an enemy are learned by age three: "It is easy to substitute an object of hatred for someone else. There are no Jews left in Somalia. In the Arab/Muslim world and in Somalia, they don't know Jews and we become the object of hatred. However, the other is always the female. There is always the need for scape-goating to keep the group

pure. When you have shame honor cultures, you have the propensity to need an object to hate because the in-group must remain pure and they must have a scapegoat to get rid of their toxic feelings for their needs are considered dirty and it is hard to get your needs met in an appropriate way. The group identity is more important than the individual. The locus of shame is the female. The female is so strictly controlled and manipulated. That is why there is female gentile mutilation, to purify female gentiles that are considered contaminated. It is an ongoing process."

Hartevelt Kobrin noted that many don't fully grasp the connection between domestic violence/ violence against women and terrorism. However, even though some groups like the Muslim Brotherhood appear to show empathy for the disenfranchised, she stressed that all of the radical Islamists lack empathy and this is connected to the oppression of women: "It is easy to give a sense of having empathy, but it is pseudo-empathy for they don't care about anyone not like them. The need to hate stabilizes a very fragile personality. People are beginning to explore this area and it has to be brought to the public. Early child development is the root of radicalization. All terrorists had difficult childhoods but it is no excuse for people make decisions."

"You have power control submission in these cultures replace a sense of empathy," she stressed. "We underestimate the role of shame. It has a depilating effect on early development. Shame is normalized as ok, like hitting your wife. If you hit a wife and your child witnesses, the child learns that is how you bond to people. In shame honor cultures, you cannot separate from your mother psychologically." Thus, the only way to counter the spread of radical Islamism is to address "early childhood development" within these communities: "Tremendous inroads have to be made in things like eliminating female gentile mutilation and honor killings. Education will be key and it will take a long time. It won't be

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remedied overnight but they must begin to deal   with the problem."

What Motivates Terrorists?

By Simon Cottee
Source: http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/06/terrorism-isis-motive/395351/

One of the most frequently asked questions about terrorism is also the most intractable. Why? Why do they do it? Why do people join terrorist groups and participate in acts of terrorism?

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There are as many answers to this question as there are terrorist groups, and everyone from clerics to caustic cab drivers seems to have a confident opinion on the subject, as though the interior world of terrorists can be easily mined and mapped. But this confidence is often misplaced, given how little scholars actually know about terrorism and the people who are involved in it. It also betrays an epic obliviousness about just how difficult it is to access the internal, subjective desires and emotions that shape the outer world. Instead of asking why people join terrorist groups and commit terrorist atrocities, a more worthwhile starting point for explanation is to ask how.

One culturally prevalent answer to the why question is that terrorists are "driven" or "pushed" to do it, and that the decisive driving or pushing agent is pathology. This answer has evolved in recent years in line with advances in knowledge and moral sensibilities. In terrorism studies in the late 1960s, it was not uncommon for scholars to conceive of pathology as a psychological abnormality or affliction rooted inside the individual. Since the 1980s, this idea has fallen into disrepute, and

the scholarly consensus now holds that the roots of terrorism lie not in the individual, but in the wider circumstances in which terrorists live and act.

This reflects a broader consensus in the social sciences about violence: namely, that it is "socially determined," a product of deeper historical, economic, or cultural forces over and above the individual. It is perhaps best summarized by the renowned social psychologist Albert Bandura. Drawing on studies of violence from across the human sciences, Bandura concluded that "it requires conducive social conditions rather than monstrous people to produce atrocious deeds. Given appropriate social conditions, decent, ordinary people can be led to do extraordinarily cruel things." Social scientists argue about the nature and impact of the "social conditions" in question, but few would question the essential point that violence, however personalized or idiosyncratic its expression, is primarily rooted in historical structures or social relationships, not individuals, still less their "pathological" mindsets.

This consensus is also reflected in much liberal-left commentary about terrorism, especially of the jihadist variant. For example, in some quarters of the "radical" left it is asserted that the roots of jihadist terrorism lie not in Islam but in the myriad historical crimes and injustices of Western, and specifically U.S.-driven, imperialism—most notably, in the post-9/11 era, the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Jihadist violence, from this perspective, is an inevitable reaction fueled by Muslim anger and vengeance; and Westernized jihadists, far from rejecting the civilized norms and ideals proclaimed by the West, are in fact alienated from a West that excludes, demeans, and harasses Muslims.

The scholarly consensus on violence has a lot going for it. It humanizes the perpetrators of violence by insisting on their ordinariness and contextualizing their actions. It obliges people to reflect on their own possible shortcomings and vulnerabilities, and how, in different circumstances, they too could do monstrous deeds. And it compels people to recognize that they do not act in a social vacuum, and that what they think, feel, and do is powerfully shaped by the broader historical circumstances in which they are compelled to live and act. Moreover, Westernized jihadists, as a recent report cogently suggested, assuredly *are* alienated and feel that they do not belong in a secular world that often mocks and challenges their religion and identity as Muslims.

But the consensus can't divest itself of the idea of pathology. Rather, it simply relocates the notion, tracing the causes of violence to pathological "background factors" operating on the violent. No doubt this is a more illuminating and edifying narrative than that sketched out in earlier psychological accounts. But its explanatory power is limited, because, as the eminent sociologist Jack Katz has convincingly argued, "whatever the validity of the hereditary, psychological, and social-ecological conditions of crime, many of those in the supposedly causal categories do not commit the crime at issue, ... many who do commit the crime do not fit the causal categories, and ... many who do fit the background categories and later commit the predicted crime go for long stretches without committing the crimes to which theory directs them." Or as the British writer David Aaronovitch once joked, "Why don't black lesbians blow up buses? Aren't they alienated enough?"

One of the most sensitive and profound explorations of terrorism in recent years comes not from a scholar, but from a novelist. Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* is a murder mystery in which the focal point is not the who, but the why. The protagonist, Seymour Levov, is a successful businessman whose 16-year-old daughter Meredith ("Merry") blows up a post office to protest the Vietnam War, killing a bystander. All Seymour can think about is why Merry did it. She was an adored only child who grew up in a privileged and decent family in the idyllic hamlet of Old Rimrock, New Jersey. Seymour is desperate to locate "the wound" that caused Merry's violence. Was it her stutter? Was it that anomalous kiss on the mouth he gave her one summer when she was 11 and he 36? Or was it the mysterious firebrand Rita Cohen who radicalized her?

As the novel progresses, Seymour's disbelief gives way to clarity. But it is a negative clarity. "He had learned the worst lesson that life can teach—that it makes no sense," Roth writes. He had learned that his daughter "was unknowable," and that "there are no reasons," that "reasons are in books." In capturing Seymour's efforts to understand the disaster that befalls his family, Roth holds up to scrutiny conventional efforts to explain terrorism—and exposes just how imaginatively cramped and simplifying they can be.

Do terrorists have their reasons for committing atrocities? They certainly reel off any number of reasons in their pronouncements, but, as law professor Stephen Holmes has observed, "private motivations cannot always be gleaned from public justifications." Sometimes people do what they do for the reasons they profess. Sometimes not, because what they do is motivated by reasons that are too dark, shameful, or bizarre to be openly acknowledged. Sometimes people do things that are so morally contentious that when called to account they are liable to excuse or justify, rather than to explain, their actions. Terrorists unquestionably fall into this category. And sometimes people do what they do without the slightest sense of knowing why. I once met someone who robbed a liquor store in his teens. He was caught and did jail time for it. This person is now an accomplished writer. Doing that stick-up was a hinge

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moment in his life and today, some 30 years later, he still cannot make sense of it. The motive simply eludes him.

Terrorism scholar John Horgan has made a similar point. "The most valuable interviews I've conducted [with former terrorists] have been ones in which the interviewees conceded, 'To be honest, I don't really know,'" he writes. "Motivation is a very complicated issue. To explain why any of us does anything is a challenge." It's a challenge further compounded by the fact that some actions are informed by multiple motives, and even if these can be reliably identified it is often difficult to disentangle them and calculate their respective causal weight.

As Horgan suggests, a more manageable and useful question to ask about terrorism is not why, but how—and when and where? How did this specific person come to join this specific organization? What networks helped facilitate the act of joining, and where and how were these networks accessed or sought out?

Because these questions are about the circumstances of terrorism, and not the interior world of terrorists, they are not only more intellectually tractable for scholars, but also more directly relevant to efforts to prevent or stop terrorist recruitment. Law-enforcement agents can't disrupt a motive, but with the right intelligence and skills they may be able to disrupt a network of terrorist recruiters. Marc Sageman's work on Western "leaderless" jihadists demonstrates the promise of this kind of approach. Although Sageman has some interesting things to say about the why question, the strength of his research lies in showing just how decisive social and kinship networks are in the radicalization process.

This isn't to suggest that the why question should be abandoned, but rather that those who ask it better appreciate the magnitude of the question and acknowledge the possibility that some momentous life decisions will remain forever opaque and mysterious—not only to outside observers, but also to the people who take them and must live with the consequences.

Simon Cottee is a contributing writer for The Atlantic *and a senior lecturer in criminology at the University of Kent. He is the author of the forthcoming book* The Apostates: When Muslims Leave Islam.

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Al-Shabab considering shift to international agenda

Source: http://i-hls.com/2015/06/al-shabab-considering-shift-to-international-agenda/

The Somalia-based terrorist group al-Shabab has largely lagged other such groups when targeting attacks abroad and recruiting foreign fighters, but new leadership could change that, an international security expert recently said.

According to Fierce HomeLand Security, the Islamic insurgent group has been using violence to gain control in Somalia and impose Sharia law since 2006. Al-Shabab lost most of its territory in 2011, when it was pushed out of the country's capital city of Mogadishu by coalition forces.

Amid this backdrop, the group's changing leadership is determining whether it should pursue a greater foreign focus, said Vanda Felbab-Brown, a senior fellow at the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at the Washington, D.C.-based Brookings Institute.

"They are clearly involved in attacks abroad, certainly in Kenya", she said during a May 21st event. "But there is more then one way to the foreign enemy."

One reason the number of foreign fighters joining al-Shabab has remained low is because many travelers from the United States to Somalia were treated badly, she said, adding that

al-Shabab leadership now recognizes that that policy was counterproductive and is looking to change course.

Al-Shabab's foreign agenda could rely largely on the type of relationship it wants to have with the Islamic State, commonly referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, which is emerging as the biggest threat in the region since al-Qaeda.

Iraq's Problem Is So Much Bigger Than Just Training Its Military

Source: http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2015/06/iraqs-problem-so-much-bigger-just-training-its-military/114793/?oref=d-river

June 09 – President Obama may blame the lack of a strategy for training the troops on Baghdad, but solving ISIS is much bigger than finding a fighting force.

Iraq's army is a pathetic mess. Everyone inside the Pentagon knows this. The White House does too. And setting aside official protest by Baghdad, the Iraqi government is so aware it's trembling.

But that's not why ISIS is winning. And to be clear, ISIS is winning.

The terrorist group too extreme for al Qaeda now controls 50 percent of Syria and an increasing share of Iraq. It's conducting suicide attacks in Saudi Arabia and inspiring rocket launches from Gaza into Israel. All this ISIS has accomplished in one year. Despite more than 3,800 airstrikes against it.

On Monday, when asked about a U.S. strategy in the face of this frightening advance, President Obama said the United States is studying how it can help recruit more Iraqis to fight and get Iraqi soldiers better ready for war. "Where we've trained Iraqi forces directly and equipped them and we have a train-and-assist posture, they operate effectively," Obama contends. "Where we haven't—morale, lack of equipment, etc.—may undermine the effectiveness of Iraqi security forces."

According to Obama, arresting ISIS is an Iraqi responsibility.

This is dishonest. That he takes this position, however, is understandable. The man ushered into office in part on a promise to get America out of Iraq (and Afghanistan) does not want to be the man who did that only to watch that state fail and then go back in. Add to this the polling: While the public wants a U.S. campaign against ISIS, it remains divided over the use of ground troops.

So as Obama's critics shout about the president putting politics, and legacy, ahead of security, the truth is that his ambivalence reflects the collective churning of the American

gut. We think we've seen this movie before, and we didn't like the ending. But we haven't seen this movie before because this one is not about Iraq. **And after a decade of training Iraqi troops, a few more months of tutoring will not turn this force into one that can defeat what Obama today called the "nimble," "aggressive," and "opportunistic" Islamic State fighters.**

It's about ISIS, a lethal, strategically smart and tactically effective adversary whose intentions are not contained by Iraq's borders.

The United States – under Barack Obama or the next president – can choose to sit this out, to let Sunni fight Shia and then Wahhabi fight Sunni until some resolution is found. The risk associated with this option is that what remains standing could be the slave-holding, woman-raping, Christian- and Jew-killing territory known as the Islamic State, which will not pause to relish victory but instead set sights on Europe and the United States.

Or the United States – under Barack Obama or the next president – can choose to engage aggressively, hoping that a greater assault than what's being accomplished by U.S. airpower and on-the-ground training will stop ISIS from destroying the governments in the region that still take Washington's calls. The cost of this choice is great: money and, more importantly, blood.

There are certainly other plausible scenarios between these two extremes. But in any case, this is the debate America should be having. Wait it out and see what might be necessary later, knowing it could be more taxing and destructive than it would be now. Or engage yet again in a region that seems committed to conducting the intra-Muslim war the world so desperately wants the Middle East to avoid.

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No matter the answer, that's a more honest question to consider than whether the Iraqi army is trained well enough.

Terrorists develop tactics to evade U.S. drones

Source: http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150109-terrorists-develop-tactics-to-evade-u-s-drones

The CIA's use of Predator drones against Islamic militants in the Middle East began shortly after the 9/11 attacks and has increased dramatically during the Obama administration. **Only a handful of drone strikes were issued through much of the 2000s, but in 2012 alone, forty-one strikes were aimed at Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), followed by twenty-six in 2013 and twenty-three in 2014,** according to the Longwar Journal. Many of these strikes have killed high valued targets including the first major strike in 2002 which killed Ali Qaed Senyan al-Harthi, and five other militants as they rode in a jeep across the desert. Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born cleric who recruited militants across the world to join al-Qaeda in Yemen, was also killed in a drone strike in 2011.

As president the number of drone strikes in Yemen increased, AQAP militants began to develop tactics to hide themselves from a drone's sensors.

In a recent AQAP video posted on social media sites, militants describe how fighters can avoid detection by U.S. drones. **According to the *Washington Times*, the video, "Combating Spy Airplanes" shows a step-by-step process for making and using an** aluminum-based portable body wrap **which it claims will prevent the drone's infrared cameras from detecting a human's heat signature.** "The aluminum is supposed to act like a heart barrier, keeping the fighter's body heat from being detected by the drone camera system," read an analysis by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). **A camouflage version of the wrap is said to help hide fighters from the drones during the day.**

Whether AQAP's body wrap is actually effective is unclear, but the idea of it shows how militants are studying U.S. military tactics, and then countering them. The homemade AQAP instructional video uses clips from the Pentagon's official video of the Predator drone. A spokesman for U.S. Central Command, which conducts military operations in Yemen, said "For operational security reasons, we wouldn't discuss the possible effectiveness or ineffectiveness of specific enemy (tactics, techniques and procedures) nor would we speculate on how they derive their information." Some military analysts question the gains made by U.S. efforts in Yemen. They claim **AQAP is controlling more territory now than before.** "Our long drone war against AQAP has been remarkably ineffective," said Robert Spencer, who heads Jihad Watch. "Awlaki was killed, but AQAP now controls much of Yemen and acts at will there. They are clearly not cowed, not afraid, not on the defensive."

Others believe that the need for terrorists to produce videos promoting tactics for countering drones means that the Predator strikes are effective. "One part of their military strategy is to distribute videos and information to followers online, particularly via Twitter and YouTube, showing that they are actively engaged in countering the impact drones have had on their capabilities," said Steven Stalinsky, executive director of MEMRI.

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Why 'decapitation' strikes have killed terrorist leaders, but not al-Qaeda

Source: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/why-decapitation-strikes-have-killed-terrorist-leaders-but-not-al-qaeda/2015/06/16/560c3c1e-143e-11e5-9ddc-e3353542100c_story.html

June 16 – In separate strikes last week on veteran al-Qaeda leaders, the United States demonstrated again the extent to which it has perfected an almost eerie capability to find the world's most wanted terrorism suspects in some of the world's most chaotic environments and deliver lethal blows from above.

But the continued spread of al-Qaeda's ideology and the

emergence of brutal new offshoots, including the Islamic State, have underscored the limitations of a U.S. strategy that remains largely reliant on "decapitation" strikes.

U.S. officials confirmed Tuesday that Nasir al-Wuhayshi (photo), leader of al-Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen, was killed last week by a missile fired from a CIA drone. The announcement came one day after U.S. military officials said that a former al-Qaeda operative in Libya appeared to have been killed in a bombing Saturday by U.S. fighter jets.

Obama administration officials touted the potential impact of the operations. White House spokesman Ned Price said that Wuhayshi's death "removes from the battlefield an experienced terrorist leader and brings us closer to degrading and ultimately defeating these groups."

How much closer, however, remains unclear. Many officials and experts in the U.S. counterterrorism community now see the destruction of al-Qaeda and its progeny as a more distant goal than at any time since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Islamist terrorist groups have taken advantage of political turmoil in the Middle East to make gains in recruitment, territory and influence.

movement and to threaten the West as they once did," said Juan Zarate, a former senior counterterrorism adviser to President George W. Bush.

But the latest U.S. operations "have little relevance to what ISIS is building and growing in the heart of the Middle East," Zarate said, using an alternative term for the Islamic State, "and may actually strengthen their hand in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Libya."

The targets last week were members of a dwindling generation of militants with links to al-Qaeda's founders.

Wuhayshi once served as a senior aide to Osama bin Laden and escaped from a Yemeni prison in 2006 to form an al-Qaeda franchise that eventually eclipsed its parent organization as a threat to the United States. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been linked to plots including the attempted bombing of a - Detroit-bound plane in 2009 and the attacks on the Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper in Paris this year.

Mokhtar Belmokhtar, targeted in Libya, was a

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The locations of the latest U.S. strikes, Yemen and Libya, are countries where the collapse of central governments has enabled radical Islamist elements to flourish.

Even with no presence or partners on the ground in those places, the United States has managed to maintain its lethal reach. But in a measure of how the expectations that follow such operations have shifted, U.S. officials and experts said the strikes may prove to be as advantageous to ascendant groups such as the Islamic State as they are damaging to al-Qaeda.

"The decapitation campaign of AQ senior leadership has left the group with diminishing capabilities to drive the global terrorist

former member of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the network's North African affiliate, but formed a breakaway group in 2012. The following year, he staged a bloody siege of a gas complex in eastern Algeria that killed 40 people, including three Americans.

Both men were seen as drivers of their respective terrorist groups' anti-Western agendas, and Wuhayshi had been designated al-Qaeda's second in command, meaning he would have led the global network if Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's successor, were captured or killed.

The attacks extend a remarkable U.S. record against high-value al-Qaeda targets, a run that extends

back to the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq in 2006 and includes the deaths of bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki — a U.S. citizen who became a senior operative for AQAP — in 2011.

All were seen as potentially staggering blows to terrorist organizations that nevertheless managed to regroup — although al-Qaeda's core in Pakistan remains significantly weakened.

Bruce Riedel, a former CIA analyst and terrorism expert at the Brookings Institution,

U.S building secret drone bases

The Obama administration is reportedly assembling a cluster of secret drone bases in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula as part of an aggressive campaign against al-Qaeda affiliates in Somalia and Yemen

said Islamist groups have been able to turn to a new generation of leaders, many of whom rose through their organizations' ranks without surfacing on U.S. target lists.

"Look at Baghdadi," Riedel said, referring to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State, which has seized territory across Iraq and Syria and declared itself a caliphate. "Nobody knew who Baghdadi was two or three years ago. But clearly people on the inside in Iraq knew."

U.S. officials said Wuhayshi's subordinates in AQAP — including his apparent successor, Qassim al-Raimi — are seen as committed to al-Qaeda and unlikely to shift the organization's course or pursue an affiliation with the Islamic State.

But in interviews Tuesday, Yemeni citizens in the district where Wuhayshi was killed said there have been growing indications of Islamic State activity in the region, and they voiced concern that the group, also known as Daesh, might now be emboldened.

"There's more concern now about Daesh," said Salem al-Hamoomi, a radio journalist in Mukalla, a city in southern Yemen near where Wuhayshi was killed. "People fear its ideology, and people fear the group is here."

Seth Jones, a terrorism analyst at the Rand Corp., said that Wuhayshi's death should "be viewed in the context of the struggle between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State over the leadership of the broader Salafi-Jihadi movement." Even before the AQAP leader's demise, Jones said, the Islamic State had "co-opted a few small, local jihadist networks in Yemen."

The Obama administration's dependence on drone surveillance and airstrikes against al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups reflects, in part, a reluctance to be drawn more directly into Middle East conflicts. But the policy has also been driven by developments that derailed administration attempts to build a new counterterrorism strategy around providing support to regional partners.

The collapse of the U.S.-backed government in Yemen this year forced the CIA and the U.S. military to pull out dozens of officers who had worked closely with Yemeni security agencies on counterterrorism operations. The Yemeni government was effectively deposed by Shiite rebels known as Houthis who are antagonistic toward the United States as well as the largely Sunni membership of al-Qaeda.

Rep. Adam B. Schiff (Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said that AQAP's efforts to take advantage of the turmoil and fend off advances by the Houthis may have made its

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leadership more vulnerable to U.S. intelligence-gathering.

"The disintegration of Yemen has just been utterly catastrophic in terms of letting al-Qaeda

out of the box," Schiff said. "There's no question our intelligence has suffered. But there are residual intelligence capabilities that are still potent."

Face Reality: Many Muslims Support ISIS

By Tarek Fatah
Source: http://www.meforum.org/5331/many-muslims-support-isis

June 16 – In the last week of May, the Qatar-based Arabic news network Al-Jazeera polled its Arabic-language audience on the question: "Do you support the victories of the Islamic

State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in your region?" **The results were shocking. Of the 56,881 Arabic-speaking respondents, a whopping 81% voted yes.** The results of this online survey may not be scientific. But they do provide anecdotal evidence of what many see as a rise in the support of Islamism in the Arab Middle East, among Muslims in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, and in the diaspora in Britain and France.

On Monday (June 15), a 17-year-old Briton became that country's youngest suicide bomber after he blew up a brand new SUV packed with explosives in the northern Iraqi town of Baiji. Talha Asmal had Arabized his name to Abu Yusuf al-Britani and is the latest young person used by jihadi Islamists as cannon fodder in their quest to establish an Islamic caliphate. This is laid out in sharia law, as a precursor to the Islamic Armageddon enshrined in Hadith literature, based on Prophet Mohammed's prophesy.

In the wake of news reports about the British teen's act of terror, another story emerged about three UK-based sisters taking their nine

children and linking up with their brother inside Syria to join the ISIS jihad.

Here in Canada, the RCMP came up with its own startling revelation. They have arrested Somalian Ali Omar Ader, an alleged extremist and hostage taker they say was involved in the kidnapping of Canadian freelance journalist Amanda Lindhout in Somalia in 2008. He was visiting in Ottawa.

South of the border, two Pakistani-American brothers were convicted on terrorism charges earlier this month. Raees Alam Qazi and Sheheryar Alam Qazi confessed to planning a terrorist attack on New York City landmarks and were sentenced to 35 and 20 years in prison, respectively.

While these and other incidents of Islamist terrorism keep occurring at regular intervals, the explanation for what is happening remains the same. That is, that these individuals are not acting in the name of Islam. That Islam has been "hijacked" by the terrorists.

This is what the family of Britain's youngest suicide bomber told the media: "As a family, we would like to take this opportunity to unequivocally state that ISIS are not Islam. They do not represent — in any way, shape or form — Islam and Muslims and we are no longer prepared to allow a barbaric group like ISIS to hijack our faith."

But increasingly, similar words by present and former U.S. presidents that "Islam is a religion of peace" ring hollow today. The reality is quite different.

It is true that for many Muslims, Islam is a moral compass that guides them in their daily, law-abiding lives. But for many

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others, Islam is intrinsically interwoven with the doctrine of armed jihad and the goal of ultimate Muslim supremacy over non-Muslims.

I would have hoped to hear more Muslims saying in the wake of these latest incidents that despite the fact that sharia law dictates the doctrine of armed jihad, we as Muslims reject it as inapplicable in the modern era of nation states, the United Nations and international law.

Contrary to the often-repeated mantra that there is nothing in common between Islam and the Islamic State, for many Muslims, there is a link. And we Muslims should acknowledge that reality.

Tarek Fatah is a founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, a columnist at the Toronto Sun, and a Robert J. and Abby B. Levine Fellow at the Middle East Forum. He is the author of two award-winning books: Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State and The Jew is Not My Enemy: Unveiling the Myths that Fuel Muslim Anti-Semitism.

Donald Trump: ISIS built a hotel in Syria

Source: http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2015/jun/16/donald-trump/donald-trump-isis-built-hotel-syria/

The self-proclaimed Islamic State has taken over the luxury Ninawa International Hotel in Mosul, Iraq. Photo released by the Islamic State.

The lobby of the Ninawa International Hotel in Mosul, Iraq. The self-proclaimed Islamic State took over the hotel in May 2015. Photo released by the Islamic State.

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Donald Trump is facing a lot of competition these days.

The Republican real estate mogul announced he's running for president -- against at least a dozen other candidates. In his June 16 announcement speech, Trump said he also has a new competitor in the hotel biz: a group of entrepreneurial terrorists who call themselves the Islamic State.

"Islamic terrorism is eating up large portions of the Middle East," he said. "They've become rich. I'm in competition with them. They just built a hotel in Syria. Can you believe this? They built a hotel."

We weren't sure if we could, in fact, believe Trump's claim that the Islamic State built a hotel in Syria, so we decided to check it out.

The grain of truth here is that the Islamic State has taken over a luxury hotel. But they didn't build it. And it's not in Syria. And it doesn't really operate like a normal hotel.

We couldn't find any evidence that the Islamic State is running any sort of hotel in Syria. We tried to get in touch with a Trump spokesperson and didn't hear back.

However, this May, the Islamic State reopened a five-star hotel in Mosul that shut down when the terrorist group took over the city, one of the largest in Iraq.

So the Islamic State didn't build the Ninawa International Hotel; they just occupied it.

Also, it's not really open for business. According to news reports, the Islamic State is using the hotel's 262 rooms to house the group's commanding officers, and they might use it as a wedding venue for the group's members.

You can't book a room at Ninawa online, and the TripAdvisor page is now defunct.

But pre-Islamic State reviews -- caught by Buzzfeed and others -- said the hotel had a good view of the Tigris river, a tennis court, gymnasium, swimming pool and two restaurants.

News reports say that, keeping with Islamic law, the Islamic State banned drinking and smoking in the hotel, and workers have removed decorations they disapprove of.

Our ruling

Trump claimed the Islamic State "just built a hotel in Syria."

The Islamic State does occupy a luxury hotel, which they took over about a month and a half ago. However, it's in Iraq, not Syria, and they didn't build it. It's an old hotel that the group refurbished and occupied. As far as we know, the hotel's rooms are reserved for Islamic State commanders, and the event spaces are for weddings.

At least for now, Trump doesn't have to worry about the Islamic State running him out of the hotel business. We rate his claim False.

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Cost of violence hits $14 trillion in increasingly divided world

Source: http://www.terrorismwatch.org/2015/06/cost-of-violence-hits-14-trillion-in.html

June 18 – **The cost of violence around the world reached a record $14.3 trillion in 2014, equivalent to the combined economies of Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, a global security report said on Wednesday.**

The divide between the most and least peaceful regions deepened with many Middle Eastern and African countries sinking further into violence, according to research by the Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).

Syria ranked as the least peaceful country in the 2015 Global Peace Index, while Libya

saw the most severe deterioration. **Iceland remained the most peaceful.**

"The (cost of violence) has been largely associated with the increase of deaths in conflict, the ongoing economic consequences of conflicts in the countries where they're occuring and also the increased cost associated with the displaced people," IEP founder Steve Killelea told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a phone interview from London.

The cost of supporting refugees and internally

displaced people (IDPs) has increased by 267 percent since 2008 to $128 billion as the numbers of uprooted people topped 50 million -- the highest level since World War Two.

However, it is expenses related to the military, police forces and dealing with homicides that have had the highest impact on costs, accounting for more than 68 percent of the total, said the study.

Despite conflict in the Ukraine, Europe continues to experience historic levels of peace, with a decrease in homicide rates and the withdrawal of forces from Iraq and Afghanistan.

But Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, South Sudan and Central African Republic have all become more violent than a year ago, according to the index of 162 states.

The intensity of conflict has increased dramatically, said the study, with the number of people killed rising to 180,000 in 2014 from 49,000 in 2010.

Middle East and Northern Africa are the world's most violent regions overtaking South Asia, which ranked worst in last year's study which covered 2013.

"With the changing dynamics within the region it's very hard to know what the solutions are and to make predictions for the next year," said Killelea.

The study shows Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Egypt and Benin have seen the biggest improvements in peace.

Does Islam Have a Role in Suicide Bombings?

By A.J. Caschetta

Middle East Quarterly - Summer 2015
Source: http://www.meforum.org/5320/islam-suicide-bombings

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Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini built a culture of martyrdom and suicide attacks. On October 30, 1980, Mohammed Hossein Fahmideh, a 13-year-old boy, allegedly crawled beneath an Iraqi tank and exploded a grenade. Khomeini had a special monument dedicated to Fahmideh, shown above, intended to appeal to children, and thousands of children were conscripted as suicide bombers

When journalists, historians, psychologists, and experts in group dynamics, organizational structures, and criminal justice write about the unique set of circumstances that lead to suicide terrorism, they share the view that Islam has little to do with it. Most analysts either downplay or ignore altogether the role of Islam in suicide terrorism while some attempt to refute the connection and condemn others for not doing so.

This reluctance to countenance the role of Islam and Islamism in suicide terrorism has led to some fantastical and far-fetched theories that blur the nature of the deed with euphemisms and neologisms ("tactical martyrdom,"[1] "sordid pleasure,"[2] "altruistic murder") and blame the victims, especially Israelis, for their unhappy fate. And far too often, the causes of suicide terrorism are said to be the policies of the West.

▶ **Read the rest of this comprehensive article at source's URL.**

A.J. Caschetta is a senior lecturer in English at the Rochester Institute of Technology and a fellow at the Middle East Forum.

Does Monitoring Kids for Terrorist Traits Mess with Their Heads?

Source: http://www.vice.com/read/young-muslims-monitored-for-extremism-325

June 17 – **When is a child old enough to have their mobile phone examined for signs that they're a potential terrorist? At what point does a teacher need to start listening for phrases like "jihadi bride" and "war on Islam" on the playground?**

These are the weird and difficult questions being asked in British schools today. The days when kids drawing dicks everywhere was the biggest worry are behind us. Today's teachers are expected to be intelligence officers trained in the subtle business of susceptibility to religious and political fundamentalism.

Firms are selling "anti-radicalization" software to education boards, with one company now piloting its system on school computers in 16 different locations across the UK. The software monitors pupils' online antics for extremist-related language, flagging up keywords like "Kuffs" (a casual, insulting term for non-Muslims) or "YODO" (an acronym for "you only die once" which shows up in ISIS martyrdom material).

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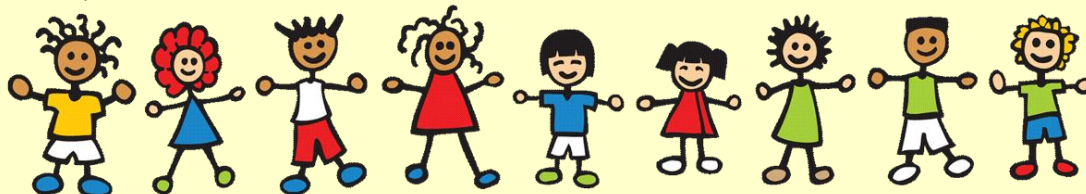
Under the UK's Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015, which comes into force next month, schools have a new duty to "have due regard to the need to prevent pupils being drawn into terrorism."

News about the spy software follows controversy over a questionnaire sent to primary schools in East London's Waltham Forest that asked children between nine and 11 years old leading questions about whether they would be prepared to hurt someone who made fun of their race or religion. Another East London primary school invited the parents of four-year-olds to an evening workshop on preventing radicalization as part of the government's "Prevent" anti-extremism initiative.

Is four years old really a ripe enough age for teachers to assume that kids in their care might be terrorists? And what will that kind of suspicion do to the development of young people? How fucked up and distrustful are our kids going to grow up? I asked a couple of experts for their thoughts.

VICE: Hi, Bill. What do you think of anti-radicalization software in schools?

Bill Bolloten: I think it's dangerous. It's extending the eyes and ears of the state. It's requiring a kind of law enforcement role teachers are not well-equipped for. The government's Prevent strategy guidance applies to all schools, colleges, and universities—even nurseries. I really don't know what the signs of extremism are supposed to be when you're four or five years old;

when you're still learning to write and express thoughts.

Are there any signs of vulnerability primary school teachers could be watching out for?
The idea there is a set of indicators you can assemble that will point to a child vulnerable to being radicalized—I'm not convinced by that idea. There's no evidence for it. In one of the bits of government guidance, it says "there is no single route to terrorism, nor is there a simple profile." But unfortunately the idea there are clear signs to be detected is embedded in the government's approach and the training schools are getting.

What are the indicators supposed to be?
A lot of it is vague and contradictory. There are supposed to be indicators of vulnerability like "changing your dress or appearance in accordance with a group." Other indicators mentioned on policy documents are "identity crisis" or "personal crisis" or "difficulties with social interaction." I mean, this is absurd. I could have ticked all of these when I was 15-years-old.

So are teenagers at 15 more vulnerable to extreme ideas?
Well, when you're in your teenage years, you get curious about the adult world. Schools need to be safe places to express controversial opinions as you're exploring ideas. But there's

no correlation between just looking at something, or talking about it, and getting drawn into unlawful acts.

How will pupils feel about being monitored?
The danger is it will fracture trust. Pupils will feel like they're under surveillance. At this year's National Union of Teachers conference, there were a lot of delegates saying pupils had told them, "I've got opinion on this, but I'm not going to share it because I'd be labelled an extremist."

And in younger children, how could it affect their psychological development?
If you create a situation where, from four or five years old, children are given the impression they've done something wrong or potentially dangerous because of something perfectly innocent they've written or said, that can't be good for their healthy development. Labelling or stigmatizing a young child can clearly have consequences for their mental and emotional well-being. They could become more withdrawn and quiet if they feel the school isn't a safe place to express themselves, just at the time they're still trying to establish a secure sense of their own identity. Singling children out could lead to them mistrusting each other and undermines the welcoming, trusting atmosphere a school should create.

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VICE: Hi, Michael. What do you think of anti-radicalization software in schools?

Michael: The Prevent strategy has become an industry, and the idea of keywords raising alarm bells for teachers is ridiculous. For one thing, youth language changes. And the people who make the software don't understand how fast the terms change among young people, so software isn't going to be able to keep up anyway.

So primary school children aren't likely to be vulnerable to extremism, whatever the terms they're using?
The idea children searching or using certain phrases are somehow vulnerable to supporting terrorist organizations—no, that's ridiculous. Children are inquisitive. They hear things—they might have heard something on TV about jihad or holocaust, and they might say something shocking about it. They are challenged, whether by friends or teachers, and they learn. Should we be concerned they'll join ISIS or a Neo-Nazi group? No. School should be a free

space where young people feel free to ask and discuss things.

What sort of age do young people begin to explore potentially worrying political ideas?
As they enter their teenager years, at around 13, young people do become more curious about the world, about injustices, and as they get closer to be an adult, they wonder where they are going to fit in. Young Muslims can be the most politicized. But if you have a young guy asking questions about Israel and Palestine, you have to try to develop their interest in history. If you refuse to engage, they are more vulnerable to going to YouTube preachers explaining things with conspiracy theories.

But how do teachers know when controversial ideas are things to be worried about?
Good teachers can see patterns of behavior, a change in attitude,

and judge whether to intervene. But software can't do that. A box on a form can't do that. Mosques are now afraid to engage in anything like political discussion, so that space has been closed down for young people. If we take away schools too, it could drive young people online as the only place these difficult ideas are discussed.

At least three software companies — Impero, Future Digital, and Securus — have rolled out new "anti-radicalization" products.

legislation.gov.uk

▶ **Read more on the UK Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 at:**
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted

Iran Supporting More than 100 Shiite Terror Groups

Source: http://www.clarionproject.org/news/iran-supporting-more-100-shiite-terror-groups-report#

A recent report in *Al Hayat*, one of the largest and most-respected pan-Arab dailies, charges that Iran is supporting more than 100 Shiite extremist organizations and militias in Syria and Iraq.

The newspaper, which is published in London and funded by Saudi Arabia, says the crimes of these groups are no less horrific than those of the Islamic State.

In Iraq, the Iranian-funded armed militias comprised of Persians have capabilities far beyond those of the Iraqi security forces. The paper quotes academics who commented that the purpose of these militias is to target the Arabs in Iraq, both Sunni and Shiite.

In the Arab world, there is anger that the international media is ignoring the atrocities being committed by these militias. Hussein Al Muayid, an Iraqi religious scholar and advisor to the general secretary of the Muslim World League, pointedly questioned why the media as well as political figures focus only on the activities of the terror activities of Sunni organizations.

Muayid claims such selective reporting serves to makes an implicit statement that the Sunni world is responsible for all the terror in the world.

The original Arabic item in the highly-regarded Al Hayat newspaper.

In addition, while governments, experts and clerics issuing *fatwas* are refusing to give any aid to these Sunni terror organizations, Muayid says Shiite militias, which perpetrate the most horrific acts, enjoy the support of the Iranian ayatollahs, the highest religious authorities in Iran, and the financial and military support of the Islamic republic.

Western researchers and Arab analysts believe that Iran is supporting more than 50 militias in Iraq and another 50 in Syria whose atrocities are not less than those of the Islamic State.

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The following is a list of most of the Shiite militias that are loyal to Iran and are active in Iraq:

1. Gangs of the People of the Truth
2. Companies of the Churasani Pioneer
3. Battalions of the Lord of the Martyrs
4. Noble Movement of Hezbollah
5. Hezbollah Battalions
6. Companies of Peace
7. Corps of the Loyal Promise
8. Bader Organization – Military Wing
9. Brigade of Omar ibn Yasser
10. Brigade of Assad Allah el Raleb
11. Brigade of the Promised Day
12. Battalions of the Supporters of Elhaja
13. Battalions of the Sacred Defense
14. Brigade of Elkariya
15. Companies of Alzahra
16. Brigade of Zu Elfakar
17. Brigade of the Guarantors of Zainab
18. Companies of the Supporters of the Belief
19. Brigade Al Muntazir
20. Badar Special Groups
21. Brigade of Abu Elfader Elabbas
22. Movement of Al Jihad and al Bina
23. Companies of the Public Defense
24. Battalions of the Shiite Brigade
25. Hezbollah the Rebels
26. Battalions of the Anger
27. Brigade of the Youths With Missions
28. Hezbollah Battalions of the Missing Imam
29. Battalions With the Direction of the Message
30. Ashura Companies
31. Battalions of Malek Elashtar
32. Elabdar Movement
33. Battalions of the Imam Ali
34. Army of the Muktar
35. Public Draft
36. Elhamad Brigade
37. Brigade of the Existing Imam
38. Eladiat Brigade – Special Guard
39. Movement of the Loyal Supporters of Allah
40. Brigade of the 5th Special Guard
41. Army of Elkarar
42. Combat Division of Abba

Country Reports on Terrorism 2014
United States Department of State Publication
Bureau of Counterterrorism
Released June 2015
Source: http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2014/index.htm

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Country Reports on Terrorism 2014 is submitted in compliance with Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f (the "Act"), which requires the Department of State to provide to Congress a full and complete annual report on terrorism for those countries and groups meeting the criteria of the Act. The report was published April 2015.
Beginning with the report for 2004, it replaced the previously published *Patterns of Global Terrorism*.

Chapters
-Chapter 1. Strategic Assessment
-Chapter 2. Country Reports: Africa Overview
-Chapter 2. Country Reports: East Asia and Pacific Overview
-Chapter 2. Country Reports: Europe Overview
-Chapter 2. Country Reports: Middle East and North Africa Overview
-Chapter 2. Country Reports: South and Central Asia Overview
-Chapter 2. Country Reports: Western Hemisphere Overview
-Chapter 3: State Sponsors of Terrorism Overview
-Chapter 4: The Global Challenge of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, or Nuclear (CBRN) Terrorism
-Chapter 5: Terrorist Safe Havens (Update to 7120 Report)
-Chapter 6. Foreign Terrorist Organizations
-Chapter 7. Legislative Requirements and Key Terms

Annexes

-National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism: Annex of Statistical Information [PDF version   ]

-Terrorism Deaths, Injuries and Kidnappings of Private U.S. Citizens Overseas in 2014

Full Report

-Country Reports on Terrorism 2014 (PDF)

Due to the coming 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, Brazil

BRAZIL

Overview: The Brazilian government continued to support counterterrorism activities, which included third-country technical assistance for controlling sensitive technologies, assessing and mitigating potential terrorist threats in advance of major sporting events like the FIFA World Cup, and investigating fraudulent travel documents. Operationally, Brazilian security forces worked with U.S. officials to pursue investigative leads provided by the United States and other intelligence services, law enforcement, and financial agencies regarding terrorist suspects.

The Brazilian Federal Police (DPF) worked closely with the U.S. government and other nations' law enforcement entities to assess and mitigate potential terrorist threats, especially leading up to and during the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Cooperation was strong and continuous, particularly dealing with crisis management, emergency response, and planning exercises to build response capability.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Brazil's 1980 National Security Law is the only legislation that mentions terrorism. Brazilian law lacks clarity on the definition of terrorist acts, which hinders prosecutions of potential terrorists.

Four pieces of terrorism legislation were under consideration in the Brazilian Congress: one would deny visas to persons and/or expel foreigners convicted or accused of a terrorist act in another country (introduced in 2011); another would define terrorism in the Brazilian Constitution (introduced in 2013); a third would update the Brazilian penal code to include sentencing guidelines for terrorism crimes (introduced in 2012); and the fourth would define a number of crimes, among them terrorism and terrorist financing, and was intended to enter into force in advance of the FIFA 2014 World Cup (introduced in 2011).

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Brazil has three law enforcement agencies with counterterrorism responsibilities, ranging from the investigation of terrorism to interdiction and response. The lead counterterrorism agency, with responsibility for investigating any terrorist-related threats or groups, is the DPF Anti-Terrorism Division, working with the DPF's Tactical Operations Command. In addition, the state-level Military Police Departments, through their respective Police Special Operations Battalions; and the state-level Civil Police Departments, through their respective Divisions of Special Operations; also work on counterterrorism issues.

All of Brazil's federal law enforcement agencies with counterterrorism responsibilities have benefitted from U.S. capacity building training. The U.S. Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program delivered courses to security and law enforcement personnel, covering topics such as tactical command, vital infrastructure security, crisis incident management, digital network security, and bus and rail security – all with the goal of enhancing investigative capabilities, building border security capabilities, and supporting the Government of Brazil's efforts to prevent terrorist attacks at the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. The ATA training courses had the added benefit of bringing together disparate agencies, which enhanced Brazilian interagency communication.

The U.S. Department of State funded professional development courses for police and justice officials both in Brazil and through the International Law Enforcement Academy in San Salvador, El Salvador. In 2014, Homeland Security Investigations provided cross-border financial investigations training to help combat terrorist financing. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation offered courses ranging from interview and interrogation techniques, terrorist financing and money laundering investigations, and Hostage Rescue Team technical assistance exchanges.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) provided training to Brazil's National Civil Aviation Agency (ANAC) airport security managers and to the DPF's Bureau of Airport Security Services on airport security checkpoint optimization, explosive threat mitigation, and the implementation of an airport security testing program. The TSA also initiated an expert exchange with the DPF's canine group (SECAN) to assist in the development of its explosive detection canine program. SECAN requested that its canine program be evaluated by TSA for possible recognition of commensurability with TSA's canine program.

Brazilian authorities continued to work with other concerned nations – particularly the United States – in combating document fraud. Since 2009, multiple regional and international joint operations successfully disrupted a number of document vendors and facilitators, as well as related human-smuggling networks. Since 2008, DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have trained Brazilian airline employees on identifying fraudulent documents. The U.S. government provides comprehensive and ongoing anti-fraud training to airline and border police units through its Investigations Program.

The U.S.-Brazil Container Security Initiative in Santos, which began in 2005, continued to operate throughout 2014. Brazil continued to reach out to CBP's International Affairs and Field Operations Offices to learn best practices and conduct joint workshops to bolster supply chain security and port security. Similarly, the Brazilian ANAC, DPF, and Brazilian Customs continued to work with TSA to make modifications to Brazil's National Cargo Security Program to gain TSA recognition of commensurability for cargo security procedures, training, and operations at Brazil's international airports.

Brazil shares vast international borders with ten different countries, and many of these borders are porous – especially those with Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina. Travel document security is a highly specialized skill. The Brazilian states maintain individual criminal records databases, and information sharing is unwieldy. Biometric information is not collected from visitors. A 2013 law requires the collection of passenger name record data, and it is being gradually implemented. Brazil does not maintain its own terrorist watch list, although it collaborates with other nations.

In 2014, the Brazilian Army inaugurated the initial section of a border-monitoring system that integrates a combination of soldiers, cameras, sensors, and satellites. The initial section was implemented in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul on the Paraguay border. The system will eventually cover the entire Brazilian land border.

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Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Brazil is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America, a FATF-style regional body. Brazil prioritizes FATF recommendations and created a working group chaired by the Ministry of Justice to incorporate these recommendations into legislation and regulation. Brazil updated its money laundering legislation in 2012, establishing stricter penalties, but it did not criminalize terrorist financing as a stand-alone criminal offense. Brazil is a member of the Egmont Group, a global association of financial intelligence units.

Through Brazil's Financial Activities Oversight Council (COAF), which is a largely independent entity within the Finance Ministry, Brazil has carried out name checks for persons and entities on the UNSCR 1267/1989 (al-Qa'ida sanctions) and 1988 (Taliban sanction) terrorist finance lists, but it has not reported any assets, accounts, or property in the names of persons or entities on the UN lists. The Government of Brazil has generally responded to U.S. efforts to identify and block terrorist-related funds.

COAF does not have the authority to unilaterally freeze assets without a court order. The FATF has recommended that COAF create a standard operating procedure for freezing funds, which COAF has prioritized as a project but had not yet completed by year's end.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2014 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm.

Regional and International Cooperation: Brazil participates in regional counterterrorism fora, including the OAS and its Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism, the Union of

South American Nations, and the working group on terrorism and sub-working group on financial issues in the Southern Common Market.

Brazil is an active participant in the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Working Group on Security. Additionally, in 2014, the Director-President of ANAC held the Presidency of the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission.

The Brazilian government continued to invest in border and law enforcement infrastructure, and has undertaken initiatives with its neighboring countries to control the flow of goods – legal and illegal – through the Tri-Border Area of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay.

Countering Radicalization to Violence and Violent Extremism: Brazil's DPF Anti-Terrorism Division was created specifically to address threats of radicalization and to counter violent extremism.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: And of course our US friends and allies continue to address Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as "Macedonia"… This is the price of belonging to the West! This is the price for bleeding in two World Wars for the West! Not to mention the love we currently experience from both sides of the Ocean due to our financial turmoil threatening the very existance of a country and its citizens…

MACEDONIA

Overview: Counterterrorism efforts in Macedonia include the passing of a law criminalizing fighting for, aiding, or abetting foreign terrorist groups. Dozens of Macedonian citizens have traveled to Syria and Iraq as foreign terrorist fighters in recent years, although there are indications that the foreign terrorist fighter law passed in September 2014 may be having some deterrent effect.

Terrorism Is Booming Almost Everywhere But in the United States

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By Micah Zenko
Source: http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/19/terrorism-is-booming-almost-everywhere-but-in-the-united-states-state-department-report/

June 19 - Today, the State Department published its *Country Reports on Terrorism: 2014* — its annual, congressionally mandated analytical and statistical review of global terrorism. Since the concept of terrorism is open to subjective interpretation and politically motivated misrepresentation, it is important to note that, since 1983, the U.S. government has used the same definition for statistical analytical purposes, which is based in Title 22 of the U.S. Code, Section 2656f(d):

(2) the term "terrorism" means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents…

"non-combatant," which is referred to but not defined in 22 USC 2656f(d)(2), is interpreted to mean, in addition to civilians, military personnel (whether or not armed or on duty) who are not deployed in a war zone or a war-like setting.

With that relatively limited definition of terrorism in mind, there are five significant findings that stand out from the latest report.

First, the phenomenon of terrorism has significantly worsened, in terms of the number of attacks, their lethality, as well as the size of terrorist organizations. The number of attacks increased 35 percent from 9,707 in 2013 to 13,463 last year. There were 17,981 fatalities in 2013, growing 81 percent to 32,727 in 2014. To give you a fuller sense of how vastly contemporary terrorism has grown, just a dozen years ago, only 725 people were killed worldwide. In President Barack Obama's first full year in office, in 2010, it was 13,186. In other words, terror deaths grew by more than 4,000 percent from 2002 and by 160 percent in the past four years.

The size of several groups grew in strength, in particular the self-declared Islamic State, which was estimated to include both
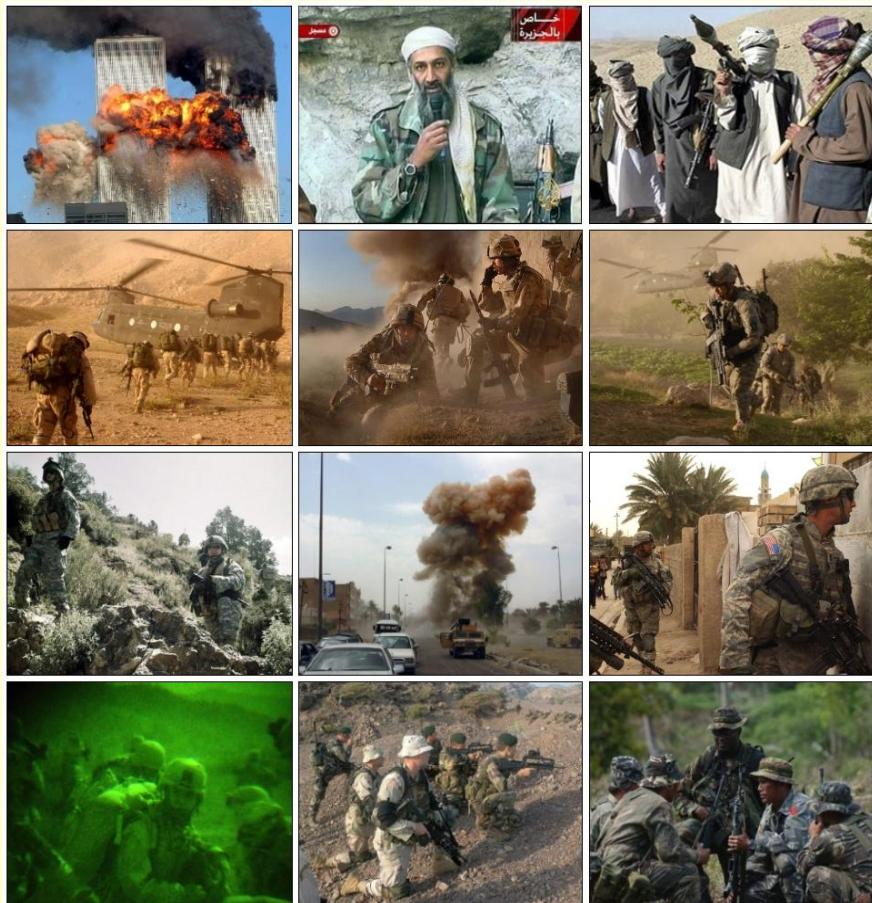
between 1,000 and 2,000 members in Iraq and a "significant portion" of the 26,000 extremist fighters in Syria in 2013, and grew in strength to between 20,000 and 31,500 in 2014. Boko Haram also expanded from "hundreds to a few thousand" to "several thousand" fighters. In addition, there were 33 new organizations

approach, rather than the same set "counterterrorism" principles.

Third, even with these worsening trends, terrorism still represents only a small fraction of overall violent deaths. The annual number of violent deaths worldwide is 508,000, according to the Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015: Every Body Counts report. In other words, less than 7 percent of violent deaths are a result of acts of terrorism. Compare the 32,727 terrorist fatalities to the estimated 377,000 people who were killed, collectively, in interpersonal violence, gang violence, or economically motived crimes. Citizens of several Central American and Caribbean countries are still more likely to be the victim of homicide than Iraqis or Syrians are from terrorism.

Fourth, readers of the State Department report should know that there have always been disagreements with the methodologies employed. In 2003, under the leadership of its then-director John Brennan, the Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC) provided wildly inaccurate data to the CIA, which was then incorporated into the State Department report. The TTIC found there had been 307 fatalities, but after Secretary of State Colin Powell directed an exhaustive re-examination of the evidence, the total amount grew by 104 percent to 725. More recently, the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism charged that the current compilers of the State Department's statistics, the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, undercounted the violence during the Iraq war, which subsequently makes the recent increase in violence "more extreme than it really is."

Finally, terrorism continues to pose an extremely small threat to the United States and its citizens. The number of Americans killed by international terrorism grew over the past year from 16 to 24. However, this is still fewer than the average number that has tragically been killed each year since 9/11, which is 28. Moreover, not one U.S.

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identified as perpetrators of terrorist attacks in 2014, indicating that more groups are forming to employ this deadly tactic.

Second, reflecting what scholars and experts have long known, terrorism predominantly is a driving component of interstate warfare or transregional conflict. **Some 63 percent of all attacks occurred in just six countries: Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Syria.** Unsurprisingly, these are also countries characterized by chronic state fragility, deep and widespread dissatisfaction with political leadership, and non-state actors with the resources and motivation to target noncombatants with lethal force in an effort to achieve some set of clinical objectives. These shared underlying conditions explain why many scholars keep arguing (largely in vain) that any enduring defeat of terrorism requires a conflict prevention, peace building, and development
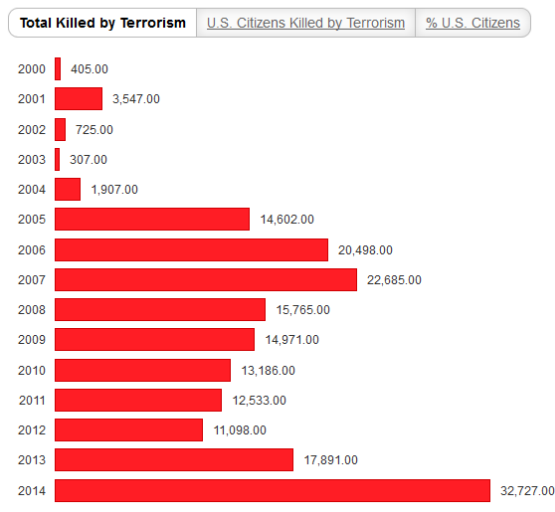
citizen died from terrorism *within* the United States last year. Rather, as has been consistent with previous years, Americans die from terrorism when they travel to war zones, or areas marked by violent instability: of the 24 deaths last year, 10 were in Afghanistan, 5 in Israel or the Occupied Territories, 3 in Somali, 3 in Syria, and 1 a piece in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

See the chart below to visualize how relatively safe Americans are from terrorism when
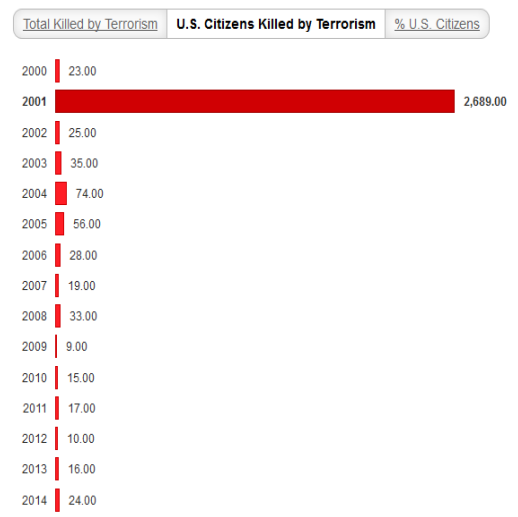
compared to the rest of the world. At today's press briefing on the findings of the report, Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the State Department Tina Kaidanow pointed out that "numbers don't tell the whole story."

Truly numbers never do, and they are always contested, but they should be understood by the interested public, and ideally serve as the basis for public policy responses to this ever worsening global challenge.

Total vs. U.S. Citizens Killed by Terrorism Per Year

Total Killed by Terrorism	U.S. Citizens Killed by Terrorism	% U.S. Citizens

Year	Total Killed by Terrorism
2000	405.00
2001	3,547.00
2002	725.00
2003	307.00
2004	1,907.00
2005	14,602.00
2006	20,498.00
2007	22,685.00
2008	15,765.00
2009	14,971.00
2010	13,186.00
2011	12,533.00
2012	11,098.00
2013	17,891.00
2014	32,727.00

Total vs. U.S. Citizens Killed by Terrorism Per Year

Total Killed by Terrorism	U.S. Citizens Killed by Terrorism	% U.S. Citizens

Year	U.S. Citizens Killed by Terrorism
2000	23.00
2001	2,689.00
2002	25.00
2003	35.00
2004	74.00
2005	56.00
2006	28.00
2007	19.00
2008	33.00
2009	9.00
2010	15.00
2011	17.00
2012	10.00
2013	16.00
2014	24.00

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Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images News

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Tracking the Islamic State — With Words

Source: http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/19/islamc-state-big-data-middle-east/?wp_login_redirect=0

Each day brings with it new headlines charting the relentless spread of the Islamic State. As of this past February, more than 20,000 foreign volunteers, including 3,400 Westerners, had flown into Islamic State-controlled territory from 90 countries. High-profile attacks inspired by the group on foreign soil, from the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris to those on a Tunisian museum and the Canadian Parliament, to an attempted mass shooting in Texas, combined with its sharp media savvy, have rapidly enhanced the Islamic State's international visibility as well as its recruiting base.

And while those groups monitoring its geographic spread have produced a proliferation of maps charting the Islamic State's physical footprint, there have been

relatively few attempts to visually chart the broader global discussion *around* the organization — that is to say, to generate a map that allows us to see the reach and scale of the Islamic State narrative as the media outlets around the world are depicting it so that we might be able to click on any location on Earth and see what has been reported in the media about the Islamic State with respect to that location.

We've certainly got the tools. Using the Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT) project, which monitors local media around the world and live-translates 65 languages, along with Google's BigQuery system and CartoDB's online

mapping platform, the map above offers a glimpse into the global dialogue about the Islamic State, drawing on information culled from nearly 725,000 articles published between Feb. 19 and June 7 that mention the organization by name.

Although the locations marked above do include areas where the Islamic State has physically launched attacks, conducted

advertisements, and navigation bars; to translation errors; to limitations of the underlying data-mining tools. Mapping the Islamic State proved to be especially difficult due to the group's prevalence in the public discourse, which regularly invokes the group's name in numerous contexts unrelated to actual coverage of the group itself.

On the technical side, the "breaking news"

Map created by 🌐 The GDELT Project

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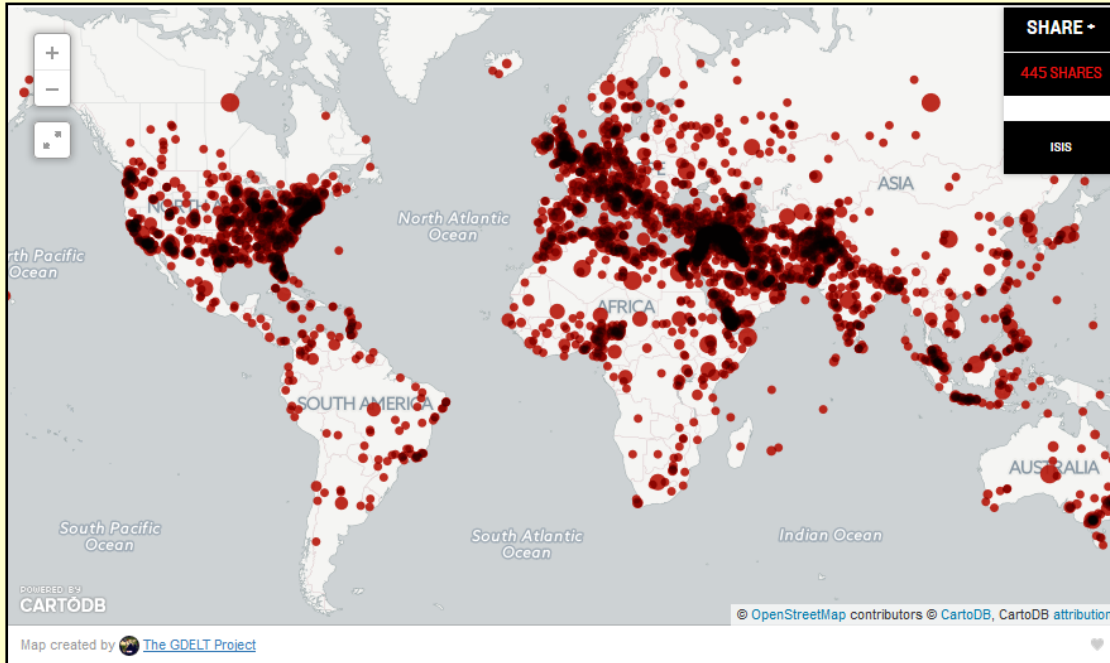
recruiting activities, opened training camps, and forged new alliances, it also includes the hometown of an Islamic State victim, the site of an anti-Islamic State rally at a mosque, a reference at a campaign rally, and discussion of its brutality and tactics. In short, it is a map of how the world's media is covering the threat of the Islamic State. Each dot represents a location mentioned in a published news article in close proximity on the page to a mention of the Islamic State over the past three months across all 65 languages that GDELT monitors.

Clicking on a dot on the map above will display a list of monitored coverage mentioning both that location and the Islamic State. To indicate the passage of time, the animated gif below shows a cumulative view of all the locations mentioned in Islamic State-related news coverage in 15-minute increments over the time period, accentuating the group's accelerating geographic spread.

To be sure, there are enormous challenges involved in mapping the news media, from correctly separating the body text of a news article from surrounding insets, footers,

insets that news sites often use to report on the Islamic State's major attacks occasionally make it difficult for the algorithms to correctly distinguish the core body of a news article from unrelated insets for different articles, which can cause mentions of the Islamic State to bleed into other coverage. Although aggressive filtering can mitigate these errors, it also has the potential to eliminate a great deal of relevant coverage, especially when coupled with translation error. For example, requiring that articles mention the Islamic State three or more times would miss articles such as this one on a Russian teenage girl.

In the map above, a higher-than-usual density of mistakenly tagged articles was permitted in order to maximize the inclusion of more obscure coverage and casual mentions in order to provide the broadest possible cross-section of the global news discussion of the Islamic State. Thus, when you click on the map, you will find a number of incorrect results. But if you scroll through the results or click on neighboring locations,

you will find a large number of relevant results scattered within.

Even without algorithmic error, information on the organization's reach and activities is often highly conflicting. A CNN article claiming that Tataouine, Tunisia, had become a waypoint for Islamic State fighters was followed two days later by strenuous denials from the Tunisian government. A pledge of allegiance by the al-Mourabitoun group was followed less than 24 hours later by a renunciation from the organization's leader. A February claim that 19 Hazaras kidnapped in Afghanistan had been taken by the Islamic State was backtracked in May. Nigeria's former chief justice refused to comment on allegations that his son had left

accounts defaced with the black Islamic State flag. As with all things cyber, it is difficult to separate attacks sponsored by the Islamic State itself and its sympathizers from false-flag attacks by criminal elements and rebellious teenagers leveraging the chaos for their own ends. From the Sequoia Park Zoo in California and Eldora Speedway in Ohio, to a cocktail bar in Somerville, Massachusetts, cyberattacks have hit across the entire United States, replacing homepages with screens featuring the black Islamic State flag. Websites from other countries are far from immune, with the Islamic State flag appearing on sites ranging from the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre to the Chilean Ministry of Defense, while Islamic
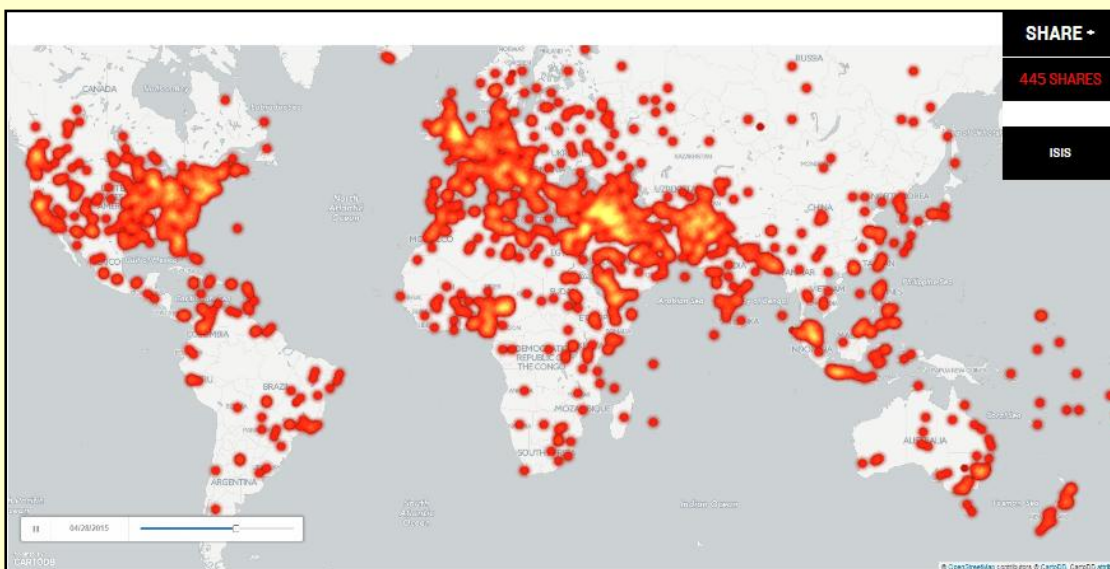
the country to join the Islamic State. The Canadian government remained silent over accusations that someone affiliated with its intelligence service had helped ferry three British schoolgirls to Syria. The April cyberattack on TV5Monde is increasingly being attributed to Russian hackers rather than to Islamic State sympathizers. Such a chaotic and conflicting information environment makes robust assessment of the Islamic State's global reach difficult at best, but maps, like the one above, allow us to see how the media is often self-correcting, with initial published reports being corrected over time.

Even those activities that appear clearly attributable to the Islamic State can be difficult to assess.

Even those activities that appear clearly attributable to the Islamic State can be difficult to assess. The map above is filled with examples of website and social media

State graffiti appeared, in physical form, on Bermuda's cabinet building. Seeing all of these attacks arrayed geographically on the map above really drives home the enormous reach of cyberattacks claiming to be by the Islamic State.

That the Islamic State's reach extends beyond Syria and Iraq is without question. Its media savvy has drawn recruits from at least 90 countries. Among them: nine Sudanese university students in the United Kingdom, a college student in Russia, a Jamaican teenager, a Beaumont, Canada, high school student, an Augusta, Georgia, man, and even a Joliet, Illinois-based National Guardsman. The general secretary of the Islamic Association of St. Lucia worries that militants from the Caribbean fighting in Syria will return home to conduct attacks, while the Zambian Muslim community warns of

domestic recruitment efforts. Even the idyllic environs of the Maldives has provided more than 100 fighters and hosted a 300-person mass march in support of the Islamic State in September 2014. Yet, placing these on a map conveys the reach of the Islamic State's recruiting far better than a dry statistical list in a government report.

Islamic State recruitment efforts in Europe have forced the region to recalibrate its security posture, with Britain, Germany, and Ireland among the countries that have proposed or enacted sweeping new anti-terrorism laws. Iceland has explored granting police "proactive investigation" authority that would permit authorities to investigate individuals not presently under suspicion of criminal activity or intent, while Malaysia passed new anti-terrorism legislation granting broad powers to detain and monitor those suspected of threats. Connecting each of these responses with Islamic State-related news relating to each country offers a window into the driving forces behind these changes.

The increasing reach of the Islamic State into neighboring countries has provided a steady flow of hostages. Libya alone has seen the kidnappings of 86 Eritrean refugees, nine foreign oil workers, two North Koreans, and two Tunisian journalists. A Romanian mineworker was kidnapped in Burkina Faso, a Syrian rebel leader was captured in broad daylight in Turkey, and 500 Iraqi boys were snatched, allegedly to serve as suicide bombers. Those kidnapped, killed, and threatened by the group serve to connect the conflict to cities throughout the world. Colombian newspapers report on two citizens killed in the Islamic State-inspired attack in Tunisia, while an Assyrian church in Modesto, California holds a vigil for Assyrian Christians taken hostage by the Islamic State, including a former local resident. An Ecuadorean cartoonist receives an anonymous death threat, while U.S. military members from Springfield, Missouri, and San Juan County, New Mexico, appear on an Islamic State "hit list." A former white supremacist in Kamloops, Canada, works to fight recruitment of young Canadians, while a Brantford, Canada, mosque holds an open house in which it denounces Islamic State followers as "criminals, not believers."

Discussion of the Islamic State permeates domestic U.S. politics, particularly in Republican circles. Wisconsin Gov. Scott

Walker famously told the audience at the Conservative Political Action Conference in February that "tak[ing] on 100,000 [pro-union] protesters" in 2011 prepared him to "ensure that the threat from radical Islamic terrorists does not wash up on American soil," while Sen. Lisa Murkowski invoked the threat from the Islamic State as a rationale for sparing Fort Wainwright, Alaska, from defense spending cuts. Indiana Gov. Mike Pence received widespread media attention in February when he claimed President Barack Obama was "unwilling to call Islamic extremism what it is," and Sen. Lindsey Graham kicked off his presidential candidacy in South Carolina by outlining his intent as president to target the Islamic State.

Reaction to and internalization of the Islamic State abroad has often focused on its brutality. Its violence against women has been likened to that of other insurgent movements, such as FARC in Colombia. Gen. John Kelly, head of U.S. Southern Command, noted further parallels between the Islamic State and FARC in their use of the media to generate sympathy, while citing the Colombian military's response to FARC as a potential model for weakening the Islamic State. Others see parallels in its actions with those of the Nazis, the Japanese "Rape of Nanking," and the xenophobia and anti-immigrant violence of South Africa. Its destruction of cultural heritage sites is likened to Greenpeace's damage to the Nazca lines of Peru.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing parallels involves the Islamic State's most violent and visceral trademarks: public beheadings and immolations. This past February, the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit that provides legal services, released a report documenting nearly 4,000 "terror lynchings" in the United States from 1877 to 1950. From beheadings to body parts being hacked off and taken as souvenirs, from eye gouging to hot pokers, from castration to burning alive, African-Americans accused of even minor crimes were tortured and killed while "[t]he white men, women, and children present watched … enjoying deviled eggs, lemonade, and whiskey in a picnic-like atmosphere." The report prompted a flurry of coverage noting that even the Islamic State, at its most gruesome, has failed to come anywhere close to the sheer barbarity of the atrocities

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committed in the United States less than a century ago.

Big data offers us a powerful new tool to survey the global narrative emerging around a terrorist organization like the Islamic State in order to grapple not only with its physical footprint, but with how the world is understanding it in real time. It allows us to explore such narratives at an unprecedented scale by examining more content in a single week than Western open-source agencies have translated in 30 years. The ability to look across three-quarters of a million news articles spanning 65 languages to create a single holistic map of the geography of discourse around a terrorist organization offers a fundamentally new approach to how we think of tracking terrorist narratives.

And by arranging each of the stories above geographically on a map, it converts a list of 725,000 articles into a visual narrative that makes starkly clear the massive geographic footprint of the global discussion about the Islamic State. It's a new way of understanding what matters to us, and it's just one of the ways in which big data is changing the way we see the world.

▶ **Both maps are interactive – exlore them by visiting source's URL.**

Terra incognita: If US killer Roof was an Islamist, he'd be a 'militant'

Source: http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Terra-incognita-If-US-killer-Roof-was-an-Islamist-hed-be-a-militant-406705

Since the racist mass-murder in South Carolina there has been an avalanche of disingenuous claims about how if only perpetrator Dylann Roof had been someone else our reaction would have been different.

"Hang him," shout Facebook posts, or "I don't usually support the death penalty but now I do." Demands to remove the confederate flag from a state-sponsored memorial or ban it altogether have been pouring in, even though the shooter wore a Rhodesian flag and an old Apartheid-era flag in photos. Those won't be banned, apparently.

The dominant narrative is: "If Dylann was a Muslim, most of the world would blame Islam and Muslims." Commentator Khaled Diab claimed, "When a Muslim blows up a mosque in Baghdad, it's called terrorism. When a white guy shoots up a church in Charleston, it's a hate crime."

The media critique is a replay of the February murders of three Muslim students in Chapel Hill by Craig Stephen Hicks. At the time he was widely labeled a terrorist and The Nation reminded us that "the most common type of American terrorist is a white man with a weapon and a grudge."

"We have been conditioned to accept that if the violence is committed by a Muslim, then it is terrorism," claimed Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations." The theory is that Dylann Roof has not been judged as harshly because he is white.

University of Pennsylvania Professor Anthea Butler argues that "shooters of color are called 'terrorists' and 'thugs.' Why are white shooters called 'mentally ill'?" But judging by the media reaction, this is a straw man. In fact, white shooters are the ones called terrorists. For example, Brit Bennet wrote in The New York Times a day after the shooting that "white terrorism is as old as America."

By contrast, the one group that these same commentators fear to call terrorists is Islamist extremists.

Remember Major Nidal Malik Hasan? He shouted "allahu akhbar" as he gunned down 13 people at Fort Hood in 2009. He was in contact with the radical al-Qaida preacher Anwar al-Awlaki, who supported his deeds. And yet his acts were deemed "workplace violence," not terrorism. And yes, Hasan is every bit as "white" as Roof. They are both white terrorists.

If Roof had shouted "God is great" and been in touch with Islamic State (IS) leaders before his killing spree, the media would be calling him a militant, not a terrorist.

Remember Amedy Coulibaly, the murderer who attacked the kosher supermarket in Paris last January? The BBC described his gun battle with police as "an Islamist militant shot dead by

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French special forces... after he attacked a Jewish supermarket." If Roof had targeted Jews, he would be a militant, not a terrorist.

Boko Haram, the extremist Islamist group in Nigeria that has killed thousands of people, is always called a militant organization. When it blew up worshipers at a mosque, CNN noted, "It may seem counterintuitive that Islamic militants should stack a mosque." In contract, it apparently didn't occur to anyone at CNN to wonder why a white extremist like Roof had made the "counterintuitive" decision to attack a church.

And for all those who wanted to compare bombings in Baghdad to the killings in South Carolina: what does the media actually call those who blow up mosques and markets in Baghdad? "Attackers," "militants," "suicide bombers" – but never "terrorists."

Al-Jazeera's Tarek Abu-Esber even has a funny video at Al-Jazeera Plus to explain why they don't use the words "terrorist" or "terrorism."

He points out that they wouldn't use the word for IS, the IRA or Timothy Mcveigh.

Most news media have come to agree with excising the word "terrorist" from their vocabularies since 9/11. Roy Peter Clark of the Poynter Institute told the Christian Science Monitor that "if you're writing a report, one of the things reporters are taught to avoid is loaded language."

The one exception seems to be white terrorism, or terrorism in the name of white supremacy. That is because being angry and demanding the death penalty for Roof is the easy thing to do. Hating the Boston bomber, Major Hasan, the "shoe bomber," or so many others tends to be more complex. Their actions must be understood, their grievances acknowledged.

Roof is called a "white terrorist," but why is he whiter than the jihadists in Syria who were born European Christians and converted to Islam to "enjoy the pleasures" IS provides them? Those extremists in Syria carried out a massacre of Yezidis, they sold women into slavery. And yet all the voices so outraged about Roof are more silent on IS. Where is the withering hatred for IS for its mass murder of thousands? People are right to be outraged by the persistence of American racism and mass murder; but they should be consistent in condemning all forms of mass murder.

When I was in Iraqi Kurdistan we peered through the binoculars toward Mosul to see the abandoned Christian villages that IS now uses as a base. The Times, the BBC, The Washington Post, CNN and all these media giants who are so quick to say "white terrorism" only see "militants" in these villages. IS wiped out entire villages; no, no terrorists here? It isn't that "white terrorism" is needed to balance "Islamic terrorism." I've often argued that the best way to illustrate the misplaced nature of the word "militant" is to categorize all KKK actions as "militant acts" because it shows how ridiculous and inapplicable this term is. The KKK are not "militants" and neither is Boko Haram. In the opposite, the media is comfortable with the term "white terrorism" and uncomfortable with the term "Islamic terrorism." The media has excused the deaths of tens of thousands of people under the term "militants." Remember "Taliban militants arrested over attack on school"? Those militants had killed 130 kids at a school.

What if Roof had killed 130 children? Would he qualify as a militant? If only he had bought along a black flag he'd have received a get-outof- terrorism-free card.

Often with Islamic terrorism there is a fear that labeling it is impugns all Muslims. That is why the knee-jerk reaction in the West following Islamist terrorist attacks is solidarity with Muslims. Within hours of the Sydney siege by deranged gunman Man Haron Monis in December of 2014, many people began tweeting "I'll ride with you" because, as one Australian noted, "being Muslim in the wake of a terrorist attack can be horrifying."

However, it's easy in the West to blame "white terror" because there is no analogous "white identity." It's beating a dead horse. So the straw man of "I'm confronting white terrorism" can be bandied about by people who self-congratulate each other for "standing up to racism." The fact is that standing up to the mass murder of the Roofs and Hicks is easy; no one supports them. Burning a confederate flag, as some students did at Oxford to supposedly protest the killings, is easy. Burning an IS flag? Not so much.

And that is the real elephant in the room.

The West is sick of terrorism, but fears to face the extremist and supremacist agenda being spouted by those who support IS or their fellow travelers.

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Hundreds, maybe thousands of Western white youths have journeyed to fight with IS. IS is every bit as disgusting a form of "white terrorism" as Roof's killing spree in South Carolina. IS ideology stems from a similar supremacism. Yet everything is done to obscure the religious and supremacist origins of IS, and everything is done to exaggerate the threat of the "white terrorists" who are "as old as America." Yes, there are lots of terrorists in American history – but some of them also have names like Ali Hassan Abu Kamal, Sirhan Sirhan and Omar Abdel-Rahman.

Does the Confederate flag really offend you? Why? Because it represents slavery? Ok. Well IS is practicing slavery.

Does Roof offend you? Good. Are you equally offended by Thomas Evans, the British convert who journeyed to Somalia to fight alongside Al-Shabab? Al-Shabab has been implicated in the mass murder of school teachers in Kenya, who were taken from buses and machine-gunned.

You're offended by the murder of black people by white people? Well wake up: black people in Kenya are being murdered by Islamist-inspired white people. Indigenous Yezidi people in Iraq are being slaughtered by foreign fighters with a supremacist ideology.

Until people are as outraged by Islamist terrorism as they are about the mass murders in South Carolina, and take it equally seriously, they will continue to sacrifice the lives of people around the world under various excuses relating to "militants." Don't let the Roofs of the world off the hook just because some of them choose the black flag of extremism in Syria.

Mali, Tuareg rebels sign historic peace agreement

Source: http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150622-mali-tuareg-rebels-sign-historic-peace-agreement

June 22 – **The Tuareg-led rebel coalition in northern Mali on Saturday signed a historic**

the independence-seeking Tuareg and the central government in Bamako.
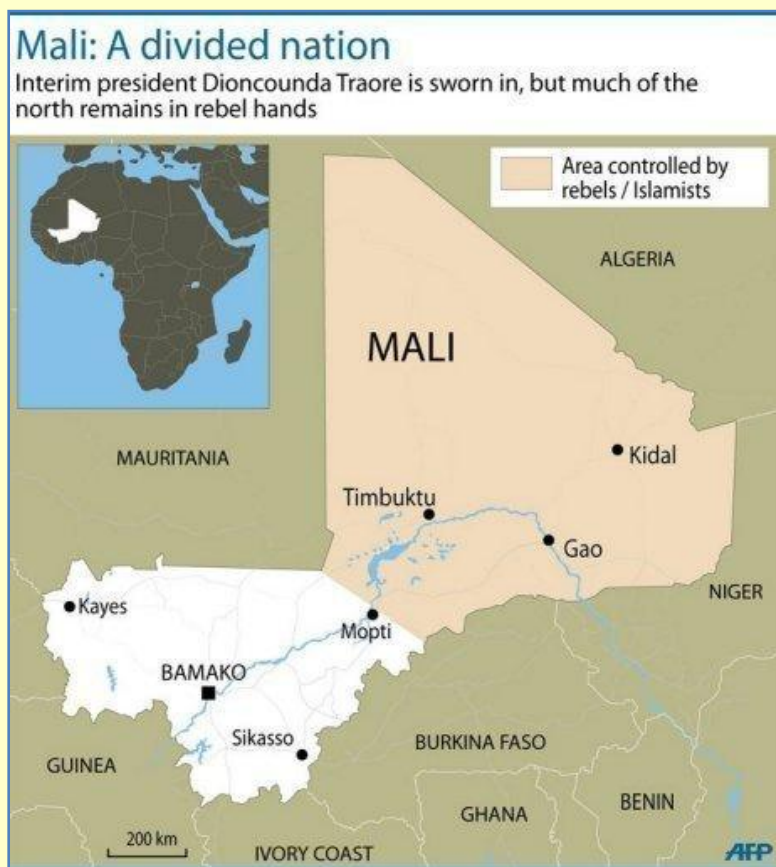
Since 1960, when Mali gained its independence from France, the Tuareg launched four bloody wars in an effort to gain their independence, but were defeated each time.

In November 2011, following the fall of Col. Muammar Qaddafi in neighboring Libya, many Tuareg tribesmen who served in Qaddafi's private militias, took their arms and moved back to their home areas in north Mali. There they joined a small Islamist movement called Ansar Dine, and begun, again, to agitate for Tuareg independence.

Their opportunity came in March 2012: on 22 March, a group of military officers in Bamako staged a military coup against the civilian government. In the confusion and chaos which followed, the combined forces of the Tuareg and Ansar Dine easily chased the Mali army out of north Mali, and in April 2013 declared the creation of the independent Republic of Azawad in north Mali.

Azawad was the size of France, but with a tiny population of only 1.6 million.

The break-away Azawad was initially ruled by an uneasy

Mali: A divided nation
Interim president Dioncounda Traore is sworn in, but much of the north remains in rebel hands

Area controlled by rebels / Islamists

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agreement with the government of Mali to end decades of conflict and war between

alliance of Tuareg tribesmen and an Islamists of Ansar Dine, but within weeks the Islamists took over, kicking the Tuareg soldiers out of Azawad, imposing a strict sharia law, destroying cultural sites – some recognized by the UN as world heritage sites — and driving a quarter of the population out of the break-away region.

In January 2013 the Islamists began to drive south toward the capital Bamako. France decided that enough was enough, and sent its air force and 4,000 soldiers to evict the Islamists from north Mali. The French expeditionary force was joined by a UN-approved regional force of 3,000, led by the army of neighboring Niger.

By March 2013 the war was over, with the Islamists either dead or dispersed, and later that spring Mali was reunited.

The pact signed Saturday between the Tuareg

the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) coalition, insisted on amendments to the draft.

On Saturday, the leader of the CMA, Sidi Brahim Ould Sidati, signed the document on behalf of the CMA in a televised ceremony in Bamako.

"Trust me — we will make sure that no one is disappointed. We will build a brotherly Mali together," President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita

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and the Mali government was brokered by Algeria – it is called the Algiers Accord – and it aims to bring stability to the country's northern region.

The BBC reports that the first draft of the agreement had already been signed on 15 May by the government and several of the Tuareg militias active in north Mali – but the most powerful Tuareg rebel groups, all members of

told a the audience of diplomats, Tuareg leaders, and Mali politicians.

"Today is a great day for all us children of Mali."

Ramtane Lamamra, the foreign minister of Algeria, hailed "a new beginning, a new opportunity and a new destiny for this great Malian nation."

The deal signed on Saturday calls for the creation of elected regional assemblies, but does not offer autonomy or federalism for northern Mali, which locals call Azawad.

The negotiators were able to persuade the rebel groups which were part of the CMA to sign the agreement after promising them that their members would be included in a security force for the north, and that residents of Azawad would be represented better in government institutions.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki moon welcomed the pact and pledged his support for its implementation.

"The ultimate responsibility for peace lies with Mali and the Malians, and the Secretary-General urges all parties to continue to work in good faith to advance progress, and to fully implement the provisions of the ceasefire," his spokesman said in a statement.

Mongi Hamdi, the head of MINUSMA, the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali, warned, though, that there would still be "moments of doubt and discouragement, tensions and distrust" on the path to peace.

"The international community will always be with you but cannot make peace for you," he said, urging the opposing sides to show "good faith and goodwill" in implementing the accord.

The Algiers Accord notwithstanding, Mali is deeply divided, as it has since independence. The Tuareg and Arab populations of the north have argued since 1960 that the sub-Saharan ethnic groups in the country's more prosperous south have been marginalizing them.

Mahamadou Djeri Maiga, a CMA spokesman, said international mediation efforts had "paid off" but warned that the hard work lay ahead.

"We are for peace, but what we want is that the agreement is actually implemented on the ground," he told AFP.
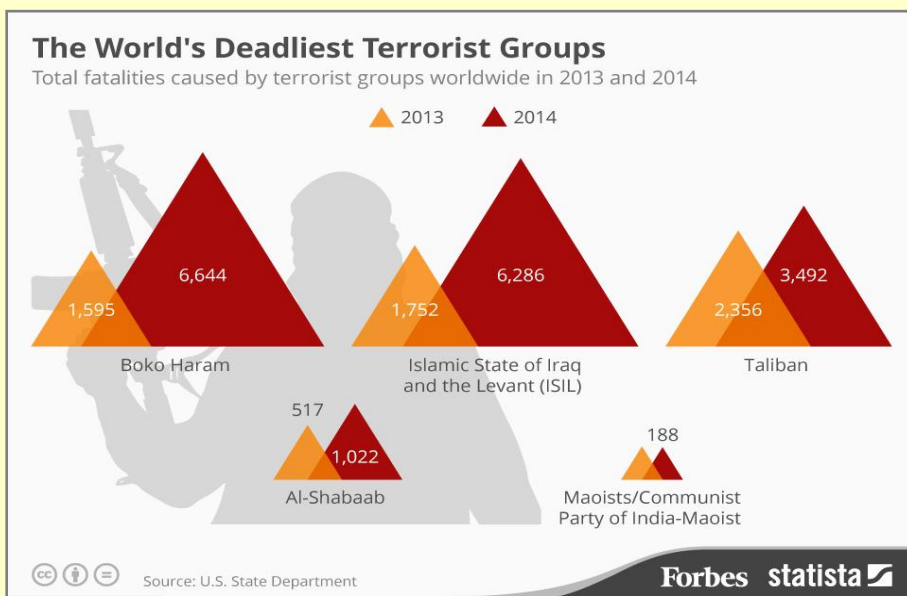
"Everyone must respect its commitments… We want peace; we don't want what has happened with previous agreements."

French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian is traveling to Bamako today (Monday) to support the peace agreement, a member of his entourage announced.

"He is going there to demonstrate the presence and support of France for the agreement, which is indispensable for the return of peace and development in Mali," a source in the French Defense Ministry said.

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The World's Deadliest Terrorist Groups [Infographic]

Source:http://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2015/06/22/the-worlds-deadliest-terrorist-groups-infographic/

The World's Deadliest Terrorist Groups
Total fatalities caused by terrorist groups worldwide in 2013 and 2014

▲ 2013   ▲ 2014

Boko Haram: 1,595 / 6,644
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL): 1,752 / 6,286
Taliban: 2,356 / 3,492
Al-Shabaab: 517 / 1,022
Maoists/Communist Party of India-Maoist: 188

Source: U.S. Department of State

Forbes statista

The number of people killed in terrorist attacks around the world rose sharply in 2014, according to the US State Department. Compared to 2013, attacks were up 35 percent while fatalities increased 81 percent, reaching 32,700. This trend is primarily due to activity in Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria, as well as the exceptionally lethal manner of many attacks.

Out of the attacks where perpetrator information was available, Boko Haram came first for lethality. The Nigerian jihadist group was responsible for 6,644 deaths in 2014, slightly ahead of ISIL who inflicted 6,286 fatalities during the same year. The Taliban had the third highest death toll of any terrorist group worldwide last year according to the US State Department.

Greece – Lower Koufonisi Island