

## TERROR CAMPAIGN

There have been at least  
**82 ISIS-linked  
attack plots**  
against the West since 2014...

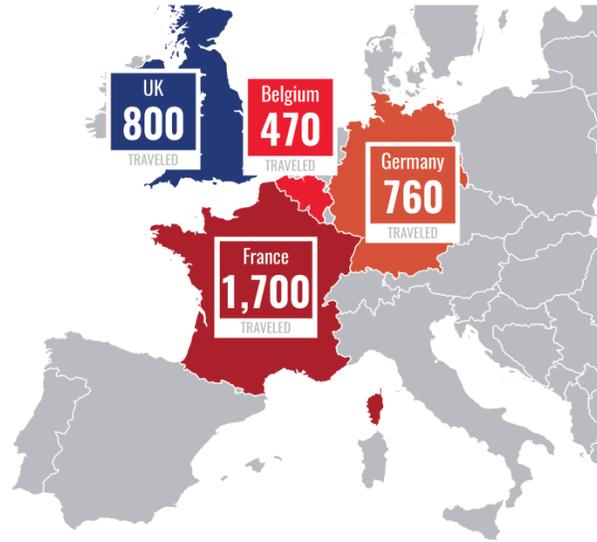
Source: Homeland Security Committee

**...35 of these plots  
have been in Europe.**

Source: Homeland Security Committee

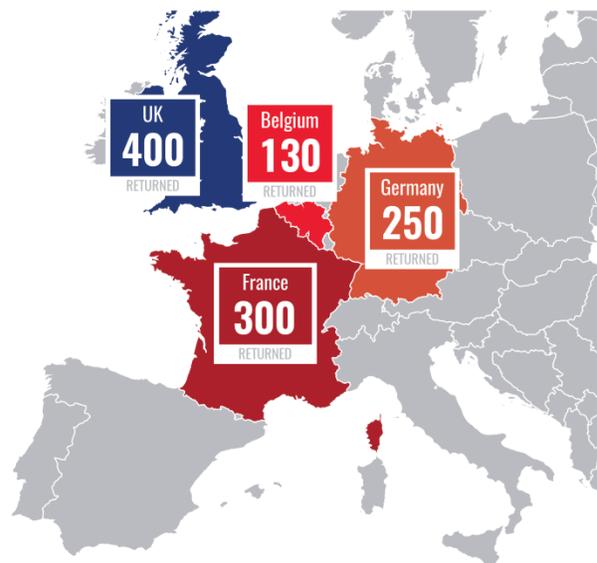
The majority of EU citizens who **traveled**  
to join Islamist extremists in Iraq & Syria were  
from **UK, France, Germany & Belgium.**

Source: The Soufan Group



More than **1,000** have **returned**  
to **UK, France, Germany & Belgium.**

Source: Homeland Security Committee





## KEY POINTS

**Europe is confronting an increasingly dangerous Islamist terror threat. Over the last year, ISIS-linked attack plots in Europe have unfolded at a rate of nearly two every month.** There have been at least 35 ISIS-linked plots to launch attacks across Europe since 2014, including the November 2015 Paris and March 2016 Brussels attacks; 22 of these plots have been executed or disrupted within the last 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

**Thousands of Europeans who joined Islamist extremists in Syria and Iraq since 2011, some of whom are trained and intent on committing acts of terror, are filtering back into the continent.** As many as 5,000 European Union (EU) citizens have traveled to Syria and Iraq, according to Europol.<sup>2</sup> More than 1,000 of them have already returned to just four countries – the U.K., France, Germany, and Belgium.<sup>3</sup> Europol Director Rob Wainwright has warned of a related “black hole of information” regarding European foreign fighters.<sup>4</sup> Syria returnees were involved in both the deadly Brussels and Paris attacks.

**European security services have identified thousands of potential terror suspects within their borders.** German authorities have identified 1,100 suspected radical Islamists.<sup>5</sup> They are actively pursuing 130 counterterrorism investigations focused on almost 200 jihadists, including returnees from Syria.<sup>6</sup> Authorities in France have identified at least 2,000 of their citizens or residents connected to jihadist networks.<sup>7</sup> At least 16 French and Belgian nationals – many of them previously known to authorities – were part of the broader network behind the recent terror plots in Brussels and Paris.<sup>8</sup>

**The magnitude of the threat in Europe is unprecedented and it is overwhelming security services.** The operatives behind the Paris and Brussels attack plots reportedly operated across at least nine EU countries – France, Belgium, Germany, the U.K., Greece, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, and Hungary.<sup>9</sup> A Belgian counterterrorism official warned only days before the March 22 attacks in Brussels, “...we don’t have the infrastructure to properly investigate or monitor hundreds of individuals suspected of terror links, as well as pursue the hundreds of open files and investigations we have...It’s literally an impossible situation and, honestly, it’s very grave.”<sup>10</sup>

**The European ISIS network has remained an active, widespread threat in the wake of last month’s Brussels attack.** Just two days after the bombings in Brussels, French authorities disrupted a major ISIS-linked attack plot and discovered “an arsenal of weapons and explosives of an unprecedented size.”<sup>11</sup> Nearly 20 ISIS-linked suspects have been arrested in five EU countries since then.<sup>12</sup> German intelligence official Hans-Georg Maasen cautioned that while European agencies “may, in fact, have information about dangerous individuals saved in our databases...we might fail to notice that they are here because they enter with false identities.”<sup>13</sup>

**ISIS terror operatives have exploited the largest flow of refugees and migrants since World War II to infiltrate Europe undetected.** EU member states reported nearly 2 million instances of illegal border crossings involving around 1 million people last year.<sup>14</sup> Two of the ISIS-linked operatives behind the November 2015 Paris attack snuck into Europe by posing as Syrian refugees.<sup>15</sup> At least one of the March 2016 Brussels attackers reportedly posed as a Syrian refugee in Greece.<sup>16</sup> The head of Germany’s domestic intelligence agency warned this year “we have repeatedly seen that terrorists...have slipped in camouflaged or disguised as refugees. This is a fact that the security agencies are facing.”<sup>17</sup>

**European jihadists are also attempting to radicalize and recruit refugees settling in the continent.** Over one million individuals from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia arrived in Europe in 2015.<sup>18</sup> In Germany alone, the domestic intelligence service identified 300 instances of radical Islamists recruiting within the refugee population.<sup>19</sup>



<sup>1</sup> These figures are Homeland Security Committee (HSC) tallies based on open-source data, including news reports, publicly available government statements, and non-governmental reports.

<sup>2</sup> Oren Dorell, "Europol: ISIL will try more deadly attacks in 2016," USA Today, January 25, 2016,

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/01/25/europol-isil-attacks-european-counterterrorism-center-video/79314836/>.

<sup>3</sup> This figure is a HSC tally based on public statements made by UK Home Secretary Theresa May, French PM Manuel Valls, German Prosecutor Peter Frank, and Belgian Police Chief Catherine De Bolle.

<sup>4</sup> Maia De La Baume and Giulia Paravicini, "Europe's intelligence 'black hole'," Politico Europe, December 3, 2015,

<http://www.politico.eu/article/europes-intelligence-black-hole-europol-fbi-cia-paris-counter-terrorism/>.

<sup>5</sup> Michelle Martin, "German spy chief says Islamic State wants to attack but no specific plot known," Reuters, April 10, 2016,

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/german-spy-chief-says-islamic-state-wants-attack-114340627.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Ben Knight, "German prosecutor: Hard to convict 'Islamic state' returnees," Deutsche Welle, March 29, 2016,

<http://www.dw.com/en/german-prosecutor-hard-to-convict-islamic-state-returnees/a-19148842>.

<sup>7</sup> John Irish, "French prime minister says 600-plus people have left France for Syria or Iraq," Reuters, March 20, 2016,

<http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN0WM0V2>.

<sup>8</sup> This figure is a HSC tally based on open-source data, including news reports, publicly available government statements, and non-governmental reports.

<sup>9</sup> This figure is a HSC tally based on open-source data, including news reports, publicly available government statements, and non-governmental reports.

<sup>10</sup> Mitchell Prothero, "Belgian Authorities Overwhelmed By Terror Investigations," BuzzFeed News, March 22, 2016,

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/mitchprothero/belgian-authorities-overwhelmed-by-terror-investigations#.iIKALedQe>.

<sup>11</sup> Cassandra Vinograd, "Belgium Town Kirtrijk Scoured for Suspect Linked to Terror Suspect Reda Kriket," NBC News, March 31,

2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/paris-terror-attacks/kortrijk-operation-underway-linked-reda-kriket-local-media-n548426>.

Alissa Rubin and Eric Schmitt, "Revelation on Brussels Attackers Fuels Fears of New Assaults," New York Times, April 10, 2016,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/11/world/europe/brussels-attackers-original-target-was-france-prosecutor-says.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Dalton, "Investigators Home In on Scope of Terror Network Behind Brussels, Paris Attacks," The Wall Street Journal,

April 4, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/investigators-home-in-on-scope-of-terror-network-behind-brussels-paris-attacks-1459728742>.

<sup>13</sup> "German intelligence head admits 'misjudgment' on 'Islamic State' strategy," Deutsche Welle, April 10, 2016,

<http://www.dw.com/en/german-intelligence-head-admits-misjudgment-on-islamic-state-strategy/a-19176809>.

<sup>14</sup> "Risk Analysis for 2016," Frontex, April 5, 2016,

[http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Annula\\_Risk\\_Analysis\\_2016.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annula_Risk_Analysis_2016.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Frontex, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Vivienne Walt, "Europe's Terror Fears Won't End With the Arrests of the Likely Last Paris and Brussels Attackers," TIME, April

8, 2016, <http://time.com/4287341/brussels-attacks-arrest-mohamed-abrini-osama-krayem/>.

<sup>17</sup> Caroline Copley, "German spy agency says ISIS sending fighters disguised as refugees," Reuters, February 5, 2016,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-security-idUSKCN0VE0XL>.

<sup>18</sup> "Irregular Migrant, Refugee Arrivals in Europe Top One Million in 2015: IOM," International Organization for Migration,

December 22, 2015, <https://www.iom.int/news/irregular-migrant-refugee-arrivals-europe-top-one-million-2015-iom>.

<sup>19</sup> Martin, 2016.