



THE ISIS TERROR THREAT IN AMERICA

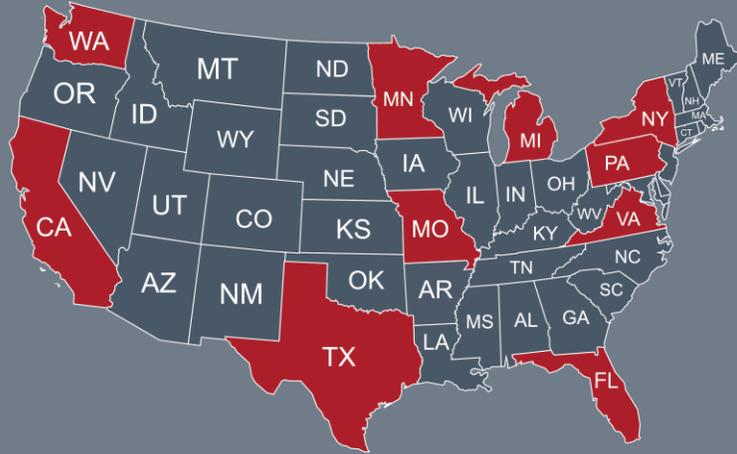
So far in 2016...

12 PEOPLE ARRESTED in...

10 STATES for...

California, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania,
Texas, Virginia, Washington, New York, Florida

- PLOTS TO ATTACK
- OVERSEAS TRAVEL
- LYING TO AUTHORITIES
- WEAPONS CHARGES

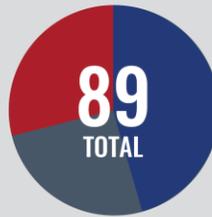


Since 2014...



800+ **ISIS-LINKED
INVESTIGATIONS**
in **ALL 50 STATES**

ISIS-LINKED PLOTS TO ATTACK THE WEST



- 39** IN EUROPE
- 25** IN THE U.S.
- 25** TARGETING WESTERNERS
OUTSIDE U.S./EUROPE

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This document is produced by the Majority Staff of the House Homeland Security Committee. It is based on information culled from open source materials, including media reports, publicly available government statements, and nongovernmental reports.

KEY POINTS

- **ISIS and its global affiliates pose a persistent threat, including here in the U.S. where authorities are investigating more than 800 ISIS-linked cases.**
- **ISIS and al Qaeda maintain safe havens from where they can recruit, train, and deploy operatives to launch attacks in the West.**
- **Waves of dangerous foreign fighters are returning home from Syria and Iraq, particularly to Europe, where Islamist terror operatives have infiltrated borders by posing as refugees.**



- **A terrorist whom President Obama released from Guantanamo in 2012 has assumed an increasingly prominent role with al Qaeda’s affiliate in Yemen, highlighting the threat of recidivism among former detainees.**
- **The Iranian regime’s support for terror continues unabated, including in Syria where its intervention empowers ISIS and al Qaeda.**

HOMEGROWN ISLAMIST EXTREMISM

- FBI Director James Comey last month estimated that around 80 percent of the Bureau’s more than 1,000 active homegrown jihadist investigations are linked to ISIS. The group’s “ability to motivate troubled souls, to inspire them, remains a persistent” threat in America, he added.
- Since September 11, 2001, there have been at least 152 homegrown jihadist plots in the United States, including attempts to join terrorist groups overseas and execute attacks at home. Around 85 percent of these cases have occurred or been uncovered since 2009.¹
- Authorities have arrested 87 individuals in the U.S. and charged 3 others in absentia in ISIS-linked cases since 2014.² These individuals had, among other acts: plotted attacks; attempted to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria (or facilitated others’ travel); provided money, equipment, and weapons to ISIS; and falsified statements to federal authorities. Six ISIS-linked terrorists have been killed while carrying out four separate attacks in California, Massachusetts, and Texas.
- Nearly 90 percent of the ISIS supporters charged in the U.S. are male and almost 40 percent of them are converts to Islam; their average age is 26.³ Law enforcement authorities arrested around one-third of ISIS-linked suspects on their way to join ISIS overseas.

Recent Developments

- May 24: Sajmir Alimehmeti, a 22-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen originally from Albania, was charged for attempting to travel to join ISIS and trying to facilitate others’ travel for the same purpose.
- May 11: Azizjon Rakhmatov, a 28-year-old Uzbek national, was charged for his role in a terror cell that facilitated the movement and equipping of ISIS recruits traveling to Syria. Rakhmatov provided money to help an associate travel to Syria and acquire weapons.
- April 29: James Gonzalo Medina, a 40-year-old U.S. citizen, was charged with attempting to bomb a synagogue in Aventura, Florida, using an explosive device. He claimed that the plot was for “ISIS in America.”

¹ This figure is based on open-source data compiled by the Congressional Research Service and the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

² This figure is based on open-source data compiled and analyzed by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

³ These data points are from the George Washington University’s Program on Extremism. See:

<https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Snapshot-April.pdf>.



ISIS TERROR ATTACK PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST

- There have been 89 ISIS-linked plots to attack Western targets since 2014, including 25 inside the U.S.⁴

Recent Developments

- June 2: German authorities arrested three Syrian nationals who had plotted to launch an attack in Dusseldorf after receiving guidance from senior ISIS operatives in Syria. Two of them reportedly infiltrated Europe via Turkey and Greece. A fourth suspect turned himself into authorities in France in February.
- May 17: Australian authorities arrested an 18-year-old terror suspect and disrupted what they believed to be an imminent attack. They had been tracking the suspect for some time and previously prevented him from traveling to Syria.
- April 29: James Gonzalo Medina, the Florida man arrested for plotting to bomb a synagogue, said he wanted to launch an attack on behalf of “ISIS in America.”
- April 25: Australian authorities arrested a 16-year-old Australian terror suspect who was reportedly in contact with an ISIS recruiter and planned to conduct an attack on Anzac Day, a World War I anniversary day in Australia.
- April 21: Spanish authorities arrested a 26-year-old Moroccan national who was reportedly preparing to travel to join ISIS in Syria and planned to conduct an attack in Spain.
- April 21: American and Danish officials announced that they had previously disrupted an ISIS-linked plot to bomb a Jewish school in Denmark.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS

- Nearly 40,000 fighters—including at least 6,900 from Western countries—have traveled to Syria from at least 120 countries since 2011. Around 250 of the Westerners traveled from the United States and 5,000 of them traveled from European Union countries. Around one-third of the European fighters are suspected to have returned home from Syria. As many as 20,000 Shia fighters—including from Lebanese Hezbollah and Iranian-directed Iraq-based militias— have also traveled to Syria to fight alongside the Assad regime.
- The Pentagon estimates that up to 500 foreign fighters travel to Syria and Iraq every month. That number had spiked to as high as 2,000. ISIS has recently encouraged fighters to head to Libya, possibly in response to an uptick in pressure in Syria.

⁴ These figures are based on open-source data compiled and analyzed by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.



- Europol recently assessed that there was an “increased risk” that foreign fighters may exploit migratory flows to enter Europe. German authorities are currently investigating 40 cases of suspected Islamic extremists who infiltrated their borders by posing as refugees and migrants. Italian authorities recently arrested several suspected terrorists who may have been plotting attacks, at least two of whom entered Europe as refugees. At least one of the European ISIS operatives in the March 2016 Brussels attack reportedly reentered Europe by posing as a Syrian refugee in Greece. Several of the ISIS attackers in Paris last November also infiltrated the continent posing as Syrian refugees.
 - The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) has identified “...individuals with ties to terrorist groups in Syria attempting to gain entry to the U.S. through the U.S. refugee program.” The Obama administration plans to resettle at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in the U.S. this year. Over 3,600 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the U.S. since 2011, including more than 1,700 this fiscal year. Law enforcement and intelligence officials have repeatedly indicated that the U.S. lacks the reliable and credible intelligence required to properly vet and screen potential Syrian refugees.
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FOREIGN JIHADIST NETWORKS & SAFE HAVENS

ISIS

- At least 34 Islamist extremist groups have pledged their allegiance to ISIS. ISIS, its affiliates, and supporting groups currently operate in approximately two dozen countries or territories, including Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Nigeria, the Palestinian territories (Gaza), Pakistan, Philippines, Russia (North Caucasus region), Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.⁵ The group has established eight official branches. ISIS may declare another formal branch in Southeast Asia in the near future.
- ISIS—in command of 20–25,000 fighters—controls nearly two dozen cities and towns across Iraq and Syria, despite losing some of its territory since 2014.⁶ ISIS also occupies roughly 60 miles of strategic terrain along Syria’s northern border with Turkey. The group has anchored its territorial claims in Syria and Iraq with strongholds in Raqqa and Mosul, respectively. The Director of National Intelligence James Clapper recently commented that it will take a “long time” to retake Mosul and that it will not happen under the Obama Administration.
- In Libya, ISIS controls the coastal city of Sirte, which provides the group with access to more than 150 miles of coastline on the Mediterranean Sea. It also has a smaller presence in Benghazi, Darna, and Sabratha. It has reportedly amassed as many as 6,500 fighters across Libya, an estimate that has doubled over the last 12 to 18 months. ISIS in Libya has also bolstered its ties with Boko Haram in Nigeria, particularly since the latter pledged its allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi in 2015.

⁵ Data compiled by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

⁶ These figures are derived from assessments of territorial control conducted by the Institute for the Study of War research organization.



- ISIS's affiliate in Egypt, which blew up a commercial passenger plane in 2015, has maintained its foothold in the Sinai Peninsula. ISIS has recently launched an intensive online media campaign that "underscores the organization's view of Sinai as a critical battlefield." The Israeli Defense Forces assess that HAMAS has provided financial, training, communications, and medical support to the Sinai affiliate's estimated 600–1,000 fighters.
- In Afghanistan, ISIS's estimated 1–3,000 fighters currently operate in southern Nangarhar province along the Pakistan border. In Yemen, ISIS has exploited the ongoing civil war to draw recruits and expand its footprint. It recently launched a string of bombings targeting Yemen's military and police forces. ISIS may soon declare a new affiliate in Southeast Asia.

Al Qaeda

- Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate Jabhat al Nusra, which has established a significant footprint in northern and western Syria, "is laying the groundwork for al Qaeda's first sovereign state." Al Qaeda's leaders in Pakistan are reportedly working to establish a second base of operations in Syria, including by deploying senior operatives to the country.
- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) maintains a sizable presence in Yemen. It continues to wield significant influence in southern and eastern Yemen, despite withdrawing from the port city of Mukalla under pressure from pro-government forces in late April. U.S. Central Command chief General Joseph Votel warned earlier this year "If we do not deal with AQAP, it is only a matter of time before the group uses its expanded capabilities and safe haven to attempt another attack against the U.S."
- Al Qaeda and its affiliate Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent have a presence inside Afghanistan. The Department of Defense recently assessed that Al Qaeda has increased its cooperation with the Taliban and can act as an accelerant for Taliban operations.
- Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has launched major attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ivory Coast since late 2015. These attacks appear to be part of a broader targeting, financing, and recruiting campaign. Al Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia, al Shabaab, continues to present a serious threat to Western and local interests in east Africa. Al Qaeda-linked groups are also operating in Libya.

GUANTANAMO BAY DETAINEES

- The Director of National Intelligence's latest assessment of recidivism among former Guantanamo Bay detainees concluded that over 30 percent of detainees released have returned or are suspected of having returned to jihadist activity.
- The Obama Administration transferred al Qaeda member Ibrahim Qosi to Sudan in 2012. Since then, Qosi—a Sudanese associate of Osama bin Laden—has joined AQAP and was recently featured in the group's *Inspire* magazine. He has also been a prominent recruiter and propagandist since he reportedly joined the group in 2014.



- The Defense Department on April 16 announced the transfer of nine Yemeni detainees to Saudi Arabia. The Obama Administration has released 27 terrorists from Guantanamo Bay thus far in 2016. There are currently 80 remaining detainees at Guantanamo.
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THE IRANIAN TERROR THREAT

- Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps has continued to deploy forces to Syria to support Assad's regime, empowering Sunni extremists and extending the conflict's duration and severity.
- Iranian officials recently hosted senior leaders of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terror organization. Iran has historically provided weapons, money, and training to PIJ, which has been targeting Israel for decades.
- The Iranian regime "may be able to deploy an operational [intercontinental ballistic missile] by 2020," according to a recent U.S. Northern Command assessment.