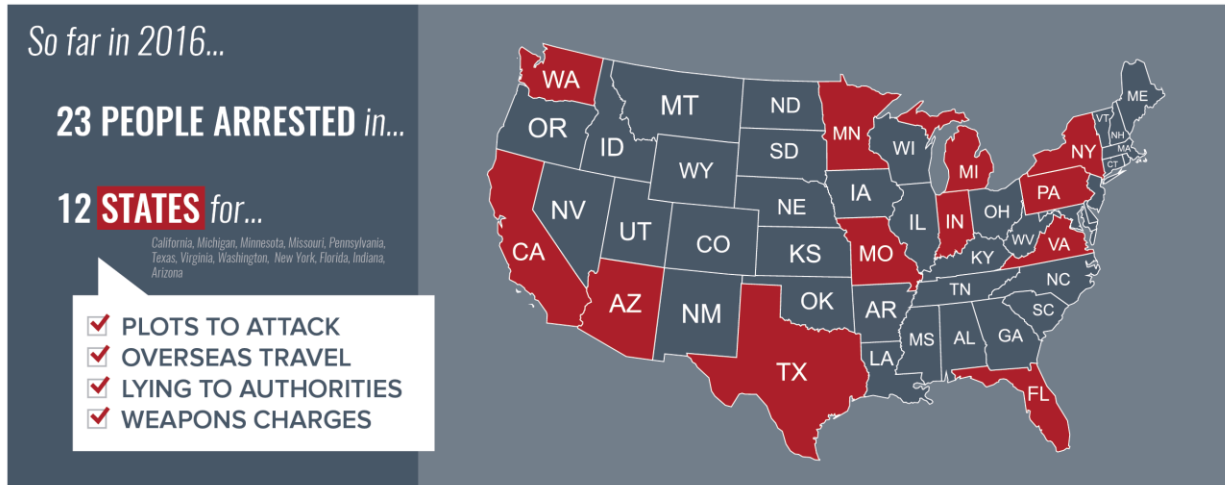




THE ISIS TERROR THREAT IN AMERICA



Since 2009...

**ISLAMIST TERRORISTS
HAVE KILLED 90 PEOPLE
INSIDE THE U.S.**

HOMELAND.HOUSE.GOV

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 assessments.

KEY POINTS

- **Islamist terrorists have waged a deadly campaign of violence, particularly in Europe where ISIS-linked terrorists launched four separate attacks over a two-week period in July.** ISIS supporters in France killed a priest in Normandy and dozens of people celebrating Bastille Day in Nice; in Germany, they conducted two separate attacks. These strikes in Europe followed what was the deadliest post-9/11 Islamist terror attack on American soil in June.
- **ISIS and al Qaeda continue to operate in safe havens that can serve as launching pads for external operations.** ISIS's unprecedented social media capabilities and propaganda are also accelerating its ability to inspire global audiences.
- **Islamist terror operatives deployed posing as refugees and radicalized refugees have conducted attacks inside Europe.** Refugees living in Germany recently executed two separate attacks on a passenger train and at a music festival.



- **The Obama Administration has continued to transfer Guantanamo Bay detainees overseas despite an alarming recidivism rate among former detainees.** Less than 80 detainees remain at the terror detention facility; around a third of them have reportedly been cleared for transfer.
- **The Iranian regime continues to host senior al Qaeda members in Iran.** Several al Qaeda members involved in financial and weapons transfers are actively operating inside Iran.

HOMEGROWN ISLAMIST EXTREMISM

- FBI Director James Comey estimated in May 2016 that around 80 percent of the Bureau's more than 1,000 active homegrown terror investigations are linked to ISIS. Attacks directed or inspired by ISIS represent "the greatest threat to the physical safety of Americans today," he added in July 2016.
- Since September 11, 2001, there have been at least 163 homegrown jihadist plots in the United States, including attempts to join terrorist groups overseas and execute attacks at home. More than 86 percent of these cases have occurred or been uncovered since 2009.¹
- Authorities have arrested 102 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. Seven ISIS-linked terrorists have been killed while carrying out five separate attacks in California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Texas.
- Nearly 90 percent of the ISIS supporters charged in the U.S. are male and approximately 35 percent of them are converts to Islam; their average age is 26.³ Nearly one-third of the ISIS-linked individuals charged were involved in plotting attacks in the Homeland.

Recent Developments

- July 28: Robert Blake Jackson, a 31-year-old U.S. citizen from Pensacola, Florida, was arrested for lying to the FBI about his pro-ISIS posts on Facebook.
- July 21: Three U.S. citizens from southern Florida—52-year-old Gregory Hubbard, 50-year-old Darren Jackson, and 31-year-old Dayne Christian—were arrested after declaring their support for ISIS and intent to travel overseas to join the group. Authorities arrested Hubbard at the Miami International Airport where he was preparing to fly to Europe.
- July 17: Elias Gebreweit Isaac, a 27-year-old from Santa Rosa, California, was arrested after pledging allegiance to ISIS and threatening police officers.

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 figures are provided by the George Washington University's Program on Extremism. See:

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



- July 8: Haris Qamar, a 25-year-old U.S. citizen born in Brooklyn, New York, was arrested after taking photographs in Washington, D.C. that he believed were intended to be used in an ISIS video encouraging attacks. Qamar had attempted to travel overseas to join ISIS in 2014.
 - July 8: Yusuf Wehelie, a 25-year-old U.S. citizen from Virginia, was arrested by FBI counterterrorism agents after attempting to transport four guns from Maryland to Virginia. Wehelie had previously been under investigation for his contacts with an American al Qaeda recruit in Yemen.
 - July 7: Munir Abdulkader, a 21-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen, was arrested in May 2015 after he plotted to kill a U.S. military employee and attack a police station in Ohio. Abdulkader received direction from Syria-based ISIS operative Junaid Hussain and pledged his support for ISIS on Twitter.
 - July 3: Mohamed Bailor Jalloh, a 26-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen and former U.S. Army National Guard member, was arrested for helping plot an attack in America on behalf of ISIS. A member of ISIS who is now dead had communicated with Jalloh and directed him to assist with the execution of a plot with another individual. Jalloh traveled to Nigeria in 2015 where investigators believe he met with ISIS members. Jalloh also indicated he was inspired by Anwar al Awlaki's online sermons and Nidal Hassan's attack at Fort Hood in 2009.
 - July 1: Mahin Khan, an 18-year-old from Tucson, Arizona, was arrested for plotting to attack government buildings in Phoenix and Tucson. Khan's classmate said he posted "calls for [j]ihad" on Facebook. Khan was coordinating with an individual he believed to be an ISIS member.
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ISIS TERROR ATTACK PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST

- There have been at least 103 ISIS-linked plots to attack Western targets since 2014, including 30 inside the U.S.⁴

Recent Developments

- July 25: Two French nationals who pledged allegiance to ISIS attacked a church in Normandy, France, murdering an 85-year-old priest. The attackers had both attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS and were reportedly known to French counterterrorism authorities. ISIS's media outlets released a video of the attackers' pledge.
- July 24: A 27-year-old Syrian man who pledged allegiance to ISIS and was living in a refugee shelter since 2014 conducted a suicide bombing outside a music festival in Ansbach, Germany, injuring 15 people. The attacker recorded his pledge on a cell phone recovered after the attack.
- July 18: A 17-year-old Afghan refugee wielding an axe and a knife attacked passengers on a train near Wurzburg, Germany, injuring at least three people. ISIS claimed credit for the attack.

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



Authorities found a hand-drawn ISIS flag and a letter about taking “revenge on the infidels” in his bedroom.

- July 14: A 31-year-old Tunisian national with a French residency permit drove a truck through a crowd taking in the Bastille Day celebration in the southern resort town of Nice, France, killing 84 people. The attacker had sought out radical Islamist propaganda online, including ISIS materials. ISIS’s media outlet declared the attacker was a “soldier of the Islamic State” who had responded to the group’s call for its followers to launch attacks in Europe.
- July 10: South African authorities arrested four individuals who had plotted to attack the U.S. Embassy and Jewish community targets in South Africa. Two of them, twin brothers, also attempted to fly to Syria to join ISIS.
- July 7: Munir Abdulkader, a 21-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen, was arrested in May 2015 after he plotted to kill a U.S. military employee and attack a police station in Ohio. Abdulkader received direction from Syria-based ISIS operative Junaid Hussain—who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in August 2015—and pledged his support for ISIS on Twitter.
- July 3: Mohamed Bailor Jalloh, a 26-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen and former U.S. Army National Guard member, was arrested for plotting an attack in America on behalf of ISIS. A member of ISIS who is now dead had communicated with Jalloh and directed him to assist with the execution of a plot with another individual. Jalloh traveled to Nigeria where investigators believe he met with ISIS members. Jalloh also indicated he was inspired by Anwar al Awlaki’s online sermons.
- July 1: Mahin Khan, an 18-year-old from Tucson, Arizona, was arrested for plotting to attack government buildings in Phoenix and Tucson. Khan’s classmate said he posted “calls for [j]ihad” on Facebook. Khan was coordinating with an individual he believed to be an ISIS member.
- July 1: ISIS-linked terrorists attacked a café in Bangladesh’s capital that expatriates were known to visit. The attackers killed at least 22 people, including an American citizen and two individuals studying at U.S. universities.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS

- More than 40,000 fighters—including at least 6,900 from Western countries—have traveled to Syria and Iraq 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 estimated in April 2016 that up to 500 foreign fighters travel to Syria and Iraq every month. That number had spiked to as high as 2,000.



- Europol recently assessed that there was an “increased risk” that foreign fighters may exploit migratory flows to enter Europe. Two recent attacks in Germany were conducted by refugees from Syria and Afghanistan. German authorities arrested several Syrian nationals plotting an attack in Dusseldorf in early June. 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. At least two of the ISIS attackers in Paris last November infiltrated Europe by 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 7,000 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the U.S. since 2011, including more than 5,200 this fiscal year. The vetting process for these refugees, which includes the collection of background information and interviews, is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department, with assistance from U.S. government security agencies. It typically takes 18 to 24 months for refugees to be resettled in the United States after their applications are referred by the United Nations. American law enforcement and intelligence officials have repeatedly indicated that the U.S. lacks reliable and credible intelligence 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 have operated in approximately two dozen countries or territories, including Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, 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 soon declare a new branch in the Philippines, where several jihadist groups have pledged allegiance to it.
- ISIS—in command of 18–22,000 fighters—controls nearly two dozen cities and towns across Iraq and Syria, despite losing some of its territory since 2014.⁶ As of late June, it still dominated more than 25,000 square miles of territory across the two countries.⁷ ISIS also occupies around 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.
- ISIS’s Libyan branch, “the most developed and the most dangerous” of its affiliates, has fielded as many as 8,000 fighters. Anti-ISIS forces have recently taken territory from ISIS in and around the coastal city of Sirte, where fighting remains intense. A non-governmental organization assessed in June 2016 that ISIS will likely establish a new safe haven in southwest Libya in response to the pressure it is facing in Sirte.

⁵ Data compiled by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee using open source materials.

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

⁷ This figure was calculated based on an estimate of ISIS’s territorial control provided by Special President Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL Brett McGurk before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 28, 2016. See http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/062816_McGurk_Testimony.pdf.



- ISIS's affiliate in Egypt, which blew up a commercial passenger plane in 2015, has maintained its foothold in the Sinai Peninsula with up to 1,000 fighters. ISIS terrorists claimed responsibility for killing a Coptic Christian priest and targeting local policemen in the Sinai Peninsula over the last month. The Israeli Defense Forces assess that HAMAS has provided financial, training, communications, and medical support to ISIS in the Sinai.
- ISIS' affiliate in Afghanistan recently conducted its first major suicide bombing attack in the capital of Kabul, targeting members of the Shi'a community. The group, largely comprised of former Pakistan Taliban fighters, has traditionally been operating in southern Nangarhar province along the Pakistan border. In Yemen, ISIS has exploited the ongoing civil war to expand its footprint, recently executing coordinated bombing attacks on pro-government security forces in southern Yemen.

Al Qaeda

- Syria-based Jabhat al Nusra (JN) has been operating as al Qaeda's "largest affiliate." National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas Rasmussen recently expressed concerns over al Qaeda's safe haven in Syria "because we know [al Qaeda] is trying to strengthen its global networks by relocating some of its remaining leadership cadre from South Asia to Syria." The recently announced "split" of JN from al Qaeda is more likely a rebranding effort and is unlikely to change the fundamental nature of the jihadist group, according to one nongovernmental assessment.
- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which has up to 4,000 members, maintains a significant presence in Yemen, particularly in the south and in the east. AQAP is "using the unrest in Yemen to provide a haven from which to plan future attacks against our allies as well as the U.S. and its interests" according to U.S. Central Command.
- Al Qaeda and its affiliate Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent have a presence inside Afghanistan. The Defense Department assessed in May 2016 that Al Qaeda has increased its cooperation with the Taliban and can act as an accelerant for the Taliban's operations.
- Al Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia, al Shabaab, continues to present a serious threat to Western and regional interests in east Africa. U.S. Africa Command thwarted an al Shabaab attack plot against American military personnel in Somalia in June 2016.
- Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has launched several major attacks in West Africa since late 2015, which appear to be part of a broader targeting, financing, and recruiting campaign. Al Qaeda-linked groups are also operating in Libya.

GUANTANAMO BAY DETAINEES

- The Director of National Intelligence's most recent 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 *Washington Post* reported on June 8 that the Obama Administration has assessed that at least a dozen former Guantanamo detainees conducted attacks on American and allied forces in Afghanistan following their release.



- The Defense Department announced on July 11 the transfer of Muhammadi Davlatov and Mansur Ahmad Saad al-Dayfi to the Serbian government. The Obama Administration has released 28 terrorists from Guantanamo Bay thus far in 2016. There are currently 76 remaining detainees at Guantanamo; 27 of them have reportedly been approved for transfer to foreign countries.
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THE IRANIAN TERROR THREAT

- The U.S. Treasury Department in July sanctioned three senior al Qaeda members operating inside Iran as part of a terror facilitation network. The broader al Qaeda network inside Iran has been operating there under a formal agreement with the Iranian regime.
- Iran's terrorist proxy Lebanese Hezbollah has stockpiled an estimated 100,000 rockets and missiles, including weapons capable of hitting targets across all of Israel.
- German officials have reportedly warned that Iran has been attempting to illicitly purchase nuclear equipment from German suppliers over the last year. Iranian companies that had previously been sanctioned for their involvement in the regime's nuclear program have increasingly sought to procure materials in China.
- Iranian authorities recently detained Reza Shahini, a 46-year-old dual U.S.-Iranian citizen from San Diego, California, for "crime against the state."