



THE ISIS TERROR THREAT IN AMERICA

So far in 2016...

29 PEOPLE ARRESTED in...

16 STATES for...

California, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Texas,
Virginia, Washington, New York, Florida, Indiana, Arizona, North
Carolina, Kentucky, New Jersey, Maryland, District of Columbia

- ✓ PLOTS TO ATTACK
- ✓ OVERSEAS TRAVEL
- ✓ FINANCIAL SUPPORT
- ✓ LYING TO AUTHORITIES
- ✓ WEAPONS CHARGES



ISIS-LINKED ATTACKERS HAVE killed or injured 145 PEOPLE IN THE U.S. in 2016

In September...



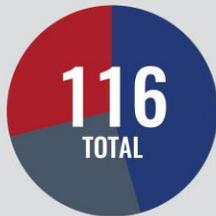
**10 injured in
MINNESOTA**
mall stabbing



**33 injured in
NY/NJ**
bombings

ISIS-LINKED PLOTS TO ATTACK THE WEST

(2014-Present)



- **51 IN EUROPE**
- **36 IN THE U.S.**
- **29 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 assessments.



KEY POINTS

- **ISIS’s ability to sow terror in the West has not been significantly diminished as the United States confronts the most alarming terror threat environment since 9/11.**
- **Islamist terrorists from ISIS to al Qaeda sit atop a global jihadist network strengthened by safe havens, hardened fighters, local supporters, diverse resources, and advanced technologies.**
- **The “terrorist diaspora” from Syria and Iraq will remain a significant threat in the years to come, particularly as fighters continue to infiltrate the West amidst massive refugee and migrant flows.**
- **The primary state sponsor of terror, Iran, continues to threaten the United States and undermine its interests. It is dismantling the sanctions regime, developing more robust military and nuclear capabilities, spreading its malevolent influence throughout the Middle East, and sustaining the conflicts that empower extremists of all stripes.**
- **Former Guantanamo Bay terror detainees are continuing to return to the ranks of jihadist organizations at a dangerous clip.**

HOMEGROWN ISLAMIST EXTREMISM

- **FBI Director James Comey stated in September 2016 that the Bureau has about 1,000 active homegrown terror investigations. He estimated in May 2016 that around 80 percent of active homegrown terror investigations are related to ISIS.**
- **Since September 11, 2001, there have been at least 171 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 109 individuals in the U.S. and charged 4 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. Eight ISIS-linked terrorists have been killed while carrying out five separate attacks in California, Florida, Massachusetts, Texas, and Minnesota.**
- **Nearly 90 percent of the ISIS supporters charged in the U.S. are male and their average age is 26.³ Nearly one-third of the ISIS-linked individuals charged were involved in plotting attacks inside the United States.**

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/Sept.%202016%20Update.pdf>.



Recent Developments

- September 30: Nelash Mohamed Das, a 24-year-old Bangladeshi citizen who has been living in Maryland as a legal permanent resident, was arrested after he plotted to kill a member of the U.S. military on behalf of ISIS.
- September 18: Ahmad Khan Rahami, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen who was born in Afghanistan and is a resident of Elizabeth, New Jersey, was arrested after launching a bombing campaign targeting multiple locations in New York and New Jersey. Rahami was carrying a journal citing ISIS's call for its followers in the West to launch attacks at home.
- September 18: Dahir Adan, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen living in St. Cloud, Minnesota, attacked nearly a dozen people with a knife at a mall. Adan was born to a Somali family in Kenya before immigrating to the United States.
- September 8: Marie Castelli, a 56-year-old U.S. citizen and Muslim convert from Maysville, Kentucky, was arrested after issuing violent threats and lying to federal authorities. Castelli promoted ISIS propaganda through social media.

ISIS TERROR ATTACK PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST

- There have been at least 116 ISIS-linked plots to attack Western targets since 2014, including 36 inside the United States.⁴

Recent Developments

- September 30: Nelash Mohamed Das expressed support for ISIS through social media, claimed he was in communication with ISIS members overseas, and attempted to target the U.S. military on behalf of ISIS.
- September 25: French authorities arrested two young women who had been plotting an attack in France. The women, 17 and 19 years old, had been communicating with a French ISIS operative who reportedly encouraged them to launch specific attacks in France.
- September 21: German authorities arrested a 16-year-old Syrian refugee they believed was plotting an attack. The suspect was communicating with ISIS and had received specific guidance on building a bomb.
- September 18: Ahmad Khan Rahami was carrying a journal with references indicating he was following the guidance of Abu Muhammad al Adnani, who was the "principal architect" of ISIS's external operations before a U.S. airstrike eliminated him on August 30, 2016. Rahami wrote that Adnani and Anwar al Awlaki, the former external operations head for al Qaeda's branch in Yemen, "said it clearly attack the [non-believers] in their backyard."

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



- September 18: Dahir Adan reportedly asked victims during his stabbing spree at a mall in Minnesota if they were Muslim. ISIS's primary media arm claimed Adan was an ISIS supporter shortly after the attack.
 - September 10: Ihsas Khan, a 22-year-old man who was inspired by ISIS, attacked and stabbed an individual in Sydney, Australia.
 - September 10: French authorities arrested a 15-year-old boy who was reportedly plotting an imminent attack in Paris, France. The boy, who had been under house arrest since November 2015, was believed to communicating with a prominent French ISIS operative.
 - September 10: An ISIS-linked cyber hacking group released a "kill list" with information about real estate professionals in the United States and encouraged individuals to locate and attack them.
 - September 9: French authorities arrested the members of a female ISIS terror cell that plotted a bombing near the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, France. One of the women had been engaged to two ISIS supporters who separately killed a priest and a police official and his partner. French authorities have also unraveled multiple terror plots in the French Riviera since the July 2016 Nice attack.
 - September 8: ISIS supporter Marie Castelli posted the name, address, and photograph of an individual she encouraged others to attack and execute.
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FOREIGN FIGHTERS

- More than 42,900 fighters—including at least 7,900 from Western countries—have reportedly traveled to Syria and Iraq from at least 120 countries since 2011. The number of fighters flowing into Syria and Iraq every month has reportedly dropped from 2,000 to "as few as 50." Around 250 of the Western fighters traveled from the United States and 5,000 of them traveled from European Union countries. 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.
- Europol Director Rob Wainwright recently predicted that Europe will face a "generation-long struggle" with "thousands of foreign fighters" returning to the continent. Europol estimates that nearly 2,000 European fighters have returned home from Syria and Iraq. FBI Director Comey recently warned "[t]here will be a terrorist diaspora sometime in the next two to five years like we've never seen before."
- A Syrian refugee living in a shelter in Germany who had reportedly been "rapidly radicalized" was arrested after plotting an attack on behalf of ISIS. A recent Syrian suicide bomber in Germany had reportedly sought asylum in Europe after illegally entering the continent in 2013. 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; Hungarian officials believe a majority of the attackers in Paris used migrant routes to enter Europe.

- 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 has resettled nearly 13,000 refugees in the United States this past fiscal year and has vowed to help "bring even more" this coming year. The vetting process for these refugees, which typically takes 18 to 24 months, is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department, with assistance from U.S. government security agencies. 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 controls more than a dozen cities and towns across Iraq and Syria, despite losing significant terrain since 2014, including half of its territory in Iraq and a quarter of its territory in Syria.⁶ The group has anchored its territorial claims in Syria and Iraq with strongholds in Raqqa and Mosul, respectively. American military officials have indicated they are preparing to assist local, anti-ISIS forces launch an assault in Mosul this month.
- ISIS's Libyan branch, described by CIA Director John Brennan in June 2016 as "the most developed and the most dangerous" of its affiliates, has been largely dislodged from its base in the coastal city of Sirte. Its territory there has been reduced to a square kilometer. ISIS fighters will, however, continue to have a presence in other parts of Libya and they may establish a new base and sanctuary in southern Libya.
- ISIS's affiliate in Egypt, which blew up a commercial passenger plane in 2015, has maintained its foothold in the Sinai Peninsula. Its militants have continued targeting local security forces. The Israeli Defense Forces assess that HAMAS, the Palestinian terrorist organization based in the Gaza Strip, has provided financial, training, communications, and medical support to ISIS in the Sinai.
- ISIS's affiliate in Afghanistan has been vying for control over territory in eastern Afghanistan despite joint U.S.-Afghan operations targeting it. The group, largely comprised of former Pakistani

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.



Taliban fighters, has traditionally operated in southern Nangarhar province along the Pakistan border.

- ISIS's supporters in East Africa have established a base in Puntland, Somalia, and are actively recruiting followers under the direction of a former al Shabaab operative. ISIS supporters in neighboring Kenya recently launched an attack on local police forces.
- In Yemen, ISIS has exploited the ongoing civil war to expand its footprint. It recently claimed responsibility for the killing of a local security official in Aden.
- The head of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service recently warned that ISIS-affiliated groups in Indonesia and the Philippines pose a growing terror threat.

Al Qaeda

- Syria-based Jabhat al Nusra (JN) is al Qaeda's largest affiliate. It will continue to support al Qaeda's ideology and intent to attack the West despite its recent "separation" announcement and name change (to Jabhat Fatah al Sham), according to National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas Rasmussen. JN has increasingly integrated Syrian opposition fighters facing a coordinated assault from the forces of the Assad regime, Russia, and Iran and its proxies. It has been gaining traction within the Syrian population and could consolidate its control over a "protected territorial base on the borders of Europe that the international community would find very hard to root out."
- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), supported by up to 4,000 members, has exploited the ongoing conflict in Yemen to "provide a haven from which to plan future attacks" against the U.S. and its allies. AQAP has intertwined itself with local militias and civilian populations as a way to increase its influence.
- Al Qaeda and its affiliate Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent have recently had 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. The Taliban either controls or is fighting for control over at least 30 percent of Afghanistan's population. The al Qaeda-aligned Haqqani Network constitutes "the primary threat to Americans, to coalition members and to Afghans, especially in and around Kabul."
- Al Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia, al Shabaab, continues to pose a threat to Western and regional interests in East Africa despite being weakened by local security forces. The group "retains the ability to retake territory" in Somalia. Al Shabaab forces recently attacked local government forces and U.S. military advisors in Somalia. In June 2016, U.S. Africa Command thwarted an al Shabaab attack plot against American military personnel in Somalia.
- Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has launched several major attacks in West Africa since late 2015. AQIM has been attempting to expand its influence in Libya, including through proxies.



GUANTANAMO BAY DETAINEES

- The Director of National Intelligence’s most recent assessment of recidivism among former Guantanamo Bay detainees concluded that at least 30 percent of detainees released have returned or are suspected of having returned to jihadist activity. At least 20 detainees released since 2009 are known or suspected to have reengaged in the fight.
- There are now 61 detainees left at Guantanamo Bay; around a third of them are awaiting transfer overseas.
- *The Washington Post* reported in June 2016 that the Obama Administration has assessed that at least a dozen former Guantanamo detainees have conducted deadly attacks on American and allied forces in Afghanistan following their release.

THE IRANIAN TERROR THREAT

- Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Navy has recently deployed its missile ships and high-speed attack boats to conduct aggressive and threatening maneuvers near U.S. Navy vessels. These types of provocations have reportedly risen more than 50 percent since last year. Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen recently attacked a naval vessel owned by the United Arab Emirates.
- Iranian leaders have been touting their ongoing development of ballistic missiles. In January 2016, the Obama Administration agreed – in a secret agreement coinciding with the release of American hostages and the transfer of \$1.7 billion to Tehran – to the lifting of United Nations sanctions on two Iranian banks that facilitated procurement for Iran’s missile industry.
- Iranian-directed fighters, including from Iraqi Shi’a militias, have reportedly converged on Aleppo, Syria, in order to support the Assad regime’s offensive in the city. In Lebanon, Iran’s terrorist proxy Hezbollah has stockpiled an estimated 100,000 rockets and missiles, including weapons capable of hitting targets across all of Israel.
- Iran and Russia have recently enhanced their military cooperation through basing access and weapons system transfers. Iran’s hosting of Russian military assets on its soil allows it to improve its deterrence capabilities. Russia’s illicit transfer of the S-300 missile system to Iran represents a “strategic game changer” that will complicate U.S. military planning.
- 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.