



THE ISIS TERROR THREAT IN AMERICA

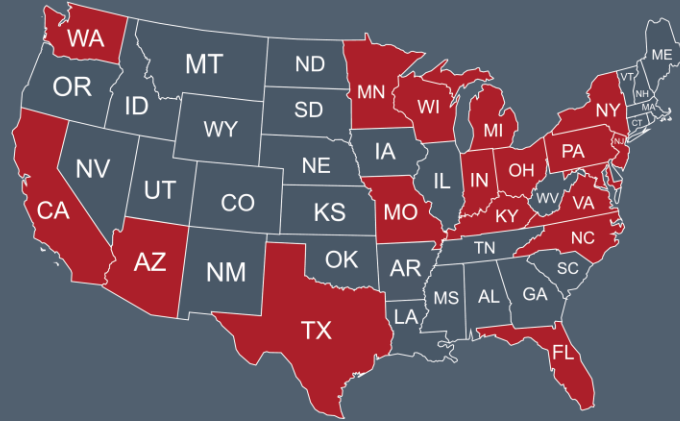
So far in 2016...

34 PEOPLE ARRESTED in...

18 STATES for...

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

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



VIRGINIA has the most **ISIS-LINKED ARRESTS** in 2016.

TOTAL = 6 ARRESTS
(2016-Present)



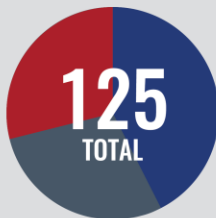
NEW YORK has the most **ISIS-LINKED ARRESTS** from 2014.

TOTAL = 22 ARRESTS
(2014-Present)



ISIS-LINKED PLOTS TO ATTACK THE WEST

(2014-Present)



- **55** IN EUROPE
- **38** IN THE U.S.
- **32** 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' message continues to resonate with American citizens as more extremists plot attacks on American soil and attempt to travel overseas to join the terror group.**
- **ISIS has targeted the West at an alarming rate, marked by a recent surge in ISIS-linked plots to attack US and allied interests abroad.**
- **ISIS and al Qaeda continue to take advantage of safe havens to consolidate their power and territory, as well as plan attacks.**
- **The threat of the "terrorist diaspora" to the West will continue to grow, particularly as fighters flee from recent offensives in Mosul and Raqqa.**
- **Iran continues to take aggressive steps to threaten US interests at home and abroad, particularly in the Gulf.**
- **Guantanamo Bay detainees are continuing to return to the fight to replenish the ranks of jihadist organizations.**

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 223 homegrown jihadist plots in the United States, including attempts to join terrorist groups overseas and execute attacks at home. More than 90 percent of these cases have occurred or been uncovered since 2009.¹
- Authorities have arrested 114 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

- November 7: Aaron Travis Daniels, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Ohio, was arrested after attempting to travel to Libya to join ISIS. Daniels planned to fly from the United States to Trinidad and then on to Libya. Daniels had expressed his support for ISIS through social media and sent money to an ISIS operative overseas.
- October 28: Marlonn Hicks, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen from Indiana, pleaded guilty to a charge that he distributed information on making explosives with the intent to assist in the execution of a terror attack on behalf of ISIS.
- October 12: Michelle Bastian, a 49-year-old U.S. citizen from Arizona, was arrested after conspiring to bomb a prison where her husband is incarcerated for a 2007 murder conviction. Bastian provided her husband copies of jihadist magazines that contained instructions for planning terror attacks.
- October 5: Jason Ludke, a 35-year-old U.S. citizen, and Yoasvany Padilla-Conde, a 30-year-old immigrant whose residency status is not clear, were arrested after attempting to join ISIS overseas. The two men—both residents of Milwaukee, Wisconsin— were on their way to Mexico to obtain documents to facilitate onward travel to Iraq or Yemen.

ISIS TERROR ATTACK PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST

- There have been at least 125 ISIS-linked plots to attack Western targets since 2014, a surge from 116 plots in October. This figure includes 38 ISIS-linked plots inside the United States.⁴

Recent Developments

- November 3: German authorities arrested a 27-year-old Syrian believed to be planning an attack on behalf of ISIS. The man was seeking asylum in Germany and had received guidance from an ISIS operative in Syria.
- October 28: ISIS supporter Marlonn Hicks intended to facilitate an attack in the United States when he sent information on making explosives to an individual online. Hicks had previously expressed a desire to join ISIS overseas. He began taking further steps to engage in terror activity on behalf of ISIS following the June 2016 Orlando attack executed by ISIS supporter Omar Mateen.
- October 27: ISIS claimed responsibility for stabbing a security guard at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.
- October 27: German authorities announced that in March they arrested a 19-year-old Syrian ISIS member who had been plotting a terror attack in Berlin and had served as a local contact for potential attackers in Germany. He arrived in Germany as an asylum seeker in the summer of 2015.

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



- October 13: Two 16-year-olds who pledged allegiance to ISIS were arrested after planning to conduct an attack in Sydney, Australia.
 - October 12: Michelle Bastian sent her incarcerated husband a copy of Dabiq, ISIS's magazine, as part of a plot to bomb a prison.
 - October 10: German authorities arrested a 22-year-old Syrian refugee they believed was planning a suicide bombing in Berlin targeting an airport.
 - October 8: An Egyptian ISIS supporter attacked a vehicle carrying five U.S. service members in Kuwait using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.
 - October 4: British authorities arrested a 33-year-old ISIS supporter who intended to assist in the execution of an attack by providing instructions on the use of encryption software.
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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. According to Wainwright, “ISIL are in the business of getting their people back into Europe in increasingly sophisticated ways,” which includes obtaining high-quality false travel documents. He noted a recent “pickup in the rate of return,” noticeably to Britain, Sweden and Italy. 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.”
- According to EU Commissioner for the Security Union Julian King, an influx of jihadists to Europe is possible as the battle to capture Mosul from the Islamic state wages on. “The retaking of the IS's northern Iraq territory, Mosul, may lead to the return to Europe of violent IS fighters,” King said. “This is a very serious threat and we must be prepared to face it.”
- The suspected coordinator of the Paris attacks on November 13, 2015 and the Brussels terror attacks on March 22, 2016 has been identified as Oussama Atar, who is of dual Belgian and Moroccan nationality. Also known by the name Abu Ahmad, Atar is a cousin of the El Bakraoui brothers who were responsible for the Brussels airport and metro attack in March. Atar is thought to have directed



the attacks from Syria and has been known to Belgian authorities for years. He previously spent time in Abu Ghraib prison in 2005 for illegally crossing the border into Iraq.

- Jaber Albakr, a Syrian refugee that came to Germany seeking asylum, was arrested in October 2016 on suspicion of planning a bomb attack at a Berlin airport two days after escaping a raid on his apartment that contained explosives. Days later, Albakr committed suicide in his cell in Leipzig, Germany.
- 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 the November 2015 attacks 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. 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.

FOREIGN JIHADIST NETWORKS & SAFE HAVENS

- 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
- In October 2016, the Iraqi Government launched an operation to retake Mosul, ISIS’ last remaining stronghold in Iraq and the largest city under the group’s control. The operation is backed by U.S. airstrikes and ground support and consists of both Iraqi regular troops and special forces, Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and Shia militias. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are working to encircle the city by approaching its eastern neighborhoods while also joining Peshmerga forces to the east and south. While supporting the offensive, an American serviceman was killed on October 20, 2016 by wounds

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.



sustained from an improvised explosive device near Bashiqa, marking the first U.S. service member to die in the fight to retake Mosul. In an effort to escape the offensive, ISIS has forced around 1,500 families to retreat with them near Mosul, some of which appear to be used as human shields.

- In early November 2016, Operation Euphrates Rage was launched by the Syrian Democratic Forces with the support of the United States and an international coalition to liberate Raqqa, Syria, the de facto capital of ISIS. The military plan will be carried out in stages with the initial goal of isolating the city to prevent fighters from escaping and blocking the group's supply routes stretching between Raqqa and Mosul. This operation was launched simultaneously with the offensive in Mosul to hinder ISIS' ability to exercise command and control and stretch the group's available resources. Liberating Raqqa would undercut the group's ability to carry out attacks and end its fictitious claim of a caliphate.
- 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. While the branch's territory there has been reduced to a square kilometer, continued urban warfare has resulted in the offensive's stall and the United States has halted air strikes since October 31, although Washington is prepared to conduct strikes at the request of Libya's UN-backed government. ISIS fighters will 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 and soldiers, with the recent killing of an Egyptian general in North Sinai by ISIS. The Israeli Defense Force assesses 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. In early October 2016, a U.S. service member was killed by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province during a patrol with Afghan forces as part of a counterterrorism mission against ISIS in the country. While the terrorist group, largely comprised of former Pakistani Taliban fighters, traditionally operate in southern Nangarhar province along the border with Pakistan, ISIS-claimed attacks have also occurred in other parts of country.
- 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. The group is gaining ground in the Puntland region with the recent capture of the fishing town of Qandala. ISIS supporters in neighboring Kenya also 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.



- In late October 2016, the U.S. Department of State ordered the family members of U.S. Consulate General employees in Istanbul, Turkey to depart due to information regarding extremist groups' efforts to attack U.S. citizens in Istanbul. The warning did not specify which extremist group posed the 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. Jabhat al Nusra has increasingly integrated Syrian opposition fighters to counter coordinated assaults 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 and is utilizing the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops supporting the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to occupy strategic towns in the south-central part of the country. 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 and the group claimed a recent suicide car bomb attack near Somalia's parliament in Mogadishu which left two soldiers dead and five wounded. Deadly attacks by the affiliate have spread beyond Somalia, with an October 2016 attack across the border in Mandera, Kenya killing 12 people. Mandera was also the location of a previous grenade and gun attack earlier in the month killing six.
 - 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.
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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 60 detainees left at Guantanamo Bay; as of late October 2016, 20 of them are waiting to be transferred 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.
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THE IRANIAN TERROR THREAT

- Iranian-backed forces in Yemen recently launched multiple missile attacks targeting a U.S. Navy vessel operating in the Red Sea. The Iranian regime has reportedly been increasing its provision of weapons, including missiles, to al Houthi fighters in Yemen. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Navy has also threatened U.S. Navy vessels in the Arabian Gulf, deploying its missile ships and high-speed attack boats to conduct aggressive maneuvers, at least the fourth incident of that nature in a month.
- Iranian-directed militias deployed to Syria to assist the Assad regime have been exacerbating sectarian conflict and helping create the conditions that allow Sunni extremists to thrive. In Iraq, as many as 100,000 Iranian-backed Shia militias known as the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) are gaining influence while helping the Iraqi army fight the Islamic State in Anbar Province. 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.