



**ISIS TERROR THREAT IN AMERICA**

**81** TOTAL ISIS-LINKED  
ARRESTS IN AMERICA

**21** ISIS-LINKED PLOTS TO  
LAUNCH ATTACKS IN  
AMERICA

**2016 - ISIS THREAT IN THE U.S. SO FAR...**

**6 PEOPLE  
ARRESTED IN..**

**5 STATES FOR..**

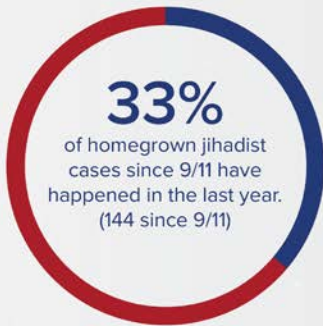
**4 TYPES OF ACTS**

- Plotting attacks
- Traveling overseas
- Lying to authorities
- Weapons charges



ISIS CONTROLS  
**150 MILES** OF LIBYA'S  
MEDITERRANEAN  
COASTLINE - WHICH IS  
LONGER THAN THE  
DISTANCE BETWEEN  
DC & PHILLY.

ISIS SANCTUARY  
ISIS CONTROLS TERRITORY  
IN IRAQ & SYRIA ROUGHLY  
THE LAND SIZE OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA.



**6,600**

Western fighters have traveled to the  
conflict zone to join ISIS.

**1,900**

European fighters have traveled to the  
conflict zone to join ISIS **and**  
returned to Europe.

**THE WEST**

**SYRIA/IRAQ**

**EUROPE**

**SYRIA/IRAQ**

[HOMELAND.HOUSE.GOV](http://HOMELAND.HOUSE.GOV)

*This document is produced by the Majority Staff of the House Homeland Security Committee.*



## KEY POINTS

- **The United States faces the highest Islamist terror threat environment since 9/11.** ISIS is waging war here in the homeland, where there have been 21 ISIS-linked plots to launch attacks. Law enforcement authorities have arrested 81 ISIS-linked suspects, including six thus far in 2016.
- **An increasing number of battle-hardened fighters from Europe are returning from jihadist training grounds.** Nearly 2,000 Europeans – among an estimated 6,600 Western fighters who have traveled to Syria and Iraq – have snuck back into Europe. A French counterterrorism official recently warned “We are moving towards a European 9/11: simultaneous attacks on the same day in several countries...We know the terrorists are working on this.”
- **Islamist terrorists are exploiting global refugee flows to infiltrate and target the West.** Germany’s domestic intelligence chief recently said terrorists “have slipped in camouflaged or disguised as refugees. This is a fact that the security agencies are facing.” A suspected ISIS terror plotter arrested in Germany this week snuck into Europe posing as a refugee. The European Union also recently assessed there is a “real and imminent danger” of Syrian refugees inside Europe being radicalized and recruited by Islamist extremists.
- **ISIS and al Qaeda are expanding their sanctuaries from North Africa to South Asia.** ISIS is reinforcing its foothold in Libya, where it has amassed as many as 6,500 fighters and controls coastal territory on the Mediterranean Sea. Al Qaeda is making further gains in Yemen and its key ally in Afghanistan controls more territory than it has at any point since 2001.
- **The Obama Administration has surged the release of terrorists from Guantanamo Bay despite alarming rates of recidivism.** The intelligence community has assessed that 30 percent of Guantanamo detainees released are either known to have or suspected of having rejoined the fight. The potential transfer of detainees to the United States, prohibited under law, would also pose a threat to the American people.
- **The Iranian regime gained access to \$100 billion in cash from the disastrous nuclear deal and is poised for further economic relief that will fuel its global network of terror.**

## HOMEGROWN ISLAMIST EXTREMISM

- Since September 11, 2001, there have been 144 terrorist plots in the U.S. involving homegrown violent jihadists. Nearly 85 percent of these cases—which include plots to launch attacks and to join foreign terrorist organizations overseas—have occurred or been uncovered after 2009.<sup>1</sup>
- Authorities have arrested 81 individuals in ISIS-related cases in the United States. Additionally, three ISIS-linked individuals have been charged in absentia. The cases involve individuals: plotting attacks; attempting to travel to join ISIS overseas; sending money, equipment, and weapons to terrorists; falsifying statements to federal authorities; and failing to report a felony.<sup>2</sup> Five ISIS-linked terrorists have been killed as they were carrying out attack plots.

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

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



- Nearly 90 percent of the ISIS supporters arrested by authorities are male and around 40 percent of them are converts to Islam; their average age is 26.<sup>3</sup> Around one-third of ISIS-linked suspects arrested by authorities were on their way to an airport with the intent of traveling overseas in support of ISIS. Almost one-third of ISIS-linked suspects arrested had ties to attack plots in the United States.

### Recent Developments

- February 6: Khalil Abu-Rayyan was arrested after planning to attack a church in Detroit, Michigan. Abu-Rayyan, a 21-year-old from Dearborn Heights, supported ISIS and had said “If I can’t do jihad in the Middle East, I would do my jihad over here.”
- January 25: Samy Mohamed Hamzeh was arrested after planning to attack a Masonic temple in Wisconsin. Hamzeh, a 23-year-old from Milwaukee, had also planned to launch an attack against Israelis and was charged with possession of machineguns.
- January 15: Joseph Hassan Farrokh and Amin Mohamed Elhassan were arrested after Farrokh attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS with Elhassan’s help. Farrokh, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen from Pennsylvania, and Elhassan, a 25-year-old legal permanent U.S. resident from Sudan, lived in Woodbridge, Virginia. Farrokh attempted to travel to Syria via Jordan.
- January 15: Amin al Baroudi, who was arrested in December 2015, pleaded guilty for delivering tactical equipment to Islamist fighters in Syria aligned with al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al Nusra. Baroudi, a 50-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen from Syria who had lived in Irvine, California, made several trips to Turkey in connection with the export of sniper rifle scopes and other gear to Syria.
- January 14: Mohamed Elshinawy, who was arrested in December 2015, was indicted for supporting ISIS and receiving funds he believed were given to him from ISIS for the purpose of launching attacks in the United States. Elshinawy, a 30-year-old from Edgewood, Maryland, sought to recruit others to join ISIS and communicated with associates overseas through social media.
- January 11: Malik Alim Jones, who was detained in Somalia in December 2015, was indicted for supporting and receiving military training from al Qaeda affiliate al Shabaab. Jones, a U.S. citizen from Maryland, had traveled from New York to Somalia via Kenya in 2011 and was recently attempting to travel to Yemen.

---

## **ISIS TERROR ATTACK PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST**

---

<sup>3</sup> These data points are from the George Washington University’s Program on Extremism. See: <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/ISIS%20in%20America%20-%20January%202016.pdf>.



- There have been 74 ISIS-linked plots to attack Western targets, including 21 inside in the United States, since 2014.<sup>4</sup>

### Recent Developments

- February 6: Khalil Abu-Rayyan was arrested after planning to attack a church in Detroit, Michigan. Abu-Rayyan, a 21-year-old from Dearborn Heights, supported ISIS and had said “If I can’t do jihad in the Middle East, I would do my jihad over here.”
- January 14: ISIS-linked operatives reportedly acting on orders from leaders in Syria attacked a Starbucks coffee shop and surrounding areas frequented by Westerners in Jakarta, Indonesia, killing three people. ISIS issued a statement claiming credit for the attack it said “targeted a gathering of nationals of the Crusader alliance.”
- January 12: An ISIS suicide bomber attacked an area frequented by tourists in Istanbul, Turkey, killing ten German nationals. The terror operative entered Turkey after registering as a refugee from Syria.
- January 11: A 15-year-old ISIS supporter attacked a Jewish teacher with a machete in Marseille, France. The attacker had moved from Turkey to France with his family in 2011 and told authorities the attack was “in the name of Allah and Islamic State.”

---

## **FOREIGN FIGHTERS**

- An estimated 36,500 Sunni fighters from 120 countries have converged on the battlefields of Syria and Iraq since 2011. This figure is more than seven times larger than the number of Islamist fighters who traveled to Afghanistan during the 1980s to fight the Soviet Union. This estimate represents a more than 80% increase over assessments from a year ago.
- An estimated 6,600 Westerners are among the fighters who have traveled to Syria and Iraq. Approximately 250 Americans have traveled – or attempted to travel – to Syria to fight. In 2015, 150 Islamist fighters traveled from the Caribbean region to the Middle East.
- Almost 2,000 European foreign fighters have reportedly returned to Europe from Syria and Iraq. The European Union’s law enforcement arm (Europol) warned in a recent report: “There is every reason to expect that [ISIS], [ISIS-] inspired terrorists or another religiously inspired terrorist group will undertake a terrorist attack somewhere in Europe again, but particularly in France, intended to cause mass casualties amongst the civilian population.”
- Up to 20,000 Shi’a militants, including those from Lebanese Hezbollah and Iraqi militias, have also traveled to the conflict zone to fight alongside the Assad regime under Iranian direction.

---

<sup>4</sup> These figures are based on open-source data compiled and analyzed by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee. They were recently adjusted in January 2016 after accounting for additional open-source information and analysis. In one case, the committee assessed that a report suggesting an ISIS connection to a 2014 Australia-based terror attack plot could not be confirmed. In another case, court proceedings related to an attack plot in Denmark in 2014 confirmed an ISIS connection that was not previously clear.



---

## FOREIGN JIHADIST NETWORKS & SAFE HAVENS

### *ISIS*

- ISIS has a direct presence, affiliates, or groups pledging support in at least 19 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.<sup>5</sup> According to the United Nations, 34 Islamist extremist groups have pledged allegiance to ISIS.
- ISIS controls around two dozen cities across Iraq and Syria.<sup>6</sup> It has maintained its core bases in Mosul, Iraq, and Raqqa, Syria, despite its territorial losses elsewhere. ISIS has also held roughly 70 miles of strategic terrain along Syria's border with Turkey. As of mid-December 2015, ISIS's territory across Iraq and Syria spanned more than 30,000 square miles, or nearly the size of South Carolina.
- In Libya, ISIS controls more than 150 miles of coastline on the Mediterranean Sea. It is based in the coastal city of Sirte, which had a pre-war population of 100,000, and has fielded as many as 6,500 fighters inside Libya. In Afghanistan, ISIS controls several towns near the border with Pakistan. It took over four districts in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, where it has an estimated 1,000 fighters. In Nigeria, ISIS's affiliate Boko Haram has remained a deadly force despite losing much of the nearly 20,000 square miles of territory it held early last year. ISIS's affiliate in Egypt, which was responsible for the bombing of a commercial plane in 2015, has maintained its foothold in the Sinai Peninsula.

### *Al Qaeda*

- Al Qaeda and its affiliates continue to maintain a significant presence in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan-Pakistan, and Somalia.
- Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate Jabhat al Nusra, which has a sanctuary in northern Syria, "poses one of the most significant long-term threats [to the United States] of any Salafi-jihadi group." Al Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), recently seized more territory. The Taliban, al Qaeda's ally and enabler in Afghanistan, "now controls more territory than at any time since 2001."

---

## GUANTANAMO BAY DETAINEES

- The Office of the Director of National Intelligence's (ODNI) 2015 assessment of recidivism among former Guantanamo Bay detainees concluded that 30 percent of detainees released have returned or are suspected of having returned to jihadist activity.

---

<sup>5</sup> Data compiled by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

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



- A Sudanese al Qaeda member released by the Obama Administration in 2012 has apparently joined the ranks of AQAP. Between March and September 2015, an additional 11 former detainees were assessed to have returned to the battlefield.
  - The Obama Administration has released 16 terrorists from Guantanamo Bay thus far in 2016, leaving 91 at the facility.
- 

## **TERRORISTS' EXPLOITATION OF REFUGEE FLOWS**

- 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."
  - Law enforcement authorities recently arrested two Islamist terrorists in Texas and California who arrived in the U.S. from Iraq and Syria through the refugee resettlement program between 2009 and 2012.
  - French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve warned last month that ISIS "has managed to seize passports in Iraq, Syria and Libya to set up a true industry of fake passports." At least two of the November 2015 Paris attackers snuck into Europe by using Syrian passports and hiding among refugees. More than 40 suspected Islamist terrorists have been apprehended after attempting to infiltrate Europe through refugee and migrant flows, according to a recent study.
  - The Obama administration has proposed resettling at least 10,000 more Syrian refugees in the U.S. this fiscal year, in addition to more than 2,300 already resettled since 2011. Law enforcement and intelligence officials have repeatedly indicated that we lack the on-the-ground intelligence in Syria needed to confidently vet individuals and identify security risks in the process of screening Syrian refugees for resettlement.
- 

## **THE IRANIAN TERROR THREAT**

- Iran, the world's leading state sponsor of Islamist terror, announced that it had gained access to \$100 billion and had begun securing investment deals in Europe as part of the economic windfall it is receiving through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear agreement.
- Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) illegally seized and detained 10 U.S. Navy sailors overnight on January 12. The IRGC subsequently released a propaganda video using the sailors and was awarded with medals by Iran's leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The group "...continues to act with impunity and continues to target U.S. interests."
- Iranian-directed Iraqi Shia militia groups are reportedly responsible for the recent kidnapping of three American citizens in Baghdad, Iraq.