



NATO RAPID DEPLOYABLE CORPS – ITALY
- Public Affairs Office -



DAILY MEDIA

MORNING EDITION

THURSDAY 28 MAY 2015

NRDC-ITA HQ, Solbiate Olona, Varese

Tel. +39 0331 345110- 5117-5129 / Fax +39 0331 345124 / Web www.paonrdc.it / Email analysis@paonrdc.it

Another al Qaeda veteran reportedly killed while leading Jund al Aqsa in Syria

<http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/05/another-al-qaeda-veteran-reportedly-killed-while-leading-jund-al-aqsa-in-syria.php>

Chief of Al-Qaeda's Syria affiliate pledges no attacks on the West

<http://news.yahoo.com/chief-al-qaedas-syria-affiliate-pledges-no-attacks-221912033.html>

Syria conflict: IS 'driven from Assyrian villages'

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32898914>

Italian PM hails Algeria's "abilities" to stabilize North Africa region

<http://www.aps.dz/en/algeria/7526-italian-pm-hails-algeria-s-abilities-to-stabilize-north-africa-region?>

Isis launch Russian language magazine

<http://europe.newsweek.com/isis-launch-russian-language-magazine-327846>

The girls who've become ISIS and Boko Haram's best killers

<http://www.islamedianalysis.info/eu-military-chiefs-preparing-to-fight-isis-over-mediterranean/>

EU military chiefs preparing to fight Isis over Mediterranean

<http://www.islamedianalysis.info/eu-military-chiefs-preparing-to-fight-isis-over-mediterranean/>

Another al Qaeda veteran reportedly killed while leading Jund al Aqsa in Syria

BY THOMAS JOSCELYN | May 27, 2015 | tjoscelyn@gmail.com | [@thomasjoscelyn](https://twitter.com/thomasjoscelyn)



Said Arif, an al Qaeda veteran who trained in Afghanistan in the 1990s, has reportedly been killed in Syria while leading Jund al Aqsa's forces. Arif's death has been reported by multiple jihadists on social media, but has not yet been confirmed on Jund al Aqsa's official Twitter feed. He was allegedly killed in an airstrike conducted by the US-led coalition just days ago.

The Long War Journal has [previously identified Jund al Aqsa](#) as an al Qaeda front, based on the biographies of its leadership, the group's propaganda, and its close working relationship with the Al Nusrah Front, al Qaeda's official branch in Syria. Arif's background is consistent with this assessment.

The US State Department [designated](#) Arif as a terrorist on Aug. 18, 2014, identifying him as an "Algerian army officer deserter, who traveled to Afghanistan in the 1990s, where he trained in al Qaeda camps with weapons and explosives." [See *LWJ* report, [US adds Islamic State, Al Nusrah Front leaders to list of global terrorists](#).]

Arif was implicated in multiple al Qaeda plots against targets in Europe. State described him as "a long-time terrorist who was a suspect in the al Qaeda December 2000 plot to bomb the Strasbourg Christmas market." He was arrested in 2003 and tried in France along "with 25 others," all of whom were accused of belonging to the "Chechen Network," which plotted "to blow up the Eiffel Tower" and launch "chemical attacks...on malls and police stations in France." Arif was convicted in 2006 "for his role in these planned attacks," afterwards declaring that al Qaeda was "planning to attack an American military base in Spain using chemical weapons."

Arif was eventually placed under house arrest in France, but fled for Syria in 2013. He then joined the Nusrah Front, according to State.

Photos posted on Twitter purportedly show Arif's charred body. There are conflicting reports as to where he was killed, with the airstrike taking place in either Latakia or Idlib.

If Arif's death is confirmed, then he is the latest of several al Qaeda veterans to die while leading Jund al Aqsa's forces. Late last month, the group confirmed that Adel Radi Saker al Wahabi al Harbi, another US-designated al Qaeda operative, had been killed in the fighting. [See *LWJ* report, [An al Qaeda front group in Syria.](#)]

Harbi was a leading figure in al Qaeda's so-called "Khorasan group," an elite unit of veteran jihadists dispatched to Syria by Ayman al Zawahiri. The Khorasan group serves dual roles, plotting attacks in the West while also leading the fight against Bashar al Assad's regime and its allies.

Jund al Aqsa's founder, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al Qatari, disappeared in early 2014. The jihadists accused the Syrian Revolutionaries Front (SRF), a Western-backed group, of killing him. Qatari, who waged jihad in Afghanistan, was a known comrade of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri.

In addition to the Al Nusrah Front, al Qaeda veterans have been seeded in the upper echelon of several insurgency organizations inside Syria.

Chief of Al-Qaeda's Syria affiliate pledges no attacks on the West



7 hours ago



Beirut (AFP) - Al-Qaeda's Syria affiliate would not use Syria as a launching pad for attacks on the West, its chief said in a wide-ranging televised interview late Wednesday.

Without showing his face, Abu Mohamed al-Jolani said his group, Al-Nusra Front, would protect Syrian minorities that renounced the regime.

The interview was Jolani's second with Qatari-owned Al-Jazeera TV since a similar appearance in 2013. The interviewer, Ahmad Mansur, said it was broadcast "from liberated lands in Syria."

All that could be seen of Jolani was a black shawl, a plaid shirt, and gesturing hands.

"The instructions that we have are not to use al-Sham as a base to launch attacks on the West or Europe, so as not to muddy the current war," Jolani said.

"Our mission in Syria is the downfall of the regime, its symbols, and its allies, like Hezbollah,"

Related Stories

1. [Lebanon's Hezbollah urges backing for fight against IS](#) AFP
2. [Jihadists in Iraq and Syria: a timeline](#) AFP
3. [Hezbollah, Syrian army make big gains in border battle](#) Reuters
4. [Syria regime 'to accept de facto partition' of country](#) AFP
5. [Syria's Assad pays tribute to soldiers despite setbacks](#) AFP

Jolani said, referring to the powerful Shiite movement fighting alongside the Bashar al-Assad regime.

But if the United States kept attacking them, he said, "all options are open. Anyone has the right to self-defence."

Jolani also denied the existence of the "Khorasan group," which the US had said was an offshoot of Al-Qaeda that was plotting attacks against the US.

Nevertheless, he lambasted the US for its air raids against Al-Nusra in Syria and accused it of coordinating with the Assad regime on the use of air space.

"America is propping up the regime," Jolani charged, leaning forward in an ornate golden-crusted chair.

- 'We will protect them' -

Al-Nusra and its extremist rival the Islamic State group have been designated as terrorist organisations by the US since the end of 2012.

Since September, a US-led international coalition has been raiding jihadist positions in Syria, although most strikes have targeted IS.

In recent months, Al-Nusra has led a rebel coalition in a series of key victories in Syria's northwest Idlib, including the provincial capital and a large military base.

The gains have opened the road for a potential jihadist advance on Latakia and Tartus, coastal provinces that are home to Syrian minorities including Christians and Alawites, the offshoot of Shiite Islam to which the Assad clan belongs.

Extremist groups in Syria, including Al-Nusra and IS, have been accused of targeting these minority communities.

But Al-Nusra's chief seemed to try to play down those fears, saying his group "only fights those who fight us."

"If the Alawites leave their religion and leave Bashar al-Assad, we will protect them," Jolani said.



A Syrian child waves his national flag in front of a poster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in D...

A Syrian child waves his national flag in front of a poster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in D ...

He said Christians living under the rule of Al-Nusra were living in peace, and that in a future state ruled by Islamic law, the financially capable would pay "jizya," or tax reserved for non-Muslims.

- 'Gateway to Damascus' -

Jolani promised defeat for Lebanese movement Hezbollah, which has significantly bolstered the Assad regime, in the mountainous border region between Syria and Lebanon.

"Hezbollah knew the ugliness of the Syrian regime. It knew its fate was directly linked to Bashar's fate," Jolani warned.

"Qalamun will be an important gateway for Damascus when the battle for the capital begins," he added.

"As soon as Bashar is defeated, it will be the end for Hezbollah."

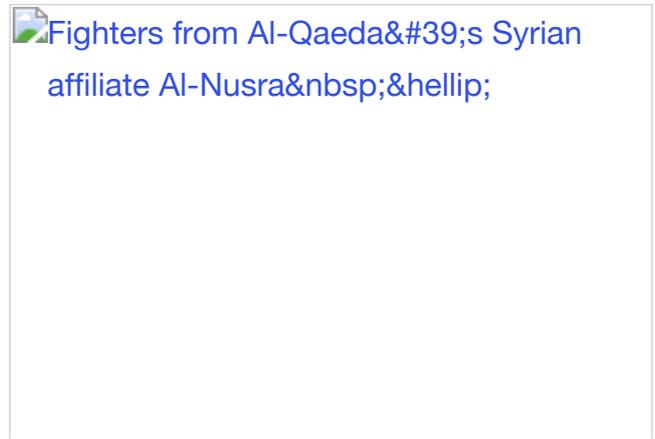
Much like his interview in 2013, the Nusra chief said the end of the Assad regime was near.

"I assure you, the fall of Bashar is not far away," he said. "I do not want to project much optimism, but there are very positive signs."

He rejected a political end to the conflict, saying that any political agreement "reached in the halls of Washington... would cost the blood of the Syrian people."

Jolani also firmly denied receiving any state funding, saying that Nusra was financed by its own "businesses activities" and contributions from individual donors.

Wednesday's interview was the first in a two-part series, to be continued next week.



Fighters from Al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate Al-Nusra Front drive armed vehicles in the northern Sy ...

Syria conflict: IS 'driven from Assyrian villages'

27 May 2015 | Middle East



This Assyrian church in one of the villages was allegedly damaged by IS

Islamic State fighters have been driven out of Assyrian Christian villages in Syria that they seized in February, activists say.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Kurdish fighters had retaken the villages along the Khabur river in north-eastern Syria.

But some reports say Syrian government forces drove the IS fighters out.

Also on Wednesday it was reported that two of the hostages seized from the villages by IS had been freed.

The two elderly women arrived in the provincial capital of Hassakeh on Tuesday, activists said.

About 200 people from the villages are thought to still be in IS captivity.

Christians under pressure

The villages were cleared of IS fighters earlier this week but many residents have not returned for fear of any remaining IS fighters and booby traps, according to Afram Yakoub, chairman of

the Assyrian Federation of Sweden.

Mr Yakoub said IS's retreat was largely due to an air campaign by Syrian government forces.

It is estimated that up to 40,000 Assyrians lived in Syria - alongside the overall Christian population of 1.2 million - before the country's civil war broke out in 2011.

The Assyrians, one of the world's oldest Christian communities, have been under increasing pressure since IS captured large parts of the country.

Some 1,000 local Assyrian families are believed to have fled their homes in the wake of the abductions.

Syria's Christians

- Thought to have constituted about 30% of the population as recently as the 1920s
- Long part of Syria's elite - founder of ruling Baath party was a Christian
- Before the war made up some 10% of Syria's 22 million people
- Up to 40,000 of those were Assyrians. They speak Syriac, a form of Aramaic, the language of Christ
- Hundreds of thousands have been displaced by the fighting
- Some have taken up arms to defend themselves against Islamists

Syria's beleaguered Christians

Share this story About sharing

Islamic State

Features and Analysis

Islamic State: How it is run

22 May 2015

Fears of Shia muscle in Iraq's Sunni heartland

18 May 2015

What is Islamic State?

Italian PM hails Algeria's "abilities" to stabilize North Africa region



Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi

ROME- Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi hailed Wednesday in Rome Algeria's abilities to stabilize North Africa region, regarding its efforts for restoring peace and security.

"Algeria has demonstrated all its ability to stabilize the North African region and for this I congratulate the Algerian government for its role in the conduct and the signing of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali," Renzi told a press conference held jointly with Prime Minister, Abdelmalek Sellal, after the work of the 3rd Algerian-Italian High-Level meeting.

Thus, he emphasized Algeria's efforts to restore peace and security in this region, given the situation in Mali and Libya.

For that, Italian Premier said that his country "supports" the approach of Algeria for a "political solution" in Libya, adding that "Algeria and Italy are committed to working together to reach a solution" in this country.

"The problem of Libya is not internal and it is necessary to combine the efforts at all levels," he stressed, noting the "strong partnership" between Algeria and Italy who support the efforts of UN Special Envoy for Libya, Bernardino Leone.

Concerning the bilateral cooperation, Renzi affirmed that "Algeria remains a fundamental partner" for Italy.

Speaking to the Italian businessmen and industrialists, he said that relations with Algeria are "excellent", assuring them that "the Italian government makes every effort to ensure that those

wishing to invest in Algeria are accompanied in this friend and ally country."

Renzi said that by intensifying and consolidating the cooperation with Algeria, both countries preserve their traditional relationships of friendship.

Finally, he also "thanked" Algeria for its participation in the World Expo Milan 2015, saying the two countries play an important role in the Mediterranean in order to "assert their values of civilization, peace sharing and the fight against terrorism."

Isis launch Russian language magazine

By **Eilish O'Gara** 5/27/15 at 8:41 PM



Part of the front cover of the Russian-language Isis magazine which is called 'Istok' [Twitter](#)



FILED UNDER: [Conflict](#) , [ISIS](#) , [Islamic State](#) , [Propaganda](#) , [Jihadist Propaganda](#), [Russian](#) , [Russian language](#) , [Russia](#)

In the same week that David Cameron and Vladimir Putin agreed to open up dialogue and work together to "stop the rise of ISIL", the terror group has released its first edition of a new propaganda magazine written in Russian.

The magazine, called 'Istok', was released by Al-Hayat Media Center, the foreign language media division of Isis. Al-Hayat Media Center is also responsible for producing Isis' English language propaganda magazine 'Dabiq', which was first published in July 2014 and is now already in its ninth edition.

In a bold attempt to branch out to potential jihadi fighters living on the Caucasus, which has long been engulfed by sectarian conflict and is a significant base for Islamist terrorist organizations, the magazine dedicates a large amount of space to the stories of Russian

jihadis who have left the country and travelled to Syria and Iraq in order to fight alongside the Islamic State.

Try Newsweek: **subscription offers**

Written in a similar format to the English language version of the magazine, the magazine's author utilizes relevant Qur'anic verses and emotive images to emphasise the importance of the establishment of the caliphate.

The production of magazine propaganda is not the only method Isis regularly utilize to spread their message of global jihad. This week, the BBC reported that up to 50,000 Twitter accounts are currently operating on behalf of Isis, spreading the group's propaganda videos, uploading images, spreading it's messages and recruiting would-be jihadists. Such accounts have been found to be based in over 100 different countries.

A new report by the UN security council estimates that approximately 20,000 fighters have now left their home countries to fight alongside the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. This is a 7,000 increase since 2014 in spite of the US led airstrikes against the group in Syria and Iraq.

Of this figure of 20,000, around 3,400 appear to hail from Western countries, with the largest numbers coming from France, Belgium, the UK and Germany.

According to Alexander Bortnikov, director of the Russian Federal Security Service, approximately 1,700 foreign fighters currently in Iraq and Syria appear to have come from Russia and/or Chechnya.

You are here: [Home](#) / Archives for Africa

The girls who've become ISIS and Boko Haram's best killers

27 MAGGIO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



Aisha, 9 years old, and her elder sister, Falmata, 13, were both abducted from their home in Damasak, in Nigeria's northeastern Borno state, during a raid by Boko Haram militants in March. Their much older brother, Bukkar, isn't sure they'll ever return. He believes they might have been drafted into the insurgents' growing army of female suicide bombers. Indeed, he has every reason to think so.

When militants invaded Damasak, they burned down houses and demanded children be handed over to them. Parents who objected were killed, and eventually hundreds of children—girls in particular—were taken by force.

“They set our house on fire and walked through the streets kidnapping children who were under 15 years of age and killing those who were above that age,” Bukkar remembers. “They were most interested in little girls, whom they plan to use as suicide bombers.”

Boko Haram has become notorious for using young female suicide bombers. The majority of those recognized have been adolescent girls, with some as young as 10. Other young women are forced to become soldiers and sex slaves.

“Militants feel it is easier to intimidate and brainwash young girls than adult women. Besides, these girls come cheap, and most of them are extremely loyal,” says Yusuf Mohammed, who works with young people affected by trauma in Maiduguri, the birthplace of Boko Haram.

The use of these young women began not long after more than 200 young women were kidnapped from their school in Chibok last year, an incident that provoked global outrage and the #BringBackOurGirls campaign that, so far, has proved fruitless.

The corresponding time frame and the age of the suicide bombers killed and captured since then have prompted speculation that Boko Haram has enlisted some of the kidnapped girls from Chibok in its jihad. The alleged bomber in a July 2014 attack at a university in Kano bore a marked resemblance to one of the abducted schoolgirls.

There's a strong possibility that after more than a year in captivity, some of the Chibok girls could have been indoctrinated by their kidnappers to carry out suicide attacks, but there's no clear evidence that this is the case. The government believes the Chibok girls are still more or less together and being held by the terrorists in a secret location. Meanwhile Boko Haram has abducted hundreds of young women and girls in other towns and villages in Nigeria's northeastern region.

According to local sources, Boko Haram operates suicide bombing training camps in Kirenuwa town in Marte, 112 kilometers north of Maiduguri, and in the Kala Balge area in northern Borno. Those are in addition to parts of the deadly Sambisa forest, where the Nigerian military is carrying out an offensive against the insurgents.

These same local sources say that when women are abducted by the militants the "young and smart" girls are separated from the older ones and trained on how to handle heavy weapons or carry out suicide attacks, or both.

This month, soldiers who spoke on condition of anonymity said they were shocked when women opened fire on troops who had come to rescue them in Sambisa forest. The women, they said, killed seven soldiers. A dozen women died in the firefight.

Indoctrinated female bombers are persuaded to seek martyrdom for fighting God's cause.

"They repeatedly told us that the best jihad is the one in which your horse is slain and your blood is spilled," said Rukaya, 13, who was rescued by Niger's armed forces from a Boko Haram camp in Bosso, in southeastern Niger along the border with Nigeria, then taken to a camp for displaced persons in Diffa, deeper in Niger's territory.

In the past, Boko Haram gave financial incentives to its bombers. In its first-ever suicide attack—a 2011 bombing at the police headquarters in the national capital of Abuja—Boko Haram was reported to have offered the male suicide bomber the equivalent of \$24,870 for the operation, which he bequeathed to his four children.

It is doubtful that the rising number of female bombers or their families received any such largesse.

Over the past 13 months, there has been a huge rise in female suicide bombings and huge increase in casualties as well. The attacks have claimed up to 78 victims. Boko Haram's first female bomber was a woman believed to be in her early twenties who rode a motorcycle into military barracks and blew herself up at a checkpoint in the northeastern city of Gombe last June. In its latest suicide attack, at least seven people

were killed and 33 others seriously wounded when a female bomber, believed to be 10 years old, blew herself up at a bus station on May 16 in Damaturu, the capital of Nigeria's northeastern Yobe State.

Last week, the Borno State deputy governor said Boko Haram had deployed more than 600 women throughout Maiduguri, with the goal of carrying out suicide bombings in the metropolis. While this number is completely unfeasible, female terrorists have had the advantage that, previously at least, they attracted less attention from authorities and could move about largely unquestioned: the long hijab, or covering, worn by Muslim women can easily hide bombs, and strict standards of morality make it hard for male security officers to search female suspects. Last November, two women dressed in full hijabs, which covered everything but their faces, entered a busy Maiduguri market and detonated explosives, killing more than 40 people. A 20-year-old woman, who was one of the suicide bombers, had a bomb tied firmly to her back in the same manner used by many women to carry their children in northern Nigeria.

More recently, as vigilance in the region has increased, some women—particularly teenage girls—have given up the full-length covering for fear they'll be mistaken for terrorists. They still wear hijab, but the veils are shorter and lighter, or mere head coverings along with simple dresses, so that anyone can see there are no explosives on them.

Meanwhile, the government says the search for the Chibok girls goes on, and continues to heap skepticism on suggestions that they may have been pressed into the ranks of Boko Haram's women bombers. In an interview on Nigeria's African Independent Television in March, President Goodluck Jonathan, who lost his reelection bid, argued that Boko Haram would have been only too happy to display the corpses of the Chibok girls for propaganda purposes if they had been killed.

"They are still alive, because when terrorists kill they display," Jonathan said. "But we can't just move in with artilleries and clear the place because they may use them as shields, so we are working with the global best practices."

Kashim Shettima, who is the governor of Borno, said the abducted girls have been kept in bunkers, inside Sambisa forest. "We are suspecting that the Chibok girls are living with the insurgents in bunkers," Shettima said in a statement presented at a conference on security last week, "I think the military must carry out their operations beneath the surface of the earth." He said Boko Haram is also "known to have dug tunnels to enable them to move from house to house. So, having been left unchallenged for such a long time, such possibilities cannot be ruled out, which poses serious obstacles within the forest."

With many theories suggesting that the Chibok girls are been kept in the deadly forest, only a complete and effective elimination of the terrorists there can ascertain whether or not the now-famous girls are dead or alive. (source Awdnews)

EU military chiefs preparing to fight Isis over Mediterranean

27 MAGGIO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



The EU is preparing for a military conflict with Isis as part of a year-long campaign on the north African coast to tackle the Mediterranean migrant crisis, according to secret documents allegedly leaked to the WikiLeaks organisation.

In a draft outline of the plan for military intervention in Libya reportedly approved by representatives from all 28 member states on 18 May, officials expressed a number of major concerns about the operation.

One document, produced by the European Union Military Committee (EUMC), warned that while it could offer a “military end state” in the region: “The EUMC considers that the political end state is not clearly defined.”

[WikiLeaks](#) claimed the EUMC also warned about risks to the EU’s reputation in the event of “collateral damage... or creating a perception of having chosen sides [in the Libyan conflict]”.

The alleged document suggested an operation of one year, with an ultimate goal that “the flow of migrants and smugglers’ activities have been significantly reduced”. It recommends using “the full range of surveillance and intelligence capabilities available to member states” to identify potential smuggling vessels before they leave African shores.

And in a section on “operational risk”, defence chiefs noted that: “The EUMC considers that the threat to the force should be acknowledged, especially during activities such as boarding and when operating on land or in proximity to an unsecured coastline, or during interaction with non-seaworthy vessels.

“The potential presence of hostile forces, extremists or terrorists such as Da’esh [Isis] should also be taken into consideration.”

Meanwhile, the head of the International Organisation for Migration has warned that the EU’s scheme to resettle 20,000 people will be insufficient to deal with the crisis.

IOM Director General William Lacy Swing told EU officials that “the 20,000 quota is commendable. We’re glad for it,” but that Europe “needs to go much, much further”.

More than 80,000 migrants have reached European shores so far this year. The IOM estimates that 1,820 migrants have died or gone missing on the Mediterranean Sea route.