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THE ISLAMIC STATE'S VARYING FORTUNES IN NORTH AFRICA

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr

June 24, 2015 · in Analysis

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The jihadist group that calls itself the Islamic State has increasingly set its sights on expanding into North Africa. The eighth issue of the group's English-language magazine *Dabiq* was [suggestively titled](#) "Shari'ah Alone Will Rule Africa," with the cover displaying a photograph of the Great Mosque in the Tunisian city of Kairouan. This signaling left no room for doubt about the Islamic State's designs on the region.



The Islamic State has devoted considerable resources to its expansion, whether through mergers and acquisitions with existing jihadist groups or by encouraging splinter groups and defections from rival jihadist entities. Several reasons exist for the Islamic State to expand its territorial holdings outside of Syria and Iraq. First, expansion serves its propaganda needs, as it blunts any territorial losses that the group may experience in Syria and Iraq, and allows the Islamic State to maintain the image of momentum and strength that is [so integral](#) to its recruitment strategy. Second, expansion improves the group's resilience. Just as al-Qaeda's affiliate strategy has complicated U.S. counterterrorism efforts, the Islamic State's movement into new arenas allows the group to withstand counter-network operations against one of its nodes. Abu Arhim al-Libi, an Islamic State propagandist, acknowledged this in a [long analytical piece](#) posted in January 2015 discussing the group's expansion into Libya. Al-Libi noted that "the strategic location of Libya means that it could relieve the pressure being felt by the State of the Caliphate in Iraq and ash-Sham." Third, the Islamic State's expansion into North Africa and other arenas legitimizes the group's claim to be a caliphate. Its defining and most appealing characteristic (to jihadists) is its control over, and governance of, territory. This is [evidenced by the group's slogan](#), *baqiya wa tatamaddad*, or remaining and expanding. Fourth, expansion into new theaters strengthens the Islamic State's hand against al-Qaeda in the competition for leadership of the transnational jihadist movement. With every new gain, the Islamic State reinforces the perception that it is ascendant while al-Qaeda stagnates and declines.

North Africa is among the most promising theaters for the Islamic State's expansion, with an appealing location at the crossroads between Europe, the Sahel, and the Middle East. The group could potentially use the region as a springboard for further expansion into Africa and a staging ground for attacks in Europe. Several specific conditions in North Africa are favorable to the Islamic State. First, North Africa is home to a number of regional jihadist organizations that the group can try to recruit into its orbit. Much of the Islamic State's growth outside the Syria-Iraq theater has come as a result of the self-declared caliphate's ability to convince other jihadist groups, including Nigeria's Boko Haram and Egypt's [Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis](#), to enter its network.

Second, the civil conflict in Libya and deterioration of state institutions has provided the Islamic State an opportunity to establish a foothold. Civil conflict often benefits violent and extreme actors, and the Libyan civil war has been particularly conducive to the Islamic State's growth because the country's two competing governments have focused their military resources on one another, and have largely turned a blind eye to the Islamic State unless provoked. Because of this permissive environment, the Islamic State has begun to conceive of Libya as an alternative destination to Syria and Iraq for its foreign fighters: A recent article in *Dabiq* [remarks](#) that "Libya has become an ideal land of hijrah for those who find difficulty making their ways to Sham, particularly those of our brothers and sisters in Africa."

Third, the Islamic State can capitalize on the post-Arab Spring flow of weapons and growth of ungoverned and weakly-governed spaces. For example, during the rebellion against Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011, large amounts of high-caliber weaponry were removed from Qaddafi's arsenals, resulting in a proliferation of weapons throughout the region. Many of these looted arms made their way [into the hands of militant groups](#). Moreover, post-revolutionary governments in Libya and Tunisia have struggled to project power over the entirety of their territories. Both of these trends benefit the Islamic State.

The Islamic State's growth has been particularly worrisome in Libya, with its toxic blend of civil conflict and weak governance. The group was never as militarily strong there as [some observers believed](#) — a fact underscored by the deep setbacks it has recently experienced in Derna — but the group has made real advances, and Libya is the Islamic State's most significant foothold outside of Iraq and Syria. The Islamic State also may experience a surge of support in Tunisia, as the vast majority of the [approximately 3,000 Tunisian foreign fighters](#) who traveled to the Syria-Iraq theater fought with the group. Though the top-tier

leaders of major Tunisian jihadist organizations [are loyal](#) to al-Qaeda, the fact that so much sympathy for the Islamic State exists at the foot soldier level makes the group's growth in the country likely. But while the Islamic State is in a strong position in Tunisia and Libya, it is not faring well in Algeria, where recent counterterrorism operations dealt the group a significant blow. Absent major defections from other jihadist organizations, it will take the Islamic State some time to reestablish a foothold in that country. Let's look more closely at this proto-Caliphate's expansion into Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria.

Background on the Islamic State's Expansion into Libya

The Islamic State's growth in Libya is an indirect outcome of the toppling of Qaddafi and the ensuing collapse of what remained of the Libyan state, as well as the participation of many Libyan volunteers in the Syrian civil war. In the early years of that war, hundreds of Libyan citizens [joined](#) Sunni militant groups fighting Bashar al-Assad's regime. The Islamic State, then limited to Syria and Iraq, recruited directly from Libya. For example, Turki al-Binali, now one of the Islamic State's most prominent religious scholars, [traveled to the city of Sirte](#) as early as June 2013 to recruit Libyans.

In 2012, a group of Libyan foreign fighters in Syria [established](#) the al-Battar Brigade, and in the spring of 2014, hundreds of al-Battar fighters [began to return](#) to Derna. Upon their return, these fighters established the Islamic Youth Shura Council (IYSC), which [immediately began](#) recruiting other Libyans to join the Islamic State, targeting secular activists and other opponents for assassination, and imposing *sharia* in areas it controlled. IYSC's entrance into Derna was [not well-received](#) by Derna's already established militant groups, including the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade.

IYSC solidified its ties with the Islamic State in September 2014, when two emissaries from the group in Syria, Abu al-Bara al-Azdi and Abu Habib al-Jazrawi, [traveled to Derna](#) to secure IYSC's pledges of allegiance to the self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In early October, a group of IYSC militants publicly pledged allegiance to Baghdadi, and announced that the territory held by the group would be known as Wilayat Barqa (the province of Barqa). A larger [ceremony](#) to announce the Islamic State's expansion into Derna was held in November. At around the same time, Libyan militants [announced](#) that the Islamic State had divided Libya into three provinces: Fezzan (southern Libya), Tripolitania (the ancient province encompassing Tripoli and western Libya), and Barqa.

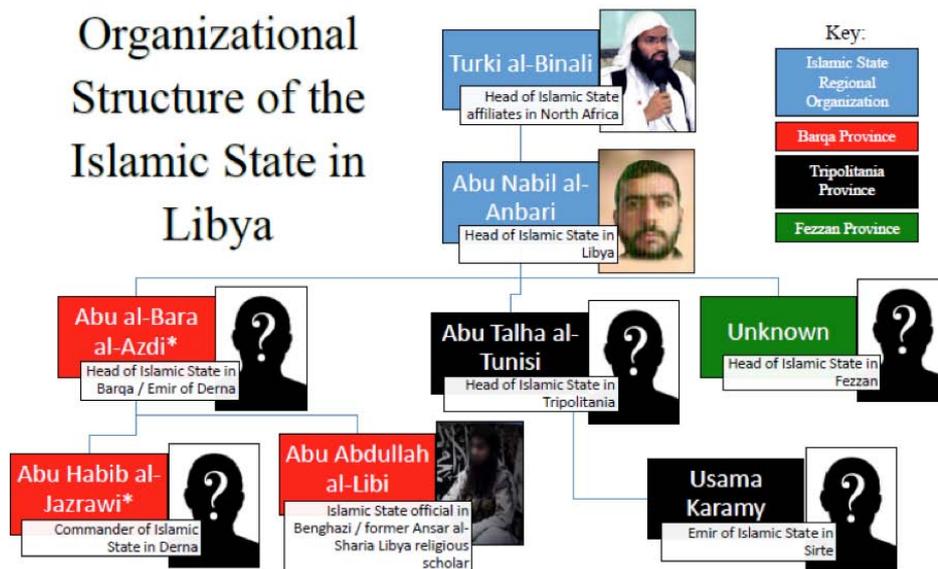
The relationship between the Islamic State in Libya and the organization's senior leadership in Syria and Iraq was formalized in November 2014, when Baghdadi [released](#) an audio statement accepting the pledges of allegiance from Libya. For several months, the Barqa Province was the only noticeably active caliphate cadre in Libya, a situation that changed in January 2015 when fighters from the Islamic State's Tripolitania Province carried out a high-profile [attack](#) against the Corinthia luxury hotel in Tripoli. The Tripolitania Province continued to make headlines in February 2015 with the gruesome [beheading](#) of 21 Egyptian Christians seized from the town of Sirte. The group also captured several buildings in Sirte in February, the first time it had taken territory outside of Derna. Sirte remains contested, with the Islamic State facing off against forces from the Libyan Dawn faction for control of the city. However, the organization has recently experienced a complete reversal in Derna, as we discuss below.

The Islamic State's Structure and Strength in Libya

The Islamic State has developed a hierarchical leadership structure in Libya that resembles the group's organizational structure in Syria and Iraq. The organization's top officials in the country are non-Libyans. Most of them were dispatched to Libya by the Islamic State's central command, thus giving the group's leadership in Syria and Iraq the opportunity to maintain some degree of command and control over its Libyan affiliate.

The aforementioned Turki al-Binali, a Bahraini national, is believed to be the leader of the group's North African "provinces." Al-Binali has spent significant time recruiting in Libya in recent years. Below him on the organizational chart is Abu Nabil al-Anbari, who likely serves as the Islamic State's top commander in Libya. Al-Anbari is, as his name suggests, an Iraqi who previously fought with al-Qaeda in Iraq, and served time in Abu Ghraib prison in the early years of Iraq's Sunni insurgency. Some news reports claim that al-Anbari was imprisoned with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, suggesting that he has deep and longstanding ties to the Islamic State's leadership. Before serving as a commander in Libya, al-Anbari was the Islamic State's emir in the strategic Salahuddin province in Iraq.

Below al-Anbari, the Islamic State has appointed commanders for its three administrative provinces in Libya. Abu Talha al-Tunisi is believed to be the emir of Tripolitania province, while Abu al-Bara al-Azdi serves as the emir of Derna. The aforementioned Abu Habib al-Jazrawi also has a high-ranking position in Derna. The identity of the emir of the Islamic State's Fezzan province is unknown.



*There is a dispute over whether Abu al-Bara al-Azdi or Abu Habib al-Jazrawi heads the Derna branch of the Islamic State.

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There are differing views on the Islamic State's manpower in Libya. Patrick Skinner, a former CIA case officer, estimated in February 2015 that the Islamic State has from 1,000 to 3,000 fighters in Libya. Some U.S. intelligence officials estimate that up to 5,000 militants in Libya self-identify as Islamic State members.

The Islamic State's fighting force in Libya includes local recruits, foreign fighters, and former members of other militant groups. The Islamic State has recruited from local populations in Sirte, Benghazi and Derna, particularly targeting for recruitment members of other Libyan militant groups, including Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL). A number of former ASL members in Sirte joined the Islamic State's ranks in the city, though some Sirte-based ASL members opposed affiliating with the Islamic State, [resulting](#) in a dispute that divided the group. The Islamic State netted a major [defection](#) from ASL in April 2015, when Abu Abdullah al-Libi, one of ASL's top religious scholars, renounced his ties with ASL and pledged his allegiance to the Islamic State. He brought with him a cadre of ASL fighters, according to jihadist social media sources.

The Islamic State's capabilities and tactics in Tripolitania Province

The Islamic State's area of greatest strength in Libya is Sirte, where the group is in a strong military position. Sirte is one place where the Islamic State has taken advantage of the Libyan civil war to strengthen its hand: Dawn did not make defeating the Islamic State in Sirte a top priority, as it viewed the rival Dignity coalition as a larger threat, though this may now be changing.

Though the Islamic State does not control Sirte, in recent weeks the group has made serious inroads in the city and the surrounding areas. In late May, Islamic State forces seized control of the Gardabya air base 12 miles south of Sirte. Islamic State fighters are also believed to have regained control of Nawfaliya, a town east of Sirte. In early June, Islamic State fighters continued their march, [overtaking](#) the town of Harwa.

In addition to its military operations in and around Sirte, the Tripolitania Province has conducted terrorist attacks and raids across western Libya. The group's operational reach extends to Misrata and Tripoli, the two largest cities controlled by the Libya Dawn faction.

The Islamic State's capabilities and tactics in Barqa Province

The group's prospects for growth in so-called Barqa Province are less promising than in Sirte and western Libya — although the possibility that the Islamic State might surge fighters from Sirte into Barqa Province should not be discounted. Fighting between the Islamic State and another militant group in Derna, the Derna Mujahedin Shura Council (DMSC) — a coalition comprised of several militant factions, including groups with ties to al-Qaeda such as ASL and the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade — has eroded the Islamic State's foothold in the city.

After the Islamic State carried out shows of force in Derna in October and November 2014, news outlets [erroneously claimed](#) that the group had established full control over the city. In reality, control of Derna was divided among several militant groups. Recent developments have underscored that the Islamic State's presence amounted to less than the “complete control” that one major outlet reported. The group's troubles in Derna began in April, when it [attempted](#) to stamp out dissent among the influential al-Harir family, resulting in clashes between locals and Islamic State militants. The DMSC [issued](#) a “final warning” to the Islamic State.

In early June, Islamic State militants [killed](#) Nasir Atiyah al-Akar, a senior DMSC leader with longstanding ties to al-Qaeda. Clashes broke out between the Islamic State and DMSC immediately after al-Akar's death. On June 9, Islamic State militants [killed](#) Salim Darbi, the commander of the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade and the head of the DMSC. In response, the DMSC launched an offensive to oust the Islamic State from the city. The DMSC defeated the group in most of Derna, and the Islamic State is now [confined](#) to limited areas in and around the city. The fact that the organization was so easily forced out of Derna suggests that it did not control Derna to begin with.

The Islamic State's capabilities in Fezzan Province

Little is known about the Fezzan Province group, which has been largely inactive since it was established. The group has claimed responsibility for a small number of attacks, including a January 2015 raid on a Libyan military unit near the southern town of Sebha and the beheading of a group of Ethiopian Christians in April 2015. There is no publicly available information on the size or principal location of the Fezzan Province group.

The Islamic State's Bid for Prominence in Tunisia

Tunisia has emerged as an important theater in the ongoing competition between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda. Both Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST) and Katibat Uqba ibn Nafi (KUIN), Tunisia's most prominent jihadist groups, are affiliated with al-Qaeda, though AST has [not made its ties with al-Qaeda public](#) for strategic reasons. However, the Islamic State intends to insert itself into the country and disrupt al-Qaeda's hegemony over the Tunisian jihadist community.

In March 2015, "Jund al-Khilafa in Tunisia" emerged to claim responsibility (falsely) for the terrorist attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunis. In May 2015, a group calling itself Tunisian Mujahedin pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. Though little is known about the composition of these groups, the Islamic State further telegraphed its intentions regarding Tunisia when it released the aforementioned eighth issue of *Dabiq*, showcasing the Great Mosque in Kairouan on its cover.

Despite [reports](#) to the contrary, the leadership of AST and KUIN remain aligned with al-Qaeda. KUIN quelled rumors about its possible defection to the Islamic State by reaffirming its pledge of allegiance to al-Qaeda following the death of its commander Khaled Chaib (a.k.a. Luqman Abu Sakhr) in March 2015. Thus, the Islamic State's best chance of making significant inroads in Tunisia is at the foot soldier level more than the leadership level.

The Islamic State's biggest advantage over al-Qaeda in Tunisia is the former's dominance of the Tunisian foreign fighter community. Tunisia's approximately 3,000 foreign fighters who went to Syria and Iraq had a sour experience with al-Qaeda's affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, which is believed to have discriminated against them. Thus, the overwhelming majority of Tunisian foreign fighters in that theater joined the Islamic State.

The bifurcation between leaders and foot soldiers in the Tunisian jihadist community has created a tense

dynamic. While al-Qaeda seeks to preserve its stronghold in Tunisia and regain the loyalty of the rank-and-file, the Islamic State seeks to break into the Tunisian jihadist market by capitalizing on its influence among foreign fighters and low-level operatives. In an effort to win adherents, the Islamic State has sometimes exaggerated its exploits in Tunisia, including claiming to have carried out the Bardo Museum attack in March 2015. The Tunisian government later [concluded](#) that KUIN was responsible.

The Islamic State's Setbacks in Algeria

The Islamic State has significantly declined in Algeria in recent weeks due to a highly successful policing operation. The group emerged in Algeria in mid-2014, when the “center zone” of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which was based in the Kabylie coastal mountain region, [announced](#) that it was defecting and joining the Islamic State. The commander of the unit, Gouri Abdelmalek, declared that al-Qaeda had deviated “from the true path,” and announced that his group would now be known as Jund al-Khilafa (Soldiers of the Caliphate). Days after Jund al-Khilafa was formed, the group posted a video of its beheading of Hervé Gourdel, a French hiker whom it had kidnapped.

The Islamic State's Algeria branch was never well-positioned to endure a great deal of attrition because, even at its peak, Jund al-Khilafa only had about twenty to thirty fighters. In December 2014, the Algerian army [killed](#) Gouri Abdelmalek and two other militants in a raid in the Boumerdès region east of Algiers. But an even deadlier blow to the Islamic State occurred in May 2015, when Algerian security forces launched a large-scale military operation against a high-level meeting of Jund al-Khilafa militants in the Bouira region. The Algerian operation not only [killed](#) about two dozen fighters at minimum — well over half of its ranks — but also new emir Abdullah Othman al-Asimi and five of Jund al-Khilafa's six military commanders. Algerian security forces were able to [kill](#) three more Jund al-Khilafa fighters the following day.

The May 2015 operation imposed significant attrition on the Islamic State's Algerian branch at the leadership and foot soldier level. Indeed, the Islamic State in Algeria is essentially irrelevant from a strategic perspective unless it can rebuild its in-country capabilities. While there is a significant likelihood that the group will try to mount a resurgence in Algeria, the country's security forces will be proactive in trying to prevent its reemergence.

Conclusion

The Islamic State's expansion into North Africa threatens to exacerbate insecurity in a region already experiencing significant tumult. However, the group's North Africa operations are currently facing significant challenges following its military losses in Derna and Algeria's successful counterterrorism operations against the organization.

Indeed, the Islamic State's recent experiences in Algeria and Derna underscore the challenges that the organization will face as it seeks to expand into new theaters in North Africa and beyond. While the Islamic State is able to mobilize a small subset of the jihadist community, the group lacks power in many new theaters relative to other players — and yet is exceedingly aggressive. As such, these nascent “provinces”

are vulnerable to attack both from state security forces and rival jihadist groups like al-Qaeda. In order to overcome these initial barriers to entry, the Islamic State will either have to collaborate more closely with local jihadist forces — something that the group has been reluctant to do to date — or muster a force capable of overpowering its opponents. A third alternative for the Islamic State is to slowly and cautiously develop its clandestine network in new theaters, refraining from boldly claiming its presence as it has been wont to do in Syria, Iraq and other areas. The adversity that the Islamic State has encountered in Derna and Algeria stands in stark contrast to the unprecedented success that the group experienced when it stormed through Iraq in the summer of 2014. The Islamic State's future in the region and beyond may hinge on how it responds to these increasingly evident challenges.

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Syrian leader can stop Islamic State terrorist group — Russian security official

24 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



The Persian Gulf countries should pray for Syrian President Bashar Assad who can stop the Islamic State militant group, deputy Russian Security Council chief Yevgeny Lukyanov said on Wednesday.

“I believe that countries of this region – Saudi Arabia, Persian Gulf states and may be others should pray for Bashar Assad. This is the last frontier of their security. If the Assad regime falls, then the IS next goal will be Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states,” Lukyanov said.

Some 5,000 Saudi nationals are part of the IS, he said, adding: “When the active phase of confrontation ends there, where will they go? They will come back [home]. What can they do? They can only kill people,” he said.

The return of IS gunmen is also a problem for Russia, the official said. “They are already coming back,” he said, adding that the gunmen turn to Russia’s diplomatic missions pretending to be tourists who have lost their passports.

“There is no country that would be immune from terrorist actions,” Lukyanov stressed.

The IS differs from other groups as it does not just carry out terrorist acts, but it seizes territory and creates power bodies, courts and imposes a set of Sharia laws. “They create a state,” he said.

The Islamic State has stepped up its activity and is now the center of international terrorism. The group was created as a result of a merger of several radical Sunni groups led by an Al Qaeda branch in Iraq.

Balkans track ISIS fighters flowing through turkey, overwhelmed by lax border control

24 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



Officials from Bosnia Herzegovina said as many as 50 women and children are currently living, some fighting, with the Islamic State group in Syria. Their recruitment into the Sunni extremist organization comes as a direct result of the rising number of ISIS supporters in the country and their susceptibility to extremism, a trend that is threatening the stability of the entire region, officials said.

“Once a destination country for foreign fighters in the 1990s, Bosnia is now the country of origin for volunteers in other people’s wars,” said Vlado Azinovic, a co-author of a report published this month by Atlantic Initiative, a Sarajevo nonprofit.

The report said 192 Bosnian adults and 25 children traveled to Iraq and Syria from 2012 to 2014. Of those, 156 had gone there to fight. Those statistics make Bosnia one of the largest groups of foreign jihadists from Europe, prompting officials in the country to crack down on extremists.

Another report published by the European Parliament in 2013 showed about 3,000 people in Bosnia identified as Wahhabists, a conservative Muslim movement introduced in the country in the early '90s. They are the ones, Bosnian officials have said, who identify with ISIS.

In the past year, Bosnia has arrested dozens of people on suspicion of having traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS, or who are thought to be [providing](#) the Sunni militant group with weapons and cash. Bosnia last year passed a law that bans citizens from fighting in foreign countries.

Bosnia is just one of several countries in the Balkan region attempting to curb the number of foreign fighters flowing through their borders and recruiting domestically. The Balkans are becoming a transit point for foreigners who want to fight with ISIS. In the past several months, authorities in Bosnia, Kosovo and Bulgaria have arrested foreigners allegedly working for ISIS.

Islamist foreigners wanting to reach Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS are flocking from places like Morocco to Europe and then on to the Balkans, before heading to Turkey to pass through the border to the battleground. Moroccan authorities [said](#) more than 2,000 nationals, many of whom passed through the Balkans, are now fighting in Syria and Iraq with ISIS.

Those fighters flowing from the Balkans into Syria through Turkey are also returning home, officials said, and that is what is causing concern.

The international community, especially those in the U.S.-led coalition to fight ISIS — such as Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia — have repeatedly called on Turkey to do more to stop foreign fighters from flowing across its borders.

Eastern Turkey, including the cities of Antakya and Kilis, is a main transport hub not only for foreign fighters into Syria, but also for weapons, money and supplies. Turkey provides the main and easiest path into Syria and onto Iraq. ISIS has demolished the border fence between the two countries.

Foreign fighters looking to join ISIS in Syria cross into the country much like journalists, aid workers and moderate rebels have done for more than three years: through the Bab al-Salama or Bab al-Hawa border crossing in southeastern Turkey.

Most fly into Istanbul before catching a flight to Hatay or Gaziantep where they meet with the group or individual whom they have [contacted to take them into Syria](#). Journalists call this local contact who helps them on the ground a “fixer.” For ISIS, the process and terminology are similar. ISIS foreign fighters, via connections with those they know in the militant group, connect with a fixer to drive them from Hatay province to the Syria border.

The foreign fighters exit the same way they enter.

U.S. State Department spokesman Jeff Rathke said last week the coalition needs to make more progress to stem the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and Syria.

“Turkey has already taken additional steps. We’ve worked closely with them, and again, we think there is more that can be done by all members of the coalition to stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. Turkey does have the will to join with us in the fight against ISIL,” he said.

110 women traveled from Germany to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS

24 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



A German newspaper revealed on Tuesday, that at least 110 women have traveled from Germany to conflict areas in Syria and Iraq to join the ISIS group.

The German newspaper “Augsburger Allgemeine” pointed out that, “The number of those women has exceeded the number estimated by the Constitution Commission, which indicates that 70 women have traveled from Germany to join ISIS in the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq,” noting that, “It is likely that the number of women who left Germany is more than 110 women.”

The newspaper added, “Among persons who have traveled from Germany to the ISIS-held areas, at least 36 children and teenagers, according to data from the security authorities.”



The New York Times | <http://nyti.ms/1GHqtHI>

MIDDLE EAST

Documents on 2012 Drone Strike Detail How Terrorists Are Targeted

By **SCOTT SHANE** JUNE 24, 2015

WASHINGTON — Early in 2012, worried that suicide bombers might pass through airline security undetected, American counterterrorism officials ordered a drone strike in Yemen to kill a doctor they believed was working with Al Qaeda to surgically implant explosives in operatives, according to British intelligence documents.

The documents, previously undisclosed, include details about how terrorism suspects are targeted in drone strikes and how strikes can go wrong at times. The documents also show how closely the National Security Agency has worked in Pakistan and Yemen with its British counterpart, Government Communications Headquarters, or G.C.H.Q.

Britain has carried out drone strikes only in war zones in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. The documents raise the possibility that in addition, British intelligence may have helped guide American strikes outside conventional war zones.

Drone strikes carried out by the C.I.A. and the military's Joint Special Operations Command have received fresh scrutiny after President Obama disclosed in April that a strike had killed two Western aid workers held hostage by Al Qaeda in Pakistan. In that case, intelligence officers targeting the Qaeda compound had no idea the hostages were there, illustrating how incomplete or faulty information has led to civilian deaths in the drone campaign.

Last week offered two more examples of the uncertain outcomes of

airstrikes. A prominent Algerian terrorist, widely reported dead in a Pentagon strike by F-15s, appears to still be alive. And only several days after a strike in Yemen did American officials learn that an attack had killed the leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, who was also the No. 2 leader of Al Qaeda's global terror network.

The British documents were provided by Edward J. Snowden, the former N.S.A. contractor, to *The Guardian*, the British newspaper and global website, and shared with *The New York Times*. Press officers for the N.S.A. and the C.I.A. declined to comment. G.C.H.Q. said in a statement that while it would not comment on intelligence operations, "We expect all states concerned to act in accordance with international law and take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian casualties when conducting any form of military or counterterrorist operations."

An internal newsletter for the British agency identifies the doctor killed in a drone strike in Yemen on March 30, 2012, as Khadim Usamah, whom it describes as "the doctor who pioneered using surgically planted explosives." The newsletter calls Dr. Usamah, who appears to have never been identified publicly before, a member of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the branch of the terrorist organization based in Yemen. It says he was killed along with a second Qaeda member.

The strike came at a time of especially intense concern inside the Obama administration about the persistent efforts of Al Qaeda in Yemen to use commercial aircraft to mount an attack on the United States. The chief bomb maker of the Arab peninsula branch, Ibrahim al-Asiri, was experimenting with designing explosives that a suicide attacker could carry undetected through conventional security checkpoints.

In August 2009, Mr. Asiri dispatched his younger brother, Abdullah al-Asiri, to Saudi Arabia with a bomb that by most accounts was inserted in his rectum. He detonated the explosives when he met with the Saudi counterterrorism chief, Mohammed bin Nayef, but the bomb killed only the younger Mr. Asiri.

On Dec. 25, 2009, a young Nigerian equipped by Mr. Asiri with explosives hidden in his underwear, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, made it through airline security and onto a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit. But

when he tried to blow up the flight as it approached Detroit, the bomb only ignited and burned Mr. Abdulmutallab, who was swiftly subdued by other passengers.

Some intelligence officials expressed concern after that failed attack that Mr. Asiri had recruited one or more surgeons to experiment with implanting a bomb with no metal parts into the abdomen of a suicide bomber. There is no known case in which such an attack was carried out, but the British documents suggest that intelligence officials believed Dr. Usamah was part of an effort to develop such plans when he was killed.

Some of the British agency's documents suggest, though they do not explicitly state, that it provided intelligence for that strike in Yemen and other American strikes. That would be no surprise, since intelligence cooperation between the United States and Britain has long been close, particularly in the area of signals intelligence, or eavesdropping. The documents discuss the British agency's employees who work at an N.S.A. station in Fort Gordon, Ga., and at a large N.S.A. center in England called Menwith Hill Station.

British officials rarely speak publicly about cooperation with the program of targeted killings. In a formal answer to a parliamentary inquiry last year about whether Britain was participating in unmanned aerial vehicle strikes in Yemen, the British defense minister, Mark Francois, replied in writing that "U.A.V. strikes against terrorist targets in Yemen are a matter for the Yemeni and U.S. governments." The answer did not explicitly deny a British role, but certainly suggested there was not one.

American drone strikes are supported by a majority of the public in the United States but opposed by the British public. A poll last year by the Pew Research Center found that 52 percent of Americans backed the strikes, with 41 percent opposed. In Britain, 59 percent were opposed, while 33 percent approved of the strikes.

Opposition to the strikes is often based on reports of civilians killed unintentionally. While proponents argue that missiles fired from unmanned aircraft are the most precise way to eliminate terrorists, intelligence agencies often do not have enough detailed information about who is in a strike zone to be certain that all are militants posing a threat to the United

States or to Americans overseas.

The British agency's documents underscore the central role of eavesdropping and the tracking of electronic signals in identifying suspects and in determining their exact location. Such sophisticated technology may improve the odds of finding and hitting the intended target.

But the British documents also hint at the flawed conclusions that signals intelligence can produce.

For example, a smartphone carried by a target can be easily tracked by the N.S.A. or its British counterpart, and can contribute to what the agencies call "PID," or positive identification. But phones can, of course, be passed from person to person, leading to mistaken identifications.

"Of significant note," the British agency's October 2010 guide to targeting says with careful understatement, "is whether the handset is identified as single user or multi-user." The guide has a reference to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, indicating that it was written to assist in strikes there.

With such uncertainties in mind, agencies try to identify targets by both voice and physical appearance, the document says. It also describes attempts to determine a suspect's "B.D.L.," or bed-down location.

Some suspects are more "Comsec aware" than others, the guide says — in other words, some of them pay more attention to communications security, aware that counterterrorism agencies may be tracking their calls.

The guide talks about a suspect "detaching" from communications — for example, ending a call or turning off a mobile phone — and notes the obvious: that someone who is talking on the phone will "detach" when hit by a missile.

"Immediately after a strike it should be possible to detect whether the target detached at time of strike," the guide notes. "This is a good indication that the correct target has been struck."

UN Libya envoy meets with armed groups in support of political agreement

23 June 2015 – As part of an overall United Nations-supported effort on the security track of Libya’s national dialogue, the United Nations envoy for country has met in Misrata with representatives of armed groups, stressing the importance of local ceasefires and reconciliation agreements are welcome developments.

“The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has repeatedly emphasized the importance of security and military officials from the conflicting sides engaging in dialogue,” said Bernardino León in a [press release](#) issued yesterday by the Mission.

The discussion is part of the overall UNSMIL efforts on the security track of the Libyan dialogue, which is complementary to the ongoing political discussions and critical for the success of the process.

In this context, UNSMIL is in contact with the various security and military actors on the ground in different areas of the country. Yesterday’s meeting was with armed groups from Misrata, the Western Mountain and other areas of western Libya.

It will be followed by similar gatherings in other regions, including Zintan. Also, a meeting is being prepared in Cairo, Egypt, in the coming days with representatives of the Libyan Army and armed groups from regions in the east.

“The cooperation of the armed groups is crucial for restoring peace and stability to Libya,” said Mr. León in Misrata, attended by representatives of the Municipal Council. He expressed the hope of convening the security track of the dialogue soon to draw a detailed plan for the implementation of the security arrangements and address security-related issues.

Giving an overview of the [draft](#) political agreement to end Libya’s conflict, the UNSMIL chief underscored the importance of the support of the armed groups for successful implementation, including their withdrawal from cities and towns.

In that regard, he added, recent local ceasefires and reconciliation agreements reached between localities in western Libya are welcome developments that “the Libyan actors should build on with a view to achieving a permanent and sustainable truce.”

During the meetings, the participants expressed their views regarding the way forward, voiced their concerns and discussed how to overcome them. There was agreement among them to hold a wider meeting soon to discuss mechanisms to consolidate the ceasefires and strengthen it by applying a number of confidence-building measures, such as the exchange of prisoners.

ISIS brutally execute prisoners by drowning in cage and blowing them up with grenade launchers

14:31, 23 JUNE 2015 | BY JOHN SHAMMAS

The barbaric video shows men lowered into a swimming pool which was fitted out with underwater cameras to ensure their horrific deaths would be captured on film

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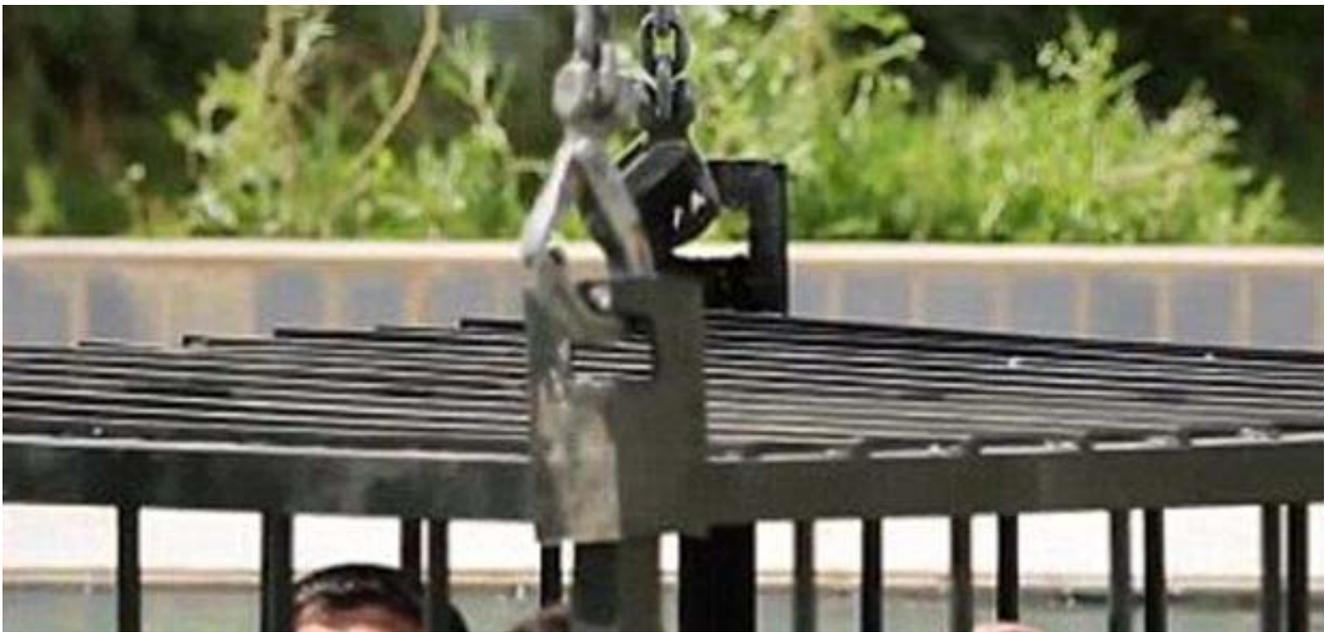


Caged: The prisoners awaited death as they were locked behind bars in the pool

Islamic terror group **ISIS** has released harrowing footage appearing to show caged prisoners being lowered into a swimming pool to drown alongside other horrific executions.

The vile group claimed that 16 men were killed in Nineveh, Iraq, after being accused of spying in a set of horrifying killings.

In the first round of executions, five terrified men can be seen being lowered into the water while locked in a cage together.



Minutes later, the cage is lifted, which shows the man lying motionless on the cage floor.

The barbaric footage even used pricey underwater cameras which were fitted around the swimming pool to capture the scene from below the water.



But after that horrific ordeal, the video is not finished with its brutal executions.

It then cuts to show four victims locked in an old-looking car in the desert.



Trapped: Four men were locked in the car, awaiting death

The video then cuts to an ISIS executioner brandishing a rocket-propelled grenade, who fires in the direction of the car.

The footage then lingers on the exploded car as it languishes in flames.



Another execution showed in the video sees prisoners being made to kneel before explosives which were tied around their neck were detonated.



Before dying, each of the prisoners were forced to admit their guilt for 'spying' before being brutally murdered.



Sickening: Vile ISIS terrorists revel in another horrific execution

