

## ISIS GLOBAL INTSUM

The purpose of this intelligence summary is to document and assess the significance of open source reports regarding ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) activity *outside* of Iraq and Syria (ISIS Abroad). This estimate will organize ISIS abroad activity into concentric rings, including the ISIS “Interior Ring” comprised of Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon as well as Iraq and Syria; the “Near Abroad Ring” comprised of former Arab Caliphate lands; and the “Far Abroad Ring” comprised of Europe, the United States, Southeast Asia, and the Cyber domain.

**Key Takeaway:** *ISIS is executing a complex global strategy across three geographic rings. ISIS is engaged in military operations in the “Near Abroad” of Iraq and Syria and in neighboring states in al-Sham, or “Greater Syria,” encompassing primarily Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Jordan. ISIS is conducting terrorist attacks in these states, goading enemies into an offensive posture that may polarize domestic populations and set conditions for intensified regional conflict. ISIS is also cultivating relationships with numerous jihadi groups in the “Near Abroad Ring” that are capable of conducting simultaneous, independent military operations across the Middle East and North Africa. These ISIS groups can shape local conditions and set terms for future ISIS expansion. Finally, ISIS sympathizers are active in Europe and the “Far Abroad Ring”, creating resonance for the movement globally. ISIS is competing with al-Qaeda for dominance on the global jihadist stage while creating redundancy for its military campaign inside of Iraq as it prepares to absorb new counter-attacks.*

### THE INTERIOR RING (JORDAN, ISRAEL, PALESTINE, LEBANON, AS WELL AS SYRIA AND IRAQ)

**Interior Ring Takeaway:** *ISIS ground operations have expanded beyond Iraq and Syria. ISIS cross-border support networks in Lebanese and Turkish border towns endure, but ISIS has additional objectives for neighboring states in the region. ISIS launched attacks on Jordan and Turkey in January 2015. This escalation of terrorism suggests a phase change by ISIS, either to provoke neighboring states into a military posture that will polarize their populations, or to deter them from participating in the international coalition as an alternate course that could enable further expansion. Turkey will be treated below in the Near Abroad Ring, as it falls outside of al-Sham.*

**Jordan:** ISIS published a video on February 3, 2015 depicting the execution of a captive Jordanian air force pilot.<sup>1</sup> Through this act, ISIS intended to goad Jordan into an intensification of its involvement in the international coalition, thereby

amplifying the enmity between ISIS and the Jordanian state. This aggression was a departure from ISIS’s previous focus on recruitment within alienated populations in Jordan, and suggests a new phase of ISIS operations there, consistent with ISIS’s stated desire to draw more enemies into its global fight.<sup>2</sup> The pilot’s execution and a January 25, 2015 ISIS attack on the Jordanian border demonstrate a new focus on pressuring and intimidating the Jordanian government as a Western ally.<sup>3</sup> ISIS will likely attempt to amplify divisions in Jordanian society, and to justify future attacks against the Jordanian state.

**Lebanon:** ISIS launched an attack on a Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) outpost near Ras Baalbek on January 23, 2015 following an overall increase in ISIS’s activity in Qalamoun, where ISIS has maintained a small presence for years.<sup>4</sup> The LAF repelled the attack, but reports in February 2015 of an ISIS shari’a court and checkpoints in the surrounding countryside indicate that ISIS intends to establish political control.<sup>5</sup> Reports of ISIS sleeper cells within disenfranchised Sunni communities indicate latent ISIS capability deeper into Lebanon. ISIS may seek to expand its operations in Lebanon as an extension of its military campaign for al-Sham and as an opportunity to procure additional resources and social support. This objective requires a destabilization of Lebanon, concurrent with Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra intent to conduct a Lebanon campaign, which may have begun with a double suicide attack in Tripoli on January 10.<sup>6</sup> ISIS and JN may combine their efforts in Qalamoun and Lebanon, a break from their strategic norms. This alignment may dissipate quickly, however, if ISIS uses Qalamoun as a launch point to co-opt gains made by JN and rebels and expand ISIS’s control.<sup>7</sup>

**Israel and Palestine:** Gaza protestors carried ISIS flags during a January 19, 2015 rally, overtly demonstrating support for ISIS that may have been developing quietly over time.<sup>8</sup> ISIS declared its

## ISIS GLOBAL ACTIVITY, JANUARY 7- FEBRUARY 18, 2015



enmity with the Palestinian political organization Hamas in July 2014, accusing the group of abandoning Shari'a "fundamentals" in order to gain popularity.<sup>9</sup> Pro-ISIS displays indicate that some residents may share this sentiment. Between November 2014 and February 2015, Israeli authorities detained several individuals with ties to ISIS, and also broke up two small, independent attack cells.<sup>10</sup> Israel and Palestine fall within historic Sham, but they also represent hard security targets, so ISIS will likely leverage small terrorist cells to undertake spectacular attacks.

### NEAR ABROAD (AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA, TURKEY, SINAI, LIBYA, TUNISIA, ALGERIA, MOROCCO, CAUCASUS)

**Near Abroad Takeaway:** *The Near Abroad will likely be the main theater for conflict between ISIS and al-Qaeda (AQ). In January 2015, ISIS conducted robust outreach to multiple jihadist groups in the region, executing a standardized plan to create formal affiliations with outside groups. These affiliated jihadist groups form the seed of ISIS's remote "wilayats," or provinces, that represent an extension of ISIS's caliphate. Some of these groups were previously aligned with AQ, indicating that ISIS may be able to offer resources and combat multipliers that AQ cannot. The apparent addition of ISIS resources and training resulted in an acceleration of attacks and expansion of military control by previously declared ISIS wilayats in Libya and the Sinai Peninsula during January. ISIS has significant potential to influence the Libyan conflict, and its actions suggest that the Libyan campaign may be ISIS's main effort in the Near Abroad.*

**Libya:** ISIS's Wilayat Tripolitana conducted a complex attack on January 27, 2015, directing a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) and multiple Suicide Vest (SVEST) attacks against

Tripoli's Corinthia Hotel, the headquarters of General National Congress (GNC) Prime Minister Omar al-Hasbi.<sup>11</sup> The attack was an inflection in ISIS's Libya campaign, aimed at securing the cooperation of Islamist rebel groups in western Libya while slowly expanding ISIS's stronghold in the east. ISIS targeted al-Hasbi in order to fracture the Libya Dawn coalition, which is comprised of loosely affiliated pro-GNC militias. The GNC responded to ISIS's aggression on February 15 by announcing it would send a military force to clear ISIS out of Sirte.<sup>12</sup> ISIS cells in Sabratha, Tripoli, Misrata, and Sirte will likely offer advanced capabilities to Islamist militias that are willing to turn against the GNC. At the same time, ISIS will likely continue to push outward from its stronghold in Derna, striking Libyan National Army (LNA) forces directly. Egyptian and NATO involvement in the conflict may create a second front between ISIS and the West, as indicated by Egypt's February 16 airstrikes against ISIS positions in Derna.<sup>13</sup>

**Sinai:** ISIS's Wilayat Sinai conducted synchronized, complex attacks on hardened military targets across North Sinai on January 29, 2015.<sup>14</sup> The attacks were part of a succession of amplified military and social outreach activities by Wilayat Sinai that suggest increased funding and expertise from ISIS leadership. ISIS Wilayat Sinai also accelerated intimidation tactics in January 2015, such as executions and house detonations, while exerting sufficient control to deny Egyptian security forces the ability to travel on the main North Sinai Road without heavy protection.<sup>15</sup> The resulting freedom of movement for ISIS allows Wilayat Sinai forces to plan increasingly deadly attacks and accelerate aid distribution and recruitment. The growing synergy between Wilayat Sinai and the ISIS core in Iraq and Syria empowers ISIS

leadership with an additional front in a strategic location. Wilayat Sinai will be able to support a regional expansion strategy that ISIS can leverage as it manages its interior Caliphate campaign.

**Afghanistan and Pakistan:** ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani announced the creation of ISIS's Wilayat Khorasan on January 26, 2015.<sup>16</sup> Adnani named a former Pakistani Taliban (TTP) commander as the wilayat's governor and a former Afghan Taliban commander his deputy. The allegiance of militant commanders furnishes ISIS with localized knowledge and a physical footprint in the region, possibly augmented by forces generated by ISIS recruiters active in Pakistan during December 2014 and January 2015.<sup>17</sup> Afghan officials have been quick to dismiss the ISIS presence. The potential exists, however, for Afghan militants to shift allegiance to ISIS in order to gain resources, triumph over local rivals, achieve local objectives, or demonstrate ideological support in the context of the ongoing legitimacy battle between al-Qaeda and ISIS, who both seek dominance in the Khorasan region. For example, on January 28, the Taliban kidnapped ISIS's deputy commander for Wilayat Khorasan and on February 9, a U.S. drone strike killed that commander. These events indicate that ISIS will face serious resistance in its efforts to grow in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> ISIS forces in the Khorasan must compete with rival militant groups like the Taliban and al-Qaeda, while also guarding against U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

**Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz died on January 23, 2015. ISIS capitalized on the event as a messaging opportunity. In the days after his death, ISIS published four videos in which Saudi fighters across Iraq and Syria celebrated the King's death and promised future attacks in the Kingdom.<sup>19</sup> The foreign fighters highlighted ISIS's latent support network in Saudi Arabia, which ISIS may activate in future operations. These sleeper cells occasionally contain non-Saudi members, demonstrated by a December 2014 raid in which Saudi authorities arrested a Malaysian army commander along with 134 other suspected terrorists.<sup>20</sup> The individual traveled to the Kingdom on the pretext of pilgrimage, and was arrested with an ISIS cell along the Saudi-Jordanian border, in the zone of al-Jawf near the Iraqi border where al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), ISIS's predecessor, had historically recruited foreign fighters.<sup>21</sup> Many of the other detainees were linked to ISIS and allegedly planned to "destabilize the country." While Saudi internal security is robust, ISIS will likely cultivate a support base within the country in order to take advantage of potential future unrest. ISIS telegraphed this intent in its November 13, 2014 announcement of a Saudi Arabia wilayat.<sup>22</sup>

**Turkey:** An SVEST, attributed to a Russian female ISIS operative, detonated in Istanbul on January 6, 2015 raising the question of

ISIS intent in Turkey.<sup>23</sup> Turkey has been a deep rear support area for ISIS in Syria, sustaining human and material smuggling routes through multiple border control points.<sup>24</sup> The Turkish government historically regarded the threat of ISIS attacks in Turkey as moderate-to-low, but this attack suggests ISIS may be entering a new phase in Turkey. It is possible that the attacker acted independently, however several of ISIS's global programs may contain objectives in Turkey: 1. ISIS may desire to polarize the Turkish population. 2. ISIS may attempt to divert Turkish internal security priorities away from the Syrian border. 3. ISIS may attempt to shape Turkey's involvement in the anti-ISIS coalition, given that Turkey expressed on October 1, 2014 that its priority in Syria is Assad and not ISIS.<sup>25</sup>

**Morocco and Algeria:** Moroccan authorities arrested dozens of individuals across the country on January 13 and 17, 2015 for supporting ISIS or operating ISIS recruitment cells.<sup>26</sup> Morocco lies at the seam between Europe and West Africa, and it is a valuable location for ISIS recruitment and logistics operations. Three major cells were broken up in the country in late 2014, while others are reportedly still active.<sup>27</sup> Morocco thus faces an internal ISIS threat in addition to a cross-border threat from the former al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) splinter group Jund al-Khalifa (JaK), which appears oriented toward Morocco. JaK declared allegiance to ISIS in September 2014 and recruited some Moroccan members last fall.<sup>28</sup> However, JaK was largely crippled after Algerian forces launched an offensive on the group in December 2014. Authorities arrested an Algerian Jund al-Khalifa member in a Moroccan border town on January 26, 2015.<sup>29</sup> The arrest indicates that remnants of ISIS's Algeria "wilayat" may be concentrated along the Moroccan-Algerian border, rather than near the Tunisian border where al-Qaeda and locally focused militant groups such as Ansar al-Sharia forces typically operate. ISIS may seek to reconstitute this presence in the future.

**Caucasus:** Top al-Qaeda officials released a joint statement on January 28, 2015 condemning fractures within the al-Qaeda affiliated Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus (IEC).<sup>30</sup> Since December 2014, multiple Chechen and Daghestani commanders in the IEC had retracted their allegiance to IEC leader Aliaskhab Kebekov and pledged allegiance to ISIS leader al-Baghdadi.<sup>31</sup> The Daghestani commanders allegedly defected because of Kebekov's more moderate approach to jihad and because of a dearth of IEC strategists capable of planning large-scale military operations. ISIS may fill that void, exporting its military prowess as a currency to court existing jihadist groups. This assessment is supported by ISIS's claim that a wilayat in the Caucasus is forthcoming.<sup>32</sup> An ISIS Wilayat Qawqaz would likely capitalize on friction arising from a current government crackdown on Chechen radicals.<sup>33</sup>



## FAR ABROAD (EUROPE, UNITED STATES, ASIA, CYBER)

**Far Abroad Takeaway:** *ISIS began a new phase of its Far Abroad campaign in January 2015. This effort is focused on punishing anti-ISIS coalition members in addition to exacerbating and exploiting internal divisions within European countries. ISIS has encouraged lone wolf attacks and sent foreign fighters back to Europe to execute spectacular attacks with the support of cross-border radical networks. ISIS plans to attack any nation that strikes its Caliphate. It also aims to incite popular reactions and security responses that polarize European society, thus causing marginalized individuals to join ISIS. This effect supports ISIS's plan to eliminate neutral parties through either absorption or elimination, in preparation of eventual all-out battle with the West.*

**Global Protests:** Muslim civilians in more than a dozen nations demonstrated against the cover of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine that was released after the January 7, 2015 attack on the satirical paper in Paris. Such protests occurred between January 16 and 20<sup>34</sup> in Gaza, Algeria, Pakistan, Chechnya, Niger, Mali, Somalia, Syria, Lebanon, Senegal, Mauritania and Iran. Notably, few “anti-Charlie” rallies occurred in Europe, even though European citizens held several large anti-immigration rallies during this time period.<sup>35</sup> Muslim Europeans likely refrained from participation in anti-Charlie protests out of respect for the proximity of the attacks. However, this divergence between the reaction of Muslim communities in Europe and the wider Near East also stems from increased force posture in European states and a surge in anti-Muslim events, especially in France. Over a hundred anti-Muslim incidents were reported in France in the weeks after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks.<sup>36</sup> Subsequent domestic struggles in France have demonstrated the difficulty European governments face in reconciling internal security and counterterrorism objectives with efforts to establish inclusive and tolerant national identities. ISIS's Far Abroad campaign seeks to exploit this tension in order to widen the gap between restive communities and Western governments.

**United States:** On January 14, 2015, the FBI arrested Christopher Lee Cornell, an Ohio man who plotted to attack the U.S. capitol in the name of ISIS.<sup>37</sup> While lone wolf attack attempts in the U.S. have been rare, small groups of American ISIS supporters have funded and attempted to join the group. Because of the U.S. leadership of the anti-ISIS coalition and the relative dearth of American ISIS fighters, ISIS will likely aim to punish the U.S., rather than attempt to exacerbate cleavages in American society. The latter strategy is intended for Europe, which faces brewing cultural unrest. ISIS will continue to target the U.S. through hostage execution and attempts to break the anti-ISIS coalition.

**France:** Brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi killed 12 individuals at the Paris office of the *Charlie Hebdo* satirical magazine on January 7, 2015.<sup>38</sup> The Kouachi brothers and their associate, Amedy Coulibaly, then took hostages in separate locations on January 9, after Coulibaly allegedly shot a Paris policewoman the previous day. French forces raided the locations and killed all three men that evening. Following the January 16 arrest of several Parisians suspected of supporting Coulibaly, information surfaced revealing close logistical cooperation between Coulibaly and the Kouachi brothers.<sup>39</sup> Despite their cooperation, the militants attributed their actions to different groups.<sup>40</sup> On January 10, pro-ISIS sources circulated a video featuring Amedy Coulibaly pledging allegiance to al-Baghdadi in front of an ISIS flag.<sup>41</sup> Coulibaly's wife also traveled to ISIS in Syria on January 2.<sup>42</sup> Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) released a video on January 14 claiming that the Kouachi brothers had acted at the group's direction.<sup>43</sup> Al-Qaeda in The Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) leader Nasr al-Ansi claimed that Coulibaly's attacks were simply a “coincidence” that occurred because he was friends with Said and Cherif Kouachi. The degree of direction given by either AQAP or ISIS is therefore unclear. It is evident, however, that Europe's radical recruitment and logistical cells have not split cleanly between AQ and ISIS. Far Abroad actors inspired by AQ and ISIS retain personal ties that can result in undirected or network sponsored attacks that serve the purposes of both groups.

ISIS encourages disaffected individuals to emigrate to the caliphate or stage attacks at home. Since ISIS spokesman Adnani's September 21, 2014 directive to kill “citizens of countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State,” ISIS supporters in France, Canada, Australia, Denmark and other locations have conducted solitary, lethal attacks.<sup>44</sup> ISIS celebrates the “international atmosphere of terror” generated by its supporters' frequent, low-level attacks, as compared to larger attacks such as al-Qaeda's 2004 and 2005 bombings in Madrid and London.<sup>45</sup> The lone wolf threat is heightened by the ability of inspired, networked individuals to mobilize existing cells in order to plan complex attacks. These networked individuals often benefit from military training received and connections made while fighting abroad. ISIS continues to encourage independent attacks in France, releasing French-language videos on January 14, February 3, and February 7 urging French Muslims who could not leave the country to conduct attacks.<sup>46</sup> Concurrent with the February 3 video's release, a man attacked three French soldiers with a knife in Nice, France.<sup>47</sup> The attacker had traveled to Turkey on January 28 and was sent back at the request of French authorities. The incident highlights the threat nations incur by limiting their citizens' ability to fight abroad, especially in cases where the government is subsequently unable

to monitor suspects. This threat is distinct from the possibility that individuals may successfully emigrate and then return, equipped with military and ideological training.

In January<sup>48</sup>, faced with new threats, France deployed 122,000 police officers, gendarmeries, and military personnel to protect schools, train stations, cultural buildings, and other sensitive sites. France also chose to increase its international force posture, moving the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* to the Gulf.<sup>49</sup> Late in January, French authorities undertook a series of anti-terror raids in southern France. Counterterrorism police arrested small groups of suspected ISIS recruiters on January 20, January 27, and February 12, in separate towns along the French coast.<sup>50</sup> Separately, police arrested jihadist recruiters in the Paris and Lyon areas on February 3.<sup>51</sup> Some members of this cell had returned from fighting in Syria themselves, illustrating the organizational capacity of European jihadist veterans.

**Belgium:** Special police conducted 12 anti-terror raids across Belgium on January 15, 2015 in order to prevent a major imminent attack, possibly on an EU or NATO institution.<sup>52</sup> During an arrest in Verviers, militants exchanged gunfire with police, leaving two suspects dead and one wounded. Authorities subsequently found police uniforms, walkie-talkies, radios, false documents, grenades, handguns, AK-47s, and bomb-making materials in the men's apartment. Senior Belgian counterterrorism officials confirmed the men were part of an operational cell instructed by ISIS leadership to carry out attacks in retaliation for coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Syria.<sup>53</sup> This instruction signals a pivot in ISIS's Far Abroad strategy. ISIS is willing to send its foreign fighters back home to stage attacks, even as fighting continues in Iraq and Syria. The Far Abroad attacks support the interior caliphate campaign, by punishing and deterring coalition members from striking ISIS territory. Returned ISIS fighters benefit from radical networks linked across Europe. The Verviers suspects returned back to their hometowns, but other cell members were detained in France and Greece.<sup>54</sup> The suspected leader of the cell planned the attack from Greece, taking advantage of the land border between Greece and Turkey as a waypoint between Syria and Europe.

In response to the halted attack, Belgium mobilized 150 police officers in Brussels and Antwerp on January 17, with another 150 following in the subsequent week.<sup>55</sup> With the terror alert at 3 out of 4, Belgian officers were assigned to protect Jewish schools, government buildings, and other areas. Because of the Paris attacks, Belgian courts decided to postpone the verdict announcement for the trial of 46 members of Sharia4Belgium, a jihadist recruitment organization. On February 11, the court

sentenced 8 individuals, as the remaining members are either still fighting in Syria or have died.<sup>56</sup> Belgium thus faces an ongoing threat of foreign fighters who may return to attack independently or at ISIS's direction.

**Spain:** A January 24, 2015 raid in Ceuta, Spain, validated that ISIS will likely direct European attack cells in locations where it already maintains recruitment and logistics assets.<sup>57</sup> Because Ceuta is a Spanish territory bordering Morocco, it hosts a concentration of jihadist support cells focused on moving fighters between the European and African systems. Previous raids in the city focused on these facilitation groups. However, the ISIS cell arrested in January appears to have prepared to attack a guarded European site. Similarities between the Ceuta cell and the Verviers cell indicate that both may have been members of an aspirational attack that would hit multiple coalition members at once.

**Germany:** German authorities conducted raids across the country on January 16 and 20, 2015 to break up an ISIS recruitment and funding cell based out of Berlin.<sup>58</sup> The raids marked the culmination of a year-long investigation, and occurred alongside the arrest of several returned German ISIS fighters. While none of the detained individuals planned to stage in attack in Europe, German police admitted that about 350 individuals were under surveillance for connections to terrorist groups. State efforts to scrub out jihadist influence may succeed in warding off the deployment of ISIS attack cells. However, European nations risk aggravating disaffected populations, contributing to a cycle of radicalization. This is especially applicable in light of recent anti-immigration rallies held by the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA) group. The organization rallied over 25,000 people in Dresden on January 12, prompting thousands to counter-protest on the same day.<sup>59</sup> ISIS will capitalize on this friction, and frame anti-Islamic sentiment as reason for European Muslims to emigrate to the ISIS caliphate.<sup>60</sup>

**Europe-wide:** Concurrent with the January 15-16, 2015 raids in Belgium and Germany, the U.K. added additional patrols to Jewish sites, and the Netherlands increased its terror threat.<sup>61</sup> Soon after, on January 22, the United States European Command (EUCOM) announced plans to increase security at facilities across Europe.<sup>62</sup> This increased domestic security was matched with a series of diplomatic meetings aimed at curtailing cross-border terrorist threats. On January 19, European Union officials discussed proposals to exchange passenger information and to block the financing of terrorism, both of which had previously stalled due to privacy concerns.<sup>63</sup> On February 12, EU officials announced a related proposal to increase security

checks on those entering the passport-free Schengen zone.<sup>64</sup> In considering these proposals, European officials must balance the benefits of increased security with a potential curtailing of individual rights. Unchecked security measures could contribute to unrest amongst marginalized populations, thus playing into ISIS's narrative about the West.

**Malaysia:** In January 2015, an ISIS-aligned recruiter declared on jihadist websites that Malaysia was no longer a viable waypoint for Syria.<sup>65</sup> Southeast Asian foreign fighters frequently traveled through the country, but recent arrests of travel facilitation cells and even an ISIS commander indicate that Malaysian crackdown efforts are succeeding. This solution partially transfers the problem of radicalization to Malaysia's prisons. On January 22, the Malaysian Home Minister announced that some of the country's 120 detained ISIS supporters had been removed from the general prison population for preaching to inmates.<sup>66</sup> A worrying consequence of effective travel limitations in Malaysia may be increased jihadist emphasis on local terrorist groups, such as the Jemaah Islamiah offshoot Darul Islam Sabah in eastern Malaysia.<sup>67</sup> ISIS may attempt to establish a more direct relationship with Southeast Asian radical groups, cultivating an ISIS-influenced home campaign. But Southeast Asia is likely not a current priority for ISIS, and so ISIS operatives will likely focus in the near term on finding alternate routes for emigration to Syria.

**India:** On January 30, 2015, Turkish authorities deported nine individuals to India for attempting to join ISIS in Syria. Indian police released all nine by February 2, after the group admitted intent to enter ISIS territory.<sup>68</sup> Though India considers ISIS membership a criminal offense, it does not have a national standard for how to punish or track offenders. Many countries lack such structures, increasing the risk of recidivism. ISIS will likely continue to encourage Indian supporters to emigrate to the Caliphate, or possibly Wilayat Khorasan, rather than attempt to compete for influence with al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

**Bangladesh:** Authorities in Dhaka arrested four alleged ISIS "leaders" on January 19, 2015.<sup>69</sup> The group admitted its intent to fundraise, attack the government, and "establish a caliphate" in Bangladesh, but it is unclear whether any of the detainees are actually linked to ISIS. Events in the fall of 2014 indicated that ISIS recruiters were present in the country drawing on Indian and Bangladeshi populations.<sup>70</sup> A latent ISIS presence would likely attempt to capitalize on recent weeks of violent anti-government protests led by Bangladeshi Islamist parties. Given these protests and the new announcement of Wilayat Khorasan, South Asia should be monitored for additional signs of ISIS activity.

**Japan:** ISIS's January 24 and 31, 2015 beheadings of Haruna Yukawa and Kenji Goto represent a carefully calculated articulation of its worldview. ISIS publicized the men's captivity as Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged \$200 million in non-lethal aid to the anti-ISIS coalition.<sup>71</sup> Until that point, targeting Japan had not been a priority for ISIS. However, ISIS orients international terror activity against those who act against it. Attacking Japan was an opportunity for ISIS to practice its stated method of eliminating neutral parties through either absorption or destruction. The strategy approach seems to be working, as the Abe administration is now considering legislation to allow Japanese troops to rescue Japanese nationals overseas.<sup>72</sup> The legislation would be a departure for Japan, whose constitution forbids military activity. ISIS's global strategy depends on the assumption that, on balance, ISIS will gain more by messaging enmity with a nation or group than it will lose by actual military retaliation from that group.

**Cyber:** ISIS-supportive hacking groups intensified cyber-attacks throughout January 2015, striking a range of military, journalist, charitable, and government targets.<sup>73</sup> The ISIS-supportive group CyberCaliphate directly attacked the anti-ISIS coalition on January 12, hacking the Twitter and YouTube accounts of the United States Central Command.<sup>74</sup> International news sources identified Junaid Hussein, who is reportedly fighting in Syria, as the leader of the group. His involvement with CyberCaliphate indicates that ISIS cyberattacks are not solely a supporter-driven phenomenon. ISIS has technologically skilled individuals in its ranks who can organize and conduct attacks against the caliphate's enemies. The ISIS cyber threat may become more serious in the future, as tech-savvy ISIS supporters consolidate efforts and organize attacks to support ISIS activity. More than 19,000 cyber-attacks targeted French websites in the week after the Charlie Hebdo shooting.<sup>75</sup>

**Forecast:** In February and March 2015, ISIS will likely expand further into Lebanon in support of a campaign for the Syrian central corridor. In the Near Abroad, ISIS will likely accelerate activity in Libya, with the goal of increasing local presence and support. Egypt, Italy, France, and other European nations may call for military intervention in response. ISIS will likely declare its next wilayat in the Caucasus, possibly affecting the Russian government's strategy in Syria. ISIS may also escalate attacks in Turkey to provoke and intimidate the Turkish state. Lone, ISIS-inspired actors will continue undirected attacks in the Far Abroad. ISIS will capitalize on these attacks and on Western domestic responses in order to further its narrative of global polarization.

*Harleen Gambhir is a Counterterrorism Research Analyst at the  
Institute for the Study of War  
Twitter: @TheStudyofWar*

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