



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

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## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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# A View from the CT Foxhole

## An Interview with Captain Robert A. Newson, Military Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

By Brian Dodwell and Marielle Ness



Armed Yemeni tribe members protest against Al-Qa'ida in Sanaa on August 17, 2014 - Anadolu Agency/Getty

**Biography:** Captain Robert A. Newson, U.S. Navy, is a Naval Special Warfare (SEAL) officer who most recently led strategy and concept development for the Naval Special Warfare Command. Previously, he commanded Special Operations Command (Forward) in Yemen and Naval Special Warfare Support Activity, a cross-functional intelligence operations command, and served as director of the Joint Interagency Task Force - Counter Terrorism. Captain Newson is a graduate of the University of Kansas and the Naval Postgraduate School with distinction. He is a PhD candidate at the University of San Diego.

**CTC:** Can you briefly describe your role and experiences in Yemen in 2010-2012, and what your key takeaways were from a strategic U.S. counterterrorism perspective?

**CAPT Newson:** I was the commander of Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) Forward (SOC FWD) in Yemen. SOC FWD was an extension of SOCCENT, part and parcel with the command in Tampa. It was a task force with minimal staff and a joint force that primarily trained and advised Yemeni partners, but we also conducted civil affairs and military information support operations. And we were deeply embedded with the embassy and their activities.

I have three primary takeaways. First, our security assistance process is not tailored to the current fight. It is a Cold War model that values delivery as the key metric, and is un-tethered to the timing that would facilitate the advise and assist effort. So, for example, shipments of materials in Yemen would arrive based on equipment availability

or supplier timelines, not when we actually needed them to be there, or not be there. Oftentimes a huge shipment of supplies or weapons would arrive at the same time we were trying to play a little hard ball with them and it undermined our efforts. So we argued to zero effect that U.S. assistance efforts should be conditional and adjusted to conditions on the ground; it should be a pull from guys forward rather than a push from contractors or the system. Having control of who gets what when is an extremely powerful tool for advisors. If they don't have that it is very difficult to sometimes motivate the folks we are working with. So that was lesson number one.

Lesson two has to do with getting out of the capital and really working with the frontier forces. The remit of the government does not go too far out of the capital and it is not very productive to develop counterterrorism (CT) forces primarily kept in Sana'a that rarely engaged in the fight and were controlled by very senior Yemeni leaders. So we wanted to work with the Southern Regional Command, which is division level and brigade commanders that engage in the fight in the south. This was especially the case after President Saleh left power and President Hadi took control. Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was taking over large swaths of the south and we thought we needed to be down there in a much more significant way. I think concerns about force protection, over increasing demand of advisors and about slippery slopes prevented a broader advise and assist effort that both DoD and the Embassy were advocating.

And then my third lesson is about intelligence and logistics advise and assist efforts, and they are just as critical as training fighters and supplying weapons. This includes developing intelligence centers, which we did, and all-source intelligence capacity, which Yemen had but which was not well coordinated. It also included developing logistics supply plans and increasing the professionalism of support functions. All of this is critical to morale and fighting capacity, and what we saw in Yemen was that without a good supply system, without a good pay system, without the intelligence support, they were left facing the opponent without a

lot of knowledge or motivation.

**CTC: What were the key challenges you encountered in trying to execute U.S. counterterrorism policies with regard to AQAP while the host country was undergoing significant turmoil and a political transition? How did this political situation impact your mission on the ground?**

**CAPT Newson:** My time in Yemen from 2010 to 2012 was broken into three distinct evolutions. The first was during the Saleh regime. At that time we were up and fully running with all our efforts. And that ran until about June 2011, when the fighting really started after the failed assassination attempt of Saleh and the immediate artillery retaliation against suspected conspirators that were in the neighborhood of SOC FWD headquarters and the embassy residence. I was in the neighborhood with my command sergeant major when artillery started falling just blocks away after the failed assassination attempt. After that, SOC FWD Yemen efforts were shut down and most of our forces were removed and replaced by a Marine Corps FAST [Editor: Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team] team that protected the embassy and the Sana'a Sheraton. I stayed in Yemen with a 4 man CENTCOM contingency advisory team. And we developed the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation Plan and the embassy evacuation in coordination with the amphibious readiness group that was off the coast. That lasted until really the start of 2012 when we were able to restart the advising effort on a very small scale, but thankfully we were able to work with the Southern Regional Commander and get CT forces a little bit closer to the fight.

**CTC: As AQAP was taking that territory in the south, what ability did you have to get engaged with that? How difficult was it to get Yemeni forces to engage with what you were concerned with, AQAP, as opposed what were probably their more pressing concerns given the national political strife?**

**CAPT Newson:** It was incredibly difficult, so I spent a lot of time in Aden with the Southern Regional Commander working on his strategy to retake the southern part of Yemen. What appeared to occur was that there was a general

evacuation of the south by Yemeni forces and AQAP was allowed to move in. They took over territory and cities without much of a fight, and then the frontline was drawn not far outside of Aden. And that is when we tried to get the Southern Regional Commander engaged. It was clear there were mixed messages from the Saleh regime. President Saleh was absolutely a master of manipulation and he used counterterrorism cooperation with the U.S. as a tool to get what he wanted. He played everyone. He played the tribes. He played the political parties. He played us. So we knew we were dealing with some duplicity, and so we tried to take steps forward when we could and then hold what we had when they tried to pull back. So that was a barrier to progress. When Hadi took over they were much more engaged as earnest partners, but at that time they were also incredibly distracted with the political issues of trying to keep the government together.

**CTC: Comparing pre- to post-transition, what differences did you see in Yemen's approach to AQAP when Hadi took over?**

**CAPT Newson:** One thing the Ministry of Defense (MOD) under Hadi did was to allow and encourage southern generals in charge of the commands within the Southern Regional Command to be more aggressive. They understood the tribal dynamics and engaged very well with the tribes. This coupled with AQAP overplaying their hand with the tribes. They were being very heavy-handed, crucifying people they thought were collaborators and doing some things that really turned the tribes against them. So that was really the shifting point, when the tribes saw AQAP as more of a burden than the government forces.

During the Arab Spring the issue of tribal engagement was critical. I was thinking about contingency planning and how we maintain our efforts against AQAP if Yemen collapses into chaos. The obvious answer (and one that likely remains today) is the tribes. It is about an unconventional warfare campaign with the tribes against AQAP. When national coherence is declining, like we are currently seeing in Yemen, it sure would be a strategic asset, even a game changer, to have a relationship with the



southern Yemeni tribes. The challenge though, is planning for this worst case scenario of collapse in a way that does not undermine ongoing diplomatic efforts to achieve a more positive outcome.

**CTC:** There has been much reporting on the use of drones in Yemen, so much that it seemed to dominate the discussion at times. Where did you see this campaign fitting into the overall efforts against AQAP?

**CAPT Newson:** SOCCENT had no role in drone strikes so I did not have any operational insight into them when in Yemen. So, I can only speak about my opinions on drone strikes and where they fit in. The drone strikes, manned air strikes and special operations raids can and do disrupt terrorist operational planning and attack preparation. That is incredibly important. These strikes and raids buy space and time. But by themselves they are only a delaying action and everywhere I have been, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, every military person up and down the chain of command acknowledges this.

This “CT concept” – the solution that some people champion where the main or whole effort is drone strikes and special operations raids – is a fantasy. It may be cheaper and safer, but without broader efforts it is like mowing the grass in the jungle. You cannot hold the jungle back with a weed whacker, you need to partner with the locals to get after their own problems. So I am an advocate of small, tailored advise and assist efforts. And really what I am talking about is combat advisors on the frontlines with our partners.

Now in Yemen that was very sensitive. They understandably did not want a U.S. face on anything. But during the Hadi presidency they were very willing to have us as forward observers and combat advisors, helping with tactical intelligence and, they hoped, calling in fire support, which would enable the local forces take control of their own territory. So while I believe U.S. advisors in small numbers should be part of the fight, I also believe solutions must be locally owned. The more we are involved, the less the locals are involved. So that is a delicate balance.

**CTC:** How do you see the current negotiations over the future of the Yemeni government playing out? What lessons can we take from your experience with the last transition that may be applied to the current situation in Yemen, in terms of maintaining our counterterrorism efforts despite the current turmoil?

**CAPT Newson:** The current situation in Yemen is much more complex than what I dealt with during the Arab Spring. The Houthis have said they are willing to engage with the U.S. for the good of Yemen, but I think that is going to be really hard given their ideological underpinnings and their long-standing position about the U.S. Certainly, I have seen amazing things through diplomacy in Yemen in the past and we may be able to work some compromise where the Houthis will embrace more of a partnership to get after AQAP, but I think that’s going to be a hard row to hoe.

I am concerned that the other shoe in Yemen has yet to drop, and that is the issue of southern secessionist movement, or al-Hirak. I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time in southern Yemen and became very close to southerners who were senior leaders within MOD. And I can say the 1994 civil war between the south and the north remains a visceral issue for them. Al-Hirak was fairly vocal during the Yemeni Arab Spring, and while I was down south in 2011, the South Yemen flag was displayed prominently in Aden and elsewhere. So there is no love lost between the northerners and southerners and you cannot get any more northern than the Houthis. So with the Houthi rise to power I think we are going to see something more on the southern front. I see three possible outcomes. First, the southern Sunni tribes could align with AQAP to resist the advance of Houthis. The Sunni tribes aligning more closely with AQAP would be very bad for our counterterrorism effort. Second, the Sunni tribes could align with al-Hirak and seek secession, creating in effect what would be a three-way struggle between the Houthis, AQAP and a secessionist south. I know that the southerners would seek to engage the United States and seek support in their secession efforts in return for some robust action against AQAP. Third, the southern secessionists would just

remain under the surface. I think that last option is very unlikely given that the Houthis are pressing south and the southerners will see their chances for their desired political solution dwindling.

Regarding how we can maintain our CT efforts in this environment, with the closure of the U.S. Embassy I think it is clear the security assistance and train and advise efforts are on hold. In the near term that leaves only airstrikes and raids to keep AQAP on its heels. The lessons that are applicable from my time from 2010-2012 I think are very difficult. When compared to today, I was operating at time of a relatively stable government, even during the transition. It was a government that was very receptive to U.S. engagement, especially under Hadi. The role of the U.S. and other Western countries within Houthi-dominated Yemen is certainly unclear right now. And until that is clarified I think that we have to give some serious thought to planning unconventional warfare, engaging with the tribes to take the fight to AQAP. If Yemen continues to deteriorate into chaos, resulting in expanded freedom of maneuver for AQAP, which continues to be the most serious terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland, this has to be addressed in some way. So I think the most prominent lesson learned from my time in Yemen is that we have to seek relationships with everyone to create options which are ready to be executed, regardless of our preferred course of action.

**CTC:** Moving beyond just Yemen, with the growing emphasis on building Foreign Security Forces as a significant part of our National Strategy for Counterterrorism, what are the most significant challenges we face working with these partners and their governments (whether those challenges are related to our partners’ limitations or our own)?

**CAPT Newson:** In terms of our own internal limitations, I have concerns about advise and assist efforts that are characterized as merely trainers, which is incredibly limiting on multiple fronts. In Yemen they wanted to put us in a trainer box whereas we were trying to take a campaign perspective. This would include developing our own

intelligence capacity to understand the environment. But if you are merely a trainer, theoretically there is no need for this capacity, and some within the Embassy or DOD offices might see you as encroaching on their territory. Also, if we are seen as simply trainers then we are kept farther away from the fight. And the further away we are, the less insight we have regarding the motivation and problems of our partners. So I think we need to somehow break out of that trainer mold and really talk about campaigns, a series of coordinated activities towards a single purpose.

We also continue to have stovepipes. With all the various interagency efforts focused on Yemen, there was not a lot of integration and cross-talk with respect with how everybody was seeing things. We tried to rectify this with weekly calls for the intelligence community to bring together all these stovepipes and connect them with people on the edge and collaborate on a better picture for everyone to have a sense of what was needed.

Regarding challenges with our partners, the top issue is and will remain to be corruption. A lot of our support in equipment and money is funneled off to the pockets of corrupt personnel. We have to reduce the corruption through more transparency, more visibility, and more accountability. The other limitation related to our partners is how they relate to their populous. As we develop CT capacity we tried very hard to convince our partners to look at civil affairs capacity and Military Information Support Operations (MISO) capacity, so they could interact in a positive way and communicate with locals instead of simply bringing a hammer down on the population. And the last limitation is the motivation of our partners, which will wax and wane. We have to seek those windows of opportunity when it strengthens to make progress, and we have to figure out how we are going to hold progress at a point when that motivation starts to wane.

**CTC: With regards to using the tribes like you discussed earlier, what do you see as motivations for these tribes to stand up against groups like AQAP or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)? What would be the potential carrot we could use to**

**enhance this motivation?**

**CAPT Newson:** In terms of carrots and sticks, the stick is thankfully provided by jihadist organizations, whether that's AQAP, ISIL, or others. They cannot help themselves but over-reach and press too hard on the tribes. Using Iraq as an example, the tribes made a calculation that allowing ISIL into their territory and forcing former Prime Minister Maliki to leave the government was of better value than allowing him to stay in charge. But I fully expect that there is going to be a new calculation that living under the iron fist of extremists will be seen as not the way to go. So they are going to have their own internal motivations to resist. The carrots are what the tribes have always sought. When the Sunni awakening happened in Iraq, they wanted to get rid of al-Qa'idi in Iraq, who was cutting off the heads of their teenagers and delivering them in wicker baskets. They also wanted representational government and services to be provided. So our challenge is to work with governments to provide that representation, to provide some equity.

**CTC: Does our own strategy meet the needs of the environments we are now operating in? Are our efforts sustainable in what will, in many cases, be long-term engagements?**

**CAPT Newson:** I am very concerned that we are pricing ourselves out of small wars. I remember talking to senior leaders when we started bombing Libya, and it was like watching the gas pumps spin around as the cost rises. I am concerned we are using high end, very expensive weapon systems to fight small wars. And what you are eventually going to do is price us out of the ability to engage. We just cannot afford to fight the number of engagements we need to using F-22s, F-35s, and other expensive weapons systems that are not necessary against this adversary. Why can't we fly Super Tucanos (Editor: A turboprop light attack aircraft) and armed tactical UAVs that can do a better job of supporting at a much lower price? Everyone agrees these conflicts are going to take a long time and that we cannot disengage from them without some negative consequences. But at the rate we are spending, disengagement will be forced on us. So how do we engage on

a much more economical basis? I think the answer is to trade in a few high-end weapons systems for a whole bunch of smaller systems that are tailored to small wars. It is not a question of high-end or lower-end but of the right tool for the right job – having a balanced tool kit and using it efficiently.

**CTC: Last month we interviewed MG Grigsby at CJTF-HoA and he said that when building counterterrorism relationships, nothing is more important than intelligence sharing. What challenges have you faced trying to share information with foreign partners? And how have you overcome them?**

**CAPT Newson:** We established intelligence centers within a couple of Yemeni organizations where they brought in all their intelligence for the first time ever and tried to build a picture with it. Part of that is building trust and process development, but the other part is bringing something to the table ourselves. For example, I think we should be using either commercial imagery or figuring out how we can provide our classified imagery to them. When I left Yemen I had a great office call with the DIA Director and brought this issue up and he said they are working hard on it. I talked to people who were still in Yemen when I left months later and they said it had been improving. So I think we are getting better but there is a long way to go to properly prepare and enable our partners.

**CTC: Any final thoughts?**

**CAPT Newson:** The last thing I wanted to briefly talk about is that it is long past time that we get honest about what we are seeing, what we are doing, and what the real issues are. There have been several recent books about how many in the military would analyze a problem, see issues with it, and then we would get into a meeting or on a conference call and not talk about those issues, but instead say we were on track and move on with scheduled activities. I think that we have to get brutally honest about what is working, what is not, and what our concerns are, and not soft peddle the issues. And I hope we in the military can get better at that. We need to get honest.

## Hezbollah: Pulled between Resistance to Israel and Defense of Syria

By Matthew Levitt

ON JANUARY 18, 2015, an Israeli airstrike on Syria's Golan Heights targeted a Hezbollah convoy, killing several senior operatives.<sup>1</sup> Among the dead were Jihad Mughniyeh, the son of late Hezbollah terrorist leader Imad Mughniyeh, and Iranian Revolutionary Guard General Mohammed Allahdadi, aide to Qods Corps commander Qassem Suleimani.<sup>2</sup> Within days, Hezbollah retaliated by firing two rockets at an Israel Defense Force (IDF) convoy in the disputed Sheba'a Farms area along the Israeli-Lebanese border, killing two Israeli soldiers.<sup>3</sup> The rare flare-up sparked one of the most violent exchanges of fire between the two sides since the 2006 war. And yet, the flare-up was contained and short-lived. One reason for this is that Hezbollah's overt reaction to the Israeli strike was almost certainly only part of its planned response. Authorities fear that the remainder of the retaliation will be executed abroad using covert operatives acting under reasonably deniable circumstances.

This article examines the strategic calculations behind Hezbollah's retaliation. First, it explains why retaliation was an absolute necessity, not a choice, from Hezbollah's perspective, despite the group's interest in avoiding a full-fledged war with Israel. It then probes the nature of Hezbollah's retaliation in light of the organization's involvement in Syria, popular sentiment among its Lebanese Shi'a constituents, and its current operational capacity. It finds that Hezbollah's retaliation is likely to be two-pronged: an overt attack targeting the Israeli heartland and international attacks targeting Israeli and Jewish interests abroad.

1 Anne Barnard and Isabel Kershner, "Hezbollah Says Israeli Helicopter Strike Killed Five Fighters in Syria," *New York Times*, January 18, 2015.

2 Amos Harel, "Death of Iranian General Brings Tehran back into the Heart of Israel's Conflict with Hezbollah," *Haaretz*, January 19, 2015.

3 Jeffrey Heller and Sylvia Westall, "Two Israeli Soldiers, U.N. Peacekeeper Killed in Israel-Hezbollah Violence," *Reuters*, January 28, 2015.

### Necessary Retaliation

Speaking just three days before the Israeli airstrike, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah condemned earlier Israeli airstrikes in Syria and warned of retaliation for any future strikes: "The repeated bombings that struck several targets in Syria are a major violation, and we consider that any strike against Syria is a strike against the whole of the resistance axis, not just against Syria."<sup>4</sup> Nasrallah went on to stress that responding to such "violations" is the right of the "resistance" and could occur at any time.<sup>5</sup>

In case it was not already clear, Nasrallah sought to remind his Shi'a constituents and neighbors to the south: Hezbollah stands fully prepared to fight Israel despite the group's deep involvement in an entirely different battle in Syria. In fact, during the same interview with the pan-Arab television station Al-Mayadeen, the Hezbollah leader proclaimed that the organization was prepared to invade the Galilee and possessed the advanced weaponry necessary to defeat the IDF should another war break out.<sup>6</sup> Despite the organization's involvement in Syria, the Hezbollah leader wanted Israel to know that Hezbollah possessed both the missiles and the manpower to deal a crippling blow to Israel.

There is no doubt that Nasrallah's remarks were meant as a threat to Israel: continue your airstrikes in Syria and Hezbollah will strike back decisively. But then Israel called Nasrallah's bluff, putting Hezbollah in a position where it had to follow up on its leader's word or appear weak.

But Nasrallah's inflammatory rhetoric was not the only factor that necessitated retaliation. While not a ranking member within Hezbollah, the symbolic significance of the "martyrdom" of Jihad Mughniyeh for Hezbollah members and supporters alike was undeniable. Remember that Hezbollah had still not avenged the death of

4 Mohamed Salami, "Sayyed Nasrallah: Hezbollah Ready to Invade Galilee, Beyond Galilee," *al-Manar*, January 17, 2015.

5 *Ibid.*

6 Nizar Hassan, "Hezbollah chief admits Mossad spy found among party ranks," *Daily Star* [Beirut], January 15, 2015.

Jihad's father, Imad Mughniyeh, only further underscoring Hezbollah's need to counter the perception that it was incapable of responding or too weak to do so. The only question was how and where the group would respond.

### Part One: Overt Retaliation

But this retaliation required strategic finesse. Having warned Israel of Hezbollah's military capacity only days earlier, the response had to be on a larger scale than the organization's recent, small-scale and infrequent roadside bombs along the Lebanese border and attacks by local proxies on the Golan Heights.<sup>7</sup> However, in the immediate aftermath of the Israeli airstrike, Hezbollah remained silent on its plans for retaliation, no doubt calculating how to balance revenge with the continuation of the relative peace that has existed on the Lebanese border with Israel since the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701.<sup>8</sup> The outcome of this calculation: a two-pronged retaliation, first overtly targeting the Israeli heartland, and second more deniably targeting Israeli and Jewish interests abroad.

The first stage began on January 27, when a number of Hezbollah antitank missiles struck an IDF convoy while it drove through the disputed Sheba'a Farms area, killing two Israeli soldiers.<sup>9</sup> This act of overt retaliation was intended as a message to Israel that Hezbollah would not tolerate additional attacks against its members and that the organization was not spread too thin in Syria to deal out sharp retaliation.<sup>10</sup> A show of Hezbollah's military capacity, the attack fulfilled Nasrallah's promise of military action in the event of another Israeli airstrike. In this single, swift, and relatively restrained act, the overt part of Hezbollah's retaliation was completed.

7 Isabel Kershner and Anne Barnard, "Hezbollah Attack Along Border with Lebanon Wounds Two Israeli Soldiers," *New York Times*, October 7, 2014.

8 Hussein Dakroub, "Hezbollah silent on retaliation plans," *Daily Star* [Beirut], January 20, 2015.

9 Jodi Rudoren and Anne Barnard, "Hezbollah Kills 2 Israeli Soldiers Near Lebanon," *New York Times*, January 28, 2015.

10 Bassem Mroue, "Hezbollah Warns Israel it won't Tolerate More Attacks," *Associated Press*, January 30, 2015.



Yet Israel was not the only audience the Hezbollah response sought to address. The attack was also meant as a message to the organization's largely Lebanese Shi'a constituents that Hezbollah remains committed to its *raison d'être* despite its deep and continued involvement in Syria. Since Nasrallah's May 25, 2013, announcement that the war in Syria is Hezbollah's to fight, public opinion among Hezbollah's constituency has become increasingly critical of the group.<sup>11</sup> Nasrallah's assertion that Hezbollah, "will continue along the road [in Syria], [and] bear the responsibilities and the sacrifices," of its involvement has been perceived as an abandonment of the resistance in favor of the war in Syria.<sup>12</sup> For many of the organization's Shi'a constituents, this shift in focus eroded the organization's legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> As these doubts have continued to grow, Hezbollah has grown increasingly concerned about convincing Lebanese Shi'a that it has not lost sight of its founding purpose.

The doubts concerning Hezbollah's commitment to the resistance are not unfounded: today most of the group's Middle East operations do not target Israel at all. Indeed, on February 16, Nasrallah publicly acknowledged the not-so-well-kept secret that Hezbollah commanders were operating on the ground in Iraq.<sup>14</sup> And aside from small-scale attacks, many of which have been carried out by local proxies rather than Hezbollah members, in recent years Hezbollah has turned its attention to international targets and the war in Syria. The time was ripe to scratch the resistance itch, and the Israeli assassination of Jihad Mughniyeh proved a perfect impetus for carrying out an overt attack against the Israeli homeland. There is no doubt that the organization hoped that an attack

overtly targeting the IDF would, at least momentarily, quiet doubts as to the organization's commitment to resistance against Israel. As of now, the success of Hezbollah's attack on the IDF convoy remains to be measured.

The nature of this part of Hezbollah's retaliation highlights the irony that has come to characterize the group's expansion of the resistance front into Syria and the Golan Heights. On the one hand, Nasrallah has continuously referred to Hezbollah's activities in Syria as a, "great victory," denying claims that the organization is suffering as a result of their involvement.<sup>15</sup> Similar to his remarks on January 15, Nasrallah asserted in a speech on November 4, 2014, that Israel, "[knows] that going to war with the resistance will be very costly because we are more determined, stronger, more experienced...and we are capable of achieving such accomplishments," as a result of the group's involvement in Syria.<sup>16</sup> According to Nasrallah, expanding the resistance front to include Syria has been beneficial, dramatically increasing Hezbollah's capacity as a resistance force. It is statements like these that necessitated a response to the Israeli airstrike.

However, on the other hand, Hezbollah desperately wants to avoid opening a second front with Israel, as the reality for the group on the ground in Syria is quite different than Nasrallah has continually suggested. In fact, Hezbollah's commitment to defending the Assad regime has taken a heavy toll on the organization's operational capacity. Thus, while Hezbollah wants to maintain its credentials as an anti-Israel fighting force, it can't afford a full-scale battle with the Jewish state in Southern Lebanon while committed to fighting Sunnis in Syria and increasingly forced to do the same at home in Lebanon.<sup>17</sup> Nor does it want to take the chance of inviting the Israeli air force to respond in Syria, where Israeli airstrikes could further damage

Hezbollah and other forces loyal to the Assad regime - the impact of which was aptly demonstrated on January 18. Further, Hezbollah has already lost as many as a thousand experienced fighters to the Syrian conflict, a significant loss for a group believed to have only about 5,000 full-time, highly-trained fighters and as many as 20,000-50,000 part-time reservists.<sup>18</sup>

It is for this reason that the overt half of Hezbollah's retaliation was limited to a number of days. Reports that de-escalation was initiated by Hezbollah - via a message sent to Israel through the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) - suggest that, despite claims to the contrary and the desire to boost the organization's standing in the minds of its constituents, Hezbollah leadership is well aware of the organization's military limitations.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the desire to avoid a full-blown military conflict with Israel appears to have tipped the balance in favor of strictly limited overt retaliation.

#### Part Two: Striking Israeli Targets Abroad

But Hezbollah's retaliation is likely far from over. Precisely because of its desire to avoid opening a second front with Israel at the present time, the Hezbollah threat to Israel today is in some ways more acute oceans away - in plots that can be carried out with reasonable deniability - than along its northern borders. In this vein, Matthew Olsen, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), warned in September 2014, "Beyond its role in Syria, Lebanese Hezbollah remains committed to conducting terrorist activities worldwide."<sup>20</sup> The NCTC director continued: "We remain concerned the group's activities could either endanger or target U.S. and other Western interests."<sup>21</sup> NCTC officials note that Hezbollah, "has engaged in an aggressive terrorist campaign in recent years and continues attack

11 Ali Hashem, "Nasrallah on Syria: 'This Battle Is Ours,'" *al-Monitor*, May 26, 2013.

12 Ibid.

13 Jonathan Spyer, "Behind the Lines: New Opponents, New Challenges in the Middle East," *Jerusalem Post*, October 18, 2014; ShiaWatch, "Hezbollah's Efforts to Safeguard its Image: The Proof by the Poll and by the Rocket," February 9, 2015; ShiaWatch, "Achieving an Open, Quantitative and Community-Based Understanding of Lebanon's Shia Community: Polling Dahiyah," August 20, 2014.

14 Stuart Winer, "Hezbollah Admits Fighting Islamic State in Iraq," *Times of Israel*, February 17, 2015.

15 Dana Khraiche, "Nasrallah: Hezbollah Achieving 'Great Victory' in Syria," *Daily Star* [Beirut], November 4, 2014.

16 Ibid.

17 Jonathan Spyer, "Behind the Lines: New Opponents, New Challenges in the Middle East," *Jerusalem Post*, October 18, 2014.

18 Avi Issacharoff, "After Losing 1,000 men in Syria, Hezbollah builds 'Security Zone,'" *The Times of Israel*, October 31, 2014.

19 Dan Williams and Laila Bassam, "Israel, Hezbollah Signal their Flare-up is Over," *Reuters*, January 29, 2015.

20 Matthew G. Olsen, "Worldwide Threats to the Homeland," Hearing before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, September 17, 2014.

21 Ibid.

planning abroad.”<sup>22</sup> Over the past few years Hezbollah plots either failed or were foiled as far afield as South Africa,<sup>23</sup> Azerbaijan,<sup>24</sup> India,<sup>25</sup> Nigeria,<sup>26</sup> Cyprus,<sup>27</sup> and Turkey.<sup>28</sup> In Bulgaria, Hezbollah operatives blew up a bus of Israeli tourists at the Burgas airport.<sup>29</sup> Just this year two Hezbollah plots were thwarted, one in Thailand<sup>30</sup> and another in Peru.<sup>31</sup>

In April, two Hezbollah operatives were arrested in Thailand, one of whom admitted that the two were there to carry out a bomb attack targeting Israeli tourists in Bangkok, according to Thai security officials.<sup>32</sup> The plots underscored the threat posed by Hezbollah to civilian centers, the officials added. Most recently, Peruvian counterterrorism police arrested a Hezbollah operative in Lima, the result of a surveillance operation that began in July.<sup>33</sup> The operative, Mohammed Amadar, is a Lebanese citizen who arrived in Peru in November 2013 and married a woman of dual Peruvian-American citizenship two weeks later. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Brazil, living in Sao Paulo until they returned to Lima in July 2014. Peruvian authorities were alerted by Israel’s Mossad that Amadar was planning to

return to Lima with the intention of carrying out terrorist attacks. As a result, members of Peru’s anti-terror unit questioned him upon his arrival at the airport and put Amadar under surveillance. When he was arrested in October, police raided his home and found traces of TNT, detonators, and other flammable substances. A search of the garbage outside his home found chemicals used to manufacture explosives. By the time of his arrest, intelligence indicated Amadar’s targets included places associated with Israelis and Jews in Peru, including areas popular with Israeli backpackers, the Israeli embassy in Lima, and Jewish community institutions. The disruption of these plots indicate that, as Matthew Olsen warned, Hezbollah operatives around the world remain busy planning attacks on Israeli interests abroad.

Hezbollah has long been active in South America, from the Triborder Area where the borders of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil meet to Chile and Uruguay, and parts of Asia and Africa. This trend continues, as the State Department noted in its latest annual terrorism report, where it highlighted the financial support networks Hezbollah maintains in places like Latin America and Africa.<sup>34</sup> The report concluded that Hezbollah remains, “capable of operating around the globe.”<sup>35</sup> This conclusion was underscored in November 2014 when Brazilian police reports revealed that Hezbollah helped a Brazilian prison gang, the First Capital Command (PCC), obtain weapons in exchange for the protection of prisoners of Lebanese origin detained in Brazil.<sup>36</sup> The same reports indicated that Lebanese traffickers tied to Hezbollah reportedly helped sell C4 explosives that the PCC allegedly stole in Paraguay.<sup>37</sup>

The recent revelation that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) provided key intelligence to Israel’s Mossad that led to the 2008 assassination

of terrorist mastermind and ranking Hezbollah member Imad Mughniyeh has renewed the organization’s impetus for international attacks.<sup>38</sup> Writing in 1994, the FBI assessed that Hezbollah would be unlikely to carry out an attack in the United States — and put at risk its lucrative fundraising, procurement, and other activities within the U.S. — but the group could still decide to carry out reasonably deniable attacks targeting American or other Western interests around the world in reaction to direct threats to the group or its interests.<sup>39</sup> An American hand in the killing of Imad Mughniyeh would certainly seem to check that box. And the group remains active here in the United States as well, as underscored in January when the FBI’s Miami field office released a “request for information” bulletin about a dual Venezuelan-Lebanese Hezbollah operative known both for raising money for the group and meeting with Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss “operational issues.”<sup>40</sup>

The same can be said in respect to attacks targeting Israel. Given the desire to avoid opening a second front on the border with Israel, Hezbollah will undoubtedly opt for attacking Israeli and Jewish targets abroad. Israel’s recent assassination of Jihad Mughniyeh, together with heightened hostility in the wake of recent revelations concerning Imad Mughniyeh’s death, has surely renewed the threat to Israeli interests abroad.

### Conclusion

It is clear that part one of Hezbollah’s retaliation was limited to the two days that constituted the most serious escalation with Israel since the 2006 war. That being said, roadside border bombings will surely continue from time to time, and Hezbollah may even claim responsibility for some of these, as they did on October 7, 2014.<sup>41</sup> It is

22 Ibid.

23 Itamar Eichner, “PM reveals: South Africa attack against Israelis thwarted,” *Ynet News*, July 20, 2012.

24 Yossi Melman, “Hezbollah, Iran plotted bombing of Israel embassy in Azerbaijan,” *Haaretz*, May 31, 2009.

25 Dan Williams, “Israel blames Iran after attacks on embassy staff,” *Reuters*, February 13, 2012.

26 “Nigeria foils latest Hezbollah plot to attack Israelis,” *Jerusalem Post*, May 30, 2013.

27 Barak Ravid, “Man detained in Cyprus was planning attack on Israeli targets for Hezbollah,” *Haaretz*, July 14, 2012.

28 Oren Kessler, “Istanbul bombing was Hezbollah strike on Israeli envoy,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 18, 2011.

29 “Israelis killed in Bulgaria bus terror attack, minister says,” *CNN*, July 18, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/18/world/europe/bulgaria-israel-blast/>.

30 Barak Ravid, “Hezbollah members arrested in Thailand admit to planning attack on Israeli tourists,” *Haaretz*, April 18, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.586220>.

31 Stuart Winer, “Hezbollah operative targeted Jews, Israelis in Peru,” *The Times of Israel*, October 30, 2014.

32 “Report: Hezbollah Attack on Israeli Tourists in Bangkok Thwarted,” *Ynet News*, April 18, 2014.

33 Barak Ravid, “Hezbollah Members Arrested in Thailand Admit to Planning Attack on Israeli Tourists,” *Haaretz*, April 18, 2014.

34 United States Department of State Bureau of Counterterrorism, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2013,” United States Department of State Publication, April 2014.

35 Ibid.

36 “Hezbollah has ties to Brazil’s Largest Criminal Gang; Group also Found Active in Peru,” *Fox News Latino*, November 11, 2014.

37 Ibid.

38 Adam Goldman and Ellen Nakashima, “CIA and Mossad Killed Senior Hezbollah Figure in Car Bombing,” *Washington Post*, January 30, 2015.

39 US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Terrorist Research and Analytical Center, “International Radical Fundamentalism: An Analytical Overview of Groups and Trends,” November 1994.

40 FBI Bulletin Seeking information on Ghazi Nasr al-Dina, January 2015.

41 Isabel Kershner and Anne Barnard, “Hezbollah At-

less clear, however, when and where Hezbollah will carry out the second part of its strategic retaliation. What we do know is that despite being bogged down in Syria, Hezbollah has the capacity to target Israeli interests abroad and, as demonstrated by plots foiled by law enforcement in Thailand and Peru in recent months, has no qualms about doing so.

There is one shift in the geopolitical environment that could rapidly reshape and refocus Hezbollah's strategy: if Israeli warplanes do at some point strike Iranian nuclear facilities, all bets are off. Hezbollah will surely aim their rockets at Israeli critical infrastructure, even as it continues to pick up the pace of Peru-style operations abroad. How committed and effective Hezbollah can be as a fighting force simultaneously battling at Iran's behest both Syrian rebels and the Israeli military remains an open question, but one that both Hezbollah and Iran are likely trying to answer fairly quickly.

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## Terrorist Targeting of the Libyan Oil and Gas Sector

By Geoff D. Porter

WHILE THE HYDROCARBONS sector in Libya has been the focal point of social unrest and political violence ever since the fall of Muammar Qadhafi's regime in 2011, it is only in the last two months that Libya's oil sector has been targeted by jihadis for the purposes of terrorism. On the one hand, this development is due to the changing security landscape in Libya. On the other hand, it may be the influence of a report released in December 2014 by Mokhtar Belmokhtar's group, the Mourabitoun, exhorting jihadis to attack oil installations and providing a "how-to" guide based on his group's own experience attacking the Tigantourine gas facility at In Amenas, Algeria in 2013. What this development means, though, is that not only are competing political groups in Libya fighting for control of Libya's hydrocarbons sector, but there now appear to be jihadis bent on destroying it.

### The Importance of Libya's Oil and Gas Sector

It is hard to overstate how important the oil and gas sector is to Libya. Prior to Qadhafi's collapse and for several stretches since the February 17, 2011 revolution, Libya was able to produce as much as 1.6 million barrels per day.<sup>1</sup> It no longer produces anywhere near those volumes, but even so, oil revenue remains absolutely critical for Libya. Hydrocarbons receipts account for 80 percent of GDP, 95 percent of export revenues, and 99 percent of government revenues.<sup>2</sup> Oil revenue pays for Libyan cereal imports, which account for 90 percent of Libya's cereal consumption<sup>3</sup> and for public sector salaries, which account for more than 80 percent of the workforce.<sup>4</sup> Without oil there are no jobs. Without oil there is no food. Without oil there is potentially no

1 Libya Country Brief, US Energy Information Administration, November 25, 2014.

2 2015 Index of Economic Freedom, The Heritage Foundation, January 2015.

3 Libya Country Brief, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, January 26, 2015.

4 MENA Quarterly Economic Brief, The World Bank, January 2014, p.18.

Libya.

### Holding the Hydrocarbons Sector Hostage for Political Gain (2012-2014)

During the period from the appointment of the National Transitional Council in 2011 through the General National Congress (GNC) in 2012 (and Prime Minister Ali Zeidan's government) to the election of the House of Representatives in 2014 (and Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni's government), a pattern of social unrest and political violence targeting the hydrocarbons sector emerged. After more than forty years of Qadhafi's quixotic rule, Libyans had no experience with representative political institutions. As a result, political institutions were largely unresponsive to their constituencies' needs. But communities with grievances learned that they could compel the government in Tripoli (and later Tobruk) to acquiesce to their demands by taking oil and gas sector facilities hostage.

The goal was not to capture a facility's revenue or damage it, but rather to deprive the government of revenue, and thereby make the government accept the group's demands. Instances of groups with social or economic grievances blockading or occupying oil and gas facilities abound from 2012 until 2014, including protests at the Arab Gulf Oil Company (AGOCO) in Benghazi,<sup>5</sup> Mellitah Oil & Gas in Mellitah,<sup>6</sup> Zawiya Oil Refining Company,<sup>7</sup> the Sharara oil field,<sup>8</sup> and el-Feel oil field.<sup>9</sup> National Transitional Council chief Mustafa Abdeljalil was the first to cave to this tactic, thereby creating the moral hazard that led to this trend's growth. Abdeljalil's successor Zeidan followed suit. And more recently, so has al-Thinni.

This tactic culminated in separatist leader Ibrahim al-Jadhran blockading

5 July 7, 2012, "Ansar al-fadaraliya yughlaqun marafa naftiyah fi sharq Libya ihtijajan `ala tawziy`a al-maqa`id fi al-mu'tamar al-watani," al-Riyadh

6 July 26, 2013, "Amazigh libiya yughlaqun khitt ghaz ihtijajan `ala` adm dustura lughathim" Al-Niba'

7 December 20, 2013, "Libiya tastwarid mazidan min al-wuqud ma` habut intaj thani akbar masafiha lil-nisf bi-sabab al-idrabat," Al-Quds al-`Arabi

8 November 17, 2014, "Libiya: haql al-sharara al-nafti la yazal mughlaqan," Al-Safir

9 19 November 2014, "Libiya tatala`a li-isti'inaf intaj al-naft min haql al-fil," Al-Nahar

tack Along Border With Lebanon Wounds Two Israeli Soldiers," *New York Times*, October 7, 2014.



Libya's four largest oil export terminals in August 2013 in order to force the government in Tripoli to accept his demands, which included hydrocarbons sector revenue sharing and autonomy for eastern Libya. The demands were excessive, and with the GNC in Tripoli unable to meet them, al-Jadhran tried to market oil he had stolen. When he was stopped from doing so, he ended his siege.<sup>10</sup>

### Competing for Control of Libya's Hydrocarbons Sector (2014-2015)

Jadhran's failed gambit, along with political developments in Tripoli, put Libya on a new path that has led to a new and different politicization of the hydrocarbons sector. Although opposition against Zeidan was mounting prior to al-Jadhran's attempt to market stolen oil, it accelerated Zeidan's downfall and the High Electoral Commission rushed forward with July 2014 elections to replace the GNC with a new House of Representatives (HoR). Elections were held in most electoral districts (but not all) and voter participation was low. As a result there were questions about the HoR's legitimacy even before it was sworn in. With opposition to it intensifying and the security situation in the capital teetering, the HoR was forced to meet in the far eastern city of Tobruk. Meanwhile, the dissolved GNC reconvened in Tripoli, ruled that the HoR was illegitimate, and reestablished itself as Libya's sovereign government. By year end, Libya had two governments, one in Tripoli, the other in Tobruk, and both were relying on hydrocarbons revenue channeled through the Central Bank of Libya. But the situation was unsustainable – one or the other government was going to have to deprive the other of oil receipts.

In fact, both governments appointed their own hydrocarbons sector management. The HoR dissolved the Ministry of Oil and Gas and gave control of the entire sector to the National Oil Corporation (NOC), appointing its own NOC chairman. At some point in the future, he would be based at Ras Lanuf, but for the moment he was confined to makeshift offices in Tobruk. The revived GNC in Tripoli, however, maintained the Ministry of Oil and Gas and appointed

a new minister. It also named its own NOC chairman who operated out of the NOC's headquarters in Tripoli. GNC and HoR-allied forces have also begun to physically fight over oil sites, including a December assault on the Sidra and Ras Lanuf facilities.<sup>11</sup> The goal is no longer to simply hold facilities hostage to compel the government to act, but it is to in fact hold the facilities to control the rent to support this or that government.

The new fight has not, however, completely displaced the older tactic of leveraging the oil and gas sector to get grievances satisfied. In February 2015, protestors shut down Marsa Hariga, one of Libya's few operating oil export terminals, because the Interior Minister in Tobruk proposed dealing with the GNC.<sup>12</sup> The protestors wanted the Interior Minister dismissed, which is precisely what happened. And as soon as it did, the port reopened.

### Jihadi Violence and the Sector's Destruction (2015-)

Libya's hydrocarbons sector is now being targeted in yet a third way. In early February 2015, a group claiming allegiance with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) attacked the Mabrouk oil field, operated by an NOC-Total joint venture.<sup>13</sup> In a departure from previous targeting of the oil and gas sector, the attackers killed up to 12 individuals, looted the facility, and took seven workers hostage. In addition, they corralled roughly 50 Libyan employees, lectured them about Islam, and then released them. Ten days later, Mabrouk was attacked again and there was a simultaneous attack on the Bahi Oil field operated by an NOC-Oasis joint venture.<sup>14</sup> (Oasis is a consortium of U.S. oil companies consisting of Hess, Marathon, and ConocoPhillips.) The following day a pipeline connecting the Sarir oil field (operated by AGOCO) to the Marsa Hariga terminal was bombed, causing an explosion that forced the field to shut down.<sup>15</sup> The attack was

similar to a late January attack on an Egyptian gas pipeline claimed by the ISIL-allied Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis.<sup>16</sup> All four Libyan incidents appear to be terror attacks and as such are a significant departure from previous attempts to leverage Libya's hydrocarbons sector for political purposes. None of the attacks sought to capture or control oil and gas infrastructure. The intention was to destroy it.

In part, the emergence of jihadi violence in Libya's oil and gas sector is symptomatic of the rise of jihadi violence in Libya in general. Violent Islamist groups that embrace salafi jihadi views to varying degrees have been active in Libya since mid-2012. They subsequently took advantage of the intensifying civil war to entrench themselves, particularly in the eastern city of Darna where some groups pledged allegiance to ISIL. With Tobruk and Tripoli pre-occupied with fighting one another, jihadi groups have been able to act with increasing impunity.

The jihadis' targeting of the hydrocarbons sector may also be due to the arrival in Libya of older jihadi groups with better operational experience. In particular, the Mabrouk attack was allegedly carried out by the Tarek ibn Ziyad Brigade.<sup>17</sup> The brigade was formed in 2007 as part of Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb and was active in the Sahara, drifting between Niger and Mali. Pressure from two French military operations in Mali (Operation Serval and Operation Barkhane) may have pushed the brigade to find a more accommodating environment in lawless Libya. The group has a history of attacks against extractive industry facilities, including the 2010 attack on Areva's uranium mine in Niger during which it captured seven hostages.<sup>18</sup>

A final driver for jihadi attacks against the Libyan oil and gas sector may be a December 2014 report written by members of the Mourabitoun, the group

11 13 December 2014, "Al-Tabib: qawat 'Shuruq Libiya' tusaytara `ala mina' al-sidrah," Akhbar Libiya

12 16 February 2015, "Al-Thinni yatamasik bi-ayqaf wazir al-dhakhiliyah," Akhbar Libiya

13 4 February 2015, "Da`ish yaqtahim haql al-mabruk al-nafti fi al-jufra janub sirt," Al-`Alam al-yawm

14 14 February 2015, "Ta`arid haqli nafti fi libiya li-hajum maslah," Al-Nahar

15 14 February 2015, "Adrar hariq haql al-sarir tawqif

tasdir al-naft bi al-kamil," Akhbar Libiya

16 19 January 2015, "Bi-al-sur.tafsil tafjir 'bayt al-maqdis' li-khitt ghaz bi sina'i," Al-'Arabiya Net

17 Benoît Faucon and Matt Bradley, "Islamic State Gained Strength in Libya by Co-Opting Local Jihadists" *The Wall Street Journal*, February 17, 2015.

18 Geoff D. Porter, "AQIM's Objectives in North Africa," *CTC Sentinel* 4:2 (2011).

10 Geoff D. Porter, "Stopping a Civil War in Libya" *Politico Magazine*, March 19, 2014.

that undertook the unprecedented January 2013 attack on the Tigantourine gas facility in Algeria.<sup>19</sup> The report is presented as an “after-action report,” detailing target selection, how the attack was planned and carried out, and what went wrong, all with the goal of encouraging jihadis to conduct similar attacks.

In his foreword, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the Mourabitoun’s leader, makes clear his hostility toward the oil sector, blaming injustices in North Africa on international oil companies and the governments with which they work.<sup>20</sup> Later, the report explicitly states that the attack was carried out for the sake of jihad and not to advance mere “social demands” like employment opportunities, higher wages, or environmental concerns associated with the extractive industries.<sup>21</sup> In the foreword, Belmokhtar explains that Tigantourine was chosen because of its “strategic, economic, and political value,”<sup>22</sup> and that the timing of the attack was predicated on “the largest presence of Western managers and experts on the site.”<sup>23</sup>

The report’s purpose is clearly to help other jihadi groups carry out similar attacks. It includes references to pre-attack planning, pre-positioning assets, training troops that will participate in the attack, and lying in wait at a pre-determined location to launch the attack.<sup>24</sup> According to the report, the group engaged in several phases of reconnaissance and the group’s members penetrated “the site from the inside in order to determine its actual configuration, its security...and shift changes.”<sup>25</sup> In the discussion of the attack’s goals, it is plainly stated that one of the objectives was to destroy the facility and, among the “lessons learned,” the report acknowledges that the attackers should have used remote detonators to compensate for a lack of manpower.<sup>26</sup> The report also cautions

others who would undertake a similar operation that having hostages is not sufficient to deter a military assault and that other defensive measures should be implemented alongside holding hostages.<sup>27</sup>

From the very outset, the report states that its purpose is to encourage further such attacks and it was written “for the benefit of moudjahidin on all fronts and what may be gleaned from [the Tigantourine] experience in the future.”<sup>28</sup> The report concludes with an afterword by the jihadi ideologue Akram Hijazi who lists ten of the operation’s benefits, including that it gave jihadis a “real-life” example of an operation that can be “replicated.”<sup>29</sup>

#### Implications for the Future

The jihadi threat to Libya’s oil and gas infrastructure is grave. The social and political protests that have targeted the sector need the sector to continue to be successful in order for their protests to be successful – targeting a moribund sector is unlikely to pressure the government to meet their demands. Likewise, the rival governments battling one another for control of the hydrocarbons sector need the sector to be successful because the future viability of whoever wins depends on it.

The jihadis, though, are seeking to destroy the sector. For multiple reasons, jihadis in Libya simply cannot take control of the hydrocarbons sector the same way that ISIL has benefited from oil infrastructure in Iraq and Syria.<sup>30</sup> In Libya, the sector is too vast, the group is too small, and markets are too far away. Instead, Libyan jihadis view the sector as evidence of a foreign and corrupting presence in their midst that needs to be removed. And the Mourabitoun’s report shows them how to do it. After all, it claims that after the Tigantourine attack “the employees of dozens of oil companies throughout the Algerian desert suffered from a state of fear and terror...with thousands of employees leaving Algeria within 72 hours...as if they were attacked by an army and not [just] a brigade.” The risk here is that not

only will jihadi attacks on hydrocarbons infrastructure accelerate in the coming months, but that whenever the warring factions in Tobruk and Tripoli finally decide to lay down their weapons, the oil and gas sector upon which Libya depends for its very existence will be in ruins.

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*The views expressed here are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.*

19 18 December 2014, Dirasa tawthiqiya li-`amaliya “al-muwaqiyun bi-al-dima” al-fida’iyah bi al-jaza’ir

20 Ibid. p.8.

21 Ibid. p.51.

22 Ibid. p.18.

23 Ibid. p.20.

24 Ibid. p.26.

25 Ibid. p.20.

26 Ibid. p.43.

27 Ibid. p.48.

28 Ibid. p.10.

29 Ibid. p.62.

30 Kate Brennan and Keith Johnson, “The Islamic State of Libya Isn’t Much of a State” *Foreign Policy*, 17 February 2015

## The Role of Child Soldiers in a Multigenerational Movement

By Cole Pinheiro

IN NOVEMBER AND December 2014 the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) released videos that promoted its recruitment and indoctrination of children. The group's youth training regime includes weeks of religious education, radicalization, and military exercises. ISIL views programs such as the "Cubs of the Islamic State" as the way to produce the next generation of fighters to protect and expand the Caliphate.<sup>1</sup> They have already employed child soldiers in suicide attacks and assaults against their rivals in Syria and Iraq.<sup>2</sup>

This article will examine the role of children in this movement. The exploitation of youth is particularly troubling for many reasons. First, the war in Syria and Iraq has reached a new level of totality. The shattered societies are divided along ethnic and sectarian lines, and all social groups have mobilized portions of their population that they would not otherwise – specifically women and children – to counter existential security threats. Second, within Syria and Iraq, ISIL is targeting young impressionable minds as part of a campaign to change religious and societal norms. Third, Western counterterrorism systems are not designed to track or counter child combatants, and groups may be able to exploit our vulnerabilities. Last, ISIL envisions a multigenerational conflict, and their campaign to recruit and train children suggests that they are using their moment of strength to prepare for a lengthy fight.<sup>3</sup> In any post-conflict scenario, it will

be extraordinarily difficult to identify young fighters and execute a successful demobilization and de-radicalization program.

### A New Trend

On January 13, 2015, ISIL released a video entitled "Uncovering the Enemy Within," which showed a young Kazakh boy executing two alleged Russian spies.<sup>4</sup> In the video, the narrator accuses two prisoners of being sent to gather information on ISIL. He then reads a Quranic verse, and the boy uses a handgun to kill the two captives. At the end the boy vows, "I will be the one who slaughters you, O Kuffar. I will be a mujahid, insha'allah."<sup>5</sup> The propaganda video seeks to generate fear in multiple audiences. It also attempts to convey that ISIL has broad social support. The video suggests that violence has become a family affair – with children traveling from distant lands with their parents to participate in the fighting. ISIL is seeking to inspire other youth to participate in the violence. The group's focus on children is also a warning to the West that they are preparing for the long fight.

These videos illustrate an important shift in jihadi warfare. The use of children in direct combat was not common in early al-Qa'ida groups. Al-Qa'ida certainly trained and indoctrinated children in order to prepare the next cohort of fighters, but they did not see youth as an element of their combat power. Within Syria and Iraq, ISIL appears to be reversing this trend and is using children in attacks against enemy positions.<sup>6</sup>

A recent Human Rights Watch report indicates that ISIL intentionally recruits children to conduct attacks against enemy strong-points.<sup>7</sup> ISIL frequently forces children to participate in conflict, often against their parents will.<sup>8</sup>

The group runs several camps near Kafr Hamra and Aleppo, al Raqqa, Homs, Damascus, and Al-Bukamal in eastern Syria.<sup>9</sup> ISIL videos released in the fall of 2014 show children as young as 12-13 years old in military training camps near Mosul.<sup>10</sup> Training and indoctrination also occurs online, in informal settings, and in town squares throughout ISIL-controlled territory. Children are forced to attend local demonstrations and watch as ISIL punishes those that have violated Sharia law.<sup>11</sup> ISIL propaganda shows that they force children to help administer justice and even participate in beheadings.<sup>12</sup> Many children report that they were lured into the group during these local rallies, that their families supported their participation in jihad, and that leaders provided some moderate financial compensation for their service.<sup>13</sup> In schools throughout ISIL-controlled territory, they have also replaced existing social studies and religious curriculum with curriculum that supports their objectives and ideology.<sup>14</sup> Their efforts seek to desensitize the youth, spread the group's vision, and maintain the fear necessary to control the population.

The number of youth participating in combat is reportedly increasing. In April 2014, a Free Syrian Army (FSA) military commander claimed to have captured 30 children between the ages of 13 and 15.<sup>15</sup> The FSA reportedly sent

1 Cassandra Vinograd, "ISIS Trains Child Soldiers at Camps for 'Cubs of the Islamic State'," *CBS News*, November 7, 2014.

2 "Maybe we live, Maybe we die': Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria," Human Rights Watch, 2014, pp. 20-24.

3 Abdel Bari Atwan argued in his book *After bin Laden: Al Qaeda, the Next Generation*, that the second generation of jihadists would be younger, less theologically grounded, fanatically dedicated, and more violent. This second generation would be raised on jihadist rhetoric and not as formally educated in Islamic law. ISIL and their brutality reflects the rise of this post-USama bin Laden generation.

4 See ISIL video, "Uncovering the Enemy Within," al-Hayat Media Center, January 13, 2015.

5 Ibid.

6 ISILs forerunner, Al-Qa'ida in Iraq, began using children in suicide attacks as early as 2007. (See: "Children used' in Iraq bombing," *BBC News*, March 20, 2007).

7 "Maybe we live, Maybe we die': Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria," Human Rights Watch, 2014, p. 20.

8 *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September, 2014*, United Nations p. 17.

9 Cassandra Vinograd, "ISIS Trains Child Soldiers at Camps for 'Cubs of the Islamic State'."

10 See ISIL videos, "Blood of Jihad" & "Blood Jihad 2" *Providence of Nineveh Media*, October 12, 2014 and November 24, 2014.

11 "Grooming Children for Jihad: The Islamic State," *Vice News*, August 13, 2014.

12 See ISIL pamphlets showing children participating in beheadings in al-Raqqa & Homs, and hand-cuttings in Aleppo. <https://shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=232055&page=39>, <https://shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=232055&page=21>, <http://justpaste.it/iidg>.

13 "Maybe we live, Maybe we die': Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria," Human Rights Watch, 2014, pp. 20-24.

14 See ISIL pamphlets for schools in al Raqqa, Damascus, and Aleppo. <http://alfidaa.org/vb/showthread.php?t=91336>, <https://www.alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=73219>, <https://shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=232055&page=44>, <https://shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=227899>.

15 "Maybe we live, Maybe we die': Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria," Human Rights



the children to isolated camps to conduct de-radicalization. Religious leaders and male relatives spoke with the children in an attempt to counter ISIL's narrative and to correct erroneous religious teachings. Former ISIL fighters also confirm that children are used on the battlefield, and Kurdish forces report that they have fought against kids in Iraq. ISIL's own documents show that they used children in suicide operations during their offensive in Salah al-Din Province.<sup>16</sup> They continue to use them to man checkpoints along their lines of operation and to conduct security patrols in major cities, including Mosul.<sup>17</sup>

The recruitment of youth may demonstrate that ISIL is desperate and that it is struggling to fill personnel shortages. ISIL may have been overambitious when it attacked into Iraq, and it may now be overextended. Leveraging youth may be a way to bolster their numbers, extend their governmental control, and defend their contested borders. However, it may also illustrate that the group seeks a *levee en masse* and sees the youth as a way of lengthening the conflict. The group may see child combatants as an added capability that has greater utility over time. ISIL's documents suggest that they are not simply cannon fodder meant to delay the advance of rival security forces. The leader of the Kafr Hamra training camp summarized the groups vision for the young recruits, "tomorrow, they'll be a stronger leader or a stronger fighter."<sup>18</sup> Although ISIL's militarization of youth is troubling, children have been used as combatants throughout history.

### An Old Trend

ISIL is not unique in their desire to recruit, radicalize, and arm children. All combatants in Syria and Iraq, including the Yazidis and Kurds, have mobilized and armed their adolescent populations to bolster their strained security forces.<sup>19</sup> Other al-Qa'ida affiliates have used

Watch, 2014, p. 21.

16 See ISIL pamphlet showing their use of a young boy as a suicide bomber in Saladin Province, Iraq. <https://shamikhl.info/vb/showthread.php?t=229477>.

17 *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July - 10 September, 2014*, United Nations p. 18.

18 Ibid.

19 "Maybe we live, Maybe we die': Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria," Human Rights Watch, 2014.

children in combat to various extents over the past decade. The Taliban began using children as suicide bombers against Afghan and coalition security forces as early as 2007.<sup>20</sup> In 2012, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar al-Dine recruited or forced Taureg children to fight in northern Mali.<sup>21</sup> In mid-January 2015, Boko Haram used three 10 year old girls to conduct suicide bombing attacks in northeast Nigeria.<sup>22</sup> And on February 22, reports emerged of a 7 year old girl killing herself and five others in a Boko Haram attack.<sup>23</sup> Other unaffiliated groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, maintain programs to indoctrinate youth with violent anti-Semitism and have used them to target Israelis in the past. Nevertheless, ISIL has advertised their use of children in lethal operations more than any other modern jihadist group.

The employment of child soldiers is also not limited to Islamist militants, and jihadi ideology is not directly to blame for the increase in child combatants. Most Communist insurgencies during the Cold War either used children in combat or had youth education programs. The Peruvian Maoist group Sendero Luminoso, for example, frequently abducted children from villages and took them to remote training camps in the jungle for indoctrination. The narco-terrorist groups that evolved from Sendero Luminoso still continue this practice in the countryside.<sup>24</sup>

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) used children to commit war crimes in the 1990s during the civil war in Sierra Leone. The RUF exploited children because they were cheap and easily manipulated into conducting extremely brutal acts of terrorism. In 1997, the group re-

20 Mia Bloom and John Horgan, "New terror weapon: Little girls?" *CNN News*, January 7, 2007.

21 Rudolph Atallah, "Prepared Statement at Hearing on 'The Tuareg Revolt and the Mali Coup,'" United States House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, June 29, 2012, p. 43.

22 Alexander Smith, "Boko Haram Appears Abducted Girls as Suicide Bombers: Experts," *NBC News*, January 16, 2015.

23 "Seven-year-old girl' kills herself and five others in Nigeria suicide bombing," *Agence France-Presse*, February 22, 2015.

24 Carmen Alvarado, "Peru: Officials Rescue Children Kidnapped by Shining Path," *Infosurhoy*, September 28, 2012.

lied on children to help facilitate *Operation No Living Thing*, the infamous assault on Freetown that sought to exterminate government supporters.<sup>25</sup> Child soldiers also participated in the RUF's amputation campaigns and guarded slaves in RUF-controlled alluvial diamond mines. During the post-conflict phase of the war, the United Nations spearheaded the demobilization process.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMISL) became the longest and most expensive UN peacekeeping mission in history. UNAMISL disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated 75,490 combatants throughout Sierra Leone, including 6,845 child soldiers.<sup>26</sup> UNAMISL isolated the children and provided them with security, food, and recreation. It also provided them educational outlets to channel their energy. Many children were placed into structured educational programs because their families had perished in the war.

States have also advanced programs designed to increase nationalism and militarization in their youth. The most extreme example is the Hitler Youth program which indoctrinated children with Nazi ideology, taught them military skills, and prepared them to fight for Germany. Likewise, Mao Zedong encouraged youth, known as the Red Guards, to enforce Communist rule within China during the Cultural Revolution. The Red Guards gathered intelligence, reported on suspected counter-revolutionaries, and participated in some violent acts on behalf of the party.

### A Strategic Decision?

ISIL considers recruitment of children as a central component of their strategy and critical to their long-term success. Whereas other insurgencies use children to fill their ranks because they are easy to manipulate and cheap, ISIL understands that it must leverage the youth to achieve its grandiose vision. ISIL must continue to fight to maintain control and expand "the Caliphate." Western states hold an overwhelming advantage in conventional

25 Greg Campbell, *Blood Diamonds*, (Westview Press: 2004), pp. 79-98.

26 "Fact Sheet 1: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration," UNMISL, December 2005.

military power, and this means that ISIL is highly unlikely to achieve its central objectives in the near-term. Accordingly, a very long-term protracted strategy is the only feasible option for victory. ISIL's recent actions indicate that its leaders understand how difficult it will be to accomplish these objectives and that the struggle will continue for many generations. ISIL's leaders understand the need to incorporate secessionist mechanisms and to cultivate the next generation of holy warriors.<sup>27</sup> A fighter in Raqqa advanced this logic, "For us, we believe that this generation of children is the generation of the Caliphate...the right doctrine has been implanted into these Children. All of them love to fight for the sake of building the Islamic State."<sup>28</sup> Perhaps ISIL's leaders hope that a modern Saladin will galvanize the jihadist group and lead them to victory.<sup>29</sup>

#### A More Dangerous Threat

ISIL's use of child soldiers poses a unique counterterrorism challenge because they are especially capable of exploiting Western vulnerabilities. Children, escorted by adults who are not known to be affiliated with terrorist groups, are likely to pass through security. Western culture discourages scrutiny of children and this normative behavior creates a counterterrorism weakness. Human trafficking networks provide another means to move children between the Middle East and Europe. Currently, there are no mechanisms to gather intelligence and track children that have been involved in combat within Syria and Iraq. Therefore, it is possible for ISIL to train a child in Syria and move them into Europe without detection.

Once inside Europe, support networks can conceal the child until they conduct an attack. State counterterrorism and policing forces focus their intelligence resources predominantly on adults as-

sociated with jihadi networks. Children can avoid some level of monitoring and are likely to provide fewer indicators prior to an attack. Additionally, children that participate in fighting suffer significant mental and emotional trauma. Those adolescents currently fighting in Syria and Iraq may be a lost generation, and might pose a greater security risk to the West as they mature and become capable of traveling on their own.<sup>30</sup>

#### The Long-Term Problem

The mobilization of the youth makes ISIL especially difficult to eradicate. Even if allied forces are able to defeat ISIL as an organization in Syria and Iraq, it will be difficult to translate those gains into a broader strategic victory. ISIL realizes that the youth are the center of gravity, and they have made a concerted effort to recruit and radicalize. They have thought strategically and accounted for their weaknesses as an organization. If they fail, the next generation is already trained, imbued with jihadist ideology, and inspired to begin their own insurgent groups. This is the implementation of Usama bin Laden's desire for a self-perpetuating jihadist movement.

The demobilization, de-radicalization, and reintegration of ISIL's child soldiers is an especially difficult problem. UNAMSIL is the best example of a Western-led stability and support operation that was able to successfully disarm, control, and reintegrate child combatants into society. The program lasted from 1999 to 2005 and required 17,500 peacekeepers.<sup>31</sup> Any post-conflict operating environment in Syria and Iraq will likely be too insecure for a similar international peacekeeping effort. The costly occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, combined with contemporary fiscal realities, make Western governments reluctant to support such actions. Therefore the UNAMSIL template is not feasible.

A more practical approach in a post-ISIL world will likely require local forces to control, secure, and account for the children during the demobilization and reintegration process. Local clerics,

educators, and other influential leaders will have to engage to counter ISIL's message. Children that have extended family members or peers that support ISIL's vision will be especially resistant to any reconditioning. The reintegration of the youth will also require new education and employment opportunities. Failing to provide the youth a sense of purpose or to channel their energy will result in recidivism. The West and its regional allies will have to provide local leaders with financial, administrative, and technical support for these efforts. Saudi Arabia runs some of the most advanced de-radicalization programs in the world, but the Saudi programs have had mixed results.<sup>32</sup> Future programs within Syria and Iraq will be exponentially more difficult.

As the Iraqi government prepares for the Mosul offensive in April or May 2015, they should consider how to recondition the Sunni youth that have lived under ISIL's control for nearly a year. The "Cubs of the Islamic State" are a critical component of ISIL's long-term vision and a serious counterterrorism challenge for Western states. In order to defeat a multigenerational movement, we must impede ISIL's efforts to recruit and indoctrinate youth. We have the capability to challenge ISIL's message on social media and elsewhere online (although we still have significant room for improvement in this area), but they have the unfettered ability to influence the next generation within the territory that they control. The West will likely feel the effects of ISIL's youth training programs in the future.

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*The views expressed here are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.*

27 See ISIL's video, "The Generation of the Caliphate," January 7, 2015, <http://www.gulfup.com/?G3BFXe>. The video gives the impression that the next generation is critical for accomplishing their long-term objectives.

28 "Grooming Children for Jihad: The Islamic State," *Vice News*, August 13, 2014.

29 Western invaders seized Jerusalem on 15 July 1099. Saladin retook the city on 2 October 1187. Saladin was part of the third generation of fighters to confront the Crusader armies.

30 Kate Brannen, "Children of the Caliphate," *Foreign Policy*, October 24, 2014.

31 "Fact Sheet 1: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration," UNMISL, December 2005.

32 Marisa L. Porges, "The Saudi Deradicalization Experiment," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 22, 2010.

## Digging In and Trafficking Out: How the Destruction of Cultural Heritage Funds Terrorism

By Brigadier General (Ret.) Russell Howard, Marc Elliott, and Jonathan Prohov<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

ANTIQUITIES TRAFFICKING IN the Middle East is nothing new, and even trafficking to fund terrorism has its precedents. During the Ottoman Empire, Iraqi archaeological sites were looted at the behest of wealthy foreigners.<sup>2</sup> After the first Gulf War, looting ancient treasures became a significant source of illicit revenue for impoverished tribal groups and revitalized criminal smuggling networks that specialized in antiquities.<sup>3</sup> These networks became increasingly entrenched in the Iraqi economy during the 1990s, as the UN-imposed sanctions created the need for a black market.<sup>4</sup> After the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, looters pillaged 15,000 artifacts from the National Museum of Iraq, located in Baghdad.<sup>5</sup> As the security situation deteriorated, large-scale looting broke out at archaeological sites throughout Iraq; experts suggest that one-half million artifacts were looted between 2003 and 2005 alone.<sup>6</sup> By the time the

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) conquered northern Iraq in the summer of 2014, the organization was already involved in trafficking antiquities. Indeed, just about every faction in the Syrian conflict was already trafficking in antiquities to help fund their activities, just as terrorists and insurgents had done previously in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup>

There is wide speculation and extensive debate about the extent of ISIL's involvement in antiquities trafficking.<sup>8</sup> Much to the chagrin of researchers and policymakers, while terrorists are happy to pontificate on their goals and aspirations, they are not so forthcoming about their finances. Speculation about how much ISIL earns from antiquities trafficking to fund its caliphate ambitions runs the gamut

from a superficial amount to billions of dollars.<sup>9</sup> Archaeologist Michael Danti, who is funded by the U.S. State Department, speculates that antiquities trafficking is ISIL's second largest source of revenue, whereas a team of German investigative journalists has been unable to find definitive evidence of ISIL's involvement in this trade.<sup>10</sup>

From our perspective, ISIL's involvement in antiquities looting and trafficking is clear, based on satellite imagery, anecdotal evidence, documentation by concerned citizens, and the similar involvement of ISIL predecessors al-Qa'ida in Iraq and the Islamic State of Iraq.<sup>11</sup> Terrorists and looters are opportunists; given that ISIL derives much of its income from various illicit activities, it would be surprising if the group were not involved in what is believed to be the world's third largest illicit market, particularly in a region that is home to some of the world's oldest and most valuable antiquities.<sup>12</sup>

1 The authors would like to thank Farah al-Mousawi for her help in conducting interviews for this article.

2 Lawrence Rothfield, *The Rape of Mesopotamia: Behind the Looting of the Iraq Museum* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 4-7; Joanne Farchakh-Bajjaly, "Who Are the Looters at Archaeological Sites in Iraq?" in *Antiquities under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War*, ed. Lawrence Rothfield (New York: Altamira Press, 2008), pp. 4:55-56.

3 Farchakh-Bajjaly, "Who Are the Looters?" pp. 54-55.

4 Rothfield, *The Rape of Mesopotamia*, pp. 17-20; Farchakh-Bajjaly, "Who Are the Looters?" pp. 51-55.

5 For a firsthand account from the former museum research director about the looting of the museum and its implications, read Donny George, "The Looting of the Iraq National Museum," in *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, ed. Peter G. Stone and Joanne Farchakh-Bajjaly (Woodbridge, England: The Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 97-107. For a detailed breakdown of the number of objects stolen and their classifications, see Matthew Bogdanos, "The Casualties of War: The Truth about the Iraq Museum," *American Journal of Archaeology* Vol. 109, no. 3 (July 2005) p. 515.

6 The Archaeological Institute of America also estimated that the Iraqi antiquities trade generated \$10 million to \$20 million per year; Rothfield, *The Rape of Mesopotamia*, p. 137.

7 Sam Hardy, "Antiquities Looting under Regime, Rebels and Jihadists in Syria," *Conflict Antiquities* (blog), December 18, 2014; on antiquities trafficking as a source of revenue for terrorists in Iraq, see Matthew Bogdanos, "Thieves of Baghdad," in *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, ed. Stone and Farchakh-Bajjaly, pp. 124-26; on antiquities trafficking as a source of revenue for the Taliban in Afghanistan, see *Blood Antiques*, directed by Peter Brems and Wim Van den Eynde, New York: Syndicad, 2009; on antiquities trafficking as a source of funding for terrorists and insurgents, see Heather Pringle, "New Evidence Ties Illegal Antiquities Trade to Terrorism, Violent Crime," *National Geographic*, June 13, 2014; for more information on how antiquities trafficking supports terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, see Louise Shelley, *Dirty Entanglements: Corruption, Crime, and Terrorism* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 264.

8 In all interviews conducted for this article, this number was never considered accurate. Those who believe that antiquities are a major source of income cite unverified evidence from ISIL accounting records that were seized near Mosul in June 2014, which alleges that the group derived \$36 million from antiquities smuggling in the al-Nabuk region of Syria alone. This evidence came from Martin Chulov, "How an Arrest in Iraq Revealed Isis's \$2bn Jihadist Network," *The Guardian*, June 15, 2014; on issues pertaining to this \$36M claim, see Sam Hardy, "German Media Corroborates \$36M Islamic State Antiquities Trafficking," *Hyperallergic*, November 28, 2014; for the source of the "second highest" and "second most common" claims, see Justine Drennan, "The Black-Market Battleground," *Foreign Policy*, October 17, 2014; for issues related to Danti's claim of "second highest," see Jason Felch, "Danti's Inference: The Known Unknowns of ISIS and Antiquities Looting," *Chasing Aphrodite*, November 18, 2014; Sam Hardy, "Tax and Spend: Laissez-Faire Islamic State Capitalism for the Illicit Antiquities Trade?" *Conflict Antiquities* (blog), December 4, 2014.

9 The most extreme speculation came from a former Indian ambassador to Syria, Turkey, and the EU, who states that ISIL derives 30-50 percent of its two billion dollar revenue from antiquities trafficking—some six hundred million to one billion dollars. Rajendra Abhyankar, "Syrian 'Blood Antiquities' Proliferate Urgent Need for an International Agreement," *The Huffington Post*, November 3, 2014.

10 None of the experts interviewed for this article could verify this statistic and did not find it credible. Justine Drennan, "The Black-Market Battleground," *Foreign Policy*, October 17, 2014; Yassin Mursharbash, an author who was involved with this German investigation, explains in why antiquities were not part of the analysis, due to a lack of evidence, in "The 'Islamic State' and the Illegal Sale of Antiquities," *Abu Susu's Blog*, December 4, 2014.

11 Kathy Wren, "AAAS Analysis Shows Widespread Looting and Damage to Historical Sites in Syria," Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, December 17, 2014; "Hassaka-Tell Brak Region: Illicit Diggings at Tell al Hamidiya by ISIS," Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA), 2011; Amr al-Azm, Salam al-Kuntar, and Brian Daniels, "ISIS' Antiquities Sideline," *New York Times*, September 2, 2014; Elena Becatoros, "Smuggled Antiquities Funding Iraq Extremists, U.S. Says," *National Geographic News*, March 19, 2008.

12 Janine Di Giovanni, Leah McGrath Goodman, and Damien Sharkov, "How Does ISIS Fund Its Reign of Terror?" *Newsweek*, November 06, 2014; UNESCO, "The Fight against the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Objects: The 1970 Convention. Past and Future," Paris: UNESCO, March 15-16, 2011; Cem Erciyes, "Islamic State Makes Millions from Stolen Antiquities," *Al-Monitor*,



## Unearthing Syria's Heritage and Destroying Its Cultural Property

As Syria descended into civil war in 2011, the breakdown of civil society and the rampant lawlessness in most parts of the country had several unforeseen consequences. However, the looting of Syria's 25 cultural museums and some 10,000 archaeological sites was predicted early in the conflict.<sup>13</sup> On July 11, 2011, then Syrian prime minister Adel Safar wrote to government officials warning that "the country is threatened by armed criminal groups with hi-tech tools and specialized in the theft of manuscripts and antiquities, as well as the pillaging of museums."<sup>14</sup> Safar recommended the installation of increased security measures, such as more secure doors, alarm systems, and surveillance cameras.<sup>15</sup>

At the time, archaeologists from the Syrian Heritage in Danger initiative found these suggestions rather odd, as no looting had yet occurred.<sup>16</sup> Safar's directive nonetheless fits the narrative the Assad regime promoted almost immediately after the uprising began: that foreign conspirators and terrorists were behind the protests against his regime, despite no evidence of this at the outset of the revolution.<sup>17</sup> There was even speculation by some archaeologists that officials in the Assad regime would engage in the theft and resale of the country's cherished relics, something that occurred "under President Assad's father Hafez al-Assad."<sup>18</sup> When an Aramaic statuette was stolen from the Archaeological Museum of Hama later in July, it appeared to be an inside job, as there was no sign of a break-in; the

whereabouts of the statuette are still unknown.<sup>19</sup>

By 2012, opposition groups desperately needed money and arms, and they too turned to looting their own heritage to supplement their income.<sup>20</sup> Soon thereafter, fighters supporting the Free Syrian Army developed an "association of diggers dedicated to finding antiquities in order to fund the revolution."<sup>21</sup> A known smuggler by the name of Abu Khaled said that even "the regime is dealing with antiquities, because they are collapsing economically. They need cash money to pay the *shabiha* [hired thugs]."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, "if you ask people from Syria, they would simply answer: everyone is trafficking antiquities. And, by the way, they have been doing this for decades, it just increased now dramatically, because of the political chaos."<sup>23</sup>

Cheikmous Ali, a leading Syrian archaeologist who is president of the Association for the Protection of Syrian Archeology, documents the destruction of Syria's cultural heritage. He explains that the actors involved in archaeological looting throughout Syria have different capabilities and four basic levels of sophistication:<sup>24</sup> (1) indiscriminate and random digging; (2) digging by thieves and specialists who focus on specific locations using sophisticated technology, such as metal detectors; (3) systematic digging using archaeologists' methods; and (4) excavation with bulldozers and other heavy machinery, which causes extensive damage and has destroyed dozens of sites.<sup>25</sup>

Centuries-old smuggling routes that are well established across Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon have facilitated antiquities trafficking.<sup>26</sup> British and German reporters have come across people eagerly trying to sell millions of dollars' worth of Syrian artifacts, which they obtained from antiquities trafficking networks operating in both southern Turkey and Lebanon, and which have ties to armed groups in Syria.<sup>27</sup> Many buyers are Syrian collectors who stockpile valuable antiquities in the country, while collectors from other Gulf States travel to Syria to buy directly from dealers.<sup>28</sup> The Turkish cities of Antakya, Gaziantep, Mardin, and Urfa have been identified as hubs for selling antiquities looted from Syria's numerous archaeological sites, including Apamea and Dura-Europos, where heavy looting has been confirmed.<sup>29</sup> Some buyers allegedly come to Turkey from Western countries to purchase artifacts ranging from "\$100, for . . . a Roman-era coin, and . . . as high as \$100,000 for statues

September 2, 2014.

13 Robert Fisk, "Syria's Ancient Treasures Pulverized," *The Independent*, August 5, 2012.

14 Fisk, "Syria's Ancient Treasures"; Cheikmous Ali, "Syrian Heritage under Threat," *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archeology & Heritage Studies* 1, no. 4 (2013) pp. 351-66.

15 Ali, "Syrian Heritage under Threat."

16 Fisk, "Syria's Ancient Treasures."

17 Jeffrey Fleishman, "President Bashar Assad Blames Conspiracies for Syria Unrest," *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/mar/31/world/la-fg-syria-assad-20110331>; Karen DeYoung, "Iraq Militant Group's Pipeline through Syria Revives after Long Gap," *Washington Post*, May 11, 2009.

18 Fisk, "Syria's Ancient Treasures"; author interview with Amr Al-Azm, February 13, 2015; interview with Abdal-Razzaq Moaz, February 17, 2015.

19 Ali, "Syrian Heritage under Threat."

20 Aryn Baker and Majdel Anjar, "Syria's Looted Past: How Ancient Artifacts Are Being Traded for Guns," *Time*, September 12, 2012.

21 Baker and Anjar, "Syria's Looted Past."

22 Baker and Anjar, "Syria's Looted Past."

23 Author interview with journalist, specialist on the Middle East, ARD, German Public Broadcaster, February 15, 2015.

24 Author interview with Amr Al-Azm, February 13, 2015.

25 Cheikmous Ali and Salem Ali, "Archaeological Excavations during the Conflicts: When the Bulldozer Replaces the Trowel," *al-Gerbal*, January 2015, pp. 29-31;

"Idlib: Illicit Diggings at Tell Hizareen P1," YouTube video, depicts the use of metal detectors, posted by APSA, October 29, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH-81EEmlw>; "Deir Ezzor: Illicit Diggings at Qal'at al Rahba," YouTube video, depicts the use of bull-

dozers for illicit diggings, posted by "Protect Syrian Archeology," November 30, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1fFX5L35zc&list=UUA1WkoCIJ4VIFP1A3fC3G5Q>.

26 "Liban Tentative de Contrebande D'antiquités Syriennes," YouTube video depicts the confiscation of looted Syrian antiquities in Lebanon and details the arrest of antiquities smugglers, posted by APSA, May 17, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35rvzWFMAu4&index=1&list=FLZeQwmPndiENH6W8J3EqhYQ>; Gabrielle Denecke, "Art Smuggling in Syria as Terrorists Loot the Cultural Heritage," *Das Erste*, January 9, 2015; Saad al-Masou'di, "Toraath al-'iraq yumowwel da'ish wa muqatiluhu yanhaboon al-aathar," *al-Arabia*, September 30, 2014.

27 Interview with journalist, specialist on the Middle-East, ARD, German Public Broadcaster, February 15, 2015; "Liban Tentative," APSA; Hala Jaber and George Arbuthnott, "Syrians Loot Roman Treasures to Buy Guns," *The Sunday Times*, May 05, 2013; Denecke, "Art Smuggling in Syria."

28 Author interview with Amr Al-Azm.

29 James Harkin, "Stealing Syria's Past," Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, August 27, 2014; Katrin Elger, "Monuments Men: The Quest to Save Syria's History," *Der Spiegel*, August 4, 2014; "Apamée: Fouilles clandestines-partie 1," YouTube video, depicts heavy looting and excavations at Apamea, posted by APSA, September 19, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIcGRZaSB\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIcGRZaSB_A);

"Apamea: Illicit diggings-part 2," YouTube video, depicts heavy looting and excavations at Apamea, posted by APSA September 19, 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJoiYO\\_xo0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJoiYO_xo0).

and rare manuscripts.”<sup>30</sup> Antiquities markets in Lebanon are also flush with freshly looted artifacts, which usually make their way from Syria to these markets through Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley.<sup>31</sup> Lebanese sources told Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, lead investigator of the looting of the Baghdad Museum in 2003, that Hezbollah is involved in this trade and even levies taxes on antiquities trafficked in Lebanon.<sup>32</sup>

### Iraq after 2003: Pillaging the Cradle of Civilization

Bogdanos believes that trafficked Iraqi antiquities funded terrorism during the second Iraq war, but not to the same extent as funds realized from kidnapping ransoms and protection money extorted from local Iraqis.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, antiquities trafficking became an increasingly common source of income for the insurgency, as indicated by the illicit weapons and antiquities that coalition forces frequently found together during the Iraq war. This activity funded both Sunni and Shia militias, including al-Qa’ida in Iraq.<sup>34</sup> Even when the security situation in Iraq stabilized briefly, antiquities trafficking continued unabated. In 2010, the independent Iraqi news agency *Aswat al-Iraq* reported the recovery of “seven antiquities and documents belong[ing] to what is called the Islamic State of Iraq armed group in Mosul” when Iraqi security forces raided a goldsmith’s store “after receiving information on financing armed groups.”<sup>35</sup> The Ninewa Operations Command arrested two wanted men and seized documents belonging to the Islamic State of Iraq. In June 2014, after ISIL conquered Mosul, the group seized tens of millions of dollars from local banks and

conveniently found itself controlling 1,800-4,000 of the country’s 12,000 archaeological sites.<sup>36</sup> On June 29, 2014—the first day of Ramadan—ISIL declared that it had reestablished the Caliphate and changed its name to the Islamic State.<sup>37</sup> By mid-July, reports began to emerge of ISIL looting in Iraq from such sites as “the grand palace of the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II at . . . Nimrud,” where a “bas-relief that weighed more than 3 to 4 tons” was cut up and sold.<sup>38</sup> The director of the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage, which is located in Erbil, states that international antiquities “mafias” are informing ISIL as to what artifacts can be sold in a method akin to the “antiques wanted” section found on craigslist.<sup>39</sup> According to James McAndrew, a former senior special agent responsible for the Cultural Property, Art, and Antiquities Program of the Department of Homeland Security, intelligence sources suggest that significant pieces leaving Iraq will go to buyers in the UAE, Iran, Syria, and other Gulf States.<sup>40</sup>

Since the U.S.-led coalition attacked oil refineries under ISIL control—in Iraq on August 8, 2014, and in Syria on September 23, 2014—ISIL has increased its antiquities trafficking to make up for the loss of funds from oil revenues.<sup>41</sup> ISIL “clearly is involved and profiting at every level, from extraction to final sale and exit from

[ISIL] territory.”<sup>42</sup> According to Willy Bruggeman, former deputy director of Europol, ISIL is now seeking even greater control by establishing a direct, one-on-one relationship with buyers in the West.<sup>43</sup> ISIL does not appear to have an official antiquities policy, but it appears to be pillaging and destroying cultural heritage sites in Syria and Iraq to support its overall mission for two main reasons:<sup>44</sup> first, to raise money to finance its operations, and second, to erase the cultural identity of minority groups and the ideologies that do not comply with its radical interpretation of Islam.<sup>45</sup>

ISIL exacts taxes on antiquities that are estimated to range from 12.5 percent to a 20 percent *khums*, a traditional Islamic tax, to as high as 50 percent for looted Islamic items.<sup>46</sup> Eyewitnesses in Manbij, a Syrian town near Aleppo, note that the way ISIL treats antiquities under its control depends on the local emir, who determines whether specific antiquities are destroyed, sold, or protected.<sup>47</sup> The emir offers local looters 700 Syrian pounds (US\$ 3.87) per day, thus

30 Harkin, “Stealing Syria’s Past”; see also Di Giovanni et al., “How Does ISIS Fund?”

31 Author interview with, Amr Al-Azm; interview with journalist, specialist on the Middle-East, ARD, German Public Broadcaster; Alice Fordham, “Smugglers Thrive on Syria’s Chaos, Looting Cultural Treasures,” *NPR* (blog).

32 Museum Security Network, “Investigator of Baghdad Museum Looting Says Antiquity Smuggling Finances Terror,” *AP*, March 19, 2008; see also Shelley, *Dirty Entanglements*, 264.

33 Bogdanos, “Thieves of Baghdad.”

34 Bogdanos, “Thieves of Baghdad”; Museum Security Network, “Investigator of Baghdad Museum.”

35 “Antiquities Found in Ninewa,” *Aswat al-Iraq*, August 11, 2010.

36 As-Sumaria News, “As-siyaaha tushakkel khaliyya azma limu’aaliyat qadiyyat sariqat al-mawaaqi’ al-ithriyya fil-mowsul,” July 26, 2014; for the claim of 1,800 sites, see Michael Janson, “A Common Heritage at Risk,” *Assyrian International News Agency*, October 10, 2014; for the claim of 4,000 sites, see Abdulameer al-Hamdani, “Iraq’s Heritage Is Facing a New Wave of Destruction,” *Iraq Heritage*, September 8, 2014; for how ISIS taps into existing trafficking networks in both Iraq and Syria, see al-Azm et al., “ISIS’ Antiquities Sideline.”

37 Aaron Y. Zelin, “ISIS Is Dead, Long Live the Islamic State,” *Foreign Policy*, June 30, 2014.

38 Di Giovanni et al., “How Does ISIS Fund?”; al-Hamdani, “Iraq’s Heritage Is Facing.”

39 “Da’ish tunaqqib ‘an al-aathaar wa tabee’ha lilmaafiaat,” *Noon Post*, October 01, 2014; Sa’d al-Mas’oudi, “Toraath al-iraq yumowwel da’ish wa muqatiluhu yanhaboon al-aathar,” *al-Arabia*, September 30, 2014.

40 James McAndrew, “Syria and Iraq’s Neighbours Can Help Contain the Looting,” *The Art Newspaper*, December 18, 2014.

41 David Kohn, “ISIS’s Looting Campaign,” *The New Yorker*, October 14, 2014.

42 Dalya Alberge and Jane Arraf, “Loot, Sell, Bulldoze: Isis Grinds History to Dust,” *The Sunday Times*, July 13, 2014.

43 Oliver Moody, “Isis Fills War Chest by Selling Looted Antiquities to the West,” *The Times* [London], December 17, 2014.

44 Interview with journalist, specialist on the Middle-East, ARD, German Public Broadcaster, February 15, 2015; interview with Sam Hardy, February 12, 2015.

45 E. Nemeth, “Strategic Value of African Tribal Art: Auction Sales Trend as Cultural Intelligence,” *Intelligence and National Security* 27, no. 2 (April 2012) pp. 302-16; on the damage looting causes to communities, see Asif Efrat, *Governing Guns, Preventing Plunder: International Cooperation against Illicit Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp. 116-17; Moody, “ISIS Fills War Chest.”

46 Yochi Dreazen, “ISIS Uses Mafia Tactics to Fund Its Operations Without Help from Persian Gulf Donors,” *Foreign Policy*, July 17, 2014; “The ‘Islamic State’ and the Illegal Sale of Antiquities,” *Abu Susu’s Blog*, December 4, 2014; Onur Burcak Belli, Andrea Bohm, Alexander Buhler, Kerstin Kohlenberg, Stefan Meining, Yassin Musharbash, Mark Schieritz, Ahmet Senyurt, Birgit Svensson, Michael Thumann, Tobias Timm, and Fritz Zimmerman, “The Business of the Caliph,” *Zeit Online*, December 4, 2014; Sam Hardy, “The Antiquities Trade in the Islamic State: 12.5% Taxation of Private Looting-Smuggling Business,” *Conflict Antiquities* (blog), December 4, 2014; al-Azm et al., “ISIS’ Antiquities Sideline.”

47 Author interview with journalist, specialist on the Middle-East, ARD, German Public Broadcaster, February 15, 2015.

fulfilling his role as a “responsible” governing agent and providing ample employment opportunities.<sup>48</sup> ISIL, which opened an office in Manbij specifically to monitor looting activities, sometimes confiscates antiquities unearthed by locals and sells them to smugglers, one example being a Roman mosaic sold to Turkish traffickers. In the eastern Syrian province of Deir ez-Zor, the archaeological sites of Mari and Dura-Europos have been looted extensively since coming under ISIL control, according to recently analyzed geospatial imagery.<sup>49</sup> Bruggeman believes that pillaged Greco-Roman frescoes and masonry are among the most common antiquities stolen from an estimated 1,000 historical sites in Syria that are now under ISIL control.<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Countries around the world are beginning to react to the destruction of ancient cultures and historical sites, and to reports of illicit trafficking of antiquities from Syria and Iraq, by implementing a variety of measures. In its latest resolution against ISIL, the UN Security Council banned all trade in antiquities from Syria and reaffirmed its ban on trading of Iraqi antiquities.<sup>51</sup> The EU—which includes several important European “market countries” known to purchase looted items—has reacted by putting stronger trade controls on all Syrian cultural property.<sup>52</sup> In the U.S., a pending bill in the House would restrict the import of Syrian cultural property, and it also calls for a White House Coordinator for International Property Protection.<sup>53</sup>

After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the FBI created an Art Crime Team to help other countries recover their stolen art and antiquities, and it has since collaborated with foreign police forces in numerous undercover sting operations that have helped recover antiquities worth millions of dollars.<sup>54</sup> The State Department is also helping the International Council of Museums with its Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk, which identifies cultural objects that might come from Syria and provides phone numbers and email addresses of people to contact if a suspected object turns up.<sup>55</sup> In February 2013, UNESCO held a four-day regional conference to develop an action plan to protect Syrian cultural property and build neighboring countries’ capacity to crack down on the smuggling of illicit antiquities.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey have all recovered antiquities that were trafficked into their territory from Syria.<sup>57</sup>

Tackling the issue of trafficked antiquities needs to be part of an overall international effort to counter ISIL, and to resolve the Syrian crisis. The literature indicates that antiquities trafficking occurs in four stages: (1) looting, often by poor subsistence diggers; (2) trafficking by organized criminal networks from source to destination countries; (3) “facilitation,” where artifacts are laundered and given false provenance; and (4) entry onto the market.<sup>58</sup> Two-faced “Janus figures”—

internationally connected antiquities dealers—are thought to be the links “between the licit and illicit trade.”<sup>59</sup> While the international community struggles to stabilize conditions in Syria and Iraq, it will not be able to halt the trafficking of illicit antiquities without an effective law enforcement presence in these war-torn countries. Ideally, policymakers would target the first and second stages of the illicit supply chain to prevent the supply of stolen antiquities. However, targeting the third and fourth stages creates the opportunity to curb the demand that is fueling this trade and causing the destruction of valuable cultural heritage.

Recent international efforts to counter illicit antiquities trafficking are a good start, and the need to protect cultural property is beginning to receive the level of attention that has long been called for by such acts as the 1954 Hague Convention and the 1970 UNESCO Convention.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, international law can only go so far. As public awareness of the trade in black market antiquities increases, nations around the world must take steps to stop it. Laws that have built-in enforcement mechanisms will be the most effective way to crack down on this illicit market. Specific “choke points” in the supply chain need to be targeted, such as transit countries and cities that are known hubs for selling illicit antiquities. Just as countries in the region have been called on to take a greater role in the anti-ISIL military coalition, they also must be more proactive in countering antiquities trafficking—particularly the Gulf States. Those who facilitate and benefit from this illicit trade, such as the Janus figures and transnational traffickers, must also be targeted. Finally, a public-private initiative that involves governments, museums, collectors, and archaeologists should be launched to help eliminate the

Act, HR 5703, 113th Cong., 2nd Sess. 2014.

54 Noah Charney, Paul Denton, and John Kleberg, “Protecting Cultural Heritage from Art Theft,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, March 2012.

55 “Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk,” International Council of Museums, 2013.

56 “Illicit Traffic of Cultural Property,” Paris: UNESCO, February 10, 2013.

57 Taylor Luck, “Police Seize Large Cache of Syrian Artifacts,” *Jordan Times*, February 9, 2013.

58 Peter B. Campbell, “The Illicit Antiquities Trade as a Transnational Criminal Network: Characterizing and Anticipating Trafficking of Cultural Heritage,” *International Journal of Cultural Property* 20 (2013) p. 116; Jessica Dietzler, “On ‘Organized Crime’ in the Illicit Antiquities Trade: Moving Beyond the Definitional Debate,” *Trends in Organized Crime* 16, no. 3 (2013) p. 12; Asif Efrat, *Governing Guns, Preventing Plunder: International Cooperation against Illicit Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 119; Simon Mackenzie and Tess Davis, “Temple Looting in Cambodia: Anatomy of a Statue Trafficking Network,” *British Journal of Criminology* (Oxford, Eng-

land: Oxford University Press: June 13, 2014) pp. 8:8-15.

59 Peter B. Campbell, “Structure,” *Illicit Antiquities* (blog), <http://www.illicitantiquities.com/structure/>; Campbell, “The Illicit Antiquities Trade”; for a detailed description of this “four-stage progression model,” see Dietzler, “On ‘Organized Crime’”; Efrat, *Governing Guns*, p. 119.

60 Ali, “Syrian Heritage under Threat”; the full names of the acts are The Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

48 Joe Parkinson, Ayla Albayrak, and Duncan Mavin, “Syrian ‘Monuments Men’ Race to Protect Antiquities as Looting Bankrolls Terror,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 2015; author interview with journalist, specialist on the Middle-East, ARD, German Public Broadcaster, February 15, 2015.

49 The American Schools of Oriental Research, “Extensive Recent Looting Revealed,” *ASORBlog*, November 2014; Wren, “AAAS Analysis”; on local emirs and the determination of tax rates, see Alberge and Arraf, “Loot, Sell, Bulldoze.”

50 Moody, “Isis Fills War Chest.”

51 Michelle Nichols, “U.N. Security Council Ups Pressure On Islamic State Financing,” Reuters, February 5, 2015.

52 Council Regulation (EU) No 1332/2013 of December 13, 2013, Amending Regulation (EU) No 36/2012 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria.

53 Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property



purchase, transfer, and sale of illicit antiquities, and to recommend further policy actions to reduce such activity. Efforts aimed at curbing the demand side of the market will help crack down on this lucrative market, but until this issue can be tackled from both ends by legitimate governments, these measures will not stop the surge of antiquities looting and trafficking taking place today in in Syria and Iraq.

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## Comparing Counterterrorism in Indonesia and the Philippines

By Major Scott N. McKay and Major David A. Webb

TERRORISM IN SOUTHEAST Asia predates the American post-9/11 war on terrorism. But since 2001, terrorist groups in Indonesia and the Philippines have emerged as significant security challenges within these states, as well as indirect threats to U.S. national security. The United States has made substantial direct and indirect contributions to the counterterrorism (CT) efforts within these states, with varying returns on investment.

Despite differing responses to terrorism, Indonesia and the Philippines are both commonly viewed as CT success stories, as terrorist groups have been degraded and links to al-Qa'ida have been weakened. But while terrorist operations in Indonesia have declined in the post-9/11 era, attacks have increased in the Philippines. Last month, an operation targeting international terrorists on the southern island of Mindanao resulted in the death of 43 Philippine national police commandos.<sup>1</sup>

Between 2002 and 2013, the U.S. provided \$262 million in security assistance funding to Indonesia, and \$441 million in security assistance to the Philippines.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. has also provided direct military-to-military support in the Philippines, advising and training Philippine CT forces over the last decade. Due to differences in culture, institutions, capabilities, and U.S. assistance, the Indonesian and Philippine governments have implemented distinctive CT strategies. Indonesia has relied on national police to degrade terrorist networks, while the military has been the primary CT force in the Philippines.

This article evaluates CT efforts in Indonesia and the Philippines in order to compare and contrast host-nation approaches and corresponding U.S. support. This article also highlights American best practices, which may be transferrable to U.S. support for CT in other parts of the world.

Our research has led to two significant conclusions. First, based on several quantitative measures of effectiveness, the law enforcement-based Indonesian CT approach has been more effective than the military-based CT approach of the Philippines, although the multifaceted nature of terrorism within the Philippines arguably makes the task of CT in the Philippines more difficult. And second, the U.S. can be most effective when providing tailored CT support, based on the nature of the terrorist threat and host nation culture and national capabilities.

### Terrorism in Southeast Asia

Prior to 9/11, Southeast Asian states viewed terrorism as low-level, localized threats, with little impact on their national security interests. The United States, meanwhile, was largely preoccupied with Middle Eastern terrorist groups.<sup>3</sup> But following 9/11, as linkages between al-Qaeda and Southeast Asia emerged, the United States started to pay more attention to terrorism in the region—specifically in Indonesia and the Philippines.<sup>4</sup> The Bali bombings on October 12, 2002, however, were a wake up call for Southeast Asia. Ambassador Alfonso T. Yuchengco, the Philippine permanent representative to the United Nations (U.N.), said that “10/12” was to Indonesia and Southeast Asia what 9/11 was to the United States and the West, “awakening Southeast Asia to the threat of Islamist terrorism.”<sup>5</sup>

Three types of terrorist groups exist in Southeast Asia: global, regional, and national.<sup>6</sup> Southeast Asian terrorist groups are interconnected, however, often sharing leaders, members, tactics, and objectives. Global terrorist groups

1 Arlene Samson-Espiritu and Tim Hume, “43 Philippine police killed by Muslim rebels while hunting bomb makers” *CNN*, January 27, 2015.

2 Aid data was compiled from the U.S. State Department FY Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations. FY data was taken from the FY +2 request for 2002-2013. INCLE, FMF, IMET, and NADR funds were included in these figures.

3 Rommel Banlaoi, *Counter Terrorism Measure in Southeast Asia: How Effective Are They?* (Philippines: Yuchengco Center, 2009), pp. 23-24.

4 Banlaoi, p. 24.

5 Alfonso Yuchengco, “Islamist Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” *Issues and Insights*, no. 1-03 (Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, January, 2003), p. 1.

6 Banlaoi, p. 23.

such as al-Qa'ida have recruited and trained operatives throughout the region, and have maintained connections to Southeast Asian terrorist groups since the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. Regional terrorist groups, such as the Indonesian-based Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), seek to create an Islamic state throughout Southeast Asia. And nationalist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines seek an Islamic separatist state in the southern islands of Mindanao. Al-Qa'ida's persistent presence in Southeast Asia and its connection to regional and nationalist terrorist groups in Indonesia and the Philippines have prompted the U.S. to proactively support Indonesian and Philippine CT efforts over the last decade.<sup>7</sup>

#### Terrorism and CT in Indonesia

Jemaah Islamiyah—aligned with al-Qa'ida and overlapping in leadership and membership since the 1990s<sup>8</sup>—gained international attention through the Bali nightclub bombings in 2002, which were the most deadly terrorist attacks in the world since 9/11.<sup>9</sup> Among the approximately 500 casualties were Americans, Australians, Canadians, Europeans, Japanese, and Indonesians.<sup>10</sup>

JI followed the Bali bombings with annual high profile bombing attacks in Indonesia over the next three years, to include the bombing of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta on August 5, 2004, which killed 11 and wounded 150; the bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta on September 9, 2004, which killed 11 and wounded 160; and another Bali bombing on October 1, 2005 which killed 20 and injured 129.<sup>11</sup>

In the aftermath of the 10/12 attacks, the Indonesian government accepted American and international assistance to combat terrorism, and initiated a thorough reform of the Indonesian national security apparatus.<sup>12</sup> Key

aspects of Indonesia's CT evolution since 2002 include legal reform to enable the prosecution of terrorists, improved domestic CT forces, and the deradicalization of convicted terrorists.

The U.S. has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in security funding to support CT in Indonesia, but little direct support in the form of military training and advising. The Australian government—motivated by the Bali bombings, Jakarta embassy bombing, and persistent terrorist threats throughout the region—has provided trainers and advisors to Indonesian CT forces. American funds and Australian direct support enabled the creation of the Indonesian national CT force, known as Detachment 88, in 2003. Detachment 88 is responsible for investigations, intelligence, and hostage rescue, in addition to traditional CT operations, and has distinguished itself as an elite CT force. It has had success in targeting and dismantling terrorist organizations throughout Indonesia.<sup>13</sup>

The evolution of the CT apparatus in Indonesia has yielded tangible results, including the detention and prosecution of a significant percentage of JI leadership, and a successful start to a deradicalization program and legal reforms. However, governmental corruption, prison over-crowding, and a recent wave of ISIS propaganda will lead to future terrorism challenges, despite the short-term successes against JI. Continued progress is required to maintain the success that Indonesian CT forces have achieved in the past decade.

#### Terrorism and CT in the Philippines

January's tragic clash between members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (SAF) and members of the Islamic separatist group, known as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), highlights several notable security trends in the Philippines. The 12-hour firefight ensued during a raid to capture Zulkifli bin Hir, a Malaysian-born operational leader and bomb maker within Jemaah Islamiyah, who had reportedly been in the Philippines since 2003 training ASG bomb makers.

This incident highlights the long-standing connections between Southeast Asian terrorist groups, the continuing instability in the southern Philippines, and the new and increasing role of the Philippine National Police in the CT mission that had been dominated by the Philippine military until 2010.

The Philippines is confronted with the most diverse set of internal security challenges in Southeast Asia.<sup>14</sup> The Philippine communist insurgency, known as the New People's Army (NPA), has existed since 1968,<sup>15</sup> and is—in the eyes of the Philippine government—the most significant internal security threat, because of the NPA's dispersed disposition and ability to influence the Philippine capital region on the island of Luzon.<sup>16</sup> But in recent years, the most newsworthy security challenge within the Philippines has emerged in the southern island region of Mindanao, where Muslim separatist groups have sought autonomy for centuries.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has transitioned from separatist terrorist group to political party, as the peace process has achieved fragile autonomy for the MILF. But radical factions such as ASG and BIFF seek a completely independent Islamic state under *Sbaria* law. ASG has proven to be the most nihilistic terrorist group in the Philippines, conducting a bombing at the Davao International airport on March 5, 2003, which killed 21 and injured 148; and conducting a bombing on a Philippine super-ferry on February 27, 2004, which killed 116 and injured 300, the worst terrorist attack in Asia since the 2002 Bali bombings.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to Indonesia, the Philippine government had been in conflict with terrorist groups for decades before the start of the so-called global war on terrorism. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has the structure, the aptitude, and support of both the government and the populace to pursue the terrorist groups. Philippine law enforcement forces, however, lack

7 Bruce Vaughn, "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, February 7, 2005, pp. 4-5.

8 Vaughn, pp. 6-7.

9 Ibid., p. 11.

10 Ibid.

11 Banlaoi, p. 20.

12 Peter Chalk, "The Evolving Terrorist Threat to Southeast Asia: A Net Assessment," Rand National

Defense Research Institute (United States: 2005), p. 152.

13 Ibid., p. 154.

14 Ibid., p. 33.

15 Chalk, p. 36.

16 Virginia Bacay-Watson, interview August 2014, at the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in

Honolulu, Hawaii.

17 Banlaoi, p. 64.

capacity and public support, based on a history of ineptitude and corruption.<sup>18</sup>

CT in the Philippines, therefore, has been traditionally a military responsibility, and while the military CT forces can effectively clear terrorist safe havens, weak local governments and law enforcement units are incapable, and often unwilling, to hold and build in isolate areas such as Mindanao.<sup>19</sup> Since 2010, the Philippine government has made an effort to pass the domestic CT mission from the military to the national police, but the transition has been slow and beleaguered by distrust and competition between the two organizations.<sup>20</sup>

American CT support has arrived in the form of hundreds of millions of dollars of security funding, as well as the continual deployment of U.S. troops to the Philippines to train and advise the Philippine CT forces. Due to the links between Abu Sayyaf Group and al-Qa'ida, ASG has been the primary focus of Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines (OEF-P) for the United States. Through OEF-P, American advisors have enabled the Philippine security forces to contain and severely disrupt ASG to the point where the group no longer poses a significant threat to the Philippine capital region in Luzon. But despite the commitment of the Philippine government and the support of the United States, ASG and other Islamic separatists groups remain persistent security challenge within the Philippines.

#### Effectiveness of CT Responses

Two quantitative measures can help explain the CT effectiveness of these two states from 2002-2013. The first is an assessment of the trends in terrorist attacks according to the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) Global Terrorism Database (GTD).<sup>21</sup> The data clearly indicates

that terrorist attacks have declined in Indonesia while increasing in the Philippines.

From 2002-2007 the relative number of attacks for the two countries are similar, with the Philippines experiencing slightly more attacks throughout this period, which is understandable due to the diversity of Philippine terrorist groups. In 2002, Indonesia suffered 43 terrorist attacks compared to 48 attacks in the Philippines. In 2007, terrorist incidents in the Philippines spiked upward to 65 attacks, while attacks in Indonesia fell to only two attacks.

Attacks increased in both countries over the next six years, but overall, attacks in the Philippines increased 13-fold between 2002 and 2013 (from 48 attacks to 652) and fell by 26 percent in Indonesia during the same time period (from 43 attacks in 2002 to 32 in 2013). Although one could argue that the uptick in the Philippine attacks is due to the relative strength of the various terrorist groups that operate there, another plausible argument is that Indonesian CT has been more effective than Philippine CT.

The second quantitative measure of effectiveness is an analytic tool that measures national responses to terrorist activity. This tool was first featured in a 2014 article that evaluated the relative effectiveness of CT operations in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand.<sup>22</sup> The model determined the average time between CT operation and a subsequent terrorist attack to be eleven days in Indonesia, as compared to eight days in the Philippines. Thus, a CT intervention such as an arrest, indictment, or imprisonment had a larger magnitude of effectiveness in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> Although there are several factors that could explain the lag in a terrorist group's ability to operationally respond in these cases, this model provides a second quantitative indication that Indonesian CT efforts may have been more effective than Philippine CT efforts.

attacks were documented for each year in both Indonesia and the Philippines.

<sup>22</sup> White, p. 461.

<sup>23</sup> White, p. 468.

#### American Lessons Learned

There are several lessons to be learned from American CT support in Indonesia and the Philippines. These conclusions, though germane to the terrorism threats and responses within these specific states, may also be applicable to other international situations where the United States must assist a host-nation with CT efforts.

1. When planning a CT strategy, the United States must consider the unique history, culture, and capabilities of the host nation. These factors, combined with effectiveness of the host-nation's military, law enforcement, judicial system, and local governance, must be understood to properly tailor CT strategy. The Indonesian law enforcement-based CT approach has been more effective than the military-based Philippine CT approach, but Philippine culture and national capabilities would not have supported an Indonesian-style CT program in the Philippines in 2002. So the United States was wise to tailor support through the Philippine military, while concurrently working with Indonesian law enforcement for CT purposes. Properly tailored American CT support will best contribute to the effectiveness of the collective CT strategy.

2. Local governance, to include effective legislative and judicial systems are prerequisite ingredients if the host-nation military is to be the leading CT force. The Philippine military-led CT model had effective results against the terrorist groups, but weak local governments and law enforcement were not prepared to follow up on the security gains achieved by the military. If an initial military-based CT response is required, then the host nation should employ a dual-track approach to develop the capacity of the host-nation's civil institutions. Transitioning the CT mission from the military to the police requires national support, and the military must be willing to share intelligence and tactics, techniques, and procedures with law enforcement. Friction remains between Philippine military and law enforcement, due to many years of military-led CT in the Philippines.

3. Technical and tactical training to support CT functions such as

<sup>18</sup> Gentry White, Lorraine Mazerolle, Michael Porter, and Peter Chalk. "Modeling the Effectiveness of Counterterrorism Interventions." *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* No. 475 (2014), p. 472.

<sup>19</sup> Chalk, p. 144.

<sup>20</sup> Dennis Haney, interview, February 2015, at Stanford University.

<sup>21</sup> National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland, Website accessed on December 1, 2014. Number of



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investigation, intelligence, and targeting are more helpful than blindly-sent financial aid. For example, in Indonesia, the investigative and forensic training provided to Detachment 88 greatly enhanced its targeting effectiveness in recent years, and the training of a cyber investigation team led to a new means of gathering intelligence and prosecution of terrorists that otherwise would have been unavailable.<sup>24</sup> Cyber team training and integrated targeting methods for Indonesian CT practitioners provided more of an impact than purchased equipment alone.

4. The U.S. should seek to capitalize on the capabilities, expertise, and positive reputation of allies in the host-nation's region to assist in CT efforts. In Indonesia, Australia took an active role in providing aid and training to Indonesian CT forces, complementing the financial aid from the United States. Australia provided specialized law enforcement training for Detachment 88 as well as funding for its training facilities.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, Australia still provides forensic assistance to support Indonesian CT operations, enabling Detachment 88 to successfully prosecute the insurgents that are captured. Australian involvement was also more palatable to the Indonesian population than American involvement. In Indonesia, direct American support would have likely been negatively perceived, while direct support from Australia was not seen as threatening to the Muslim majority. In future situations, the United States should encourage direct support from allies who have similar interests within the host-nation, but might be perceived in a more positive light than Americans.

5. A form of de-radicalization or reintegration should be considered as a part of the legal and judicial reforms within the host-nation. Both Indonesia and the Philippines incorporated de-radicalization programs with varying degrees of success. The host-nation will have to develop such a program based on its cultural norms and national goals, but the United States can assist in this process by providing funding and infrastructure. Deradicalization is essential to reintegrate captured terrorists into the host-nation society.

### Conclusion

The United States has made significant direct and indirect contributions to CT efforts in Indonesia and the Philippines, with varying returns on investment. The United States seems to have received a better return on CT investment in Indonesia as terrorist attacks have declined since 9/11, while attacks have increased dramatically in the Philippines during the same time period. It is difficult, however, to determine whether these trends should be attributed to Indonesian CT efforts, or the efficacy and resilience of Philippine terrorist groups (or a combination of both). The United States can learn many lessons, however, from its CT support in Indonesia and the Philippines, and these lessons should be applied to future CT assistance efforts.

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*The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.*

<sup>24</sup> Kristen E. Schulze, interview, November 2014, London School of Economics, London, U.K.

<sup>25</sup> Chalk, p. 154.