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The UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), accompanied by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), conducted a regional high-level visit to the four States of the Lake Chad Basin from 13 to 17 February 2017. The main objectives of the visit were to discuss current threats; listen to the concerns of the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria; identify shared challenges; discuss how the international community could support their national and regional counter-terrorism efforts; and discuss regional counter-terrorism cooperation.



UN CTED delegation during the visit.

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Under pressure
militarily,
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CTED facilitates
national
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UN CTED and
the Global
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joint publication
on strengthening
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ICAO TRIP
Seminar

In its resolve to support Afghanistan's efforts to counter terrorism and the threat posed by terrorist groups, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), acting on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, conducted an assessment visit to Afghanistan on 31 January and 1 February 2017.

The visit had three main objectives: to assess Afghanistan's compliance with the obligations set forth in Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005), including measures aimed at implementing Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) on foreign terrorist fighters; to formulate recommendations on measures to be adopted by Afghanistan to fully implement resolution 1373 (2001); and to identify areas in which the country would benefit from receiving technical assistance in order to fully implement resolution 1373 (2001).



UN CTED Executive Director Jean-Paul Laborde during the visit in Kabul, Afghanistan.

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CTED conducts comprehensive assessment visit to Tajikistan

On behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, CTED conducted a six-day assessment visit to the Republic of Tajikistan from 19 to 24 February 2017 to discuss Tajikistan's implementation of Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014) and 2242 (2015). The discussions focused on legislation and judicial practice, counter-financing of terrorism, law enforcement, border control, international cooperation, and countering violent extremism that leads to terrorism, as well as on the role of women in countering terrorism and violent extremism and the need for rule-of-law-

strengthens
border control
efforts in the
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Union, UNODC,
and CTED
partner to
support Nigeria
to manage
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ICT4Peace and CTED continue to work on countering online presence of terrorist organizations

How can the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), including the Internet and social media, for terrorist purposes be effectively countered? This is the focus of a public-private capacity building project, launched in 2016 and led by the Swiss foundation ICT4Peace and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). In January and February 2017, ICT4Peace was invited by the UN in Geneva and New York, respectively, to share preliminary findings of the ongoing project.



Mr. Stauffacher with ICT4Peace briefing the Counter-Terrorism Committee on 23 February 2017.

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CTED presents first trends report - on the protection of critical infrastructure

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In a dedicated debate, the Security Council on 13 February 2017 called upon Member States to address the risk of terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure. Through its resolution 2341, adopted on the same date, the Council directs its Counter-Terrorism Committee, with the support of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), to examine Member States' efforts to protect critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks.

As a direct follow-up to this resolution, CTED has produced a first Trends Report - on the *Physical protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks*. Based on information gathered from partners in the Committee's Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network, the report is intended to bring to the attention of policymakers the analytical perspectives of academia and international and regional organizations. Prepared for informational purposes only, this work is also part of CTED's mandate stemming from Security Council resolution 2129 (2013), which requests CTED to identify emerging issues, trends, and developments, and to further engage and enhance its partnership with academia and other entities in conducting research and information-gathering. The report does not necessarily represent the views of the Committee or any of its members.

PHYSICAL PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AGAINST TERRORIST ATTACKS



CTED

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
COUNTER-TERRORISM COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE

The Trends Report is available [here](#).

your feedback!

If you have questions, comments or suggestions about the content of this newsletter, please feel free to contact the editor at cted@un.org.

Under pressure militarily, Da'esh encourages sympathizers outside conflict zones to perpetrate attacks, according to new report from the UN Secretary-General

As ISIL is militarily on the defensive in several regions, the terrorist organization that is also known as Da'esh continues to encourage its sympathizers outside conflict zones to perpetrate attacks. And despite shrinking revenue streams, the group still has sufficient funds to carry on fighting. These are among the key points from the Secretary-General's 4th report on The threat posed by ISIL/Da'esh to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat.



Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman briefed the Security Council on the report.

[Continue reading](#)

CTED facilitates national workshop on anti-money laundering and terrorist financing in Nepal

On 6-8 February 2017, the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) facilitated a national workshop for judges, prosecutors, and investigators in Nepal. Held in Kathmandu, the workshop focused on the National Judicial Academy's new manual on anti-money laundering and terrorist financing (AML-TF). The manual outlines recent amendments to Nepal's AML-TF legislation, and is the culmination of a multi-year project amongst the National Judicial Academy, CTED, and the Global



The Executive Director of the National Judicial Academy with the Head judge of the Special Anti-Money Laundering Court in Nepal with the new manual.

[Continue reading](#)

UN CTED and the Global Center publish joint publication on strengthening regional cooperation to prevent and counter violent extremism in South Asia

Based on over five years of dialogue and engagement with civil society actors in South Asia, the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the [Global Center on Cooperative Security](#), and the [Institute of South Asian Studies \(ISAS\)](#) at the National University of Singapore have jointly produced an assessment on *Strengthening regional cooperation to prevent and counter violent extremism in South Asia*.

Providing an overview of regional challenges and suggestions for how these can be remedied, the assessment captures key outcomes of a multiyear project involving civil society and experts. Also included is a set of recommendations that highlight practical ways in which multilateral and regional organizations and national governments can work with various stakeholders to address this threat to the region. The project was supported by CTED, the Global Center, and the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, with generous support from the Government of Norway.

The complete report is available [here](#).

ICAO TRIP Seminar strengthens border control efforts in the Caribbean

Representatives of 25 countries gathered in Antigua and Barbuda early February for the latest ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) Strategy Seminar.

Hosted by the Ministry of Public Utilities, Civil Aviation and Transportation of Antigua and Barbuda, the event's primary goal was to improve identity management and travel document security systems and processes.

ICAO Council President Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu delivered the opening address to the 180 government and industry seminar participants in attendance, acknowledging that global implementation of ICAO's related Security and Facilitation provisions must be augmented.



ICAO Council President Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu at the UN agency's Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) Seminar in Antigua and Barbuda.

[Continue reading](#)

The European Union, UNODC, and CTED partner to support Nigeria to manage individuals associated with Boko Haram

How can a country effectively prosecute, rehabilitate, and reintegrate former terrorists? This is a challenge for several Member States of the United Nations. In the case of Nigeria, it is most pressing with respect to persons associated with Boko Haram - be they suspects, offenders, or individuals who have surrendered. In response

to a request from the Nigerian Office of the National Security Advisor, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), with funding from the European Union, held high-level and technical consultations on this theme in Abuja from 13 to 15 December 2016.



Participants in the consultations in Abuja.

[Continue reading](#)

Reinforced cooperation between EAG and UN CTED

On 15 December 2016, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, and the Chairman of the Eurasian Group on combatting money-laundering and financing of terrorism (EAG) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Building up on the close strategic cooperation established in the past years, the cooperation between the two entities has now been brought to a new level. Conscious of the risk of terrorism and its financing in the world, the MoU establishes a strategic framework for partnership between the Parties with respect to countering the financing of terrorism in the EAG member States.



Yury Chikanchin, EAG, and Jean-Paul Laborde, CTED, after the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding.

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CTED Political Analysis and Research Digest

The Security Council, in its resolution 2129 (2013), asked CTED to “identify emerging issues, trends and developments related to resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014),” and to do so by enhancing its partnerships, among others, with research institutions, think-tanks, and academia. Most of the papers highlighted below have been published by members of the “CTED Global Counter-Terrorism Research

Network.” All information included in the PAR Weekly Research Digest is provided for information purposes only and does not necessarily constitute the views or opinions of CTED.

Forced out of Towns in the Sahel, Africa’s Jihadists Go Rural

International Crisis Group, January, 2017

- Jihadist groups have regrouped in the neglected hinterlands of Sahel countries and are launching attacks from them. To regain control of outlying districts, regional states must do far more to extend services and representation beyond recently recaptured provincial centres.
- Armed jihadist groups have developed a dangerous new strategy after being chased out of most major towns they once held in Africa’s Sahel, the vast expanse of arid, sparsely populated brushland that crosses the continent along the southern edge of the Sahara desert.
- Rather than trying to hold towns or urban districts, these groups - which include al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram, the Macina Liberation Front (FLM) and al-Murabitoun - are using bases in the countryside to strike at provincial and district centres, often forcing national armies to retreat and local state authorities to abandon immense rural areas to jihadist control.
- At the same time, increasing international support has inadvertently reinforced the historical tendency of Sahel countries - which include parts of Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Cameroon, Libya and Chad - to focus relatively more on the political centre and neglect their vast territorial hinterlands. [Unless these trends are reversed, efforts to minimise the threat from jihadist groups operating in this huge region will likely fail.](#)
- Setting aside, for the moment, their territorial ambitions, the jihadists have opted for a more discreet occupation of neglected rural areas. They are not alone. Other armed groups, including ethnic militias, self-defence groups, transnational criminal groups, armed bandits, renegades from national armies and even separatist and autonomist movements, are also emerging to fill the security vacuum left by central states. Not all are opposed to the state, but each of them tries to find a niche in a complex and shifting local network of alliances. Depending on local configurations of power and interests, these groups fight jihadist groups, simply ignore them to avoid trouble, or even make alliances with them.
- The jihadists are most successful at establishing themselves among rural communities that were only recently integrated into countries, have a weak attachment to the state and are poorly represented in parliament or local government. These include nomadic groups and communities living in border areas with supposedly doubtful loyalties, such as the Fulani nomads of Hayré, the Tolebe Fulani along the Mali-Niger border, communities living in the mountainous borders in the Gwoza Hills along the Nigeria-Cameroon border and

those in the Lake Chad marshes.

- However, jihadist attempts to consolidate a presence are not always successful. For example, Ansar Eddine failed to establish itself in southern Mali, on the border with Côte d'Ivoire. These areas were better integrated into the state through a solid network of elected representatives and chiefs than in central and northern rural areas, which enables Ivorian and Malian security services to arrest its members.
- Rather than being satisfied with retaking control of towns, Sahelian governments and their partners must reflect on how best to respond to the new strategies used by the jihadists to establish themselves in rural areas and extend their influence. Governments must invest in neglected rural zones and communities that feel marginalised.
- A single response or general strategy is inadequate when faced with determined groups that are constantly adapting their own strategy. The regional grand strategies formulated for the Sahel as a whole must be adapted to local circumstances. It is imperative for governments to reconstruct their capacities to protect population groups, to peacefully regulate tensions around access to natural resources and to limit local elite corruption and capture of state resources.

Lone-Actor and Small Cell Terrorist Attacks: A New Front in Counter-Terrorist Finance?

RUSI, January 2017

- Efforts to disrupt the funding of Daesh have taken up a significant amount of the time and resources of policymakers, law enforcement and the military. These efforts have also involved mobilising the private sector, particularly banks, oil companies and antiquities dealers. However, little attention has been paid to understanding and addressing the financing associated with the plots (whether successful, failed or disrupted) of lone actors and small cells that have acted beyond Daesh-controlled territory.
- This paper seeks to provide insight into the financing connected with a sample of 63 lone-actor and small cell terrorist plots in Great Britain and France since 2000, including those that are religiously inspired, right wing, nationalist, and single issue. The aim is to inform thinking and raise awareness among those charged with tackling this threat. The report also draws on a similar study by Australia's financial intelligence unit, AUSTRAC, thereby providing an overview of lone-actor and small cell terrorist finance from the perspective of three countries, each with individual and distinct experiences.
- What is clear from both studies is that the simplicity and spontaneity of these attacks, particularly those attempted by a lone assailant as opposed to a dyad or triad, means that assailants are often able to make use of their own funding resources, offering limited opportunities for traditional counter-terrorist

financing (CTF) approaches to reveal financial indications of plans prior to their execution. Despite this challenge, the research conducted for this paper has highlighted a number of key themes that it is hoped can contribute to the approaches taken by law enforcement and security authorities as they adapt their CTF response to the evolving threat posed by such terrorists.

- While there has been an undoubted need to focus on disrupting the significant financing accrued by Daesh over the past two years, a comprehensive CTF strategy should not lose sight of the fact that lone actors and small cells operating at home present a considerably more immediate threat to citizens than Daesh, given that the latter mainly operates in Iraq and Syria.
- Although it has traditionally been the case in many countries that terrorist financing has been addressed separately from broader financial crime, the increasing intersection of lone actors and small cells with low-level criminality suggests that this separation needs to be reconsidered. Investigations need to at least acknowledge this emerging connection and create dedicated inter-agency links to combat it.
- Attacks undertaken with knives have certainly resulted in casualties; however, the use of firearms (particularly automatic weapons) has resulted in casualties on a far greater scale. As such, increased focus should be placed on identifying and disrupting financial flows related to the trade in illicit firearms.
- Information about the financial tools employed by lone actors and small cells must be more widely disseminated to raise awareness among those agencies and actors - in both the public and private sectors - who are less familiar with terrorist financing techniques. These might include certain types of retailer, payday lenders and student loan companies, as well as online payment systems that may increasingly be the target of terrorist-related fraud. Closer monitoring of the welfare system is also advised, in light of cases identified where benefits were used to fund terrorist plots.
- The financial patterns of lone actors and small cell operators are often indistinguishable from legitimate financial behaviour, and proactive identification of these individuals through financial reporting remains challenging. National financial intelligence units must therefore act as a critical bridge between national security and law enforcement agencies (that identify subjects of interest via non-financial means) and the private sector, to allow financial institutions to conduct more targeted monitoring.

The Myth of Homegrown Terrorism

Georgetown Security Studies Review, March 2017

- Fluid and networked organization will be characteristics of the next phase of the jihadist adaptation process. Well-trodden routes for illegal migration managed by people smugglers exist that link Africa and Asia to Europe, by land and sea. In the west, it goes to Spain from the country's North African enclaves,

Ceuta and Melilla. Italy can be reached by boat from Libya, and in the east Greece is accessed from small towns and beaches in Lebanon and southern Turkey.

- A land route to Western and Central Europe, meanwhile, goes through the Balkans. Members of the Franco-Belgian network were apprehended in Turkey, Greece, Italy, the Balkans, Germany, and Hungary. Refugees are not terrorists, but ISIS operatives have been hiding in refugee centers and come to Europe through the routes carved out by illegal immigration. Screening procedures at airports have effectively closed airports to suspected terrorists. If the jihadist cannot travel by air, they will travel by car or by boat. The road from the Islamic State and other points in Asia to Europe often goes through the Balkans.
- Three states, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, and Kosovo, feature as important gatekeeper countries. With an estimated 1,000 foreign fighters who have joined either al-Qa'ida affiliates or ISIS, the region has the highest concentration of ISIS fighters in Europe. Hundreds of Bosnian and Albanian foreign fighters have come also from diaspora communities in Western and Northern Europe. Many of the foreign fighters from Bosnia, Kosovo, or Albania have previously lived in Western Europe or have cousins living there. The infrastructure for the further expansion of a jihadist presence is in place.
- Two, if not three, possible outcomes present themselves for what will happen if ISIS is thrown out of Syria and Iraq: (1) Local fighters will return to the area; while challenging, dealing with them is more of a local police matter. (2) The Balkans will be used by the terrorist networks as a place to cultivate connections with smuggling networks and a safe-zone for transiting to battleground elsewhere, particularly in Western and Northern Europe. (3) In a worst-case scenario, Bosnia and Albania may become a new jihadist battleground.
- The first two options are not mutually exclusive and would become a new challenge to Europe's security if left alone. Mergers and acquisitions between terrorist networks and the Balkan criminal networks provide the jihadists with access to lucrative illicit businesses and opportunities for the transport of operatives from Asia to Europe and back. The acquisition of criminal networks specializing in counterfeit documents, arms smuggling, and the smuggling of drugs and people is a logical adaptation to increased border controls and heightened efforts to police travel. A sensational report emerged in October 2016 that ISIS had taken over—by purchase—the Mafia's drug production in Albania and had started to flood the United Kingdom with cannabis produced on its farms there.
- If accurate, ISIS entry into the Albanian drug trade is indicative of a shift to retail-level involvement in the drug trade that has not been seen previously. It follows on ISIS's entry into other illegal crime rings: counterfeit passports, people smuggling, and illegal trade in guns. Affiliates of al-Qa'ida have for some time developed similar operations in North Africa fueling smuggling networks stretching from Western Africa to Northern Europe.
- The social and political situation in the Balkan mini-states has become more hospitable to exploitation by the jihadists. Jurisdictional fragmentation

combined with the presence of a significant number of extremist communities that are, for better or worse, self-policing present a special opportunity for the relocation of foreign fighters exiting the insurgency in Syria and Iraq. Reports about Burhan Seferi, a Macedonian Albanian who is wanted for ISIS-related prosecution in Macedonia but allowed sanctuary in Kosovo, are illustrative. Macedonia is ethnically Slavic and Greek Orthodox, whereas Kosovo is ethnically Albanian and Muslim.

- In Bosnia, focus has been on the so-called *paradzemats*, communities that reject the official Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina and insist on living under their own religious authorities. These so-called “black flag” villages—villages that fly the flag of jihad—are a local worry. Some are abandoned villages that have been bought up by Salafist financiers. Local newspapers reported earlier this year that 108 companies acted as intermediaries for Kuwaitis and other Arabs purchasing land for religious communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Why “Amnesty” Should Not Be Considered for Returning Foreign Fighters: A Response to Wells and Gurski

ICCT - The Hague, January 2017

- As the military defeat of IS in the Levant is becoming a more tangible reality and the number of [foreign fighters returning to their countries of origin is surpassing that of those leaving](#), governments are faced with the question of what to do with potentially dangerous returned and returning foreign fighters. Several articles, including ones penned by [David Wells](#) and [Phil Gurski](#), have explored the option of granting amnesty to those returning. Such a plea-bargaining deal (or what the authors sometimes interchangeably and mistakenly refer to as “amnesty”), the argument in favour goes, would serve the purpose of [“reliably incarcerating returned foreign fighters, reducing the short-term threat that they pose”](#).
- There is much to be said about rethinking our approach to tackling the phenomenon of returning foreign fighters, and to look for pragmatic solutions to the threat both from home and abroad. However, there are myriad practical reasons why such a scheme is not the answer to such a quest. To name just four:
 - Why would individuals buy into a plea-bargain scheme, especially considering that evidence and therefore a conviction is notoriously difficult to achieve? Why would fully radicalised individuals strike a deal with a (legal) system they fundamentally reject? If there is anything to learn from experiences of voluntary de-radicalisation or exit centres in the context of foreign fighters, the uptake by individuals is low.
 - What would such a scheme mean for individuals in conflict zones - how would they return to their home countries through current large-scale, international

military operations against so-called Islamic State strongholds, through “enemy lines” and across borders? If a person manages to indicate from abroad that s/he would like to take advantage of the plea-bargain deal, it is in the current context of Syria and Iraq extremely unlikely (and perhaps even undesirable) that governments could facilitate their return, given legal, moral and practical obstacles.

- Not least due to [United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178](#), states have criminalised foreign fighter-related acts and increasingly included in their prosecutorial repertoire preparatory and supporting crimes, often with minimum sentences and frequently handing out lengthy and harsh punishments, at times even explicitly to “[send a message](#)” to [would-be foreign fighters](#). Settling for shorter sentences during plea-bargaining procedures is in contradiction with the increased criminalisation of terrorism-related offences.
- The concept of plea-bargaining is available in some jurisdictions such as the US, but cannot easily be applied in other jurisdictions where the involvement of a judge is necessary for any determination of guilt and subsequent sentencing considerations. And even if a plea-bargaining type approach is possible, what crimes would such a provision be applicable to and under what circumstances? To introduce such a concept would require careful and lengthy considerations, rather than being a pragmatic “quick fix”.
- And there is an additional factor to be taken into account before applying a plea-bargaining scheme to returning foreign fighters. Empirical research as well as a wealth of anecdotal evidence over the past 4+ years of the foreign fighter phenomenon in Syria and Iraq (but also [elsewhere](#) and [well before the post-2012 wave of foreign fighter travel](#)) has made clear that the motivations of individuals for travelling abroad: (a) differ from person to person; (b) have changed over the course of the conflict (in the early months of the civil war, humanitarian reasons were the main reasons, but with increased propaganda and the proclamation of the caliphate, motivations arguably became more extreme); and (c) do not stay linear for individuals from the time of departure, to their stay in the conflict zone and upon return (some become disillusioned; others more radicalised).
- Any approach to dealing with this phenomenon needs to take these factors into account: A battle-hardened fighter who committed heinous (international) crimes cannot be treated the same as a child who was taken to the conflict by their parents; a returned disillusioned individual needs a different approach than someone having planned an attack. Therefore a “blanket” plea-bargain scheme available to all returning foreign fighters is not only an unpopular and difficult-to-attain approach in the eye of public opinion as both Wells and Gurski emphasise, but also an undesirable, ineffective and unsafe tactic.
- Instead, an individualised approach and thorough assessments of the security risk as well as the level and nature of involvement in violent extremism needs to be made. For example, diversion programmes may be a valuable option especially for [juveniles](#) who in many jurisdictions are to receive some level of rehabilitative measures instead of judicial proceedings.
- Most importantly, however, any measure should be focussed not only on

containing the immediate security risk but should be aimed at long-term outcomes. The concept of “amnesty” evokes, or at least should evoke, thoughts of “DDR” – disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, or, to very loosely equate the concept with CVE terms: Disengagement, De-radicalisation and Reintegration. A process focussed on tackling the foreign fighters phenomenon needs to take these aspects into account: changing the behaviour and thinking of foreign fighters and supporting their successful reintegration into society.

ISIS' 'Khorasan Province,' Two Years On

Centre on Religion and Geopolitics, January, 2017

- 2014 had been a year of promise for Afghanistan. Peace talks between the Taliban and Pakistan were underway, the US-led coalition ended its official combat mission at the end of the year, and the country had its first ever democratic transfer of power. Then, after months of rumors about the group's emerging presence in Afghanistan, on January 26, 2015, Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, ISIS' now-deceased spokesperson, [announced an "expansion" of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's "caliphate"](#) into the "lands of Khorasan." A term from Islamic history that encompasses a swathe of South and Central Asia, "Khorasan Province" would come to refer to ISIS operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- 2015 stood in contrast to the year that had gone before. Militant violence escalated rapidly; Afghanistan saw more deaths from terrorism in 2015 than ever before in the country, with around 800 more casualties than in the previous year. Experts debate whether the "ISIS effect" was a symptom or cause of rapidly worsening violence. On one level, ISIS remained a marginal threat, with the Afghan insurgency still [Taliban](#)-dominated. The 2015 UN Assistance Mission Report attributed 82 civilian casualties to ISIS-affiliated commanders, but more than 4,000 to the Taliban.
- However, [ISIS'](#) rise undoubtedly played a role as a catalyst for the commencement of a "race to the bottom" between militants, as the Taliban's monopoly on anti-state violence diminished. The Taliban perhaps could have refashioned itself as a "moderate" alternative to ISIS brutality. Instead it doubled down, launching renewed attacks under sustained pressure, culminating in the brief capture of the city of Kunduz in September 2015.
- President Ashraf Ghani has said that Afghanistan would be ISIS' "graveyard," wishfully adding the group to the lengthy list of failed ventures by outside invaders. But two years on, where does the group stand today? Data from the Center on Religion and Geopolitics' [Global Extremism Monitor](#) for the last quarter of 2016 shows that attacks instigated by ISIS resulted in at least 94 deaths, the great majority of these civilians. But the group also suffered heavy losses – reporting shows that state counter-actions killed at least 497 ISIS-affiliated militants during the period.
- Under renewed pressure, 2016 saw the group expand its range, as it shifted to

insurgency tactics rather than full-fledged militancy. Operations have also been reported around the country, far from the group's heartlands on the Pakistani border. An active cell in Kabul has claimed more than a dozen attacks, while local officials have even alleged ISIS activities as far afield as Ghor province, in the country's west.

- ISIS in Afghanistan has few allies, and has managed to present a unifying threat, bringing together unlikely partners and traditional rivals. In particular, the landscape has been changed through increased political engagement by Iran and Russia with the Taliban, over their common ISIS enemy. Russia in particular fears a growing support base for the group in [Central Asia](#), a region firmly within Moscow's sphere of influence, and which has seen thousands of fighters travel to Iraq and [Syria](#).
- ISIS propaganda has shown remarkable adeptness in shifting its narratives to capitalise on potential advantageous geopolitical developments. While its presence in Afghanistan remains small, the lessons of al-Qaeda's resilience in the country, despite the presence of an international counter-insurgency operation, must be heeded. ISIS operations and output in Afghanistan are bolstered by the fact that they are largely unlinked from central command, as its success does not hinge on the fate of the "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria.

Globalization of the Jihadist Threat: Case Study of Trinidad and Tobago

Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, February 2017

- Despite a well-integrated Muslim population, and an environment where there is no tangible discrimination or lack of opportunity, the Jihadist ideology has succeeded in taking root in Trinidad. Links with organized crime have helped fuel the movement and strong links have been forged with ISIS and Al-Qaeda with the result that at least 89 Trinidadians are now in Syria. It is also argued that some Trinidadian Muslims have succumbed to the messages broadcast by ISIS and that the lure of fighting for an Islamic Caliphate has found resonance.
- *"You now have a golden opportunity to do something that many of us here wish we could do right now. You have the ability to terrify the disbelievers in their own homes and make their streets run with their blood... terrorise the disbelievers and make them feel fear everywhere, even in their own bedrooms. Due to their mere disbelief, their blood by default is lawful to spill".* These words of Abu Sa'd at-Trinidad—*an Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighter of Trinidadian extraction*—in issue 15 of Dabiq, the glossy online propaganda magazine of ISIS, sent shudders through the population of Trinidad & Tobago.
- These words, in a vitriol-laced interview, were aimed at spreading fear among the island nation's overwhelmingly non-Muslim population. This was the first time that ISIS used one of its Trinidadian fighters to exhort his co-religionists in Trinidad to commit acts of violence against non-Muslims. At-Trinidad, also

known as Asadullah, is suspected of being one Shane Dominic Crawford. His terrifying message came shortly after it was revealed that nine Trinidadian nationals had been detained in Turkey for trying to infiltrate Syria to fight alongside ISIS.

- Earlier, in January 2016, the Trinidad and Tobago Express, citing a Turkish report reported that four Trinidad and Tobago nationals were being held in Turkey for fighting for ISIS. This was the latest in a steady stream of frightening reports emanating from a country far removed geographically, culturally and politically from the turmoil of the Middle East, that underscored the aggressive, proactive and increasingly successful global Jihadi recruitment effort.
- The case of Trinidad and Tobago makes for an interesting study, as on the face of it, a well-integrated Muslim population, a strong welfare state and the absence of political persecution on any religious or racial basis should not be a fertile recruiting ground for Jihadist ideology. However, the converse is most certainly the case, as not only is there a growing attraction for such extremist causes, but the numbers of Trinidadian nationals willing to fight for ISIS are also increasing. What is happening in Trinidad is symptomatic of a broader problem, as Jihadi groups have widened their reach to the extent that even apparently unconnected groups can now ally with the ideology, and the resource bases of better known groups without formally being part of them.
- It is submitted that the case of Trinidad and Tobago demonstrates how even at such a distance, Jihadi propaganda can find recruits and foment disaffection even where no local cause exists. In addition, it demonstrates the allure of the ISIS concept of a proto-state. Trinidad's situation further illustrates how a state with good internal and external communications, but with porous borders, renders itself peculiarly vulnerable to the ideological influence of terror groups, alliances with local groups and the movement of resources and personnel. In addition, given the number of potential targets for terror strikes in Trinidad, the nexus between terror groups owing allegiance to a common cause, and inspired by ISIS, is sowing the seeds for potential problems in the years to come.
- Given the relatively small size—actual and relative—of the Muslim population in Trinidad, there is little chance that the country would be turned into an Islamic state. However, this does not mean that the country cannot be used as a base of operations for radical groups to target Western countries and interests. As has been pointed out, the relative ease of movement enjoyed by Trinidadians and its geographical location make it very attractive for that purpose. In addition, the ability of ISIS to inspire lone-wolf attacks could lead to similar incidents taking place in Trinidad.
- A greater concern is that as the boundary between criminal gang and extremist group is blurred in Trinidad, the growing influence of such groups erodes the state, allowing extremist ideology to flourish unchecked. It is suggested that given the aforementioned commonality of socio-economic factors between Trinidad's ISIS recruits and its urban criminal gangs, efforts to combat the latter will have an impact on the former. In this regard the failure of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) and Trinidad's Strategic Services Agency (SSA) to

deal effectively with criminal gangs has a direct impact on its ability to contain the ISIS threat.

- Trinidad is handicapped by the lack of a coherent policy on how to combat this increasing radicalization, or to treat with those who have already been radicalized. The repatriation and rehabilitation of captured Trinidadian ISIS fighters is currently in political limbo. The pressures from radical elements to bring these people home are clashing with the societal fear of them and a complete lack of confidence in the state to either keep these elements under surveillance or de-radicalize them. Moderate Muslims have not been afraid to speak out against extremism, but their voices have as yet not proved effective as a counterweight to the extremist message.
- There is no coordination of effort or state-level involvement and this has severely hampered any efforts to create an effective counter-narrative. Part of this is due to the sensitivities of the Trinidadian government with respect to interfering in any aspect of religion; the other part is that this is a problem unlike any faced by Trinidad's Islamic community to date. Easy answers do not present themselves and it is unclear whether solutions are being actively worked on. Nonetheless, Trinidad cannot afford to fail in its efforts to halt the increasing radicalization of a section of its Muslim population. Having had one violent experience in 1990, a clear direction and commitment is needed to prevent a possible repetition, and halt the growing influence of extremist groups and the erosion of the state that will inevitably follow.

How al-Qaeda Will Benefit From Islamic State's 'Greater Sahara Province'

Jamestown Foundation, January 2017

- Under increasing pressure in Syria and Iraq, as well as in Libya, Islamic State (IS) is activating and reorganizing its networks elsewhere, observably in Europe and Turkey, and, less conspicuously, in West Africa.
- On October 30, 2016, IS confirmed via its Amaq news agency that it had recognized a militant faction led by Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, a former Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) and al-Murabitun commander, releasing a video of al-Sahrawi and 40 of his fighters giving the pledge of allegiance, or *baya*, to IS leader Abubakr al-Baghdadi.
- Although this did not receive the same level of fanfare in IS circles as the pledge Boko Haram made in March 2015, IS ensured its followers were made aware of al-Sahrawi's pledge. The mentions were brief, but the 53rd edition of Islamic State's *al-Naba* newsletter and the 3rd issue of IS' multilingual magazine, *Rumiyah*, both hailed the integration of al-Sahrawi's faction of al-Murabitun into the "Islamic Caliphate.
- IS' recognition of al-Sahrawi's faction will likely lead to competition with AQIM and its network of branches (Sahara Branch); allies (Belmokhtar, Katibat Uqba

ibn Nafi); sub-affiliates (Ansar Dine); and front groups (Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia and Macina Liberation Front (MLF)) in the broader Sahel region.

- Indeed, AQIM already appears set to encroach on al-Sahrawi's main area of operations in Burkina Faso, which had limited experience of jihadist attacks until AQIM's large-scale hotel and café attacks in Ouagadougou in January 2016. These had been preceded by similar attacks by AQIM on hotels in Bamako and near Abidjan in late 2015.
- AQIM's most recent front group, Ansaroul Islam, is based in Burkina Faso, and reportedly is a sub-group of the Malian MLF which, like MLF, exploits historical Fulani jihadist narratives to recruit among Fulanis on the Burkina side of the Mali border (menastream.com, January 3). If Ansaroul Islam takes after the MLF, it will have the grassroots networks and intelligence to be able to eliminate local clan, tribal and government officials who oppose AQIM and jihadist preaching more generally.
- Despite IS' recognition for al-Sahrawi, and its promotion of al-Barnawi to lead West Africa Province, AQIM remains a greater threat to West Africa than IS. AQIM has carried out the higher profile attacks and has the deepest-rooted insurgency in the region in Mali (Shekau's faction of Boko Haram is also deep-rooted in Nigeria but left IS in August 2016). AQIM also continues to maintain its cadre of core leaders in the Sahel and North Africa and is making significant efforts to respond to interest in IS from among its foot soldiers.
- AQIM can also count on the support of the global al-Qaeda affiliates, which have stayed loyal to al-Qaeda throughout the rise (and now decline) of the IS Caliphate project. But, perhaps most importantly, AQIM has a well-developed and multi-layered insurgency structure in West Africa that can withstand the limited expansion of IS in the region. AQIM may even benefit from the insecurity brought to the region by al-Sahrawi, as it further exhausts national security forces and creates a greater market for jihadism in West Africa from which AQIM can pull new recruits.

Sub-Saharan Africa's Three "New" Islamic State Affiliates

Combating Terrorism Center, January 2017

- While recent news on the Islamic State centers on the siege of Mosul in Iraq, the group's ideological hold in sub-Saharan Africa has been quietly growing, and not simply in relation to its well-known merger with Boko Haram. Indeed, over the past year-plus, three new Islamic State affiliates have gained prominence in sub-Saharan Africa. In West Africa, the group known as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) has gained prominence with a string of deadly attacks in September and October 2016.
- Simultaneously, across the continent, in the semi-autonomous northern Somali stretch of Puntland, a group known as the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) was recently the first Islamic State affiliate to hold territory in that county, while

further south, another Islamic State affiliate known as the Islamic State in Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda (ISISSKTU) has raised concerns.

- The story of ISGS begins with the merging of two other jihadi groups: the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and the Masked Men Brigade, which created a third group, al-Mourabitoun, in August 2013 under the leadership of Mokhtar Belmokhtar. In the last quarter of 2016, it carried out three notable attacks near the borders of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali.
- The second relatively new Islamic State affiliate in sub-Saharan Africa is known as Abnaa ul-Calipha also known as the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS). The group, which emerged in 2015 when it broke away from al-Shabaab, is led by Abdulqadir Mumin.
- Operationally, ISS has arguably been the most powerful of the new Islamic State affiliates in sub-Saharan Africa. On October 26, 2016, approximately 50 members of ISS seized the port town of Qandala in the Bari region of Puntland, making the town the first territory the Islamic State has held inside Somalia. This was particularly worrisome as Qandala's location would have given the group port access on the Gulf of Aden and potentially afforded it proximity to linkages with Yemen. As of late December 2016, however, Qandala is reported to have completely fallen to Somali maritime forces. Regardless, ISS's holding of the town, even for a short time, could be interpreted as an important symbolic victory for the group.
- The third important, and even newer, Islamic State-affiliated group in sub-Saharan Africa is Jahba East Africa, which is also known as the Islamic State in Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda (ISISSKTU). Like the Islamic State in Somalia, ISISSKTU is a splinter group of al-Shabaab. Jahba East Africa was reportedly initiated by Mohamed Abdi Ali a medical intern from Kenya who, along with his wife, was subsequently arrested in May 2016 for plotting to spread anthrax in Kenya to match the scale of destruction of the 2013 Westgate Mall attacks.
- ISISSKTU is thought to contain elements of al-Shabaab that were once described as that group's "foreign fighters." Like the Islamic State, Jahba East Africa emerged when fighters previously loyal to al-Shabaab sought to realign with the Islamic State. Jahba East Africa pledged *bay`a* to the Islamic State on April 8, 2016. To date, al-Baghdadi has not yet accepted.
- All three demonstrate some degree of commonality. First, each emerged as breakaway groups when the leadership of their predecessor groups decided to remain loyal to al-Qa`ida. Moreover, all three groups emerged around the same time, in mid-2015, just as the Islamic State was exhibiting the height of its power. Third, none of the groups are particularly large, nor are they very well-understood.
- Yet, there are indeed notable differences between the three Saharan and sub-Saharan African Islamic State affiliates. For one, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara might be thought to be slightly more institutionalized than those Islamic State affiliates in the East African region. This is the case for two reasons. First, it is the only one of the "new" Islamic State affiliates whose *bay`a* to the Islamic State has actually been acknowledged.

- Second, ISGS is the only one of these groups to have carried out multiple attacks. It is important to recall, however, that the Islamic State in Somalia is the only group to have held occupied (i.e. not desert) territory in the form of the town of Qandala—even though, as of this writing, it does not currently hold it—a fact that might encourage the Islamic State to accept its *bay`a* soon.
- It is important to remember that despite the outcropping of these three “new” Islamic State-affiliated groups, none really rivals the major al-Qa`ida-aligned affiliates on the continent, which dominate in terms of number of groups, number of adherents per group, and length of time in operational area. Nor do such groups present any real challenges to either of the Islamic State-aligned Boko Haram factions. Nevertheless, with the uncertain future of the Islamic State globally, observers should stay vigilant about the current and future activities of these three new Islamic State affiliates, whose presence and activities seems likely to grow, at least in the short term.

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