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EXECUTIVES’ VIEW
COUNTERTERRORISM DIGEST
19-25 January 2017

HIGHLIGHTS

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2 NEW YORK: USPER Akhror Saidakhmetov, 21, pleaded guilty to conspiring to provide material support to ISIL. Prosecutors stated he was committed to joining ISIL or conducting a domestic terror attack if unable to travel to Syria. [pg. 5]

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SPOTLIGHT SUMMARY

PROMISES OF PARADISE—ISIL PROPAGANDA TARGETING WOMEN: A recent report published by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) identifies seven promises ISIL makes to women in its official propaganda. The author argues these promises can help understand the incentives motivating women to migrate, thereby providing the means to devise better measures to counter radicalization of women. (ICCT)
Promises of Paradise: ISIL Propaganda Towards Women

In a December 2016 International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)-The Hague report titled Promises of Paradise? – A Study on Official ISIS-Propaganda Targeting Women, ICCT highlights seven promises ISIL makes to women in its official propaganda. The author argues these promises can help identify the incentives motivating women to migrate, thereby providing the means to devise better measures to counter radicalization of women to ISIL.

Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, more than 30,000 individuals travelled to the area of the Levant with the purpose of joining ISIL. About 5,000 of these foreign fighters originate from Europe, where nations such as Belgium, France, Sweden, and the UK stand out as source countries that provide comparatively large numbers of fighters to the terrorist organization. ICCT noted, although women becoming involved in violent extremist groups is not a new phenomenon, the numbers now observed are exceptionally high. Around 20 percent of the foreign fighter population stemming from Europe consists of women. This means approximately 1,000 women, some with their children, chose to migrate to areas controlled by ISIL in search of a new and very different life.

Seven Promises ISIL Makes to Women

- According to the report, official ISIL propaganda promises women the possibility to fulfill the religious duty which will take them to paradise in this life as well as in the afterlife. Hijra, migration to ISIL, is presented as an opportunity for a better life. ISIL propaganda also states women wearing religious clothing can escape the suspicious glances commonly experienced in the West and live a life in line with God’s wishes. By so doing, women can secure a bright future brimming with possibilities.

- Further, official ISIL propaganda promises women a central role in the state-building process of the caliphate. Here, women have three vital functions. They become esteemed wives of brave and righteous warriors whom only they can support with their strength and courage, and by carrying out domestic chores and praying. Women are also key in their role as mothers of ISIL’s next generation, through which they secure the establishment and long-term survival of the state. Women can also, through studies in medicine or pedagogy, contribute to the caliphate. This education and training is advertised as being free of charge. The same applies to books, housing, food, kindergarten and healthcare. In addition, those who do especially well in their studies are promised economic rewards for their hard work.
According to official propaganda, by joining ISIL women also get to experience a deep and meaningful sense of belonging. The material repeatedly states all people living in ISIL territory are treated as equals, regardless of skin color, nationality, or ethnicity. In the caliphate, American women and Iraqi women are sisters, and women of color are just as valued as their white sisters. Their religious affiliation makes them equals in the land of Islam, and ISIL is portrayed as a utopian society, free from discrimination.

Women living in territory controlled by ISIL also experience a sense of sisterhood framed as a deep and genuine friendship exceeding bloodlines. An example presented in official propaganda is polygyny, where up to four women share the same husband in a sisterly spirit. Through such practices, all women, including widows who have lost their husbands in the war against the Syrian regime and the anti-ISIL coalition, are guaranteed security, honor, and dignity.

Women who choose to join ISIL are also promised an exciting adventure. Here, the journey to territory controlled by ISIL is highlighted as an opportunity to experience something remarkable. Stories are recounted of women who meet each other along the course of their journey. Placing one’s foot on Caliphate soil is portrayed as something extraordinary. Only the most courageous and brave carry out this duty, and the propaganda challenges women, telling cowards to remain in the West.

Promises of deep and passionate romance are also found in official propaganda originating from ISIL. ISIL’s Dabiq magazine frequently displayed young, good-looking strong men as true believers. Women joining the terrorist organization could look forward to meeting these righteous men. Those living in the West with men who are unfaithful to God were called on to abandon them for ISIL. Those who do so are told they could expect abundant rewards. Recompenses are promised in this life as well as in the afterlife. A martyr’s widow living in the caliphate achieves the highest honor of all.

Finally, women who join ISIL are promised increased influence in the internal politics of ISIL as well as in international politics. Boosted influence is gained by subjugating women of other faiths. A commonly used example is that of Yazidi women. Power is said to be guaranteed through the enslavement of such groups, and the final victory is said to be guaranteed as God promised it.

This report concluded women who gain limited knowledge of handling weapons and explosives in ISIL-territory are not probable participants in armed terrorist attacks directed towards the West. However, through increased social networks acquired while in Syria or Iraq, women may play an important supporting role in the process of planning, crowd funding, and executing attacks. (ICCT)
1. **NEW YORK: Man Pleads Guilty to Terrorism**

On 19 January, USPER Akhror Saidakhmetov, 21, pleaded guilty to conspiring to provide material support to ISIL. Prosecutors stated he was committed to traveling to Syria to join ISIL or to conducting a domestic terror attack if unable to travel to Syria.

- Saidakhmetov was arrested on a Kennedy Airport jetway with a ticket to Turkey. Saidakhmetov and co-defendant USPER Abdurasul Juraboev were arrested following online and in-person conversations with an informant about terrorism. He is one of six alleged ISIL supporters charged in connected cases. ([NEWSDAY](#))

2. **WASHINGTON: ISIL Supporter Sentenced to Six Years**

On 20 January, USPER Daniel Seth Franey, a.k.a. Abu Dawuud, was sentenced in federal court in Tacoma, Washington, to six years in prison for illegally possessing firearms and expressing a desire to attack the police or US military personnel out of allegiance to ISIL.

- In February 2016, Franey was arrested following an undercover investigation during which he repeatedly violated a permanent protection order prohibiting him from possessing firearms.
- “This defendant espoused his jihadist ideology and talked about his desire to kill police and military officers with nearly everyone he met,” said US Attorney Annette Hayes. “His talk turned to action when he tried repeatedly to obtain high-powered weapons and ammunition, and identified a target for his attack. This sentence will protect the public from this defendant who remains dangerous.”
- According to the plea agreement and other records, Franey handled several guns—including fully automatic machine guns—several times last fall while acknowledging he was prohibited from doing so. ([AP](#))

3. **CALIFORNIA: Wife of Orlando Nightclub Shooter Pleads Not Guilty**

On 19 January, USPER Noor Salman, the wife of deceased Orlando, Florida, nightclub shooter Omar Mateen, pleaded not guilty to two federal charges. Salman was charged with providing material support to ISIL and obstruction of justice for allegedly knowing about Mateen’s plan to kill people at the nightclub.

- Investigators stated the information Salman provided seemed contradictory, as she said, “she didn’t know that the attack was coming, but also told authorities that she tried to talk [Mateen] out of the attack.” Salman also told investigators she was with Mateen when he purchased the ammunition the week prior to the shootings, and joined him at the Pulse club prior to the attack. ([NPR](#))

4. **UNITED STATES: Government Designates Neil Christopher Prakash and Khaled Sharrouf**

On 10 January, the US Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control designated AUSPER Neil Christopher Prakash and AUSPER Khaled Sharrouf as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. US persons are prohibited from engaging in transactions or dealings with Prakash and Sharrouf, and any property or interests the men have in the US are frozen.

- Prakash served as a top ISIL recruiter who facilitated the travel of new recruits, appeared in high-profile ISIL recruitment videos, and was named in a list of key contacts for aspiring ISIL foreign fighters. In June 2015, the Australian Government designated Prakash domestically for terrorism. Prakash was arrested in late 2016.

* The charges listed are currently allegations. As in any criminal case, the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.
■ Sharrouf is a Syria and Iraq-based ISIL member involved in propaganda distribution and conducting executions on behalf of ISIL. In August 2014, the Australian Government issued a warrant for Sharrouf’s arrest, noting he was one of the most notorious Australians fighting with ISIL. In 2008, Sharrouf was jailed for a plot to attack a nuclear reactor in Sydney, Australia. (TREASURY)

5 UNITED STATES: Government Designates Bachrumsyah Mennor Usman and Oman Rochman

On 10 January, the US Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control designated Bachrumsyah Mennor Usman and Oman Rochman as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. US persons are prohibited from engaging in transactions or dealings with Usman and Rochman, and any property or interests the men have in the US are frozen.

■ Usman is an ISIL official commanding ISIL fighters, facilitating funding for ISIL operations in Indonesia, recruiting for ISIL, and coordinating travel and communications for ISIL members. Usman pledged allegiance to ISIL as of mid-2014, and in September 2014 was identified as ISIL’s Archipelago Group leader.

■ Rochman was imprisoned in Indonesia in December 2010 and sentenced to nine years in prison. As of February 2016, while incarcerated, he recruited prospective militants to join ISIL and likely communicated with ISIL leaders in Syria. In August 2014, he was identified as a key figure spreading ISIL’s ideology in Indonesia by translating ISIL writings and distributing them through Islamic studies groups and social media. Rochman served as Indonesia’s main translator for ISIL and required Indonesian violent extremists desiring to join ISIL to obtain a recommendation from him before departing for Syria. (TREASURY)

■ The designations aim to cut off ISIL’s access to the international financial system and support the coalition’s efforts to disrupt ISIL’s finances and defeat the group.

6 BELGIUM: Court Convicts Group for Falsifying Documents Used by ISIL

On 19 January, a Belgian court convicted 14 people of falsifying documents used by ISIL in attacks in Paris and Brussels.

■ The group created approximately 2,000 documents—including Belgian, Spanish and Danish identity cards—and delivered them all over Europe.

■ Their sentences range from three to eight years. (REUTERS)

■ The documents were used by terrorists such as Salah Abdeslam after the Paris attacks in November 2015, and Najim Laachraoui who conducted a suicide attack a Brussels Airport in March 2016. (REUTERS)

7 FRANCE: ISIL Recruiter Transferred to France

On 21 January, French citizen and suspected ISIL member Kevin Guiavarch, 24, was charged with terrorist offenses and remanded in custody after being transferred from Turkey to France. He was the subject of an international arrest warrant and charged with association with a criminal terrorist organization and financing terrorism. He was suspected of being one of the top ISIL recruiters attracting French people to join ISIL in Syria and Iraq.

■ Guiavarch left Syria in June 2016 with his four French wives and six children, and went to Turkey where they were arrested. He reportedly spent four years in Syria amongst terrorists, initially with Fateh al-Sham and then ISIL. (AFP)

8 AUSTRIA/GERMANY: Police Arrest Suspects Planning Imminent Attack

On 20 January, Austrian special forces arrested Austrian citizen and suspected terrorist Lorenz K., 17, in Vienna. The interior minister noted the arrest prevented an imminent attack.

■ The suspect told investigators he swore allegiance to ISIL and claimed he built a “test bomb” in Germany. Authorities believed he likely became radicalized in prison between 2014 and 2015.
ON POINT

- Lorenz K. also revealed a link to an alleged accomplice, 21, in Germany who German police arrested on 21 January in Neuss. The man was taken into custody on a warrant for "planning a serious crime targeting the state." German police confiscated computers and mobile phones from the suspect's home, and his wife was temporarily detained for questioning. (REUTERS, AFP, THE LOCAL)

9 TURKEY: Gunman Attacks Police Vehicle

On 20 January, an unidentified gunman opened fire on a police vehicle in the Esenyurt district of Istanbul—where the gunman who attacked the Reina nightclub on New Year’s Eve 2016 was being held—then fled when police officers returned fire, leaving behind his gun and a bag of grenades.

In addition, assailants conducted rocket attacks targeting Istanbul’s police headquarters and an office of the AK Party. This attack came one week after ISIL released a video showing sites of interest in Istanbul, warning they would conduct more attacks. On 21 January, Turkish authorities reportedly detained five people associated with the attack. On 22 January, a second attack occurred when unidentified personnel opened fire on a police vehicle in the Esenyurt district, then fled.

- No casualties were reported in these attacks. There were no immediate claims of responsibility. (REUTERS)

10 SAUDI ARABIA: Police Raid Terrorist Hideout in Jeddah

On 21 January, two terrorists blew themselves up during a raid of their hideout by Saudi police.

- The two men, identified as Khaled al-Serwani and Nadi al-Medhiani, used a rented accommodation in the city to manufacture bombs and explosive belts. They blew themselves up after failing to escape police.

- Authorities said the men, accused of planning attacks against Saudi Arabia, had ties with ISIL and were linked to past attacks on mosques and security forces in Saudi Arabia.

- A Saudi man and his Pakistani wife, alleged to have links to the men, were arrested. (REUTERS, IANS)

11 SYRIA: US Airstrikes Kill Senior Al-Qa’ida Leaders

On 17 January, Tunisian al-Qa’ida external operations leader Mohammad Habib Boussadoun al-Tunisi was killed by a US airstrike near Idlib, Syria. Tunisi was involved in terrorist facilitation and external operations and was connected to terrorist plots to attack Western targets. Tunisi arrived in Syria in 2014 after spending several years in Europe and the Middle East, where he maintained ties with multiple violent extremists.

- US Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook added the terrorist’s death will degrade al-Qa’ida’s pool of experienced, well-connected facilitators and fighters with external operations experience.

- In addition, on 12 January, al-Qa’ida facilitator Abd al-Jalil al-Muslimi was killed near Saraqib, Syria. Muslimi, a Tunisian, was trained by the Taliban in the late 1990s. Cook said Muslimi’s death will degrade al-Qa’ida in Syria’s access to the cadre of veteran plotters, which will likely disrupt ongoing terror plots. (DEFENSE)
12 SYRIA: US Airstrike Kills Over 100 Al-Qa’ida Fighters

On 19 January, a US airstrike targeting the Shaykh Sulayman training camp in Idlib killed over 100 al-Qa’ida-affiliated terrorists.

- The training camp was operational since 2013. Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis said, “The removal of this training camp disrupts training operations and discourages hardline Islamist and Syrian opposition groups from joining or cooperating with al-Qa’ida on the battlefield.”

- Nusrah Front condemned the airstrike. (REUTERS, NYT, ZAMAN)

13 LIBYA: US Bombs ISIL Camps

On 18 January, the US military, in conjunction with the Libyan Government of National Accord, conducted airstrikes destroying two ISIL camps 28 miles southwest of Sirte. Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook stated, “While we are still evaluating the results of the strikes, the initial assessment indicates they were successful.”

- The strikes were intended to disrupt ISIL’s attempts to reorganize and establish a new safe haven in Libya. The camps were located in a “remote desert” area, but ISIL likely intended to use them to launch operations in more populated areas along the Mediterranean coast, including in Sirte.

- In addition, the terrorists targeted in the airstrikes included ISIL members “actively planning operations against our allies in Europe,” former US Defense Secretary Ash Carter said. (DEFENSE, LWJ, AP)

The airstrike is the first US bombing mission in Libya since 19 December 2016, when the US announced an end to Operation Odyssey Lightning, which cleared terrorists from Sirte. (LWJ)

14 AFGHANISTAN: Taliban Calls on US to Withdraw Forces

In late January, the Taliban published an open letter to US President Donald Trump, urging him to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan, saying nothing was achieved in 15 years of war except bloodshed and destruction.

- The Taliban warned Trump against relying on the kind of “unrealistic” reports presented to former presidents by their generals, saying, “They would emphasize continuation of war and occupation of Afghanistan because they can have better positions and privileges in war.”

- The Taliban has repeatedly urged the US and its allies to leave Afghanistan, ruling out peace talks with the Kabul government while foreign forces remain on Afghan soil. (REUTERS)

15 MALAYSIA: Authorities Arrest Four ISIL Suspects

In mid-January, Malaysian counterterrorism police arrested four ISIL suspects, including three foreigners, in a series of raids 13-19 January in Kuala Lumpur and Sabah.

- Malaysian officials said the arrests succeeded in “debilitating” a new ISIL cell led by Philippines-based former University Malaya lecturer Dr. Mahmud Ahmad. The cell allegedly planned to make Sabah a transit station for smuggling terrorists into Mindanao in the southern Philippines.

- On 13 January, police arrested a Filipino man, 31, and a Malaysian woman, 27, in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The man, who works as a watch seller, received instructions from Mahmud to recruit and arrange the infiltration of new ISIL members from Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Rohingya to the southern Philippines.

- On 19 January, the third and fourth suspects, both Bangladeshi aged 27 and 28, were arrested in Kuala Lumpur. They were suspected of having ties to ISIL militants in Bangladesh and were planning to join Mahmud’s cell. (NEW STRAITS TIMES)
Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the US

As of 9 January, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) released its data tool, the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the US (PIRUS) dataset. PIRUS is a cross-sectional, quantitative dataset of individuals in the US radicalized to the point of violent or non-violent ideologically motivated criminal activity, or ideologically motivated association with a foreign or domestic extremist organization from 1948 until 2013.

- The PIRUS dataset was coded using entirely open source material and contains variables with information ranging from characteristics, including the individuals’ criminal activity and/or violent plots, their relationship with their affiliated extremist group(s), adherence to ideological milieus, factors relevant to their radicalization process, demographics, background, and personal histories. The dataset is not limited to a single ideological category, and includes individuals representing far right, far left, Islamist, and single-issue ideologies.

START researchers submitted a report based on the PIRUS data, which included the following highlights:

- Significant differences in background characteristics, group affiliations, and radicalization processes exist across the ideological milieus.
- Individuals radicalized by violent extremist ideology and those on the far left of the dataset occur early in life, while individuals on the far right and those motivated by single issues radicalize later in life.
- Radicalization is a process which spans years, especially for those on the far right; however, online environments may speed up the radicalization process, reducing them to several months.
- Despite an increase in lone actor behavior in the US, radicalization remains a distinctly social process.
- Group and clique membership rates remain high across the ideological spectrum.

- Mental illness is relatively uncommon among violent extremists; however, the results indicate mental health conditions may be linked to higher propensities for violent behavior among radicalized individuals.
- Individuals who engage in pre-radicalization criminal behaviors are significantly more likely to attempt or commit acts of violence post-radicalization. (START)

The full dataset is available for download at www.start.umd.edu/pirus.

Manchester United Hires Counterterrorism Expert

As of 18 January, the UK-based Manchester United soccer team announced the appointment of a full-time counterterrorism manager amidst increased scrutiny on stadium security. The new position was announced at a Manchester United forum and will be filled by a former inspector from Greater Manchester Police’s specialist search unit.

- Security measures at Old Trafford were significantly increased since Manchester United’s home match with Bournemouth was abandoned after a fake bomb was found in the toilets. The Premier League match was abandoned following a full-scale stadium evacuation after a dummy device was left in the ground following a security exercise.
- Full body searches were introduced at Old Trafford stadium, while cars entering the ground are routinely checked by stadium staff. (TELEGRAPH)
New UN Manual Aims to Address Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners

On 16 January, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published the “Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons,” which is intended to strengthen key components of prison management, including training of prison staff, risk management, and rehabilitation efforts.

- The UNODC said in a news release, “It also cautions against generalized assumptions regarding a very complex topic, as well as against ‘quick fix solutions’ when it comes to the management of violent extremist prisoners.”

- Speaking at the launch, the Deputy Executive Director of UNODC, Aldo Lale-Demoz, drew attention to the need to integrate interventions for violent extremist prisoners in broader prison reform efforts. “Overcrowding, poor prison conditions and infrastructure, insufficient prison management capacity as well as corruption, for example, are all factors which will poison attempts to effectively prevent and counter violent extremism in prisons,” he said.

- Also at the launch event, held in the Austrian capital, Vienna, participants underscored the importance of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – informally dubbed the Nelson Mandela Rules – for prison management. They added that the overarching framework equally applied to violent extremist prisoners. (UN NEWS CENTRE)

Sweden’s Biggest Terror Threat is Lone Violent Extremists

As of 18 January, Sweden’s Nationellt Centrum För Terrorhotbedömning (NCT) stated the biggest terrorist threat Sweden faces in 2017 is from violent extremists sympathetic to groups such as ISIL or al-Qa’ida. Mats Sandberg, head of NCT, stated a terror attack is more likely to be inspired by the actions of the groups rather than actively orchestrated by any of its leaders or members abroad. Sweden’s national terror threat level will remain at “elevated,” or “three” on a scale from one to five where five is the most serious, based on violent extremism and its links to Sweden.

- Security police believe around 300 Swedish nationals have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join terrorists in the past few years, although fewer such journeys were made in 2016 than before. Among these people are believed to be those who are capable of conducting attacks. (NCT, THELOCAL)

NCTC: Terrorist attacks from lone offenders using simple tactics—often opportunistic—require minimal planning. To promote greater situational awareness, partnerships with the private sector, security personnel, and first responders allow for the development of a common operating picture. Components to protect first responders from lone offender attacks include: recognizing suspicious activities, items, or behaviors during the course of performing daily duties, reducing off-duty profile, and partnering while on patrol, especially on-foot patrols or while standing in a static post. Even in plots with reduced planning, enhanced collaboration can help reinforce the importance of reporting suspicious activities and behaviors, which may be indicative of attack planning and can lead to further investigation into the reported activity, potentially disrupting an attack plot. (NCTC)
ISIL Uses Online Recruiters to Lure Disaffected Youth

As of 19 January, ISIL was using “headhunters” on social media and instant messaging sites to recruit disaffected young people in Germany, some as young as 13 or 14, according to the head of Germany’s domestic intelligence agency.

- German officials noted parallels between ISIL and past radical movements such as communism and Adolf Hitler’s Nationalist Socialists, which also tried to lure young people more likely to rebel against their parents and society.
- German authorities are monitoring 548 Islamists deemed to be a security risk; however, German law does not allow for their arrest until they have committed a crime. (STRAITS TIMES)

Ads Purchased on Facebook to Fight Terrorists

On 19 January, Michael Lumpkin, the US State Department’s lead in the “soft power” fight against violent extremists, announced at the Defense One Summit in Washington, USPER Facebook’s detailed metrics for advertisers helps the government campaign reach its targets, identified as individuals potentially being groomed online by violent extremists.

- “Using Facebook ads, I can go within Facebook, I can grab an audience. I can pick country X, I need age group 13 to 34, I need people who liked Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi or any other set, and I can shoot and hit them directly with messages,” he said. “In some places in the world, it’s literally pennies a click to do it.”
- Lumpkin is the Coordinator of the Global Engagement Center at the State Department, a unit focused on both conducting its own campaigns against violent extremists and coordinating with other groups to the same end, especially in online and mobile spaces. He said the detailed user data that social media giants collect is crucial in identifying his target audience, on the social media that they prefer.

- Facebook, he noted, offers the government access to affordable amassed and collated user data for singling out target groups and individuals for the anti-violent extremism ads the US government runs. (AFP)

South Korea to Increase Anti-Terrorism Measures

Starting in April, Seoul will check inbound air passenger information to identify potential terrorists. The government will also establish a system enabling state anti-terrorism institutions to share and disseminate information to its citizens in emergencies. The government will also take steps to enhance anti-terrorism operatives’ expertise through regular training and push for the creation of an additional police commando unit to support CT activities.

- In addition, South Korea will establish a national anti-terror inspection team consisting of experts in firearms, explosives, and chemical, biological, and radioactive materials, to detect and address the country’s vulnerabilities.
- Finally, to enhance security for venues, such as the 2017 FIFA World Cup and 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, the government plans to form a CT and safety headquarters involving police, fire services, and the military. It also plans to craft security plans for the two events and conduct security drills. (KOREAHERALD)

NCTC: South Korea’s anti-terrorism measures highlight information sharing to provide an accurate operating picture for coordinated security measures and response plans. The range of tactics used by terrorists underscores the need for interagency exercises and training, which incorporates multiple scenarios to account for the complexity of a coordinated terrorist attack, typically involving multiple attackers and targets. Special event planning requires real-time information sharing between intelligence liaisons, first responders, and private-sector partners to ensure an accurate understanding of the current threat environment to identify gaps and determine mitigation strategies, which can provide an opportunity to develop adaptive security measures and ensure preparation of rapid and adequate emergency response plans. (NCTC)
US Warns of ISIL Attacks as Terrorists Return to Asia Pacific

On 18 January, while at India’s “Raisina Dialogue” conference, the Commander of the US Pacific Command—Admiral Harry Harris—warned the Asia-Pacific region is at risk of attacks by ISIL fighters returning to their home countries. As the group loses territory in the Middle East, radicalized fighters from Bangladesh, Indonesia, and elsewhere are likely to target their native countries.

- In January 2016, Southeast Asia suffered its first ISIL attack when terrorists conducted a suicide bombing and gun assault in Jakarta, leaving four attackers and four civilians dead. (AFP)
1. **WORLDWIDE: ISIL Releases Latest Al-Naba Magazine**

As of 19 January, ISIL released the 64th issue of *al-Naba* magazine featuring a safety guide for sarin gas attacks, detailing safe places to hide, instructions for discarding contaminated materials, and treatment. ISIL boasted of killing officer Bassam al-Hourani in Ma’an, Jordan, and claimed in an infographic to have killed 6,500 people, destroyed 1,000+ military vehicles/tanks, and conducted 273 suicide operations since the start of the Mosul battle in October 2016. (ISIL)

2. **FRANCE: Iraqi Terrorist Among Paris Bombers**

On 18 January, France’s domestic intelligence agency assessed an Iraqi terrorist was one of the suicide bombers who detonated himself outside the Stade de France during the November 2015 Paris attacks. The man was from Mosul, Iraq, and carried a fake Syrian passport. He and the third attacker, whose identity is still unknown, are believed to have entered Europe with a group of refugees who landed on the Greek island of Leros on 3 October 2015. (AFP, RFI)

3. **GERMANY: Prosecutors Seek Jail Term for Alleged ISIL Teenager**

On 19 January, German prosecutors sought a six-year sentence for alleged ISIL member Safia S., 16, for attacking a police officer with a knife in Hanover. The German-Moroccan teenager was accused of injuring a policeman, 34, by stabbing him in the neck at Hanover’s main railway station in 2016. Prosecutors stated the teenager developed contacts with ISIL while on a trip to Turkey and was incited to conduct “martyr operations” in Germany. Initially she wanted to travel to Syria on her own, but her mother brought her back to Germany. (DW)

4. **NIGERIA: ISIL-West Africa Attacks Refugee Camp**

On 19 January, ISIL-West Africa attacked a refugee camp in northeast Nigeria days after Nigeria’s air force bombed it. More than 100 ISIL-West Africa fighters conducted the attack, and soldiers battled for hours trying to repel them. On 17 January, Nigeria’s air force mistakenly struck the camp in Rann—believed to be housing ISIL-West Africa refugees—with multiple air-dropped munitions, resulting in up to 170 deaths. Nigerian officials said the bombing was an accident, and a panel of senior officers will investigate. (AP)

5. **MALI: Suicide Blast Kills Nearly 50 at Northern Military Camp**

On 18 January, five suicide bombers and a VBIED detonated near a military camp in Gao, Mali, killing up to 50 people and injuring over 115. AQIM claimed responsibility for the attack. (REUTERS)
6 EGYPT: Soldiers Killed in Sinai Peninsula

On 22 January, five soldiers were killed by unknown gunmen in the Sinai Peninsula. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. (AL JAZEERA)

7 SYRIA: US Airstrike Kills Seven in Idlib

On 22 January, a US airstrike targeting a Nusrah Front-affiliated vehicle killed two Nusrah Front commanders, Abu Rabei al-Souri and Abu Musab al-Jazaeri. A US drone strike in the same area also killed five people. (ZAMAN)

8 SYRIA: VBIED Strikes Refugee Camp

On 21 January, a VBIED killed at least four people and injured a number of others at the Rakban refugee camp in Syria near the border with Jordan. There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack. (REUTERS)

9 SYRIA: Nusrah Front Warns Peace Talk Participants

In late January, rebel groups fighting under the Free Syrian Army banner, some of which attended peace talks in Kazakhstan, accused Nusrah Front of launching a surprise attack on their positions. Nusrah Front previously warned participants taking part in the Syrian conflict peace talks in Kazakhstan and rejected the meeting, saying the group was forced to act preemptively to “thwart conspiracies” against it. (REUTERS, TERRORMONITOR)

10 SYRIA: Nusrah Front Expels Jund Al-Aqsa

On 23 January, Nusrah Front released a statement indicating it expelled Jund al-Aqsa from its group. Jund al-Aqsa pledged allegiance to Nusrah Front after clashes with Ahrar al-Sham in October 2016. The 2016 merger was intended to end the infighting; however, Jund al-Aqsa was reportedly kicked out of Nusrah Front for not abiding by the agreement. Relatedly, the “Shura Council of Scholars in Syria” urged Nusrah Front to stop supporting Jund al-Aqsa due to Jund al-Aqsa’s continued fighting with Ahrar al-Sham. (NUSRAH FRONT)

11 LEBANON: Suicide Attack Foiled at Beirut Café

On 21 January, Lebanese security forces foiled an attempted suicide bombing at a café in Beirut. Security forces stopped the bomber as he attempted to enter the café and before he was able to detonate his explosive vest. There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack. (REUTERS)

12 PAKISTAN: Bomb Strikes Market, Killing 22

On 21 January, a bomb exploded in a market in Parachinar—a northwest tribal region bordering Afghanistan—killing 22 people and wounding at least 50 others. Initial reports suggest a remotely controlled explosive device hidden in a sack detonated at a time the market was crowded. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack. (AP, VOA)
**13 PAKISTAN: Security Forces Kill Lashkar-E-Jhangvi Leader**

On 18 January, Pakistani security forces announced they killed the leader of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Asif Chotoo, along with three other militants accused of killing hundreds of civilians. Security forces engaged Chotoo and his accomplices in a shootout in Sheikhupura after a warning LeJ was planning an attack in Lahore. *(Reuters)*

**14 INDIA: Police Hint at Terror Plot Against Railways**

As of 18 January, Bihar police indicated recent railway incidents, including the Indore-Patna Express derailment near Kanpur which claimed over 150 lives, may have been part of a larger terror plot. The information emerged after the police arrested three people suspected of planting an IED on a railway track near Ghorasahan railway in October 2016. Police interrogated the suspects who confessed they worked for a Nepalese contact suspected of being connected to Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence. *(Times of India)*

**15 ALBANIA: Teacher Arrested for ISIL Propaganda**

On 19 January, Albanian police arrested Emine Alushi, 39, a theology teacher, for making statements supportive of ISIL. Alushi was arrested and faces a charge of religious hatred, which carries a sentence of up to ten years in prison. *(AP)*

**16 KOSOVO: Court Sentences Seven ISIL Supporters**

On 19 January, the Pristina court sentenced seven Albanians to up to four and a half years in jail for fighting for ISIL and recruiting on the group’s behalf. Some of the men admitted to fighting with anti-government forces in Syria, while others claimed they went to assist Syrian refugees in Turkey. *(AP, AFP, Reuters)*

**17 INDONESIA: Authorities Detain 17 Returning From Syria**

On 21 January, Indonesian authorities detained 17 Indonesians returning from Syria, suspected of being involved with violent extremist activity. The chief of Densus 88, the police anti-terrorism unit, said the group was “currently still under an interrogation process. If we find any relation to crime on terrorism, we will continue the investigation. If not, they will be handed over to their families.” Police have been monitoring dozens of returning citizens over concerns they could be assisting terror networks to equip new recruits with new skills and equipment to conduct an attack in Indonesia. *(Reuters)*

**18 PHILIPPINES: Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) Releases Filipino Hostages**

On 19 January, the Philippines military said Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) released two Filipino hostages held captive for nearly three months. This was the second release in less than a week. It was unclear if a ransom was paid, but the military claimed its intensified operations against the group likely forced it to release the captives. On 14 January, ASG released the captain of a South Korean cargo ship and a Filipino crew member held since October 2016. *(Reuters)*
NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER (NCTC)

NCTC serves as the primary organization in the US Government for integrating and analyzing all intelligence pertaining to terrorism possessed or acquired by the US Government (except purely domestic terrorism); serves as the central and shared knowledge bank on terrorism information; provides all-source intelligence support to government-wide counterterrorism activities; establishes the information technology (IT) systems and architectures within NCTC and between NCTC and other agencies that enable access to, as well as integration, dissemination, and use of, terrorism information.

NCTC serves as the principal advisor to the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) on intelligence operations and analysis relating to counterterrorism, advising the DNI on how well US intelligence activities, programs, and budget proposals for counterterrorism conform to priorities established by the President.