January 2016

ISIS in Libya: a Major Regional and International Threat

ISIS operatives enter the coastal city of Sirte in north-central Libya on February 18, 2015, in a show of strength accompanied by dozens of vehicles (Twitter.com, Nasher.me). Since then ISIS has established itself in Sirte and the surrounding areas, turning the entire region into its Libyan stronghold and a springboard for spreading into other regions.

Overview

1. In 2015 ISIS established two strongholds beyond the borders of its power base in Iraq and Syria: the first in the Sinai Peninsula, where it wages determined fighting against the Egyptian security forces. The second is situated in the north-central Libyan city of Sirte and its surroundings, where it has established territorial control and from where it seeks to take over the entire country. It intends to turn Libya into a springboard for terrorism and the subversion of the rest of North Africa, the sub-Saharan countries, and southern Europe. The firm territorial base ISIS constructed in Libya is the only one outside Iraq and Syria, and is potentially a greater regional and international threat.

2. ISIS could establish itself in Libya because of the chaos prevalent after the execution of Muammar Qaddafi. As in Iraq and Syria, the governmental-security vacuum created by the collapse of the central government was filled by nationalist and Islamist organizations, local and regional tribal militias and jihadist organizations. The branch of ISIS in Libya exploited the lack of a functioning government and
the absence of international intervention to establish itself in the region around Sirte and from there to aspire to spread throughout Libya.

3. ISIS's "capital" (like Al-Raqqah in Syria and Mosul in Iraq) in Libya is the coastal city of Sirte in the north-central part of the country, which used to be Muammar Qaddafi's stronghold. In Sirte and the surrounding areas ISIS enforces its strict Salafist governmental code on the population (as it has in the cities it conquered in Iraq and Syria). It has also constructed a military infrastructure throughout Sirte which includes training camps for Libyan and foreign fighters. Its objective is to train a military force that will enable ISIS to take control of other regions in Libya and to establish branches in neighboring countries. ISIS is greedy for the oil infrastructure, whose income the organization needs to upgrade its military capabilities.

4. ISIS does not recognize Libya as a single political entity, as it does not recognize the legitimacy of the other nation states in the Middle East. Therefore, for organizational purposes, ISIS divided the Islamic State in Libya into three provinces: Tripoli in the west, Barqa (Cyrenaica) in the east, and Fezzan in the southwest. ISIS operatives in Libya are present (to various extents) and conduct various levels of activity in the three districts (which are not contiguous), seeking to take control of the entire country. They fight against the two rival governments as well as rival militias, among them jihadist organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda. ISIS's order of battle in Libya is estimated at between 4,000 and 5,000 operatives, some of them Libyan and some foreign fighters from Arab and African countries. In Libya ISIS is supported by Islamist militias, the most prominent of which is the Salafist Ansar al-Sharia.

5. ISIS got its first foothold in Libya in Barqa Province in the eastern part of the country. There it collaborated with local Islamist-jihadist organizations and foreign Salafi-jihadist fighters, some of whom had combat experience from the fighting in Syria and Iraq. The hard core that established ISIS in Libya was apparently composed of local fighters who had gone to Syria in 2012 and began returning in the spring of 2014. Among them were fighters from the Al-Battar Battalion, who had sworn allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In Derna, a city in the eastern part of the country, already Islamist under Qaddafi, they established ISIS's first power base in Libya. They founded a jihadist organization called Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam (Islamic Youth Shura Council). On June 22,
2014, the organization declared its support for ISIS and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and went on to establish its control over Derna and the entire region.

6. The following year, in June 2015, ISIS was expelled from Derna and from most of the other towns and cities in the region. Its expulsion was made possible by the ad hoc collaboration of two rivals: the anti-Islamist Libyan army, loyal to the Tobruk secular government in the east, and a local Al-Qaeda-affiliated jihadist organization called the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna. ISIS was then expelled to the mountainous region of Al-Fataih south of Derna, which overlooks the city. From there ISIS continues fighting against the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna, which is trying to expel them from that area as well, so far without success.

7. While ISIS's power base in Derna (and eastern Libya in general) suffered a serious blow, on February 18, 2015, ISIS successfully took over the large coastal city of Sirte in north-central Libya, as well as the surrounding areas. That was apparently accomplished by means of a force moved in from the east. In Sirte ISIS established its territorial center and declared the establishment of its Tripoli Province, directly subordinate to ISIS leadership in Iraq and Syria. Sirte has a seaport, international airport, army bases, economic projects, oil installations and various government facilities. It is also Muammar Qaddafi's birthplace and his tribe's power base. Thus, its support, given to ISIS, has both tribal and societal roots (based on Qaddafi supporters, who want an organization that will back them and protect them from the rebels who toppled his government).  

8. After the takeover of Sirte, ISIS took control of a series of villages and towns in the surrounding area and created a base of territorial control for itself, as it did in Iraq and Syria. Today ISIS controls 260 kilometers (about 160 miles) of Libya's coastal road, effectively cutting Tripoli off from Tobruk and Benghazi. From Sirte ISIS aspires to reach the capital city of Tripoli in the west, Benghazi and Derna in the east, and the oil fields in the south. Next in ISIS's sights are the cities of Misrata, halfway between Sirte and Tripoli, and Ajdabiya, near important oil installations (among them the Sidr oil port and oil infrastructure at Ra's Lanuf).

1 The union of former Qaddafi supporters and ISIS is similar to that of former supporters of Saddam Hussein (Iraqi army officers and Baath Party members) and ISIS in Iraq. The significance is the ISIS represents not only an ideology (and practical method of applying it), but also an effort of the old guard, removed from power, to return to the political forefront under ISIS's aegis.
9. The area of Sirte is the only region where ISIS has territorial control. In other cities and areas it has a presence or is active, but does not have effective control. Those areas include Derna and Benghazi, the territory surrounding Tripoli, and cities in proximity to Sirte (Ajdabiya in the west and Misrata in the east). However, in those locations ISIS is under considerable pressure from local forces. The lack of a territorial continuum and communications problems make it difficult for ISIS to operate in those locations. ISIS, which is aware of its vulnerability, seeks to extend its territorial power base in Sirte and unite it with other regions (as it used Iraq as a springboard for taking over eastern Syria and creating a territorial continuum between them).

10. In and around Sirte and in other locations where ISIS established itself, it constructed a military infrastructure for terrorism and guerilla warfare against its many enemies inside and outside Libya:

1) Inside Libya ISIS directs its terrorism and guerilla warfare against the Tripoli and Tobruk governments, the Tobruk government-supporting Libyan army and the many militias fighting against it. ISIS gives priority to carrying out attacks in the capital city of Tripoli and its surroundings to weaken the government and harm foreign representatives and citizens. In 2015 ISIS attacked the Corinthia Hotel (a diplomatic and governmental nerve center). It also carried out series of attacks on foreign legations and on oil fields east and south of Sirte (both series of attacks without significant results). It also carried out well-
publicized executions of so-called "infidels," Copts from Egypt and Christians from Eritrea, to terrorize its enemies.

2) **Outside Libya** ISIS directed most of its attacks against Tunisia, because of its relative weakness and its proximity to centers of ISIS control in Libya. During the past year ISIS carried out a series of showcase terrorist attacks in Tunisia. They included an attack on the Bardo National Museum in Tunis, a shooting attack on a beach in Sousse and an attack on a bus carrying members of the presidential guard. ISIS claimed responsibility in every instance and its Libyan infrastructure was reportedly involved in training, arming and dispatching the terrorist operatives to Tunisia. ISIS in Libya also collaborates with jihadist operatives and organizations in northern Africa and sub-Saharan regions. Especially notable are the connections between ISIS in Libya and ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula, and between both of them and Boko Haram in Nigeria, which also swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

11. Like Iraq and Syria, **Libya is a country that has disintegrated and is involved in an ongoing civil war that is likely to continue for a long time.** That is the result of the deep divisions between the various centers of power and the access of the rival sides to military and economic assets like oil fields, the refugee-smuggling industry and large stockpiles of weapons and ammunition from the Qaddafi era (some of which are of high quality and are smuggled from Libya to its Arab and African neighbors). **It is still difficult to assess ISIS’s ability to realize its far-reaching aspirations in Libya, but it has clearly established a stronghold it will not easily give up, in view of Libya's perceived importance.**

12. **The establishment of ISIS (and other jihadist organizations) in Libya has the potential for many intra-Libyan, regional and international threats:**

   1) **Inside Libya** ISIS is one of several organizations struggling for power and control. The establishment of ISIS in Libya increases the chaos and anarchy already plaguing the country, making it difficult to stabilize a central government (for various reasons not only connected to ISIS). Thus despite the efforts of the Tripoli and Tobruk governments to reach an agreement, in all probability in the coming years de facto Libya will be divided and suffer from war and turmoil, creating a governmental and security vacuum, and making it easy for ISIS to continue consolidating its power and making it difficult to uproot it.
2) ISIS is liable to increase its ties to the jihadist organizations in northern and sub-Saharan Africa, exporting subversion and terrorism:

A. **Tunisia is currently in ISIS's crosshairs**, but in the future **ISIS may increase its support for jihadist organizations in sub-Saharan Africa** (including Niger, Chad, Mali and Sudan). **In West Africa** ISIS has close ties with **Nigeria's jihadist Boko Haram**, which has sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

B. **ISIS in Libya's ties to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, ISIS's branch in the Sinai Peninsula, are also likely to become stronger. ISIS may also smuggle more weapons from Libya to the Sinai Peninsula** (weapons which may also find their way to the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip). **Libya has a wide-open border of 1,115 kilometers (almost 700 miles) with Egypt**, through which operatives are infiltrated and weapons smuggled into Egypt by various organizations and criminal gangs, including ISIS. The Egyptian police consider ISIS’s establishment in Libya, and especially in the eastern part of the country, as a threat to Egypt's national security, although so far no effective measures have been taken to keep ISIS from gaining strength in Libya.

Libya's geographical location may make it a regional threat, as ISIS uses it as a power base from which to export terrorism and subversion to its neighbors (Google Maps)

3) The threat to Italy and the rest of Europe:

A. **Libya's proximity to Italy makes ISIS's presence there potentially dangerous not only to Italy but to all of Europe** (the distance between Sirte and Sicily is 696 kilometers, about 432 miles). Their closeness
may encourage ISIS to send terrorist operatives to Italy and other European countries once it has established itself in Sirte and other locations. ISIS, through its affiliated social networks, has already threatened Italy, and may turn verbal threats into action. After the terrorist attack in Paris, ISIS posted a video entitled "Paris before Rome," sending the message that Italy's turn would come after Paris. It is also possible that ISIS's interest is not influenced only by Rome's geographical proximity and its position as the center of the Christian world, but also by the legacy of Italy's 23-year occupation of Libya.

B. Libya is a point of exit for work-seeking emigrants and asylum-seekers swarming to Italy by sea from Libya, and African and Arab countries.\(^2\) ISIS establishment in Libya has been accompanied by its cruel treatment of local populations, which may increase the flow of asylum-seekers from Libya. ISIS may use them as cover for infiltrating terrorist operatives into Italy or exploit them for financial gain.

4) Turning a profit from Libya's oil and gas industry: ISIS is liable to take control of Libya's oil and gas industry or to damage or threaten it from its power base in Sirte. Its objective will either be to profit from selling oil to Western countries (still a viable business, but with a much smaller turnover than before Qaddafi was toppled) or at least to keep the oil profits from its enemies. In

\(^2\) More than a million asylum-seekers and emigrants entered Europe overland and by sea in 2015. About 150,000 of them came from North Africa, arriving by sea. Most of them apparently came via Libya.
2015 ISIS attacked the oil and gas industry in southern Libya a number of times, so far without significant success. At the beginning of 2016 ISIS attacked the important oil terminal at Sidr after it had taken control of the nearby town of Bin Jawad. ISIS can be expected to increase its efforts to create sources of income which will upgrade its military and governmental capabilities, as it has done in Iraq and Syria.

13. Alongside the threats ISIS in Libya poses, it also has a considerable number of vulnerabilities which can be exploited by any future campaign against it: its order of battle is limited to a few thousand operatives forced to fight armies, militias and hostile organizations (including organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda) more powerful than ISIS; there are organizations and tribes supporting ISIS in an ad hoc coalition, and when their interests shift they may abandon it for new allies; between ISIS’s control of Sirte and other areas of its activities there is no territorial continuum, making it difficult to move forces from one sector to another. So far, as opposed to Iraq and Syria, ISIS has not yet taken control of oil fields and turned them into sources of profit. In addition, every country bordering Libya is hostile to ISIS and it is reasonable to assume they will collaborate with any coalition whose objective is to expel ISIS from Libya.

14. However, no such international or pan-Arab coalition exists as yet. In countries like the United States, France, and those bordering Libya like Egypt and Tunisia, there is a growing awareness of the threats inherent in an ISIS stronghold in Libya. However, while the strategy the United States has implemented against ISIS since September 2014 professes to provide a comprehensive response to the challenge posed by ISIS, in reality it does not, because it focuses on Iraq and Syria. Therefore, it does not provide a response to ISIS’s spread to other countries, especially Libya and Egypt, and to the local and regional threats inherent therein. To deal with the overall threats of ISIS’s entrenchment in Libya, the United States and its European and Arab allies will have to change their concept of the anti-ISIS campaign. Their strategy should be extended to Libya and the other countries where ISIS is trying to establish itself, which would make it more comprehensive.
Methodology

15. The objective of this study is to examine the establishment of the ISIS branch in Libya after the fall of Qaddafi, and to analyze the potential threats. The disintegration of Libya into armies and militias and the vacuum created that made it possible for ISIS to establish itself there were taken into consideration.

16. ISIS’s establishment in Libya is an emerging historic event influenced by the upheaval in the Arab world. Libya is in a state of military and governmental chaos and the situation on the ground is in flux. That made it difficult to conduct research for this study. Therefore, it should be considered an interim study updated to January 2016 in which the current situation and its threats are described.

17. Researching the study revealed a lack of reliable information about Libya in general and its ISIS branch in particular. The information herein is therefore partial and there are often gaps. Since the report deals with a contemporary situation for which there is no historical perspective, there was very little academic literature and a variety of mostly primary sources were used.

18. Those sources included the social networks and websites affiliated with ISIS, as well as the Libyan, Arabic and international press (although the volume of information published about ISIS in Libya is far smaller that about ISIS in Iraq and Syria, currently the center of world attention). Also used were the ITIC’s weekly "Spotlight on the Global Jihad" bulletins, which follow developments in Libya. In addition use was made of articles and research published by correspondents, experts and research institutes, most of them in the United States, and some in Europe and Israel.

19. Regarding events in Libya in general and ISIS in particular, care must be taken when dealing with the great amount of propaganda issued by ISIS and/or its many enemies, intended to promote individual interests. Some of the information published about ISIS in Libya is meant to magnify or minimize and defame it in accordance with the specific interests of those issuing it. Therefore, great care was taken in analyzing the information available when writing this report.
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Section 1: ISIS's Perception of Libya

Profile of ISIS – Overview

1. ISIS is a global jihad organization with a Salafist-jihadi ideology. Salafism is an extremist Sunni Islamist school which aspires to restore the glory Islam had in the era of the Prophet Muhammad and the First Caliphate. That is to be accomplished through holy war (jihad), considered as the personal duty of every Muslim. According to ISIS, Islam’s glory will be restored through the founding of a supranational Islamic Caliphate on the ruins of the nation states established in the Middle East at the end of the First World War.

2. ISIS grew out of a branch of Al-Qaeda, founded in Iraq in 2004 by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi after the American invasion. The collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime and of the Iraqi army created a vacuum in governance and security, which was filled by global jihad organizations (as in Syria after the uprising against Bashar Assad and in Libya after the fall of Qaddafi). That was accompanied by the growing alienation of the Sunni Muslims from the central regimes, i.e., the Shi'ite regime established in Baghdad by the United States and the Alawite regime in Damascus supported by Iran.

3. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which after a series of name changes became known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (whose Arabic acronym is Daesh and whose English translation is ISIS), entrenched itself in the Sunni regions of Iraq during the fighting with the United States; During the Syrian civil war it to the eastern and northern parts of the country. Al-Qaeda’s Syrian branch (the Al-Nusra Front, jabhat al-nusra) plays a central role among the rebel organizations and is a serious rival of the Islamic State in Iraq.

4. In the summer of 2014 ISIS chalked up dramatic military victories. The most spectacular was the conquest of Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. It was accompanied by the declaration of the founding of the Islamic State (the Islamic Caliphate) by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a charismatic Islamic jihadist leader in Iraq.
5. Today ISIS controls extensive areas in northern and eastern Iraq and in eastern Syria, although during the past year it lost a considerable amount of territory. The regions are home to several million people and several large cities, all controlled by ISIS. The two most important cities are Mosul in Iraq and Al-Raqqah, ISIS "capital" in Syria. In areas under its control, ISIS operates its own governmental systems, providing the local population with daily needs (including food, water, electricity, education, policing and law enforcement). While doing so, it uses brutal methods to enforce its extremist Salafist ideology over the local populations. Its conduct in Libya is the same.

6. ISIS's military victories in June 2014, the declaration of the Caliphate, the rapid collapse of the Iraqi army in Mosul, its takeover of the governmental infrastructure (including the oilfields), its atrocities and its terrorist attacks in Western countries, all demonstrated to the United States and international community that ISIS was a regional and international threat for which a response had to be found. That led President Obama, on September 10, 2014, to declare a campaign against ISIS.

7. The American campaign, with the participation of an international coalition of Western and Arab countries, is expected to continue for several years and lead to the degrading and eventual destruction of ISIS. In recent months two additional coalitions were formed and announced their participation in combatting ISIS. They are the Russian coalition, which (along with Iran and Hezbollah) supports the Assad regime and the Islamic coalition led by Saudi Arabia, composed of 35 Arab-Muslim countries (whose modus operandi is not yet clear).
8. During the past year the air strikes and other military support provided by the American-led coalition contained ISIS in Iraq and Syria. They were supported by local forces (the Iraqi army with Shi'ite militia and support from the Kurdish forces) to retake some of the regions occupied by ISIS in 2014 and 2015 (the oil city of Baiji, Tikrit, Sinjar and Ramadi in Iraq, as well as most of the areas near the border with Turkey and vast regions in the area of Aleppo in Syria). However, the coalition did not succeed in keeping ISIS from spreading to other Middle East and Asian countries.

**ISIS's Objectives in Libya**

9. Libya is very important for ISIS for a number of reasons: its geographical location in the center of North Africa provides it with easy access to the Maghreb, Egypt and the sub-Saharan countries; the disintegration of Libya's political, governmental and societal systems in the post-Qaddafi era made it easy for ISIS to establish itself; it already had a jihadist infrastructure rooted in the veterans of the fighting in Syria and Iraq; the oil and gas fields, and large oil facilities, are a potential source of profit; the large stockpiles of weapons remaining after the fall of the Qaddafi regime enable ISIS to arm itself and sell arms to friendly Salafist-jihadist organizations; Libya's proximity to Italy makes it easy to export terrorism and subversion to Italy and from there to western Europe in general.

10. Since the declaration of the Islamic State, Libya has become the most prominent example of ISIS’s ability to establish a stronghold outside its core territories in Iraq and Syria. It is the only country beyond Iraq and Syria where ISIS has succeeded in establishing extensive territorial control, enforce its complex patterns of control on the local populations and take over the national infrastructure. In other countries where ISIS has tried to establish itself, its activities are still basically terrorist and subversive, without control over the population and the governmental infrastructure (in Egypt, for example, ISIS is entrenched in the northern Sinai Peninsula, where it wages determined guerilla warfare and carries out terrorist attacks against the Egyptian army, but so far does not have control over the population).

11. ISIS seeks to take over all of Libya, overthrow the Tripoli and Tobruk governments, enforce its authority on the various militias and establish three Islamic State provinces under Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. They will be governed according to the strict Salafist-jihadi version of Islamic law (the Sharia).
Libya will then serve as a base for ISIS's expansion to neighboring Arab and sub-Saharan countries. Libya's provinces will be part of the Islamic State (the Islamic Caliphate) which according to ISIS's vision, will eventually stretch from the Middle East, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Muslim Asia to territories in Europe which were previously conquered by the Muslims (such as Spain), and beyond.

12. **ISIS does not recognize Libya as one single national state** (as it does not recognize Iraq, Syria and other nation states in the Middle East). Therefore it divided Libya into three provinces (*wilayah*) whose names were taken from the history of Islam in the Middle East: Barqa Province in the east, Tripoli Province in the west and Fezzan Province in the south. Barqa was the Roman Cyrenaica, the name adopted by the Libyan national regimes. ISIS chose to rename it Barqa, as it was called at the beginning of Islamic expansion. Fezzan is a Berber name meaning "hard rock," as the region is rocky and mountainous. Tripoli is the original Greek name, meaning "three cities."

13. ISIS's three provinces differ in population and geography. In effect, even under Qaddafi there were differences between them, but they were governed as a political unit by a dictatorial regime (as Saddam Hussein and Bashar Assad used force to overcome ethnic, religious and tribal oppositions in Iraq and Syria). Under Qaddafi, the eastern city of Derna was known to be radical and Islamist, and therefore ISIS began to establish itself there at the beginning, until it was pushed out (see below).
14. Today ISIS is focusing on establishing a stronghold in Tripoli Province, in the western part of the country. That is because it has already succeeded in establishing territorial control over Sirte in north-central Libya, formerly Qaddafi’s power base. On the other hand, it has many difficulties with the Libyan army and various militias in the east. Using the power base it established in Sirte, ISIS seeks to reach the capital city of Tripoli and take control of the oilfields and oil installations west and south of Sirte. However, it does not spread itself too thinly in distant regions which it apparently regards as unimportant, which it probably expects to take over after it has completed taking over the most important areas.

Libya as a Springboard for Other North African Countries

15. For ISIS Libya is a convenient springboard for establishing itself in other North African and sub-Saharan African countries. ISIS in Libya is apparently using the Iraqi model, where it established itself and from there spread to Syria (and from there to other Arab-Muslim countries and regions in the Middle East and beyond). ISIS apparently wants to subvert the Tunisian regime and establish a branch there. Another neighboring country ISIS has shown interest in is Egypt, where ISIS’s province in the Sinai Peninsula (Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis) is waging an ongoing war against Egypt’s security forces.

16. ISIS’s focus on Tunisia originates from the weakness of the Tunisian regime, the proximity of its Tripoli Province to Tunisia, and the presence of jihadist operatives there. ISIS may also consider that destabilizing the Tunisian regime has symbolically importance. So far, Tunisia has been the only country to emerge successfully from what in the past was called “Arab Spring.” It is ruled by a religious-secular coalition which is a model of political tolerance, in complete contrast to ISIS’s Salafist-jihadist fanaticism.

17. Libya’s regional importance was noted in a document issued by ISIS in January 2015 claiming it had a presence in Libya, entitled "Libya, the strategic gateway for the Islamic State." It was written in Arabic and its objective was to convince jihadists in general of Libya’s importance to the Islamic State in order to encourage them to join (in Libya as in Iraq and Syria, foreign fighters form a
significant part of ISIS’s order of battle). The following are the main points of the article (based on the translation by The Quilliam Foundation):

1) **Libya is perceived as an area in which ISIS can attract world attention to relieve the pressure exerted on it in Syria and Iraq.** Its has an important strategic location, and “looks upon the sea, the desert, mountains, and six states: Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Algeria and Tunisia.” It also "has a long coast and looks upon the southern Crusader states [i.e., southern Europe], which can be reached with ease by even a rudimentary boat."

2) According to the document, there is an "abundance of light, medium and heavy munitions in Libya…stockpiled by al-Qadhafi during his reign." To purchase the weapons, he “squandered all Libya's oil revenues – which ranged between thirty and forty five billion dollars a year..." ISIS and its allied militias can use the weapons and can also smuggle them to other countries where it has branches fighting local regimes (especially the Sinai Peninsula).

3) The document goes on to say that from Libya other countries in Africa can easily be taken over. It calls attention to the fact that "one leak of [these munitions] from Libya to Mali enabled jihadist groups there to take over more than two thirds of the country in a very short amount of time."

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4 Mali, a Muslim country in northwest Africa, has been disintegrating for several years, making it fertile ground for global jihad organizations. The weapons which were "leaked" there from Libya accelerated the process. In 2010 a rebellion broke out and in 2012 northern Mali was conquered by Al-Qaeda-affiliated militias. The collapse of the region into the hands of radical Islamists and the destruction of the artifacts at Timbuktu led to a French attack on the jihadists following a request from the government of Mali in January 2013. During 2013 the jihadists were pushed to the northern part of the country and the central government regained a measure of − although not complete − control over most of the desert regions. However, terrorist activity continues. There was a reminder of Mali's jihadist potential on November 20, 2015, when the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Murabitun operating in Mali's northern deserts attacked Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali's capital to capture hostages to be used as bargaining chips. More than 20 people were killed, and eventually the local security forces gained control.
Using Libya's Coast to Infiltrate Asylum-Seekers into Europe

18. Smuggling asylum-seekers and emigrants from North Africa seeking work, mainly from Libya, into Italy is a profitable business, estimated as worth between $255 and $333 million a year merely.\(^5\) There is a flow of asylum-seekers and immigrants African and Arab countries to Libya. From there they are sailed to Europe in often-unseaworthy vessels not suitable for passengers. The industry is organized by gangs of criminals, local militias and terrorist organizations, among them ISIS, all of which regard them as source of profit.

19. According to UN figures, during the first half of 2015 approximately 137,000 refugees fled from Libya to Europe by sea. Some left because of the war and other events in Libya and others came to Libya from Arab and African countries. The figure represents a growth of 83% compared with first half of 2013 (Al-Arabiya, July 14, 2015). According to the International Organization for Migration on December 24, 2015, more than a million refugees and emigrants entered Europe overland and by sea in 2015. Most of them came via Turkey and Greece, and some (150,000) reached Italy by sea from North Africa (AP, quoted in Haaretz, December 24, 2015). Close to half a million asylum-seekers gather in Libya seeking to cross the

Mediterranean Sea to Europe, sailing in unseaworthy vessels (The Guardian, June 6, 2015).

20. ISIS also entered the industry of infiltrating asylum-seekers and work-seeking emigrants into Europe, made easy by its takeover of a long stretch of Libya's coastline and national maritime facilities (ports, anchorages and coast guard vessels). The cruelty with which it generally treats the local population in areas it takes control of will probably act as a catalyst for the exit of Libyans, as in Iraq and Syria. On May 17, 2015, Abd al-Basit Haroun, intelligence advisor to the Libyan government, said that ISIS was using vessels smuggling refugees into Europe to transport its operatives. He added that ISIS was making millions of dollars by participating in the networks smuggling refugees and that it used the money to fund its terrorist activities (Tahrirnews.com, May 17, 2015).

Terrorist Attacks against Italy and Other European Countries

21. So far, ISIS's branch in Libya has not initiated attacks on Italy or Western Europe. In the meantime, ISIS's branch in Libya contents itself with threatening Italy in general and Rome in particular (both as the capital city and a symbol of Christianity):

1) On February 12, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account posted a map indicating that the distance between Sirte and Rome was 1,250 kilometers (about
775 miles). He added that the distance between Sirte and Sicily was 450 miles. According to the poster, Scud missiles could reach Italy from Libya.

2) On August 23, 2015, a Libyan ISIS-affiliated Twitter account posted the claim that Libya was "the key to Europe and the pathway to Rome, if Allah wills it." Also posted was a picture of a masked ISIS operative saying, "We will conquer Rome, with the help of Allah, that is the promise of our prophet [Muhammad]..." On August 22, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account posted a call to the "soldiers of the Caliphate" to conquer Rome, as well as a map of northern Libya inscribed "the gateway to Rome." ISIS's monthly periodical Dabiq posted a picture of the ISIS flag flying over the Vatican.

Examples of Threats Posted on ISIS-Affiliated Twitter Accounts

Left: Masked ISIS operative threatens to conquer Rome. Right: Rome is within Scud missile range (Twitter account affiliated with ISIS, August 23, 2015).

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6 The distance between Sirte and Rome is 1,237 kilometers, about 769 miles, and between Sirte and Sicily 696 kilometers, or 432 miles.
Tweet calling Libya "the key to Europe and the pathway to Rome, if Allah wills it" (August 23, 2015).

Left: Map of the Mediterranean Sea north of Libya. The Arabic reads, "Enlist for the conquest of Rome" and over Libya, "The gateway to Rome" (Twitter account affiliated with ISIS, August 22, 2015) Right: Montage of structures in Rome with the ISIS flag. The Arabic reads, "Soldiers of the Caliphate, come one and all to conquer Rome" (Twitter account affiliated with ISIS, August 22, 2015).
22. ISIS has probably not yet attacked Italy from Libya because its top priority is establishing itself in Libya and expanding into neighboring countries (especially Tunisia). Regarding terrorist attacks abroad, so far ISIS has in fact given priority to Paris over Rome (“Paris before Rome”). However, ISIS will probably attack Italy as it establishes itself in Libya and dispatching terrorists to Europe from its power base in Syria becomes more difficult.


**Libya as a Possible Alternative to Iraq and Syria**

23. **During the past year the momentum of ISIS’s expansion in Iraq and Syria was stalled.** In Iraq it lost important cities to the Iraqi security forces (Tikrit, Baiji and Ramadi) and in Syria it was pushed back from the Turkish border by the Kurdish militias (and lost Kobanî, Tel al-Abiad and Al-Hasakah). **However, during the past year there has been a mass influx of ISIS operatives into Libya.** That led researchers and sources in Libya (hostile to ISIS) to assume that should ISIS lose its strongholds in Iraq and Syria, **Libya was liable to become an alternative base.** In

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7 On November 19, 2015, after the terrorist attack in Paris, ISIS in Iraq issued a video entitled “Paris before Rome,” in which ISIS operatives praised the attack in Paris and threatened to attack other locations in France as well as the United States. One operative said that the attacks in Paris were “the start, before the conquest of Rome” (akhbardawlatalislam.wordpress.com).
that case, if ISIS’s strongholds in Iraq and Syria suffered a significant blow, the leadership would move to Sirte.  

24. The information based ISIS sources gives no indication that the organization was considering the above move. In all probability ISIS’s entrenchment in Libya is still in its early stages and faces too many difficulties for the country to serve as an alternative to its territorial base. It is also likely that such a scenario depends primarily on the outcome of ISIS’s campaign in Iraq and Syria, which is far from being decided.

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8 See Yoram Schweitzer, One Year Since the Establishment of the Islamic State: Al-Baghdadi's Successful Gamble, Thus Far. The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), INSS Insight No. 715, 29 June 2015. http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=9960. Also see the interview with Omar Adam, commander of one of the Libyan militias, with the Times (Businessinsider.com)
Section 2: Milestones in the Consolidation of ISIS's Power in Libya

Overview

1. ISIS established itself in Libya in three main stages:

1) **Stage one: Libyan jihadists went to join the fighting in Syria and then began returning (2012–2014):** Libyan fighters were actively enlisted from a number of cities, especially Derna and Tripoli. Most of them joined the ranks of ISIS and established a military unit called the Al-Battar Battalion. Their numbers rose from a few hundred to about a thousand.

2) **Stage two: Establishing a territorial power base in Derna and eastern Libya (April 2014 – June 2015):** ISIS operatives returning from Syria established a stronghold in Derna (Barqa Province). After a year they were expelled from Derna and the towns surrounding it by a coalition of the Tobruk government and a local Al-Qaeda-affiliated jihadist organization. Today ISIS operatives are still entrenched to the south of Derna and so far have resisted pressure to drive them out.

3) **Stage three: Establishing a territorial base in Sirte and spreading from there to the surrounding regions (April 18, 2015 to the present):** During 2015 ISIS established itself in Sirte, a coastal city in north-central Libya and Qaddafi's former stronghold, and declared the establishment of the Islamic State's "Tripoli Province." It tightened its hold over the city and turned it and the surrounding area into its main territorial base, which serves as a springboard for taking control of areas to the east and south.
In the east, ISIS’s stronghold in Derna, which was weakened. In the center, ISIS’s power base in Sirte (Google Maps).

**Stage One: Libyan Jihadists Leave for Syria as Foreign Fighters and Return (2012-2014)**

2. Derna is a port city in eastern Libya with a population of between 100,000 and 200,000. It lies between Tobruk and Benghazi, with the sea to the north and the desert to the south. It is dominated by the mountainous region of Al-Fataih, currently ISIS’s regional foothold. Derna is near the coastal road and the highway links it to Tobruk in the west and the commercial-industrial city of Bayda in the east (the seat of the internationally-recognized Tobruk government).

3. Under Qaddafi Derna became a hotbed of jihadist operatives seeking to overthrow the government. The coup failed but the Qaddafi regime found it difficult to rout the rebels completely because of the city’s topography. Thus Derna became the main source of Libyan jihadists who went to Syria in 2012 to fight against the Assad regime. Their numbers have reached about 1,000. Most of them joined ISIS; the others joined the Al-Nusra Front and other rebel organizations. While a civil war began after the fall of Qaddafi (which has not yet ended), the Libyan jihadists preferred to fight the Assad regime in Syria, joining ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front.

4. In December 2012 a group of Libyan foreign fighters in Syria announced the establishment of a military unit called the Al-Battar Battalion. In their Shi‘ite-biased announcement, they thanked the "citizens of Derna" for supporting them against Assad. Later, in 2014, Al-Battar Battalion fighters in Syria swore allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and fought in the organization’s ranks.
5. In April 2014 about 300 Al-Battar Battalion fighters returned and established ISIS's first territorial foothold at Derna, from where the organization spread to other sites in Libya. They also established an organizational framework for their activities called Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam ("the advisory council of Islamic youth"). They included not only Libyan operatives, but also foreign fighters from Arab and African countries joined the Libyan operatives.

**Stage Two: Establishing and Strengthening ISIS's Territorial Stronghold in Derna (April 2014 – June 2015)**

**The City of Derna**

6. On April 10, 2014, the Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam officially declared its establishment. As is customary in ISIS, the declaration was accompanied by a show of force in the streets of Derna. Masked, uniformed operatives drove pickup trucks and carried weapons. They flew the ISIS flag and declared they would provide Derna with security and enforce Islamic law.

7. A month later the Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam established a Sharia committee to manage Derna's Islamic legal system, and immediately began taking control of the city and its surroundings. Its operatives took over the city's institutions and forced its inhabitants to obey strict Salafist Islamic law. That included a ban on drinking alcohol and selling cigarettes, the confiscation of drugs and inflicting punishment...
according to the Sharia. As in other cities, ISIS also established a **morality police force** (*hisba*), which brutally enforced the new behavior codes.

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Left: ISIS patrols the streets of Derna (Bawabat al-Shorouq, October 6, 2014). Right: Execution in the Derna soccer stadium of a man convicted of armed robbery (Akhbar Libya, August 19, 2014).

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Three homosexuals are executed in Derna (Lini4.blogspot, May 2, 2015).

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8. On June 22, 2014, two months after it gained a foothold in Derna, the **Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam declared its support for the Islamic State and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, saying, "To our blessed sheikh, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, may Allah preserve him, we say the following: act, and may Allah's blessing be upon you, and do not pay attention to the stragglers." They called for "the support of the oppressed Islamic State" and expressed confidence that the Islamic State would survive despite those seeking to destroy it.
9. After the establishment of a territorial foothold in Derna the ISIS leadership in Iraq sent three senior operatives to lead it and support it in spreading to other regions in Libya. In September 2014 the following operatives arrived in Derna: a Yemeni operative known as Abu al-Baraa al-Azadi, a Saudi Arabian operative known as Abu Habib al-Jazrawi and an Iraq operative known as Abu Nabil al-Anbari (who died in an American aerial targeted killing in November 2015). They functioned as ISIS's command in Libya. While they were in Derna they extended the control of ISIS's Derna branch to the areas surrounding the city and strengthened the ties between ISIS in Derna and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

10. Under their leadership ISIS took control of Derna and the surrounding towns and villages, thereby creating a genuine threat to the Tobruk government and the local militias. On October 5, 2014, the ISIS declared eastern Libya, with Derna at its center, as "Barqa Province of the Islamic State." The declaration was accompanied, as usual, by a show of force in the streets which included a convoy of ISIS operatives in ATVs flying the ISIS flag and shouting "Allahu Akbar" and "The Islamic State remains [firm]," on October 6, 2014.

11. After the declaration ISIS began expanding its areas of control and integrating other organizations into Barqa Province. On November 10, 2014, the Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam held a rally in Derna attended by representatives of other jihadist organizations which jointly declared they were joining the Islamic State and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. After the swearing-in ceremony, ISIS operatives held a show of force in the city, riding in a long convoy with armed, masked operatives waving ISIS flags.
Left: A convoy of armed, masked ISIS operatives in a show of force in Derna on November 10, 2014 (themagherebinote.files.wordpress.com). Right: The logo of the Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam, composed of the ISIS flag attached to a rifle and waving over an open Qur’an. The Arabic reads, “The Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam – the foundation of the [Islamic] faith is the book [the Qur’an] which shows the way, and the victorious sword” (Justpaste.it).

12. As part of entrenching itself ISIS in Derna established a series of administrative institutions to fill the governmental vacuum (as ISIS did in Mosul, Al-Raqqah and other cities). ISIS operatives set up ministries of education and religious endowments (wakf), an Islamic moral police force (hisba), an Islamic criminal police force, Sharia courts, an office of public services and even a local radio station. The ministries and institutions were established in buildings that had previously housed the Qaddafi regime.

Expelling ISIS Operatives from Derna and the Surrounding Areas

13. Because of Derna's geographical proximity to Tobruk it was clearly in the interest of the Libyan army, which supports the Tobruk government, to rid the region of ISIS's presence. To that end the Libyan army collaborated with the local Al-Qaeda branch, a jihadist organization in Derna calling itself the Shura Mujahideen Council, apparently assuming that the local branch of Al-Qaeda was less dangerous than ISIS.\(^9\)

14. The Al-Qaeda-affiliated Shura Mujahideen Council is a jihadist organization was established in Derna on December 12, 2014, by Salem Dirbi. On June 9, 2015, he was killed fighting against ISIS. After his death the Shura Mujahideen Council declared a campaign against the ISIS branch in Derna in collaboration with the Libyan army, which supported the Tobruk government.

15. During the second half of 2015 the anti-ISIS coalition retook Derna and expelled the ISIS operatives. The operatives set fire to the offices of the wakf and the Sharia court, apparently to keep documents with information about ISIS supporters in Derna from falling into the coalition's hands. Most of the ISIS operatives fled and found refuge in the surrounding areas, especially in the mountainous region of Al-Fataih, which dominates the city to the south. They entrenched

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\(^9\) Out of considerations of vested interests and opportunism, rebel organizations in Syria collaborate with the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, and not with ISIS although the Al-Nusra Front is not potentially less dangerous.
themselves in the region and from there continue to fight their enemies. So far attempts to expel them from the south of the city have not been successful.

The mountainous region of Al-Fataih (yellow) south of Derna, where the ISIS operatives found refuge (Wikimapia).

16. The wresting of Derna from ISIS included **ridding towns and villages to its east and west of ISIS operatives** (see map). On June 19, 2015, the Libyan army took control of the **Jabal al-Akhdar** coast about 65 kilometers (40 miles) west of Derna (Akhbar Libya, June 19, 2015). On June 21, 2015, the Tobruk government said in a statement that ISIS's June 19, 2015 attack on the town of **Martuba** (about 25 kilometers southeast of Derna) had failed (Al-Jazeera, June 21, 2015). On June 19, 2015, the Libyan army announced it had liberated the town of **Ras al-Hilal**, west of Derna.

The towns and villages around Derna taken from ISIS in June 2015 (Google Maps).
17. On November 15, 2015, the Shura Mujahideen Council in Derna announced the beginning of a ground offensive to take control of the Al-Fataih region from ISIS. The campaign was waged in collaboration with Tobruk government army forces. The jihadists, with army support, attacked ISIS operatives, and according to their claims killed thirty of them, including foreign ISIS fighters from Egypt, Tunisia and Chad (Al-Jazeera, November 15-16; Akhbar al-Hadath, November 18, 2015). The Libyan army also struck ISIS positions in Al-Fataih from the air.

18. The Shura Mujahideen Council in Derna and the Libyan army has not (as of January 2016) completely rid the Al-Fataih region of ISIS operatives even though the organization suffered heavy losses. That might have been the result of friction between the two opposing forces after their success in forcing ISIS out of Derna and its surroundings. "Jihadist sources" claimed the Libyan army was raising difficulties for the Mujahideen Shura Council. The Council, although affiliated with Al-Qaeda, is apparently still willing to hold a dialogue with the Libyan government on condition a unity government is established (see below).

19. In addition, the Libyan army, under Khalifa Belqasim Haftar, cannot focus on fighting ISIS in Derna because it is fighting on other fronts as well (against the forces supporting the Islamic government in Tripoli and the Islamic militias in Benghazi). ISIS has entrenched itself to the south of the city to face an expected attack and in the hopes of retaking Derna when the time is right.

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At the end of December 2015 the Libyan media reported that the Libyan army air force attack in the Al-Fataih region killed Faraj Kiban al-Obeidi, a senior ISIS operative in Derna.
The City of Benghazi

20. **Benghazi is located in eastern Libya and is the second largest city in the country.** For the most part it is controlled by jihadist and Islamist operatives, some of them affiliated with Al-Qaeda, some with ISIS and some independent. Inside the city there are many armed factions fighting one another but which participated in toppling the Qaddafi regime. Currently the various factions are divided in their support of the two rival Libyan governments while waging power struggles with each other. The ISIS operatives are concentrated in a number of neighborhoods in the city, including the center of the city and the coastal region.

21. **ISIS in Benghazi was weak.** That was because of the proximity of the pro-Tobruk Libyan army; the large number of rival militias, the blows it sustained in Derna and the physical separation from its power base in and around Sirte. Its position in Benghazi was strengthened to a certain extent in April 2015, when Abu Abdallah al-Libi, a senior Ansar al-Sharia operative in Benghazi, defected from the organization and joined ISIS (as did other Ansar al-Sharia operatives in other cities). Al-Libi is influential among jihadist operations in Benghazi and is regarded as the jihadist religious authority in the city. He currently serves as an ISIS Sharia judge in Benghazi and uses the social networks to post articles and religious edicts (fatwas) in support of ISIS.
From a series of pictures issued by the Barqa Province information office documenting the humanitarian aid ISIS gives the population in Benghazi (Alfarough.com, January 15, 2015).

22. After ISIS operatives were expelled from Derna its strength declined throughout eastern Libya. The situation was apparently of concern for the ISIS leadership in Iraq and Syria. At the end of July 2015 ISIS announced the arrival in Benghazi of six commanders from Iraq and Syria, sent by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to rehabilitate the organization in eastern Libya in general and Benghazi in particular. On January 16, 2016, a video was issued documenting ISIS operatives training in Benghazi. It ended with operatives swearing allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiya, January 16, 2016).

Stage Three: Establishing a New Power Base in Sirte and The Surrounding Regions (February 2015 to the present)

The City of Sirte

23. Sirte is a large coastal city in north-center Libya between Tripoli and Benghazi. It has about 60,000 inhabitants (70% of the population present at the time of the Qaddafi era). In its surrounding rural area, controlled by ISIS, there are about 105,000 people. It was Qaddafi’s city of birth and power base. Therefore it was fostered by his regime, which constructed the Ouagadougou conference center, now apparently used by ISIS as its headquarters. In August 2011 the city, the last stronghold of Qaddafi supporters, fell to the rebels and on October 20, 2011, Muammar Qaddafi was killed there.

11 According to the Libyan newspaper Al-Wasat (July 19, 2014). Under Qaddafi its population was around 140,000.
24. Sirte is home to the governmental-economic infrastructure, including banks, roads and railroads, a port, army and air force bases, the Ghardabiya international airport and the visitors' center. It is also a center for economic projects, including a modern water system and an electrical power plant, all of which fell to ISIS and now support its efforts to establish itself in Sirte and the surrounding areas. The port of Sidr lies about 180 kilometers (about 112 miles) to the east. It is Libya's largest oil port, and to its south are Libya's large oilfields (see below).

25. The fall of the Qaddafi regime created a governmental vacuum in Sirte which was quickly filled by a Salafist-jihadi organization called Ansar al-Sharia. It is supported by the local tribesmen, and until ISIS took control of the city it managed
daily life. However, when its leader was killed, the organization's operatives looked for a new ally and turned to ISIS, which at the time had declared the founding of the Islamic Caliphate. The result was that Ansar al-Sharia operatives in Sirte and other locations joined the ranks of ISIS and helped it take over Sirte and other towns and cities in western Libya. According to Makhlouf Ramadan Salim, who was a member of the Sirte city council and fled to Misrata, ISIS operatives began showing themselves in Sirte at the beginning of 2015 and quickly became a public presence (New York Times, November 29, 2015).

**ISIS Takeover of Sirte**

26. The takeover of Sirte was probably planned by the ISIS leadership in eastern Libya at the beginning of 2015. First ISIS operatives were sent to the city to prepare the way. After a short time a mobile ISIS force sent from Derna in Toyota pickup trucks. The ISIS operatives entered the city on February 18, 2015 in a convoy of dozens of vehicles and were not met with significant resistance. They took over the city and declared the establishment of the Islamic State's "Tripoli Province." Since then Sirte has become the territorial base of ISIS's branch in Libya. Its importance increased in June 2015 after ISIS's strength waned in Derna and all eastern Libya.

27. The convoy that entered Sirte drove to the Ansar al-Sharia headquarters. Most of the organization's operatives welcomed ISIS and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. They were joined by many Sirte residents who had supported Qaddafi. According to The Telegraph, "'When they arrived they were just a small number,' said Milad, a resident, who spoke anonymously for fear of reprisals. 'But then many locals joined them. They see them as the only way to have power in post-Qaddafi Libya.'"12

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ISIS operatives enter Sirte on February 18, 2015, in a convoy of ATVs. They carry Kalashnikov assault rifles, machine guns, RPG launchers and anti-aircraft weapons (Nasher.me and Twitter).

28. Like Mosul in Iraq, Sirte was captured by a small force of ISIS operatives who experienced no real resistance. A brigade from the city of Misrata sent to Sirte in March 2015 to retake the city did not even reach its outskirts. The brigade commanders claimed they had been surprised by a large, heavily armed local ISIS force. The fighters from Misrata, on the other hand, complained that for months they had not received salaries (a common complaint among Libyan army and militia fighters).

29. Having entered Sirte, ISIS operatives took over local banks and confiscated tens of millions of dollars (as they did in Mosul after its conquest) (The Israeli economic newspaper Calcalist, November 16, 2015). A former member of the city council who escaped from Sirte said that the ISIS operatives commandeered the
houses and property of local residents who had fled. They turned them over to their own operatives, including foreign fighters, as "the spoils of war" (New York Times, November 19, 2015). ISIS operatives, as usual, erected roadblocks inside the city and along the coastal road, and examined passing cars.

ISIS operatives on the road leading to Sirte (I-libya.blogspot.co.il, April 29, 2015).

30. **ISIS's control of extensive sections of the coastal road in and leading to Sirte isolated the city from Tripoli and Benghazi.** That gave ISIS political leverage with the various forces operating in Libya, as well as a source of income (charging taxes and confiscating equipment). For example, it was reported that ISIS operatives in Sirte had confiscated a shipment of dialysis equipment en route from Tripoli to Benghazi. The equipment was rerouted to a hospital in Sirte for "the use of Muslims" (Akhbar Libya, December 18 and 24, 2015).
Section 3: ISIS Consolidates its Power in Sirte and the Surrounding Area

ISIS in Sirte and Its Local Allies

1. As in cities in Syria and Iraq, in Sirte ISIS controls the population with a small force, probably numbering no more than several hundred operatives. On March 15, 2015, sources in Sirte estimated that the number of ISIS operatives was between 200 and 400. In addition to those inside the city, there are also operatives manning roadblocks on the main roads leading to it. According to Omar al-Sinki, the minister of the interior in the Tobruk government, in April 2015 there were about 400 ISIS operatives in Sirte, among them Tunisians and Yemenis (the number may have increased by several hundred since then). It was also reported there were several hundred operatives of the Nigerian terrorist organization Boko Haram, which had sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and become the Islamic State's West African Province (see below).

2. ISIS's took control of Sirte with a small core of operatives through collaboration with local tribesmen and strong local militias:

   1) The tribes that joined ISIS in Sirte were the Furjan, the Qadhadhfa (Muammar Qaddafi's tribe and his main power base), the al-Amamra and the Warfalla.

   2) In addition, ISIS is supported by former Ansar al-Sharia jihadist operatives, among whom are fighters from Benghazi and Misrata. They apparently turned to ISIS because they considered it a powerful ally that would support them against their rivals, whose influence in western Libya increased after the Qaddafi regime fell.
3. The support ISIS receives from **Muammar Qaddafi's Qadhadhfa tribe** is particularly important. The tribe lives in Sirte and the surrounding area and considers itself the descendants of **Musa al-Kazem**, the great-grandson of Ali bin Abu Taleb, Muhammad's father-in-law. Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire the tribe migrated from the Arabian Peninsula to Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Chad and Niger to escape paying taxes (Fobe3.com, February 25, 2011).

4. The tribe is concentrated in the regions of **Sirte and Al-Saba'** (about 750 kilometers, or about 460 miles) south of Tripoli. Many of them became ISIS
supporters after the takeover of Sirte. Ahmed Qaddaf al-Dam, Muammar Qaddafi's first cousin and a senior figure in his regime, expressed support of ISIS in February 2015 (the month ISIS took over Sirte) (Bawaba al-Kahira, February 21, 2015).

**ISIS's Methods of Control in Sirte**

5. During the ten months since ISIS entered Sirte it has established itself in the city and tightened its grip. As in other cities the organization took control of, ISIS operatives began using force to impose a strict Salafist Islamic code on the population: "lawbreakers" were publicly beheaded in the city's main square; the Internet and local media were supervised and restricted; coed education was forbidden in the local universities and Islamic religious studies were enforced; women had to be veiled; coffee houses where hookahs were smoked were closed; coffee houses were closed during the hours of prayer; drugs, cigarettes and alcoholic drugs were destroyed and Islamic activities were organized (Qur'an knowledge competitions, da'wah events during the Islamic religious month of Ramadan, etc.).

An ISIS sign in Sirte instructing women to veil themselves (Picture distributed by Twitter and other social networks, July 16, 2015).

6. However, ISIS also provides the residents of Sirte with security: it established an Islamic police force to oversee law and order, organized security patrols for the city's various neighborhoods, and negotiates resolutions for controversies between tribes and families (including between residents of neighboring towns). It also provides welfare for Sirte inhabitants: it supports needy families, gives children presents during Ramadan, distributes school
supplies at the beginning of the school year, gives needy families food during Ramadan, etc.

7. As part of establishing itself in Sirte, ISIS founded governmental institutions enabling it to conduct the city's affairs and signaling that it planned to remain in the city over time. ISIS also took over existing institutions, such as a center for asylum-seekers, the Ibn Sina Hospital and Sirte University. In addition, ISIS established an Islamic morality police force (hisba), an Islamic court, a tax office, its own media outlets, including a radio station and TV channel.

8. In Sirte ISIS has nominated itself as the local leaders, some of them religious figures and some administrators. The most prominent cleric in Sirte is Hassan Karami, aka Abu Mu’awia al-Libi, who is in charge of the Friday sermons in Sirte's central mosque. Another important cleric is Turki bin Ali, a Bahraini who arrived in Sirte to restore the local inhabitants to the bosom of [Salafist] Islam. Osama Karameh was appointed by ISIS as a local administrator. He is a relative of a former senior intelligence officer of the Qaddafi regime (reminiscent of ISIS's collaboration in Iraq with former officers of the Saddam Hussein Baath regime.).

Establishing Relations with the Inhabitants of Sirte

10. About ten months after the takeover of the city, ISIS issued a document it called the "city charter" (wathiqat al-madinah), which regulates the daily lives of the inhabitants of Sirte and their relations with the Islamic State; it issued similar documents in Mosul and Al-Raqqah. The "city charters" are based on a policy of give and take: inhabitants are required to conduct their daily lives according to ISIS’s strict Salafist code and obey the organization's orders, and in return ISIS provides them with security and various governmental services, including health and welfare.

11. The main points of the "city charter" are the following, according to newspaper reports (@talqzeeri, December 10, 2015):

1) Islamic law (the Sharia) will be imposed on the city.

2) Alcohol, cigarettes and drug-use are forbidden.

3) Women must wear traditional Muslim dress (jilbab) and remain at home.

4) Money in the coffers of the "infidels" [i.e., the Qaddafi regime] will be returned to "Muslims" [i.e., the Islamic State]. The "Caliph" [i.e., Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi] will decide how to distribute the funds.

5) Residents are forbidden to have relations with "infidel" governments [i.e., the governments in Tobruk and Tripoli, struggling for control of Libya].
6) “Infidel” soldiers and policemen [i.e., who served under the Qaddafi regime or either of the two current governments] are ordered to report to designated locations to “repent” or be executed.

7) The existence of any [political] party or union or association of any kind is forbidden.

ISIS's "city charter" attributed to ISIS in Sirte (@talqzeeri, December 10, 2015).

ISIS Takes Control of Sirte’s Airport and Sea Port

12. On May 28, 2015, ISIS operatives took over the Ghardabiya airport, a dual-function airport used by the Libyan Air Force south of the city of Sirte and incorporating an international civilian airport. A battalion of the Libyan army, which until the takeover had held out against ISIS operatives, withdrew to Misrata. The airport fell to ISIS and its planes were blown up. The port of Sirte also fell into ISIS’s hands.
The Ghardabiya airport (Facebook page of Ghardabiya airport, August 1, 2014).

Military planes at Ghardabiya airport, blown up by ISIS (Al-Jazeera).
ISIS Takes Control of Economic Installations on the Outskirts of Sirte

13. About 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) southeast of Sirte is the "Great Man-Made River," a network of pipes that supplies water to the local inhabitants and the Sahara Desert in Libya. At the end of May 2015 ISIS operatives took control of it. A short time later, on June 9, 2015, ISIS operatives took over the power plant west of the city (BBC in Arabic, June 9, 2015).
Section 4: ISIS Expands to Other Locations in Libya

Overview

1. During 2015 ISIS took control of the regions surrounding Sirte, establishing the Islamic State's Tripoli Province. That culminated in the takeover of Sirte itself on February 19, 2015. ISIS also took control of the towns of Al-Nofaliya (February 8, 2015), Harawah (June 4, 2015), Al-Washkah (July 12, 2015) and Houn (July 12, 2015) (see map). ISIS currently seeks to take control of the large city of Misrata, northwest of Sirte, and Ajdabiya, to the east. Having taken control of Sirte, ISIS now controls 260 kilometers (about 160 miles) of the Libyan coastline, cutting off the east-west coastal road.

The region of Sirte under ISIS control (marked in black). Rival militias and organizations are engaged in a power struggle with ISIS in Misrata to the northwest and Ajdabiya to the east (Google Maps).
ISIS Expands in the Regions around Sirte

The Town of Al-Nofaliya (East of Sirte)

2. **Al-Nofaliya** is a desert town about 127 kilometers (about 75 miles) southeast of **Sirte**. Its importance comes from its proximity to **Sidr**, Libya's largest oil port (about 50 kilometers, or 30 miles distant). On **February 8, 2015**, eleven days before ISIS entered Sirte, its operatives took control of Al-Nofaliya. **Former Ansar al-Sharia operatives** in the town who had joined ISIS enabled the transfer of logistic support to the ISIS convoy of about 200 operatives in 40 pickup trucks that entered the town from the west and took control.
3. In Al-Nofaliya ISIS demanded its inhabitants swear allegiance of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Since then ISIS operatives have controlled the town and the coastal road to its north. It controls other sections of the road, and can cut off travel between east and west.

4. As is its custom, ISIS operatives enforced its strict Salafist code on the local population. Operatives documented the destruction of cigarettes and alcoholic beverages, distributed flyers and began training new, local operatives.

The Town of Harawah (East of Sirte)

5. The town of Harawah lies about 70 kilometers (about 45 miles) east of Sirte. About three and a half months after ISIS took over Sirte, it sent operatives who took
over Harawah. That was made possible by successful negotiations between the local tribal chieftains and ISIS operatives for the return of three hostages. The withdrawal of the Libyan Dawn (Fajr Libya) forces, which supported the Tripoli government, pushed the local inhabitants to surrender to ISIS (Libyaherald.com, June 6, 2015). **ISIS operatives reached an arrangement with the local tribal chieftains who allowed them to enter the town and raise the ISIS flag without bloodshed.**

6. Once in control of Harawah ISIS established control over the town and enforced its strict Islamic code on the inhabitants. ISIS also instituted law and order and provided the local inhabitants with welfare services. Operatives set up **five roadblocks along the coastal road** to control the traffic passing through the region (and to profit from its control).
ISIS signs in Harawah preaching solidarity with the Islamic State (Islamic State website, November 6, 2016).

ISIS operatives on a boat commandeered in Harawah (Dump.to file sharing site, June 6, 2015).
Images:

Left: One of the roadblocks set up by ISIS on the coastal road near the town of Harawah. Right: ISIS operatives in Harawah after the takeover (Dump.to file sharing site, June 6, 2015).

ISIS Takeover of Other Sites in the Region around Sirte

On July 12, 2015, ISIS took control of the town of Al-Washkah, located about 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of Sirte (and about 120 kilometers southeast of Misrata). There as well it did not meet with resistance once the Libyan Dawn forces withdrew. Sources in the town of Abu Hadi, south of Sirte, reported that an ISIS convoy of about 100 heavily armed vehicles had passed through on July 11, 2016 en route to the region of Houn and had camped there in preparation for entering the region of Al-Jufra. On June 20, 2015, ISIS took control of the village of Wadi Zamzam south of Misrata.

Other Cities in Libya Where ISIS is Present but Does Not Have Effective Control

The City of Misrata

The city of Misrata lies on the coast halfway between Sirte and Tripoli and is home to Libya's largest port. It has played an important role in Libya's internal power struggles in recent years and has one of the strongest militias supporting the Islamic government in Tripoli. Because of its economic and strategic importance it is in ISIS’s crosshairs, which seeks to control the city and entire territory surrounding it. It is therefore likely to be ISIS's next target, and an ISIS takeover of Misrata will be a genuine threat to western Libya in general and the capital city of Tripoli in particular.
The Misrata port (Website of Misrata Land of Heroes, December 16, 2015).

Misrata and to the south, the village of Wadi Zamzam, reached by ISIS operatives in June 2015 (Google Maps).

9. ISIS's first presence in Misrata was noted a year ago. It **grew from a handful of operatives to its current presence of several hundred**, among them foreign fighters from various regional countries. As in other cities, in Misrata the ISIS leadership is in the hands of **foreign fighters**. Apparently ISIS has an effective intelligence network in Misrata. Truck drivers from the city who were captured and imprisoned in Sirte stated their interrogators had good information about their families and other personal details (New York Times, November 28, 2015).

10. **ISIS apparently seeks to take control of Misrata, thereby creating a territorial continuum between it and Sirte.** As in other locations, in Misrata ISIS is trying to take the city without frontally confronting the local militias. It is forming
alliances with local residents and the strong controlling militias, and is supervising the roads leading in and out of the city.\textsuperscript{13} So far its attempts have been rejected, and apparently it does not effectively control the city. However, its forces are located to the south, control the coastal road eastward, and present a genuine threat to the city.

The City of Sabratah

11. Sabratah is an important city to the west of Tripoli and its location separates it from the ISIS’s territorial stronghold in Sirte. It lies halfway between Tripoli and the Tunisian border crossing at Ras Ajdir. It is near the Mellitah oil and gas complex west of Tripoli, the largest gas-producing facility in Libya, which contributes to its importance.

Sabratah, with Tripoli to the east, and the Mellitah oil and gas complex and the Tunisian border crossing to the west (Google Maps).

\textsuperscript{13} In the past ISIS, on several occasions ISIS issued appeals to local residents, including a letter to "the youth of Misrata." ISIS asked them to sacrifice their lives for the sake of Allah instead of democracy and parliamentary government, and encouraged Misrata's militiamen to "repent" and join the ranks of the Islamic State.
12. In Sabratah as in other cities, ISIS derives support from local Salafist Ansar al-Sharia operatives who joined the organization. Nur al-Islam ("the light of Islam") is another local Islamist organization that supports ISIS. On May 5, 2015, organization operatives reportedly entered a number of high schools and distributed CDs of ISIS propaganda songs praising jihad.

13. ISIS is currently engaged in power struggles with the local militias controlling Sabratah; so far without decisive results. Sources in the city reported that after three ISIS operatives had been arrested, two Tunisians and one Libyan, ISIS held a show of strength, its operatives riding around the city in more than 30 vehicles for several hours. They also erected roadblocks southeast of the city in the Al-Khatatba region to control the eastern entrance into Sabratah. In the wake of ISIS's show of strength the Tunisian army sent reinforcements to its border with Libya (Al-Hadath, Tunisie-telegraph, and the Facebook page of the Dinar Valley News Agency, December 10, 2015; Daily Mail, December 11, 2015).

The City of Ajdabiya

14. Ajdabiya is a city in north-central Libyan east of Sirte, beyond ISIS’s control. It lies south of Benghazi and east of Sidr. The country's largest oilfields and oil facilities are located nearby, the area known as Libya's "oil crescent." It is therefore of particular importance to ISIS, the Libyan army supporting the Tobruk government and the various militias.
Ajdabiya and the oil facilities and Ra’s Lanuf to the west (Google Maps).

15. **Power** struggles are ongoing in Ajdabiya between the various Salafi-jihadist militias, including ISIS. Operating inside the city are ISIS, Ansar al-Sharia and a local jihadist organization called the Shura Mujahideen Council of Ajdabiya. Some of the city's dignitaries and tribes collaborate with the organizations. Reportedly, there are also jihadist fighters from Morocco, the Sinai Peninsula, Tunisia, Chad and other African countries. The Libyan army supporting the Tobruk government is also involved.

16. **At the end of October–beginning of November 2015 ISIS initiated an offensive to take control of Ajdabiya.** Its main targets were the Libyan army and Shura Mujahideen Council of Ajdabiya. ISIS claimed it had taken control of several areas in the southern part of the city. At the same time it began a campaign to murder its enemies to rout them, including soldiers, policemen and Salafist-jihadists (Akhbar Libya, October 30, 2015; Al-Bawaba, October 31, 2015). On November 25, 2015, ISIS assassinated two Salafist sheikhs. ISIS has apparently not yet managed to overcome local resistance in Ajdabiya and consolidate its power.

17. At the end of December 2015 the social networks posted the information that the Shura Mujahideen Council of Ajdabiya had sworn allegiance to ISIS. However, the organization denied it (Akhbar al-Libya, December 31, 2015 and January 3, 2016). On the other hand, ISIS claimed that **Muhammad al-Zawi**, a local militia leader, and his operatives had sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. **The swearing of allegiance and denials are an indication of the power struggles in the city between ISIS and its opponents.**
ISIS's Presence in Tripoli and to the West

The Capital City of Tripoli

18. ISIS has a presence in Tripoli and the surrounding areas but the city is controlled by rival Islamic militias that support the Islamic government. ISIS’s presence is apparently located in the Souk al-Jumaa (“Friday market”) neighborhood, the home base of Islamist foreign fighters who go to fight in Syria and Iraq. Some of them who fought in Syria returned to Tripoli and today form the core of the ISIS operatives in the city. However, their presence is apparently still limited.

19. ISIS wages terrorist attacks from the areas surrounding the city, targeting the Tripoli government and militias supporting it. It considers the Libyan Dawn militia, dominant today in Tripoli, as its prime enemy. ISIS operatives made their presence and activity in Tripoli felt with a number of attacks, the most prominent of which targeted the Corinthia Hotel (January 27, 2015, see below). On May 22, 2015, ISIS in Libya issued pictures of a "secret explosives laboratory" near Tripoli, where it claimed it was manufacturing IEDs and car bombs to be used against its enemies.

Left: IEDs manufactured in the laboratory. Right: Welding a thick metal plate as armor for a car bomb to be driven by a suicide bomber (I-libya.blogspot.co.il).

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14 The Souk al-Jumaa neighborhood is the home of Libyan Islamist jihadist Abd al-Hakim Belhadj, who fought in Afghanistan in the 1990s. He was the leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which sought to overthrow Qaddafi. Today he is a senior member of an Islamic party affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.
Left: IEDs ready for use. Right: Making an IED (i-libya.blogspot.co.il).

**ISIS Seeks Control of Libya's Oil Industry**

Cartoon of ISIS's aspiration to take over the Sidr oil port. According to the Arabic, it is only 60 kilometers (about 37 miles) distant (Star Time blog).

**Overview of Libya’s Oil Industry**

20. **Libya is the oil-producing country with the world’s ninth largest oil reserves.** Under Qaddafi it was responsible for 95% of the country’s income and supplied 11% of Europe’s oil. In 2014, however, Europe imported only 3.4% of its oil from Libya. Libya has the potential to become a major oil exporter again (Businessinsider.com, November 30, 2015).

21. **Before the fall of Qaddafi, Libya could produce 1.6 million barrels of oil a day.** After the revolution, it still produced about 1.4 million barrels, but since then, especially during the past two years, **production has declined**. Nevertheless, some of
its oil wells are still productive and most of the oil is marketed to Europe (with ups and downs in the scope of production, as can be seen by the graph). According to information from Bloomberg, in November 2015 Libya produced 375,000 barrels of oil a day (Rigzone.com, December 22, 2015).

22. Libya's oil industry is officially administered by the National Oil Corporation (NOC). The NOC is officially subordinate to the Tobruk government and recognized by the international community, but in reality its headquarters are in Tripoli, where a rival Islamic government is in control and dictates its activities. That being the case, the Tobruk government established a separate NOC management which represents Libya in international oil dealings. It recently signed an agreement with the Egyptian General Petroleum Corp (Rigzone.com, December 22, 2015). However, Libya's main problem is not managerial, but rather its inability to produce a steady supply of oil and market it abroad. The chaos in most of Libya has driven foreign oil companies away and prevents the country from realizing its huge oil and gas potential.

23. The control of Libya's oil industry, most of which is located in the eastern part of the country, has tremendous political importance. During the past two years the two rival governments and various militias have been waging a struggle to control the industry and the profit derived from it. The situation was complex, and is now more so since ISIS has entered the field.
ISIS’s Objectives

24. ISIS also wants to enjoy the profits derived from Libya’s oil and gas industry. It has the advantage of having established a territorial base in Sirte and its surrounding regions. East and southeast are the oilfields and important oil industry facilities (see map). That includes the large oil port of Sidr and the Ra’s Lanuf oil installations.

25. ISIS does not have the technical knowledge necessary to operate and maintain Libya’s oil and gas industry nor to market it abroad (especially not to the West). Therefore it will probably use the same sort of "protection" it does in Iraq and Syria, that is, taking over or threatening the industry to position itself as an important actor in the division of Libyan oil profits. Its stronghold in Sirte is a convenient location from which to threaten the oil fields and facilities throughout Libya.

26. In the meantime, ISIS has the capabilities to prevent the Tobruk and Tripoli governments, the Libyan army and the various militias from receiving any potential income from Libya’s oil industry. It hopes to use its leverage to weaken them and their military and governmental capabilities, and advance its primary objective, the takeover of the country.
27. During 2015 and the beginning of 2016, ISIS tried several times to take over or sabotage the oil facilities and fields. That was mainly after it established its control over the springboard of Sirte and its surroundings. So far ISIS does not seem to have made significant inroads, but its efforts continue. If it does derive profit from the oil and gas fields, it will be able to upgrade its military and governmental capabilities in Libya and it did in Syria and Iraq.

ISIS Strives for Control of the Port of Sidr and Ra's Lanuf

28. The port of Sidr is Libya's largest oil-exporting terminal and lies about 180 kilometers (about 110 miles) east of Sirte. It has four anchorages for large oil tankers and 19 oil tanks which can store 6.2 million barrels of crude oil. The port is run by the Waha Oil Company, which is owned by Libya's national oil company and three America oil companies. The crude oil flows into Sidr through a 1,400 kilometer (870 mile) network of pipes (Wikipedia).

29. At 23 kilometers (14 miles) to the east of the port lie the large oil facilities of Ra's Lanuf. They include a refinery, main oil terminal, extensive petrochemical industry and two airports (Wikipedia).

The port of Sidr and to its east, the town of Ra's Lanuf (circled in red), home of large petrochemical industries (Bawabat Africa, December 22, 2014).
30. On March 4, 2011, following the fall of the Qaddafi regime, rebel organizations took control of Ra's Lanuf. Since then the city has passed back and forth between government and rebel control several times. As a result, commercial activity came to a halt in Ra's Lanuf and Sidr. At the beginning of July 2014, Ali al-Hasi, described as the "spokesman" for the armed militants besieging the main oil ports in eastern Libya, reported that his men had agreed to reopen the ports at Ra's Lanuf and Sidr as a "goodwill gesture," after having been in control over them for about a year (Elbadil.com). In August 2014 a tanker of crude oil left the terminal of Ra's Lanuf for the first time since the rebels had enforced a closure.

31. On July 2, 2014, the terminal at Ra's Lanuf was again activated after what was described as "a substantial improvement" in the security situation. On the other hand,
NOC chief **Mustafa Sanalla** called the security situation in the region "fragile" (Platts, July 9, 2015).

32. However, in December 2014 activity was again halted in Sidr and Ra's Lanuf after an attack by the Libyan Dawn militia. The attack caused a fire which burned for several days. The NOC then closed the two ports because of what it called "force majeure" (Libya-businessnews.com).

**ISIS Attempts to Take Control of Sidr and Ra's Lanuf**

33. **On October 1, 2015, a group of ISIS operatives attacked the port of Sidr**, riding in vehicles and firing automatic weapons at the port's western gate. At the same time, a Toyota truck loaded with explosives sped towards its main gate, apparently driven by a suicide bomber. The port guards opened fire and repelled the attack. Four people were killed: three security guards and one ISIS operative, apparently the truck driver. His identity was not made known, but he was apparently from the sub-Sahara and not a Libyan. The truck, which did not explode, was found to contain an "enormous" amount of explosives (Libyaschannel.com, October 2, 2015, libyaobserver.ly, October 1, 2015).

34. **At the end of October 2015 ISIS made another unsuccessful attempt to take control of Ra's Lanuf.** ISIS operatives attacked a site 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) from the port and detonated a car bomb near the port's southern gate. The force securing the port repelled the attackers (Website of Al-Shabiba, October 29, 2015).

35. **On January 4, 2016, ISIS took over the city of Ben Jawad**, which beyond the edge of its control, in proximity to the port of Sidr and Ra's Lanuf. As is its custom, it instituted its morality police force (*hisba*) and began activities to enforce Islamic law. ISIS also erected a roadblock on the main road near Ben Jawad.
Left: ISIS road block near the city of Ben Jawad. Right: Piles of cigarettes in Ben Jawad before ISIS’s morality police force sets them on fire (Aamaq, January 7, 2016).

36. Immediately after taking control of Ben Jawad, ISIS operatives attacked the port of Sidr (January 4, 2016). The attack began with a suicide bomber who blew himself up at the gate of the port and a barrage of rockets and artillery. Afterwards, ISIS operatives stormed the port and clashed with security guards. The guards repelled them; both sides suffered several casualties. ISIS published several pictures showing its operatives near the oil tanks at Sidr.

[Pictures] [Caption] Left: ISIS operatives fire Grad rocket at the port of Sidr. Right: The suicide bomber who blew himself up at the gates of the port of Sidr (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, January 5, 2016).
37. **Ali al-Hasi**, senior security force operative of the oil installation of the Tobruk government, reported that **five oil tanks at the port of Sidr were set on fire** in the fighting with ISIS. He said 30 bodies of ISIS operatives had been found. However, he denied that an oil tank at Ra's Lanuf had gone up in flames (BBC, January 7, 2016). ISIS claimed responsibility for detonating a car bomb at the entrance to the camp of the oil installations' security guards south of Ra's Lanuf (Aamaq, January 5, 2016).
38. ISIS is likely to attempt to take over Ajdabiya, which lies east of Sidr and Ra’s Lanuf. ISIS has a presence there but has not yet forced the capitulation of the local militias. If ISIS does take control of Ajdabiya, it will cut off Sidr and Ra’s Lanuf from the Tobruk government, and create a good position from which to attack oilfields in the south.

ISIS Raids on Libya’s Large Oilfields and Facilities

39. In 2015 ISIS carried out a number of unsuccessful attacks on the large oilfields in Libya:

1) On November 20, 2015, ISIS operatives invaded the Zaltan oilfield southeast of Sirte. During the Friday prayer a senior ISIS operative in Sirte reported that ISIS operatives were also prepared to attack the oilfields in the towns of Marada and Sahel (see map). He threatened that ISIS would kill the guards at the oilfields and take the workers hostage (Akhbar al-Hadath, November 20, 2015). The commander of the Libyan army operations room in the region of the oilfields rushed to deny the reports, saying that most of the oilfields were operating routinely. He added that the operations room had at its disposal all the means necessary, including warplanes, to deal with ISIS’s raids (Akhbar al-Hadath, November 20 and 21, 2015).

The Libyan oilfields attacked by ISIS in 2015: Sawknah, Marada, Zaltan and Sahel (Google Maps).

2) On March 4, 2015, ISIS attacked the oilfields at Mabrouk, Zahra and Al-Bahi, all south of the port of Sidr. First attacked was the field at Al-Bahi, which ISIS successfully occupied. Next ISIS attacked the field at Mabrouk, about 100 kilometers (about 62 miles) south of Sirte, taking control of it and executing
seven workers, locals and foreign nationals. According to a different version, 12 workers were executed, two from the Philippines and two from Ghana, some shot and others beheaded. **Abd al-Hakim Muazab, responsible for the security force at Mabrouk, reported that his men had retaken the oilfield.**

![Map of Mabrouk oilfield](image1)

The oilfield at Mabrouk, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) south of Sirte. Close to it are the oilfields of Al-Bahraini and Zahra (Google Maps)

![Image of burning oilfields](image2)

The oilfields at Al-Bahi and Zahra burn after ISIS took control of them and set them on fire (Facebook page of Marada, March 3, 2015).

3) **The ISIS operatives who attacked the Zahra and Al-Bahi oilfields came from the Derna region.** They exchanged fire with the security guards and destroyed a large quantity of equipment. **Mashallah al-Zawi**, the oil minister in the Tripoli government, under whose jurisdiction the oilfield lies, reported that the attackers surrounded the oilfield from three directions, attacked and looted it,
blew up buildings and left it in ruins. He added that all the workers, including foreign nationals, had been safely evacuated. **In July 2015 it was reported that the three oilfields had been "restored to control of the [Libyan] security forces."**

40. On January 14, 2016, an oil pipe was sabotaged several kilometers south of Ra's Lanuf. A source in one of the oil companies claimed ISIS was responsible (Akhbar Libya, January 14, 2016). ISIS's Barqa Province claimed responsibility for the attack. According to its claim, the attack targeted a roadblock of the oil installation guards on the road between Marada and Zillah, south of Ra's Lanuf.
Section 5: ISIS’s Commanders and Operatives

Estimated Number and Origin of ISIS operatives

1. The number of ISIS operatives in Libya is estimated at between 4,000 and 5,000. According to The New York Times (November 29, 2015), government officials in the West and Libyan militia leaders estimate the number of ISIS operatives in Libya at 2,000, including several hundred in the city of Sirte. The Tunisians estimate the number at around 4,000-5,000 operatives (Akhbar Libya, December 24, 2015). According to a French terrorism expert, ISIS in Libya numbers about 3,000 operatives (Le Figaro, January 24, 2015). As in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has taken over large areas in Libya with a small number of operatives. ISIS took advantage of the prevailing security and governmental vacuum, the rivalries between the various militias, and its ability to gain assistance from local tribes and militias by forging alliances.

2. ISIS’s top command in Libya is composed of foreign fighters, mainly those sent by its leadership from Iraq and Syria. Jihadists from Iraq, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, who were sent by ISIS’s leadership, established ISIS’s branch in eastern Libya. Since then, senior jihadists have continued to arrive in Libya, mainly by sea to the port of Sirte. Reportedly, administrators from the Gulf States come to Sirte on a rotating basis to help ISIS with the city’s administration. Some of the foreign fighters apparently bring their families with them, apparently intending to settle in Libya for an extended period of time (as in Iraq and Syria).

3. ISIS’s operations in Libya are based on three sets of operatives:

   A. Libyan jihadists, especially from Derna and Tripoli, who went to fight in Syria and began returning to Libya in 2014 (see above). They initially established themselves in eastern Libya (Derna) but their presence was weakened and ISIS’s center of gravity in Libya moved to Sirte. The Libyan jihadi operatives who returned from Syria are probably the hard core of the

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15 According to an Egyptian media report based on sources in Libya, there are around 6,000 terrorists in Sirte, including 850 Libyans, 2,300 operatives from North Africa, 1,455 Sudanese operatives and 1,395 operatives from other parts of Africa and Europe (Al-Youm al-Sabea, December 2, 2015). The figures are probably exaggerated. According to another Egyptian report, there are at least 3,000 operatives in Libya (Al-Ahram, December 13, 2015).

16 The New York Times reporter heard this from a former member of the Sirte City Council, who had fled from Sirte to Misrata (nytimes.com, November 19, 2015).
fighters, although there is a considerable proportion of non-Libyans in the command echelons.

B. Arab operatives from the countries bordering on Libya and beyond. They came to Libya by sea or by overland routes (mostly from Egypt), and Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Gaza Strip. The number of Tunisian jihadi operatives in Libya is estimated at several hundred (Aawsat.com, December 25, 2015). The influx of ISIS operatives to Libya from Syria and Iraq has recently increased (Nytimes.com, November 19, 2015). The foreign fighters are an important element in ISIS’s branch in Libya and hold key leadership positions.

C. Jihadi operatives from sub-Saharan countries who arrive in Libya overland by desert routes. They include hundreds of operatives of the Nigerian Boko Haram, an organization which has pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISIS leader. Those operatives, who are concentrated in Sirte, help ISIS fight against its various enemies while undergoing training in Libya and will eventually return to their countries of origin and establish more branches of ISIS, which will fight against the various regimes. It is probable that the Boko Haram operatives receive additional aid (weapons and healthcare) from ISIS in Libya.

4. As in Iraq, ISIS operatives in Libya allied themselves with local forces, having common interests and without an ideological common denominator. The local forces are Islamist militias and tribes that found in ISIS an ally after the fall of the Qaddafi regime. Prominent among the local forces is the Al-Qadhadhfa, Muammar Qaddafi’s tribe, which helped ISIS operatives take over Sirte. Also prominent are the operatives of the jihadi organization Ansar al-Sharia. They defected to ISIS in Sirte, Misrata and other cities, and played an important role in ISIS’s takeover of places where it lacked a foothold.

**ISIS's Key Operatives in Libya**

5. ITIC information about ISIS leadership in Libya and its command hierarchy is scanty. That is due to the rapid turnover of commanders, their secretive

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17 According to eyewitnesses in the city of Sirte, dark-skinned fighters have been identified, apparently Boko Haram operatives. According to them, on October 2, 2015, a convoy of 30 ATVs carrying Boko Haram operatives was seen entering Sirte from the south. According to a report on the Akhbar Libya 24 website from June 2015, there are 300 Boko Haram operatives in Libya and additional Boko Haram operatives are waiting at Libya’s border with Mali and Niger in order to enter Libya.
behavior and the deaths of senior ISIS operatives in Libya during the years of fighting.

6. The following is basic information about a few of ISIS's key operatives in Libya:

A. Abu Habib al-Jazrawi, a senior ISIS commander in Libya: In a recording released on November 10, 2014, he claimed he was the "leader of the mujahidin [jihad fighters] in Libya" and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Abu Habib al-Jazrawi is a Saudi. A few weeks earlier, he called on the residents of Derna to swear allegiance to al-Baghdadi. He was sent to Derna in mid-September 2014 by ISIS’s leadership in Iraq and Syria, along with two other senior operatives: a Yemeni by the name of Abu Baraa al-Azadi and an Iraqi by the name of Abu Nabil Al-Anbari (who has since been killed in a targeted killing). The three became the backbone of command of ISIS’s branch in Libya.

B. Abu Baraa al-Azadi: A Yemeni from the Azad tribe in the Arabian Peninsula. He served as the mufti of Majles Shura Shabab al-Islam in Derna even before allegiance was sworn to ISIS’s leader. Abu Baraa al-Azadi was the “religious face” of ISIS, who issued religious rulings (fatwas) for ISIS’s branch in Derna (for example, in September 2014, he issued a fatwa concerning the “legal justification behind the rapid application of Islamic penal code by Majles Shura Shabab al-Islam”). Later, he was reportedly appointed governor of Derna, or mufti of ISIS in Libya (perhaps a result of ISIS having been driven out of Derna).
C. Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al-Zubaydi, aka Abu Nabil al-Anbari: Former governor of ISIS’s Salah al-Din Province in Iraq, appointed governor of ISIS’s Barqa Province in eastern Libya. He was a native of Iraq, where he served in ISIS’s leadership, and was a personal friend of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. During his stay in Iraq in the summer of 2014 he led the attacks on Tikrit and Baiji after ISIS captured Mosul. Abu Nabil al-Anbari then apparently became ISIS’s most senior commander in Libya, until he was killed by the United States in November 2015, in an aerial targeted killing (see below). Apparently Abu Nabil al-Anbari was the ISIS operative shown in the video documenting the execution of 21 Egyptian Copts on the beach in the area of Sirte.

7. The three senior operatives, who came from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iraq, were apparently the core of ISIS’s branch in Libya. They were initially based in Derna, but when ISIS was expelled from the city, some or all of them moved to Sirte, ISIS’s new territorial base in Libya.

8. On November 10, 2015, it was reported that ISIS’s leader (emir) in Libya, Wissam al-Zubaydi (Abu Nabil al-Anbari) was killed in a targeted aerial killing. According to various reports, he was killed in an airstrike carried out by American planes in the area of Derna (Akhbar Libya, November 10, 2015; US Department of Defense, November 10, 2015). “Sources in Derna” initially denied the US Department of Defense announcement, claiming he had moved from the Derna region to Sirte two weeks before the attack (Africa news portal, Bawabat Ifriqya al-Ikhbariya, Libya al-
However, a Pentagon spokesman reconfirmed the death, saying it was the first attack carried out by the United States against ISIS leaders in Libya.

9. Following are details of other senior operatives in Libya:

A. Abu Mughira al-Qahtani: A Saudi-born operative (Libya al-Jadida, December 8, 2015). Issue 11 of ISIS’s organ Dabiq (August 2015) referred to him as a leader (emir) sent by the Caliph to the Libya province (Wilayat Libya). The issue had an extensive interview with Al-Qahtani indicating he was well versed in the details of events in Libya.

B. Abdul Hamid Al-Qasemi: A Saudi-born operative who joined ISIS in Derna. He currently serves as one of the senior religious leaders of the Islamic State’s provinces in Libya. He has written several articles on religious and political issues, for example, an article about the Libyan Dawn militia and how it is perceived by the Islamic State. He also write an article about his journey from the Arabian Peninsula to Libya to join the Islamic State, part of ISIS’s recruitment campaign to attract foreign fighters to Libya. In addition to his religious role, Al-Qasemi apparently plays a significant role in ISIS’s propaganda machine in Libya.

C. Turki al-Bin Ali (al-Binali): A senior Bahraini-born operative, 31, a member of ISIS’s leadership in Sirte. The British newspaper The Guardian published a long investigative article about him, describing him as one of ISIS’s most important religious leaders. Turki al-Binali was born in 1984 and has a number of aliases (for example: Abu Sufyan al-Silmi, Abu Hudheifa al-Bahraini and Abu Hammam al-Athari). He was ordained in religious law at Imam al-Uzai College in Beirut, and used to travel between Lebanon, Bahrain and the UAE. In 2007, he was detained by the Bahraini authorities and sentenced to seven months in prison on charges of abetting hostile activities. In 2005, he was detained by the authorities in the UAE but was subsequently released. He has written essays on Sharia and Salafism, and others praising ISIS’s suicide bombing attacks. On October 27, 2013, he came to Libya and preached at the Al-Ribat Mosque in Sirte. From there he returned to Syria and was seen in the city of Al-Raqqah on July 19, 2015. In August 2015, he returned to Libya via the port of Sirte. Since then the ITIC lost track of him but it can be assumed that he plays a central role in ISIS’s leadership in Libya.
D. **Osama Karama:** Senior ISIS operative in the city of Sirte (possibly the local *emir*). A relative of a former senior intelligence officer in the Qaddafi regime.

E. **Abu Mariam al-Masri:** Egyptian-born judge who joined the ranks of ISIS in Libya. He was killed in Sirte in August 2015. He initially served as a judge for the Islamist organization Ansar al-Sharia in Derna and apparently defected to ISIS along with many other operatives of the organization. He was later identified as a judge in the Islamic State’s provinces in Libya. In April 2015, he issued a religious ruling (*fatwa*) at a mosque in Derna, making it legal to cut off the hand of a man accused of stealing.

F. **Abu Sayyaf al-Ansari and Abu Talha al-Tunisi:** Two jihadist leaders in ISIS’s Tripoli province whose roles are unknown.

G. **Ali Ben Hariz,** a senior jihadi operative who was killed by the Libyan Army in Benghazi. He was considered one of the most prominent commanders in ISIS’s branch in Libya. He fought in the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

H. **Saif Abdullah Bin Hussein,** aka Abu Ayadh al-Tunisi, a Tunisian-born jihadi operative in Ansar al-Sharia who joined ISIS. In July-August 2015, he moved from Sirte to Misrata to organize the local branch of ISIS. He set up a local militia affiliated with ISIS composed mainly of Tunisians.
I. **Abu Ali al-Anbari**: Iraqi Army officer who served in Saddam Hussein's army. According to *The New York Times*, based on reports from Libyan residents and Western officials al-Anbari recently arrived in Libya by sea.
Section 6: ISIS’s Terrorist Activities and Guerilla Warfare in Libya

The Objective of Terrorist Attacks and Guerilla Warfare

In addition to its ongoing military activity, ISIS carries out terrorist and guerrilla attacks in Libya against its many enemies, including the Tripoli government and the militias subordinate to it; the Tobruk government and the Libyan Army under the command of Haftar; and rival militias, primarily Libyan Dawn. It has also attacked foreign embassies and diplomats in Libya to harm the Tripoli government. The attacks increased in 2015, mainly due to the consolidation of ISIS in and around Sirte.

ISIS’s Modus Operandi in Libya

1. The modus operandi of ISIS’s terrorist and guerrilla attacks are familiar from its activity in Iraq and Syria. They include:

   1) Mobile forces in pickup trucks (Toyotas, as in other combat zones) to move operatives quickly from place to place over large areas for surprise attacks. ISIS operatives are specifically trained in the use of ATVs (see picture). That enabled ISIS to take control of cities, towns and villages in large areas with relatively small forces, in collaboration with the local forces supporting it. However, when ISIS found itself engaged in static fighting in Derna, where it could not use the element of surprise, it was at a disadvantage and was repelled into the mountainous area to the south of the city.18

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18 In northern Syria as well, in the city of Kobanî, when ISIS encountered a determined ground force of Kurds, it was at a disadvantage.
2) **Shooting and suicide bombing attacks against civilian and governmental targets.** ISIS has deployed suicide bombers, sometimes in conjunction with car bombs. The attack on the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli (January 27, 2015) was a prominent example of that type of attack. **Shooting attacks and suicide bombing attacks were also carried out against security installation of the Tripoli and Tobruk governments in western and eastern Libya, and against the oil and gas fields and facilities.**

3) **The use of a variety of weapons that fell into the hands of ISIS operatives in Libya.** ISIS operatives used them to carry out guerilla operations against the Libyan Army in eastern and western Libya. They included rocket attacks on civil airports and military airbases in eastern Libya, and shooting down a Libyan Army helicopter using a shoulder-fired missile in the area between Sirte and Tripoli. A variety of weapons seized from the Libyan Army, including rockets, anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, provide ISIS operatives with the military capability to expand its guerrilla activity against its various enemies, and enable it to export weapons to ISIS’s branches outside Libya.

4) **Beheading “infidels.”** That includes the execution of Egyptian Copts by ISIS’s Tripoli province; Eritrean Christians have also been executed. As in Iraq and Syria, pictures documenting the executions were circulated on ISIS-affiliated social networks to illustrate the organization’s determination to struggle against the so-called infidels and intimidate its enemies.
Training Camps

2. ISIS has set up a series of training camps near major cities on the sites of former Libyan Army camps. The camps train operatives to carry out military and terrorist activities inside and outside Libya. They also train foreign fighters from Africa and the Arab world. The training camps are most likely located mainly in Sirte, but also near other cities where ISIS has a presence.

3. In the first phase of its consolidation, ISIS set up the camps in eastern Libya, where hundreds of jihadi operatives were trained. Since then, the center of gravity has been moved to Sirte and its environs (although ISIS apparently still has training camps in eastern Libya). ISIS has apparently also set up such camps west of Tripoli to facilitate the deployment of terrorist operatives from Libya in Tunisia.

4. ISIS’s training camp network in the area around Sirte:

   1) In early November 2015, ISIS reportedly set up a training center in the area of Al-Sawawa, about seven kilometers (about 4 miles) east of Sirte. It is supervised by foreign fighters from the Gaza Strip and Iraq: one is a Palestinian codenamed Abu al-Ghaddan, who served in Hamas military wing, and the other is an Iraqi named Jassem Mahmoud, aka Abu Amd al-Tikriti. Voluntary and compulsory trainings for residents of Sirte are administered there. Libyan minors from Sirte, Nofaliya and Ajdabiya are also recruited to prepare the next generation of ISIS operatives, as was done in Iraq and Syria (Bawabat Ifriqa al-Ikhbariya, November 4, 2015; Shabakat Sirte al-Ikhbariya’s Facebook page, November 5, 2015).

   2) According to a report from December 2015, the graduation ceremony of the first Lion Cubs of the Caliphate course was held in Sirte. The participants were 85 boys aged 14 to 17. In the 45-day course, the boys were given target practice with a variety of weapons and learned how to manufacture IEDs. The participants came from Sirte, Nofaliya, Ajdabiya, Bani Walid and Misrata (Bawabat Ifriqa al-Ikhbariya, November 30, 2015; Al-Wasat portal, December 4, 2015). According to another report, the boys trained for three months at the Osama bin Zayd camp in the area of Al-Zahir, east of Sirte (see map below) (Al-Youm al-Sabea, December 2, 2015).

   3) According to a senior officer in the Tobruk government-supporting Libyan Army, ISIS operatives in Sirte train to fly airplanes with flight simulators. The

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19 ISIS’s youth movement, the likes of which have also been established in Iraq and Syria.
training takes place in Sirte and uses a state-of-the-art flight simulator for civil aircraft obtained by ISIS in October 2015 from outside Libya. Retired officers from Libya and the neighboring countries supervise the training. A simulator for fighter planes may also have reached Sirte. A senior Libyan security source confirmed that ISIS operatives in Libya are known to be practicing flying civil aircraft. He added that last month, Libyan Air Force planes tried unsuccessfully to destroy at least one training site. He said that due to the airstrikes, the training center was moved to a new site near Sirte airport, in the southern part of the city (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, December 1, 2015). The training may be intended to provide ISIS operatives with basic aviation skills to help them hijack planes (an area in which ISIS is not yet active).

5. The courses are apparently held at training camps in and around Sirte on the sites of Libyan Army camps and facilities of the Qaddafi regime. According to an Egyptian newspaper citing a “security source” in Sirte, ISIS has set up (updated to early December 2015) more than 12 training camps in the city of Sirte (Al-Youm al-Sabea, December 2, 2015). The paper detailed the names and locations of these camps:

   1) Al-Farouq Omar Camp – Al-Zahir area
   2) Al-Tawhid Camp – Al-Zahir area
   3) Al-Muhajireen Camp – ISIS’s biggest camp in the Al-Zahir area
   4) Aswad al-Khilafah Camp – Al-Zahir area
   5) Osama bin Zayd Camp – Al-Zahir area
   6) Al-Raya Camp – the premises of the former military police, in the area of Al-Sab’a
   7) Dhat al-Sawari (?) Camp – the area of Al-Sab’a
   8) Al-Fatiheen Camp – next door to the Al-Mahara Hotel in Al-Sab’a
   9) Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi Camp - -behind the premises of the former military police, in the area of Al-Sab’a
  10) Abu Daud al-Jazrawi Camp – a former air defense camp
  11) Al-Rawasi Camp – the marine point in the area of Al-Zaafran
  12) Al-Aadiat Camp – in Al-Aqwas
The area Al-Zahir, west of Sirte, where ISIS has several training camps (Google Maps)

6. ISIS reportedly also operates training camps elsewhere in western and eastern Libya:

1) **Nofaliya (a town in the area of Sirte):** According to pictures distributed by ISIS’s branch in Libya (June 26, 2015), ISIS has a **training camp in Nofaliya**, a town it took over in February 2015.

Right: ISIS’s training camp in the town of Nofaliya. Left: Training on firing from ATVs and small arms fire at the training camp in Nofaliya (i-libya.blogspot.com)
2) **Western Libya and Tunisia:** According to a report in early July 2015, *ISIS had training camps in the mountainous region between Libya and Tunisia.* According to a report in early January 2015, at least one camp was set up on the Tunisian side of the border with Libya, and one of the camps served as a “transit camp” for new Tunisian recruits being sent to Libya.

3) **Benghazi:** On May 27, 2015, ISIS published pictures of a training camp in Benghazi, part of the so-called Barqa Province in eastern Libya. Benghazi is not controlled by ISIS but *ISIS has a presence in its periphery.*
ISIS Terrorist Attacks and Guerilla Warfare in Western and Eastern Libya

The Capital City of Tripoli

The Attack on the Corinthia Hotel (January 2015)

7. The attack on the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli (January 27, 2015) was ISIS’s most prominent terror attack in Libya. The Corinthia is a luxury hotel, very popular with local government officials and foreigners, and served as a governmental and diplomatic nerve center. According to one version, Omar al-Hassi, Prime Minister of the Tripoli government, was staying at the hotel at the time of the attack, meeting with American representatives (according to another version, he was not staying at the hotel). The attack was intended to damage the prestige and governance of the Islamic Tripoli government and, at the same time, to kill foreign diplomats, Libyan government officials and militia operatives who frequented the hotel.

8. The attack was carried out by two armed terrorists, a Sudanese and a Tunisian. It began with a car bomb which exploded near the hotel. The terrorists then entered the hotel and shot at Libyan government officials and foreign nationals. Finally, they blew themselves up, probably with hand grenades. Around ten people were killed, half of them foreign nationals who were staying at the hotel. ISIS’s Tripoli Province claimed responsibility for the attack, stating it was revenge for the death of Abu Anas al-Libi, the senior Al-Qaeda operative behind the attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (August 7, 1998).

Attacks on Foreign Embassies in Tripoli

9. During 2015, ISIS carried out a series of attacks against foreign embassies in Libya, even though most of them were closed because of the power struggles in the city between rival militias. The embassies attacked were those of Algeria, Iran, Spain, South Korea and Morocco. The attacks were meant to glorify ISIS, damage the status of the Islamic government in Tripoli and send a threatening message to the countries whose embassies were attacked.

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20 On November 24, 2015, a similar terrorist attack was carried out at the Swiss Inn Hotel in El-Arish. A legal committee was staying at the hotel, after having arrived to monitor the parliamentary elections in the northern Sinai Peninsula. First a car bomb exploded at the entrance to the hotel, and then a suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt blew himself up. A third terrorist entered the hotel and opened fire in all directions. Four people were killed: a policeman and three judges. Twelve people were wounded, nine of them members of the Egyptian security forces (Facebook page of the Egyptian Armed Forces spokesman, November 24, 2015). ISIS’s Sinai Province claimed responsibility for the attack in an official statement posted on an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account (November 24, 2015).
The attacks carried out in Tripoli to date were relatively simple from an operational standpoint. Most of them were carried out by detonating IEDs at the entrance to the embassies and, in one case, shots were also fired. The results were insignificant (probably because of strict security arrangements and ISIS’s relative weakness in Tripoli). As ISIS continues to establish its presence in Tripoli and the area of Sirte, east of the capital, its ability, daring and motivation to carry out showcase attacks in Tripoli and its surroundings to undermine the Tripoli government will most likely increase.

10. Below is a brief summary of the attacks:

1) On January 18, 2015, IEDs were detonated under a guard post at the entrance to the Algerian Embassy in Tripoli. ISIS claimed responsibility. Two security guards were injured.

2) On February 12, 2015, two IEDs exploded near the gate of the Iranian ambassador’s residence in Tripoli. ISIS claimed responsibility. According to the AP, the Iranian ambassador was not there at the time of the attack. There were no casualties. According to the Iranian news agency IRNA, the embassy in Tripoli is inoperative and the building has been empty since 2012.

3) On April 20, 2015, an IED exploded at the entrance to the Spanish Embassy in Tripoli. The explosion caused limited damage to the wall of the embassy building and damaged vehicles parked near the embassy. There were no casualties. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.

Picture of the Spanish Embassy in Tripoli after the attack (two ISIS-affiliated Twitter accounts, April 20, 2015).
4) **On April 12, 2014**, an armed ISIS operative opened fire at the **South Korean Embassy in Libya**. At least two people were killed. The shots were fired from a car, which fled the scene. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. At the time of the attack, there were three diplomats in the embassy, which had been closed for several months.

5) **On April 13, 2015**, an IED in a bag near the gate of the **Moroccan Embassy in Tripoli** exploded. Cars parked nearby were damaged, but no casualties were reported. A residential building near the embassy was also damaged. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.

**The City of Zliten (East of Tripoli)**

11. At least 70 people were killed and more than 200 injured when a car bomb exploded at the police training camp in the city of Zliten. ISIS’s Tripoli Province claimed responsibility. A suicide bomber driving a booby-trapped tanker blew himself up at the entrance to the camp during morning roll call. ISIS said that the attack had been carried out by an operative codenamed Abdullah al-Muhajer, and attacks would continue until the whole of Libya was taken over.
Attacks in Eastern Libya

Overview

12. The attacks carried out by ISIS in eastern Libya were intended to weaken the power of the Tobruk government and the Libyan Army supporting it, harm the various militias ISIS is fighting against, and ease the military pressure exerted on ISIS operatives in the area of Derna. For example:

Interception of Libyan Army Aircraft

13. ISIS issued a video documenting the interception of a Libyan Army fighter plane. They claimed the plane had been intercepted on January 4, 2016, by anti-aircraft fire (Aamaq, January 6, 2016). On February 13, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account posted a picture of a shoulder-fired missile that shot down a Libyan Army helicopter approximately 160 kilometers (about 100 miles) east of Sirte.

Attack on the Security Directorate in the City of Al-Qubba (about 37 kilometers, or 23 miles, west of Derna)

14. On February 20, 2015, three ISIS suicide bombers carried out car bomb attacks. Two were directed against the Libyan Security Directorate and the third against a gas station in the city. The first suicide bomber was a terrorist from Saudi Arabia codenamed Abu Abdullah al-Jazrawi, and the second was a terrorist from Libya, was codenamed Bitar al-Libi. The attacks killed 31 people and injured more than 40, mostly civilians who were at the gas station.
Rocket Fire at a Libyan Army Airbase

15. On February 21, 2015, several rockets were fired at Al-Abraq International Airport, located to the east of Bayda in eastern Libya. It also serves as a military airbase. No casualties were reported. This airport is the gateway to eastern Libya and Bayda, residence of the Prime Minister of the Tobruk government, which is recognized by the international community.

Attack against the Libyan Army on the Outskirts of Benghazi

16. On April 20, 2015, ISIS-affiliated Twitter pages posted pictures of an attack carried out by ISIS operatives in Libya against a Libyan Army staging zone in the area
of Al-Saberi, on the periphery of Benghazi. The attack included the deployment of a suicide bomber and machine gun fire, among other things. The number of casualties is unknown.

Abduction and Killing of Christians

17. As in Iraq and Syria, ISIS carried out widely publicized executions of civilians in Libya perceived as "infidels" (Copts from Egypt and Christians from Ethiopia). On February 15, 2015, ISIS beheaded 21 Egyptian Copts (migrant workers) who had been abducted in Libya. The abductions and executions were carried out by ISIS’s Tripoli Province in the city of Sirte. The beheadings were documented in a video produced by Al-Hayat, one of ISIS’s media outlets, and posted on social networks.

18. On April 19, 2015, ISIS’s branch in Libya issued a video documenting two executions of Christians – one by a firing squad and the other by slitting their throats. The first were Christians from Ethiopia and the others were Christians (possibly Copts) from Egypt. The video showed a group of ISIS operatives marching dozens of people in orange jumpsuits along a beach. ISIS operatives dressed in black murdered them.
19. **A few hours after the execution, Egyptian television reported** that Egyptian Air Force planes had attacked ISIS targets in Libya. The targets included ISIS training camps and weapons stores along the border between Libya and Egypt (Egyptian TV, February 16, 2015; Reuters, February 16, 2015). **The attacks were in response to the killing of Egyptian nationals.** During 2015, Egypt and the UAE carried out at least two more airstrikes against terrorist targets in Libya.
Section 7: Libya as an Exporter of ISIS Terrorism to Neighboring Countries

Exporting Terrorism to Tunisia

Overview

1. ISIS’s establishment in Libya makes it a potential risk to North African and sub-Saharan African countries, some of which have fragile regimes, and to the entire international community. That is due to Libya’s geographical location in the center of the Maghreb, with access to a large number of countries where jihadist networks affiliated with ISIS or Al-Qaeda already exist.

2. During 2015, ISIS’s branch in Libya made a major effort to export terrorism to Tunisia, which has become its central target. Its objective is to destabilize the Tunisian regime, attack Western nationals in Tunisia and aid in consolidating ISIS’s Tunisian branch. ISIS exports terrorism by sending Libyan operatives to Tunisia and by assisting Tunisian jihadist operatives, including training them in Libya and sending them to Tunisia. Acts of terrorism carried out in Tunisia in 2015 clearly bore the stamp of ISIS’s branch in Libya. For example:

The Mass Terrorist Attack at the Bardo Museum in Tunis

3. On March 18, 2015, armed terrorists carried out a mass terrorist attack in the Bardo National Museum, near the Parliament building in the capital city of Tunis. Twenty-three people were killed in the attack, most of them tourists. According to reports, the terrorists initially tried to break into the Parliament compound, but after an exchange of fire with security guards they went to the museum. They held hostages for several hours until the Tunisian security forces overcame them and released the hostages.
4. On March 19, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated group calling itself the Islamic Caliphate Army in Tunisia issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack. According to the statement, the codenames of the terrorists who carried out the attack are Abu Zakariya al-Tunisi (i.e., the Tunisian) and Abu Anas al-Tunisi. The two men entered the Bardo Museum armed with submachine guns and began shooting. In its statement, ISIS addressed “All the infidels in Tunisia,” declaring that this attack was only the beginning and that the “infidels” in Tunisia would not be able to sleep peacefully (ISIS forum, March 19, 2015).

5. The terrorists at the Bardo Museum were probably handled by ISIS’s branch in Libya and trained at a camp in Libya, possibly the same camp where the perpetrators of the mass terrorist attack on tourists in the town of Sousse were trained (see below).

Mass Terrorist Attack against Western Tourists in the Town of Sousse

6. On June 26, 2015, a shooting attack was carried out on a hotel beach in the resort town of Sousse by a terrorist posing as a tourist. He burst into a hotel and went to the beach, where he opened fire, killing 39 tourists, mostly British. He was killed in a gunfight with the hotel’s security guards. According to Reuters, the attack caused damage to Tunisia’s tourism industry estimated at USD 515 million (businessinsider.com).
7. **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.** It issued a statement in Tunis (June 26, 2015) boasting about the “high-quality raid” carried out in the town of Sousse, causing the deaths of “dozens of nationals of the Crusader coalition.” The shooting attack was carried out by **Sayf al-Din al-Rizqi**, aka **Abu Yahya al-Qayrawani**. Al-Rizqi, 23, is a Tunisian from Qa Afur, located about 93 kilometers (about 58 miles) southwest of the capital city of Tunis. He studied electrical engineering. He became radicalized in 2014 and began to post items praising ISIS on Facebook (CNN in Arabic, June 27, 2015).
According to media reports, Sayf al-Din al-Rizqi completed a three-month training course at an ISIS training in Libya in June 2015. The training sessions were held outside the city of Sabratah, at one of the military camps formerly used by the Libyan Army. The two terrorists who carried out the attack at the Bardo Museum in Tunis reportedly trained at the same camp.

**Attack on a Bus Carrying Members of the Tunisian Presidential Guard**

9. On November 24, 2015, a suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt blew himself up near a bus carrying members of Tunisia’s Presidential Guard in Tunis. At least 12 members of the Presidential Guard were killed. The blast occurred on the city's main street (Reuters, November 25, 2015).

10. **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.** According to the statement, the explosion killed several dozen members of the Presidential Guard in the heart of Tunis. According to ISIS, it was carried out by a terrorist codenamed Abu Abdullah al-Tunisi (i.e., the Tunisian). Tunisian authorities announced that his real name was Hussam al-Abdelli, and that he was a 27 year-old street vendor from a working-class neighborhood near Tunis. His neighbors said that during the past three years he had become radicalized and began to isolate himself, spending most of his time at home and at the mosque. Al-Abdelli was detained in August 2015, on suspicion of membership in a terrorist organization, and books on jihad were found in his possession, but he was released (Reuters, November 25, 2015; akhbardawlatalislam.wordpress.com, November 25, 2015; France 24, November 26, 2015).

11. Following the attack on the Presidential Guard, the Tunisian President declared a curfew in the capital and reinstated the country’s state of emergency for one month. On November 25, 2015, his office announced the closure of the borders with Libya for 15 days the explosive belt used for the attack against the Presidential Guard was suspected as having come from Libya.
Showcase Attacks Prevented in Tunisia

12. In the second half of November 2015, the Tunisian authorities announced the arrest of a squad planning to carry out simultaneous attacks at a number of hotels and essential facilities and targeting politicians in the Sousse province. Some of the squad operatives were trained in Libya. Rifles, explosives and explosive belts found in their possession were confiscated.

13. In the second half of November 2015, the Tunisian Interior Ministry announced the detention of 26 individuals suspected of involvement in the network known as the Al-Furqan Battalion. It consisted of two squads led by operatives who had returned from Syria after fighting in the ranks of ISIS. According to Tunisian media reports, some of the detainees confessed that they had been waiting to receive explosive belts from a Tunisian operative in Sabratah, Libya. The Tunisian authorities are of the opinion that the attacks were to be carried out in conjunction with the attacks in Paris (Reuters, November 17, 2015; Akher Khabar Online, November 11, 2015; Bawabet Ifriqya al-Ikhbariya, November 15, 2015; Al-Jarida, November 27, 2015).

ISIS’s Report of the Terrorist Attacks Carried Out in Tunisia

14. On November 28, 2015, ISIS published an infographic describing the attacks it had carried out in Tunisia. According to ISIS, since the attack at the Bardo Museum in Tunis on March 18, 2015, it had carried out six additional attacks in Tunisia,
killing and injuring 100 foreign nationals and 76 members of the Tunisian security forces (AkhbardawlatIslam.wordpress.com, November 28, 2015).

Infographic claiming ISIS carried out six attacks in Tunisia after the attack at the Bardo Museum in Tunis, killing and injuring 100 foreign nationals and 76 members of the Tunisian security forces (akhbardawlatIslam.wordpress.com, November 28, 2015)

Smuggling Weapons Outside Libya

15. Large quantities of weapons were seized by rebel organizations and various militias in Libya when the Qaddafi regime was overthrown. They include small arms and ammunition, shoulder-fired SA-7 missiles, anti-tank missiles and rockets. Most of the weapons are used for internal warfare and some are smuggled outside Libya. The arms trade is carried out by criminal gangs, militias and terrorist groups for commercial purposes and to aid terrorist organizations in the Middle East and Africa.
16. **Libya’s location and its long open borders with Arab and African countries facilitate the smuggling of weapons.** The value of the arms trade in the post-Qaddafis periods is estimated at **$15-30 million a year at the very least** (the true amount may be double, since there is no reliable data as to the quantity of arms smuggled).\(^{21}\) *An report issued by the UN Security Council*, published in February 2013, expressed concern over the proliferation of large quantities of weapons seized by rebel organizations following the overthrow of the Qaddafis regime. The weapons, according to the report, are distributed to countries in North and West Africa and the Middle East, feeding terrorism and subversion. Weapons smuggled from Libya helped trigger the rebellion in *Mali* in 2010 and continue to fuel its internal struggles. Weapons are also smuggled from Libya to the *Gaza Strip*, via Egypt. According to the report, the smuggling originates at Libya’s two main port cities, Benghazi in the east and Misrata in the west (Aljazeera.net, April 10, 2013).

17. **Following its establishment in Libya, ISIS has become an important – although not the only – arms smuggler.** According to an article based on security sources in Arab countries, ISIS in Libya is the most prominent organization engaged in smuggling arms to regional countries, including *Tunisia* and *Algeria*. According to the report, *that is part of its assistance to their radical Islamist networks*. To that end, ISIS exploits the prevailing security anarchy in Libya and its open borders with Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan, Niger, Algeria and Chad (Al-Arabiya, August 7, 2015).

18. The ITIC has no concrete and up-to-date information on how ISIS smuggles arms in Libya, but it is reasonable to assume its arms smuggling is extensive. ISIS’s cooperation with fellow jihadist organizations (such as Boko Haram in Nigeria or Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in Sinai) probably also includes smuggling arms. In any event, as ISIS consolidates and expands its presence in Libya, its ability to increase its assistance to terrorist groups operating outside Libya, including by smuggling arms, will increase.

**Collaboration between ISIS in Libya and ISIS in the Northern Sinai Peninsula**

19. **ISIS’s branches in Libya and Egypt collaborate against their common enemies**, the Egyptian security forces and the Egyptian regime. ISIS operatives in eastern Libya are fighting against the anti-Islamist Tobruk government, which is

supported by Egypt. In the Sinai Peninsula, and particularly in the north, ISIS’s Sinai Province (formerly Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis) is waging prolonged fighting against the Egyptian security forces, accompanied by occasional terrorist attacks in Egypt itself.

20. In Libya, jihadis from Egypt fight in the ranks of ISIS and operatives move between the two countries on desert routes where the Egyptian regime’s control is weak. On the other hand, weapons are smuggled from Libya to ISIS operatives in the Sinai Peninsula and probably to Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip as well. The Egyptian security forces carry out security operations against ISIS in the eastern part of the country, near the border with Libya, in an attempt to prevent the movement of operatives and weapons, which is apparently carried out on a large scale. For example, the Egyptian media reported that between December 12 and December 18, 2015, the Egyptian security forces prevented infiltration attempts from Egypt to Libya by 650 people (Al-Watan, December 18, 2015). It was reported that in late December 2015 – early January 2016, the Egyptian security forces detained more than 300 operatives. They were recruited to ISIS on the Internet and planned to go to ISIS’s provinces in Syria, Iraq and Libya. The Egyptian security forces detained four people who were involved in their planned infiltration (Al-Bawaba News, January 15, 2016).

21. The Egyptian regime regards ISIS’s consolidation in Libya, especially in the east, as a threat to Egypt's national security. According to estimates published in the Egyptian media in December 2015, ISIS may establish a new province in Egypt – the Western Desert Province. There is also concern in Egypt that the new province will be connect ISIS’s provinces in Libya to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, ISIS’s branch in the Sinai Peninsula (Al-Masaa, December 13, 2015; Al-Watan, December 11, 2015).

Cooperation between ISIS in Libya and Boko Haram in Nigeria

22. Boko Haram ("Western education is forbidden") is a jihadist organization in Nigeria, founded in 2009 by Mohammed Yusuf, a preacher in the northeast of the country. Its goal is to establish an Islamic state in the region governed according to Islamic law (the Sharia). In 2009, Boko Haram’s leader was arrested and executed, and his deputy Abubakar Shekau replaced him. In 2010, Boko Haram began to carry out terrorist attacks in Nigeria. As part of ISIS’s aspirations to expand, the Nigerian

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Boko Haram was chosen as its representative in West Africa. On March 7, 2015, Boko Haram’s leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. A few days later, Islamic State Spokesman Mohammad al-Adnani announced the acceptance of the Nigerian organization as an official province of the Islamic State in West Africa.

23. A practical manifestation of the cooperation between ISIS and Boko Haram in the Libyan arena are the hundreds of Boko Haram operatives in the country assisting ISIS in the fighting and maintaining an overt presence in Sirte. ISIS allows Boko Haram operatives to train in its camps in several places in Libya, including Misrata, and apparently assists Boko Haram in other ways (supplying arms and medical assistance). In addition, Boko Haram operatives apparently take part in ISIS’s ongoing military activity in Sirte and elsewhere in Libya.
Section 8: Distribution of ISIS Propaganda in Libya

Overview

1. ISIS is **well aware of the importance of the battle for hearts and minds, and makes extensive use of various media.** As in Iraq and Syria, ISIS’s provinces in Libya also make extensive use of **Twitter and Facebook;** the justpaste.it and dump.to file-sharing websites; websites for sharing video files, primarily YouTube; and various blogs such as i-libya.blogspot.com. In addition, propaganda materials relating to Libya are distributed **on the websites and forums of ISIS’s media infrastructure in Syria and Iraq.**

2. Although the media activity takes place in Syria and Iraq, each of ISIS’s **three provinces in Libya has its own media office:** the media office of Barqa Province (**Al-Maktab al-I’lamī li-Wilayat Barqa**), the media office of Tripoli Province (**Al-Maktab al-I’lamī li-Wilayat Tarabulus**), and the media office of Fezzan Province (**Al-Maktab al-I’lamī li-Wilayat Fezzan**).

3. ISIS’s branches in the various provinces **make professional use of modern technology and state-of-the-art equipment:** on September 13, 2015, the rival organization in Derna, the Shura Mujahideen Council of Derna, took over ISIS’s media center in the city. **Its operatives seized picturegraphy equipment, high-quality**
digital cameras, laptops and desktop computers, and distributed their pictures to the Libyan media (Akhbar Libya, September 13, 2015).

4. The information offices of the ISIS provinces in Libya are active in various media channels: they produce videos, distribute pictures, print propaganda leaflets and operate local radio stations (at least in Sirte, where the Al-Tawhid radio station operates). The propaganda materials include information about ISIS’s activity in Libya, documentation of its attacks, parades and displays of strength, propaganda aimed at recruiting operatives, polemics to justify ISIS’s existence and expansion, and incitement against its enemies. Some of the videos are high quality and were probably made with the assistance of ISIS’s media infrastructure in Iraq and Syria.

5. As in Iraq and Syria, ISIS acts against Libyan and foreign journalists whose coverage of the events in Libya is not in line with ISIS’s position. In some cases ISIS did not hesitate to execute them. For example, on April 28, 2015, an officer in the Libyan Army, which supports the Tobruk government, reported that ISIS operatives had beheaded five journalists, employees of a Libyan television station in the east of the country. Their bodies were found outside the city of Bayda.

Videos

6. As in Syria and Iraq, ISIS’s provinces in Libya also invest great effort in producing high quality videos (although far less frequently than ISIS in Syria and Iraq) to glorify
ISIS and terrorize its enemies. The videos are also intended to recruit operatives and collaborators from Libya and other countries for ISIS’s branch in Libya by representing ISIS as a successful organization that implements the Islamic ideal.

Video produced by the information office in Barqa Province of ISIS’s branch in Libya, showing a masked ISIS operative calling on foreign citizens to enlist in ISIS in Libya (YouTube, February 28, 2015).

7. A notorious, high-quality video produced by ISIS’s Tripoli Province documents the execution of 21 Egyptian Copts who were abducted in Sirte. The video, which was posted to social networks on February 15, 2015, has special effects, and the sea appears blood-red after the victims are beheaded. The language of the voiceover, titles and speaker in the video is English, and directed at a Western-Christian audience; its objective is to sow fear. The video was produced by Al-Hayat, one of ISIS’s media outlets. Judging by the quality and editing, ISIS’s branch in Libya probably received help for the video from ISIS’s media apparatus in Syria and Iraq.
Use of special effects: the sea is blood-red after the victims are beheaded
(Al-Hayat Media Foundation, February 15, 2015)

Pictures

8. The information offices of ISIS’s branch in Libya also document its activities with series of pictures, usually under the heading “picturegraphic report.” For example, on June 24, 2015, the information office of Barqa Province issued pictures of the graduation ceremony of a training course for the Soldiers of the Caliphate in the town of Nofaliya. The pictures were meant to illustrate show ISIS’s capabilities and convey the message that it is determined to remain in Libya for many years and raise another generation of fighters who will eventually join it.

From a series of pictures produced by the information office of ISIS’s Barqa Province. Left: Members of ISIS’s morality police force (hisba) burning musical instruments as part of their concept that non-religious music is prohibited under Islamic law. Right: The graduation ceremony of a training course for the Soldiers of the Caliphate in the town of Nofaliya
(Twitter: i-libya.blogspot.com)
From a series of pictures produced by ISIS’s information offices. Left: Pictures from the Tripoli Province’s information office documenting ISIS’s preaching activity among citizens in the province. Right: Pictures from Barqa Province documenting humanitarian aid to the population in Benghazi in January 2015 (alfarough.com; blog.amin.org)

Flyers

9. ISIS’s information offices also print local flyers and distribute them to the local population. For example:

1) A flyer entitled Al-Naba (i.e., news) in Sirte, August 2015:

Distribution of information flyers in Sirte (I-libya.blogspot.com)

2) Flyer entitled “News from the Provinces of the Islamic State” in Derna. Leaflet produced by the Barqa province in eastern Libya:
Distribution of the flyer entitled “News from the Provinces of the Islamic State” in Derna (I-libya.blogspot.com)

3) Distribution of flyers in the town of Nofaliya, August 2015:

Distribution of flyers in Nofaliya (I-libya.blogspot.com)

Websites

10. **ISIS’s provinces in Libya do not have their own independent websites.** ISIS’s branch in Libya uses **ISIS-affiliated websites** that distribute information from all of ISIS’s provinces, especially in Syria and Iraq. The following are ISIS websites that often report on ISIS’s branch in Libya:

1) **The Islamic Caliphate website:** The website features videos and pictures published by the information offices of ISIS’s various branches, including the one in Libya.
2) **The Al-Farough website**: The website covers mainly videos and pictures published by the information offices of ISIS’s various branches, including the one in Libya. The website also includes discussions on religious issues related to ISIS.

**Blogs and Forums**

11. ISIS’s main blog in Libya is called **The Caliphate in Libya News Blog**. The blog features ongoing reports from ISIS’s branch in Libya, including videos, text and pictures.
12. **The Islamic State's publications blog**: An unofficial ISIS blog featuring daily updates of reports from ISIS's various information offices containing information about Libya, among other things. The blog was shut down several times but reappeared each time.

13. ISIS’s provinces in Libya use jihadi forums such as **Shumukh al-Islam** and **Al-Minbar al-l’ami al-Jihadi** to distribute their publications to the various provinces. ISIS’s branch in Libya has no independent forums.

**Radio and TV Channels**

14. **ISIS operates two radio stations in Sirte**, called Al-Tawhid and Al-Bayan. Al-Tawhid operates like any radio station, and also broadcasts over the Internet. Al-Bayan”s broadcasts are also available on the blog of ISIS’s branch in Libya.

15. Information about the two stations:

   1) **The Al-Tawhid radio station**: Established in July 2012 on the base of the Qaddafi regime’s broadcasting station. It began broadcasting verses from the Quran and religious programs at the behest of Islamic elements in the process of taking over Sirte at the time. In February 2014, following the takeover of Sirte, ISIS also took control of the radio station. Since then ISIS has broadcast mainly sermons and news.
ISIS’s Al-Tawhid radio station in Sirte. Under the inscription Al-Tawhid Broadcasting, the Arabic reads, “A voice that will take you to paradise.” At the left, “A voice from which the truth emerges” (Al-Sahifa, December 31, 2015)

2) The Al-Bayan radio station: The station broadcasts verses from the Quran, Islamic traditions, discussions on religious issues, and news about ISIS. It began operating in June 2014. In August 2015, the station began broadcasting in Benghazi as well. Since September 2015, its broadcasts have been received in southern Tunis, in the area of the border between Libya and Tunisia. The station has apparently erected an additional transmitter in the area.

16. In addition to the Al-Tawhid radio station, ISIS’s branch in Sirte has established a satellite TV channel affiliated with the Al-Tawhid radio station. The channel’s content is similar to that of its radio broadcasts.
Logo of the Al-Tawhid satellite TV channel (April 8, 2015)
Appendix

ISIS’s Establishment in Libya: INTERNAL LIBYAN BACKGROUND

The Political, Geographical and Social Background

1. The chaos that prevails in Libya in the post-Qaddafi era is rooted in complex and complicated political, tribal, religious and cultural tensions and contrasts. The tensions have existed in Libyan society for centuries and make it inherently difficult to create a cohesive country with an effective central government.

2. The contrasts and tensions include:

   1) **Regional separatism**: Religious separatism exists primarily between the Tripoli Province in the west, the Barqa Province in the east, and Fezzan Province in the south. It is reflected in separate tribal histories, competition for political influence and differing religious views, different political and economic orientations (Maghreb versus Egypt), opposing approaches to types of government (federal or centralized) and different lifestyles (urban versus rural).

   In the face of these fundamental contradictions, the unifying elements that evolved over the years remain fragile.

   2) **Tribal fabric**: Tribal fabric incorporates a traditional culture and value system based on violent competition, internal solidarity and hostility to other groups, i.e., sedentary versus nomadic, Arab versus non-Arab, conquerors versus conquered and highborn versus lowborn. In tribal culture, establishing alliances for ulterior motives and breaking them when the time comes is common.

   3) **Religious identity**: Libyan society is Sunni Muslim without the characteristic Middle Eastern tension between communities, religions and ethnic minorities (as in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon). However, it is fraught with competing influences of Sufism, mysticism and veneration of saints. There are also different and competing perceptions in Libya regarding the nature of Islam: moderate Maghreb Islam, Islam influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, and radical Salafist-jihadi ideologies.
3. Qaddafi established a regime based on a synthesis of traditional values (Islamic Arab and North African tribal) and new concepts (Pan-Arabism, Nasserism, African orientation). He set up a Libyan-wide system of institutions which, together with oppressive mechanisms and oil money, maintained his regime for a long time. The current crisis eroded the foundations of the Qaddafi regime and highlighted the tensions and contrasts, leading to chaos. That can be expected to pose an ongoing challenge for any regime established in Libya.

The Disintegration of Libya as a Nation State after the Fall of Qaddafi

4. The wave of protests in Libya broke out on February 15, 2011, two months after the outbreak of the regional upheaval in Tunisia (December 18, 2010). It began in Benghazi, in the east of the country, and spread to other cities. Protests were concentrated in the large cities, including the capital of Tripoli, Bayda, Derna, Ajdabiya and Zintan. In February 2011, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the justice minister who resigned from the Qaddafi government, announced the establishment of an alternative government in Benghazi called the National Transitional Council. The Libyan Army attacked, primarily against cities and facilities related to oil production which were taken over by rebels. The forces of the National Transitional Council failed to organize a counterattack, and Tripoli and Sirte remained under the control of the Qaddafi regime.

5. On August 22, 2011, the rebels took control of Tripoli, ending the Qaddafi regime. On October 20, 2011, the rebels captured the last stronghold of Qaddafi supporters in Sirte, and Qaddafi was captured, lynched and killed by a rebel group. On October 23, 2011, a festive ceremony was held of Benghazi, marking the end of the uprising and the liberation of Libya from the rule of Qaddafi.

6. The overthrowing of the Qaddafi regime led to civil war and the breakdown of the Libyan State: the provisional government in Tripoli, which represented itself opposing the Qaddafi regime and was supported by the international community, failed to restore order. Fighting broke out in Libya among rival factions. The National Transitional Council gave way to the General National Congress, which was elected in June 2012. However, the General National Congress, led by Nuri Abu Sahmain, failed to prepare a constitution within the allotted 18 months and was dissolved in August 2014. New elections were held, leading to the establishment of a House of Representatives, and were supposed to enable the establishment of a central government.
7. The Islamist parties lost the election to the new House of Representatives, and a violent conflict soon developed between them and anti-Islamist groups. Khalifa Haftar, a former general in Qaddafi’s army, who became the leader of the anti-Islamist rebels, initiated a military campaign against the Islamist forces (May 2014). The main target of the campaign was Ansar al-Sharia (literally, supporters of Sharia, i.e., supporters of Islamic law), a Salafist-Islamist organization that controlled Benghazi and has expanded its areas of control in Libya since the overthrow of Qaddafi.

8. In response, the Islamist militias, centered in Misrata, launched a counterattack against Haftar’s forces, called Libyan Dawn. The attack began in July 2014, after the election results for the new House of Representatives had been announced. The militias took control of Tripoli, forcing the anti-Islamist Libyan government to move from Tripoli to Bayda and Tobruk, in the eastern part of the country. The government was supported by the Libyan Army under the command of General Haftar.

The Creation of Rival Governments in Tripoli and in Tobruk

9. As a result, there is no functioning central regime in Libya. Two rival centers of government were formed in Libya: the nationalist, “secular” and anti-Islamist Tobruk government in the east, and the Islamist Tripoli government in the west. Each has its own House of Representatives and cabinet. Each government claims that it represents the legitimate wishes of the Libyan people. Each is supported by its own militias and military forces and by external forces. The current situation is as follows:

1) The Tobruk government in eastern Libya, supported by the international community, is headed by Abdullah al-Thani (prime minister since March 11, 2014). This government is supported by new Libyan Army, led by General Haftar, which includes ground forces, an air force and a navy. The Libyan government and the Libyan Army are supported by Egypt and a number of local militias.

2) The Islamist shadow government in Tripoli, in western Libya, is not recognized by the international community. It was established in August 2014, after an umbrella network of Islamic militias called the Libyan Dawn took control of Tripoli. The Tripoli government is headed by Khalifa al-Ghweil
The Tripoli government is supported by some military units and militia groups and by Qatar and Turkey.

10. In addition to areas either controlled or influenced by the two governments, there are large areas in Libya that are not under the control of either. They areas are controlled by local organizations and militias, some of them tribal, which represent local interests. There are also militias with various Islamic ideologies, including Salafist-jihadi ideology (organizations affiliated with ISIS or Al-Qaeda and groups with a Salafist-jihadi worldview unaffiliated with ISIS or Al-Qaeda).

The Conflict between the Tobruk Government and ISIS

11. Of the two, the Tobruk government seems to be taking more decisive steps against ISIS on the ground. The Libyan Army, under General Haftar, took part in the expulsion of ISIS operatives from their stronghold in Derna and its surroundings. In doing so, it did not hesitate to cooperate with a local jihadist organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

12. In August 2015, the Tobruk government appealed to Western countries to carry out airstrikes against ISIS in Libya (along with the airstrikes carried out by the American-led coalition in Iraq and Syria). It also asked the UN Security Council to lift the arms embargo imposed on it, in view of ISIS's continued consolidation in Libya (The Guardian; Sputnik, August 21, 2015). United States and the international community did not grant the requests, and remain indifferent to the situation in Libya, contrary to the considerable attention paid to Syria and Iraq.

13. In response, ISIS called for a “general mobilization” of its operatives for jihad in Libya against the Tobruk government, which is supported by the West. ISIS-affiliated Twitter accounts recently called for foreign fighters to go to Libya (to “migrate”) to “defend Islam in Libya.” On August 23, 2015, ISIS’s Tripoli Province issued a video in which an operative named Abu Ali al-Jazrawi said the call for jihad in Libya was more important than the call to join the jihad in the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Iraq and Yemen (Al-Arabiya, August 23, 2015).

14. As in Syria and in Iraq, in Libya there is a covert relationship between ISIS and the two rival governments. Despite the power struggles in various regions, the Central Bank of Libya continues to finance public expenditures and officials in the areas controlled by the two rival governments and the rival militias, including the area under ISIS’s control. According to a recent report, residents of Sirte travel to
Misrata, where ISIS’s rival militias enjoy a position of power, to cash checks and buy gas and various products (Nytimes.com, November 19, 2014).

Mapping the Major Armies and Militias Operating in Libya

15. Militia activity in Libya continues almost uninterruptedly, since their military power exceeds that of the shaky security forces of the two rival governments. Some of the militias use military might as a tool to shape a political agenda. In many cases, the militias take care of ongoing security and the State infrastructure and engage in welfare activity among the local residents to gain their support.

16. It is difficult to map the various armies and militias operating in Libya due to their frequent changes, mergers and splits (similar to the situation in Syria). However, there are some stable elements and prominent militias that have survived the test of time. Below are details of the armies and militias, according to three categories: Armed forces and militias that support the Tobruk government; armed forces and militias that support the Tripoli government; independent militias and groups or tribal forces that are not under the control or influence of either of the two rival governments. To understand the overall context in which ISIS operates in Libya, the ITIC has mapped the main armies and militias that operated or are operating in Libya.

17. Category A: Armed forces and militias that either support or are affiliated with the Tobruk government:

1) The Libyan National Army: The army is headed by General Khalifa Haftar, and is the Tobruk government’s main source of support. The Libyan National Army includes soldiers from the Libyan Army under the Qaddafi regime. It was established and became prominent in February 2014, when General Haftar declared the suspension of the Islamist government in Tripoli. About three months later Haftar’s army launched a successful attack against the Islamists in Benghazi (especially Ansar al-Sharia). On March 9, 2015, General Khalifa Haftar was sworn in as the new commander of the Libyan Army by the Tobruk government’s parliament.

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23 In mapping the militias, an article by Dr. Jacques Neriah: The Libyan Quagmire, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, March 25, 2015, was used

24 General Khalifa Haftar previously served as frontline commander of the Libyan Army in the Libya-Chad War (1986). He was released from prison and moved to the United States. During the revolution against
2) The Al-Sa‘iqah Forces: An elite unit of the Libyan National Army paratroopers and commandos commanded by Haftar. They first gained prominence after being stationed in Benghazi to control the chaos in the city. The Al-Sa‘iqah Forces gained popularity in Benghazi due to their fighting against Ansar al-Sharia and by being regarded as a symbol of the reestablished Libyan armed forces. In the spring of 2015, the Al-Sa‘iqah Forces joined the Libyan National Army, under the command of Khalifa Haftar.

3) The February 17 Martyrs Brigade: An Islamic militia, centered in Benghazi, it receives financial assistance from various entities in Libya. Considered the largest militia in eastern Libya, it has an estimated 1,500-3,000 operatives. The militia is part of an umbrella network in Benghazi called the Shura Council of the Revolutionaries in Benghazi, formally subordinate to the Ministry of Defense of the Tobruk government.

4) The Al-Zintan Revolutionaries' Military Council: An umbrella network numbering about 23 militias in Al-Zintan, Tripoli, Sirte and the Nafusa mountains in western Libya. It has five “brigades” and a satellite communications channel called Libya Al-Watan (Libya the Homeland). It numbers around 4,000 operatives. It became well known because of the arrest of Muammar Qaddafi’s son, Seif al-Islam Qaddafi, in November 2011. On more than one occasion, Al-Zintan forces fought against jihadists in Tripoli.

5) The Al-Sawa‘iq Brigade: A military framework that originated in Al-Zintan. It participated in the attack on Tripoli in September 2011. It has since provided personal protection for senior figures in the National Transitional Council and changed its name to the Al-Sawa‘iq Brigade for the Protection of Human Life. It is headed by Brigadier General Mustafa al-Trabelsi.

7) The Warfallah Brigade: A military framework centered in Benghazi. It relies mainly on the Warfallah tribe, in southern Libya. It announced it was joining the Libyan Army, but in fact continues to maintain its own weapons and army camps.

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Qaddafi, he returned to Libya to be appointed as the commander of the rebel forces (in practice this was not realized.) He now serves as the commander of the Libyan Army, which supports the Tobruk government.
7) **The Toubou Brigade:** A military framework consisting primarily of operatives from the Toubou tribe. Its operatives are active in southern Libya, from the border with Sudan to Toubou’s border station with Niger. Its operatives cooperate with the Arab tribes against Tripoli government-supporting Libyan Dawn. The Toubou tribesmen have established a defensive area in eastern Sahel, which includes southern Libya and the border with Chad. They secure a few Libyan oil fields and have a monopoly on smuggling refugees who come to Libya from the Horn of Africa.

18. **Category B: Militias that support the Tripoli government:**

1) **Libyan Dawn (Fajr Libya):** An umbrella network of Islamic militias formed during the uprising against Muammar Qaddafi. The militias include the Libya Shield Force in central Libya, the Libya Revolutionaries Operations Room (LROR) in Tripoli and local militias elsewhere. Libyan Dawn began operating on July 13, 2014, with the intention of taking over Libya’s international airport and a number of nearby army camps. The operation was called Libyan Dawn, and the name was subsequently chosen as the permanent name of the Islamic militias. **The militias are engaged in power struggles with ISIS’s branches in various places in Libya, with each side presenting its opponent as an “infidel” against Islam.**

2) **The Misrata Brigades:** An umbrella network of militias established after the overthrow of Qaddafi. It has more than 200 militias, also known as the Misrata Union of Revolutionaries. They number an estimated 40,000 operatives and constitute an important center of power in Libya. They operate both in Misrata and other cities, and are affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.

3) **The Al-Qa’qa’ Brigade:** Established by rebels in Al-Zintan in 2011 following battles with Qaddafi’s forces before he was overthrown. The commander of the Al-Qa’qa’ Brigade is Uthman Mulayqithah, who deserted the Qaddafi regime at the beginning of the uprising. Tripoli is apparently the center of power for these militias. According to past reports, the Brigade supports the Tripoli government and secures the country’s borders and strategic facilities (BBC in Arabic, February 18, 2015). In addition, militia operatives apparently secure the oil facilities in Libya and are financed by the national oil company.

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25 A tribe of Berber origins in southern Libya, northern Chad and northern Niger.
4) **The Tripoli Brigade**: A military framework affiliated with jihadist Abdul Karim Belhaj, commander of the February 17 Martyrs Brigade. It is active mainly in Tripoli and western Libya. It was supported in the past by France and Qatar. It has between 500 and 1,000 operatives, some of them foreigners.

5) **The Megraha Brigade**: Affiliated with the Megraha tribe. It is concentrated near Tripoli and aims to protect the tribespeople from armed militias. It originated in the central city of Al-Saba', in southern Libya, and its operatives are radical Islamists.

6) **The Libya Revolutionaries Operations Room (LROR)**: A militia headed by Adel Gharyani. It numbers around 200-300 operatives and is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. In October 2013, LROR operatives abducted then prime minister Ali Zeidan. Attempts to dissolve the militia following the abduction failed.

7) **Libya Shield Force 1**: A military framework headed by Wissam Ben Hamid. It numbers four “brigades” deployed throughout the country. It was established in 2012 as a temporary measure to merge former rebel fighters and turn them into a cohesive national force. Forces belonging to it clashed with the Libyan Army, which supports Haftar.

19. **Category C: Salafist or Salafist-jihadi organizations or militias** (excluding ISIS’s provinces):

   1) **Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)**: Salafist-jihadi organization, constituting Al-Qaeda’s branch in North Africa. It originated in the early 1990s during the civil war in Algeria. Algeria’s successful campaign against Islamic terrorism pushed the organization to the Sahara and the Sahel countries (including Niger, Mauritania and Mali). In Libya, the organization has a presence in the southern Fezzan Province and in the area of Benghazi-Derna in the east. In December 2015 and in January 2016, the organization was involved in terrorist attacks against hotels in Mali and Burkina Faso (see below).

   2) **Ansar al-Sharia**:

      A) **A Salafist-jihadi organization**, established in 2011 during the civil war in Libya. The organization is headed by Abu Khalid al-Madani. It includes Libyan operatives and foreign fighters from Tunisia, Algeria and other countries. The organization first gained notice when its operatives distributed videos documenting the fighting in Sirte, during which
Muammar Qaddafi was caught and killed (October 2011). The organization gained prominence on June 7, 2012, when it led a parade of armed vehicles in central Benghazi, demanding the imposition of Islamic law (Sharia) in Libya.

B) The organization has branches throughout Libya, named for the cities in which they operate (Ansar al-Sharia Benghazi, Ansar al-Sharia Derna, etc).

C) The United States has accused the organization of participating in the attack that led to the burning of the American consulate in Benghazi and the murder of its staff members (September 2012). As a result, the organization was included in United States’ list of designated terrorist. Recently, the organization appears to have weakened due to schisms and the defection of its operatives.

D) Ansar al-Sharia is an important ISIS ally in Libya. Operatives who deserted from Ansar al-Sharia joined ISIS in many cities, especially Sirte, and helped ISIS take control and establish its presence. A picture included in this study is inscribed “Ansar al-Sharia” on the background of an ISIS flag as an expression of the cooperation between them.26

E) The Shura Council of the Jihad Fighters of Derna and Its Surroundings: a jihadi organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda, which was established in Derna on December 12, 2014. On June 9, 2015, its leader was killed in a battle with ISIS operatives. As a result, the organization launched a campaign against ISIS in Derna in collaboration with the Tobruk Libyan Army. In the second half of June 2015, the coalition of ISIS’s opponents managed to repel the organization and push it to a mountainous region dominating the south of the city (Al-Fataih). In mid-November 2015, the organization announced a military operation aimed at taking the Al-Fataih region from ISIS, and since then there have been battles between the two organizations. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has announced its support for the Shura Council and blamed the Islamic State

for the bloodshed in Derna (The Long War Journal, July 9, 2015). On the other hand, Saad al-Tira, a senior Shura Council operative, denied his organization belonged to Al-Qaeda. He claimed its operatives were “conservatives” who opposed Qaddafi and would continue to fight until they eliminated all the opponents of revolution in Libya. He added that the organization’s operatives would fight in Sirte after they had liberated Derna from ISIS (Bawabat Ifriqa al-Ikhbariya, January 3, 2016).

F) The Al-Mourabitoun Battalion: An organization with a Salafist-jihadi ideology whose establishment was declared in northern Mali on August 23, 2013. In early December 2015, the leader of AQIM announced that Al-Mourabitoun was joining his organization with the name of the Al-Mourabitoun Battalion. On November 20, 2015 the two organizations jointly carried out the attack at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, the capital of Mali (Wikipedia in Arabic and English; aljazeera.net, August 4 and December 5, 2015; Arabi, July 21-22, 2015). They also jointly carried out the terrorist attack at the hotel in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso in West Africa (January 15, 2016). According to Alain Rodier, a French expert on terrorism, the organization has a presence along the Libyan coast in the Benghazi region (Le Figaro, December 24, 2014).

G) The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG): A Libyan organization with a Salafist-jihadi ideology, established in the early 1990s by jihadists who had fought in the Soviet-Afghan War. The organization carried out a number of attacks in Libya but the Libyan security services exposed it and detained and killed many of its operators. In 2007, the organization announced that it was joining Al-Qaeda; many of the organization’s operatives participated in the revolution against Qaddafi. In the Libyan Civil War, the organization’s operatives are active in Libyan Dawn, the Islamic military umbrella network, which is hostile to ISIS (Wikipedia in Arabic and English; aljazeera.net, March 18, 2015; Al-Sharq al-Awsat, September 8, 2014).

H) The Libyan Shield Militia: An Islamic militia affiliated with the Misrata Brigades and the Muslim Brotherhood, and recently joined forces with Ansar al-Sharia. Although it claims its forces are affiliated with the defense ministry of the Tobruk government, it apparently does not belong to the official government in the east of the country.
Tribes

20. Libya’s population includes hundreds of Arab and Berber tribes, which support themselves by smuggling merchandise, weapons and people (trafficking in migrants). Among them there are independent, tribal militias not subordinate to either of the rival governments. They include the Tuareg, nomadic tribes of Berber descent that control the southwestern part of Libya (Fezzan) up to the border with Algeria. They also have a presence in Niger, Mali, Algeria, and Tunisia. They served as mercenaries in Qaddafi’s regime. According to one version, they support the Misrata Brigade, which supports the Tripoli government. According to another version, they support the Tobruk government. However, their fundamental loyalty is apparently to themselves and their local interests.

Attempts to Establish a National Unity Government

21. On December 17, 2015, the two rival governments – the “secular” Tobruk government and the Islamic Tripoli government – signed an agreement in Morocco to form a national unity government in Libya within 40 days and to fight terrorism together. That was after ongoing international and regional efforts led by the UN after a split lasting a year and a half. The establishment of the government was intended to unite efforts in a common struggle against the chaos in Libya, and fight the consolidation of ISIS and the global jihad. The agreement, known as the Skhirat Agreement (named for a coastal town in Morocco, south of the capital Rabat), was welcomed by the international community, the United Nations, and Egypt.
22. **The agreement is expected to encounter many difficulties.** The test will be the government’s ability to overcome personal rivalries, unify the bureaucratic mechanisms in the various provinces, impose authority on the various mutually hostile armies and militias, and coordinate the efforts against ISIS (which is strengthening its control in the Sirte region). Even if a national unity government is established, it seems that its chances of overcoming the difficulties, establishing an effective central government and surviving over time, are not high.