

- **Syria** - the airstrikes were concentrated in Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqah, Kobane, Tell Abyad, Aleppo, and Abu Kamal. The airstrikes targeted ISIS tactical units, vehicles, heavy machinery, car bombs, bunkers, buildings and battle positions, among other things.
- **Iraq** - the airstrikes were concentrated in Fallujah, Haditha, Kirkuk, Makhmur, Mosul, Ramadi, Sinjar, Tal Afar, Al-Assad, Hawija and Baiji. The airstrikes targeted ISIS tactical units, vehicles (including car bombs), weapons, buildings, stores of explosives, and rocket launchers, among other things.

Statements made by senior coalition officials

■ **US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter** presented the policy of the United States in the war against ISIS. According to Carter, the policy includes nine key areas. Some of these areas are in the **political domain** and will be carried out under the leadership of the Department of State, and some are in the **military domain** and will be carried out under the leadership of the Department of Defense. These areas include: building an effective government in Iraq; changing the regime in Syria through diplomatic activity; building the military capabilities of the local partners of the American strategy in Iraq and Syria; strengthening the ability to collect intelligence about ISIS; disrupting ISIS's financing; countering ISIS's propaganda and messaging; stopping the flow of foreign fighters who join ISIS; and protecting the US homeland against the threat of terrorism.

■ Commenting on the deployment of American forces to the area, Ashton Carter says that **American forces are not a substitute for local forces**. That is why **the US will not send troops into the area** but rather work to strengthen Iraqi security forces and supply them with military equipment. According to Carter, the United States also plans to send military equipment to the local Syrian forces after they complete their training (US Department of State website, July 7, 2015).

■ **British Prime Minister David Cameron** made it clear that **the military operations should be intensified, in view of the fear that ISIS, after establishing itself in Syria and Iraq, will seek to expand to other countries**. The Prime Minister made it clear to the British military commanders that he wanted to increase the level of military activity of the British forces in Syria and Iraq, prioritizing the Special Forces and exercising counter-terrorism capabilities. According to British media reports, since September 2014 the RAF has carried out more **than 1,000 sorties in Syria and Iraq** and has attacked more than 300 targets in Iraq (The Independent, July 13, 2015).

Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (Google Maps)

Aleppo province

Aleppo

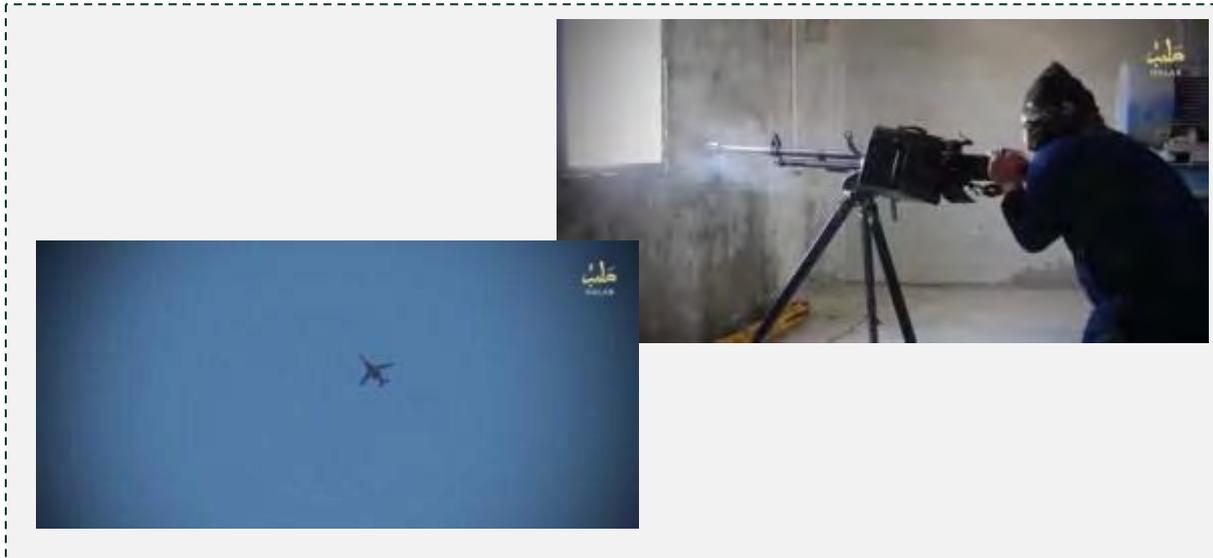
- This week, there were no significant changes in the fighting in the Aleppo province. The Syrian forces are entrenched in the Al-Zahra neighborhood in the northwest of the city and near CERS (the Scientific Studies and Research Center, better known by its French name, Centre d'Études et de Recherches Scientifiques). Heavy clashes occurred in these two areas (As-Safir, July 8, 2015).

- Rebel forces fighting in the Aleppo province have formed in two umbrella frameworks called Ansar al-Sharia and Jaysh al-Fatah in Aleppo. The two frameworks, which the Al-Nusra Front also belongs to, cooperate in the fighting against the Syrian Army, although each framework retains its name and uniqueness (As-Safir, July 8, 2015).

Kobane (Ayn al-Arab)

- On July 11, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated website posted a video showing ISIS operatives firing at Kurdish outposts in the rural area south of Kobane, allegedly belonging to the PKK (the Kurdistan Workers Party, which operates in Turkey). According to the video, these outposts were captured by ISIS and weapons there

were seized. The video shows an aircraft of the coalition forces carrying out an airstrike in the area, and ISIS forces firing at it with anti-aircraft weapons (isdarat.tv, July 11, 2015).



Left: Coalition aircraft attacking an ISIS force in the rural area south of Kobane. Right: ISIS operative firing a medium machine gun at a Kurdish force that allegedly belongs to the PKK (isdarat.tv, July 11, 2015).



The city of Kobane, controlled by Kurdish forces and located near the Syria-Turkey border (Google Maps)

Homs province

Palmyra

■ According to reports in Arab and Lebanese media (affiliated with opponents of ISIS), **Syrian Army forces have launched a military operation designed to regain control of the city of Palmyra.** During the attack, the Syrian forces were supported by the Air Force (Al-Mayadeen, July 9, 2015). On July 10, 2015, the Syrian Air Force

carried out more than 150 airstrikes in the rural area west of the city of Palmyra (alarabiya.net, July 11, 2015). The Syrian Army reportedly managed to take control of several villages located about seven km to the west of the city of Palmyra (Al-Mayadeen, July 9, 2015). These reports require verification.



The city of Palmyra (Wikimapia)

Homs

■ According to the ISIS information office in the Homs province, ISIS has taken control over two checkpoints of the Syrian security forces on the road to the T-4 (Tiyas) airbase. ISIS also reported that missile launchers, machine guns and ammunition had fallen into its hands (Smart News; YouTube, July 8, 2015). Previously, ISIS had made several unsuccessful attempts to take over the T-4 airbase.



Left: Mortar fire. Right: ISIS operatives on their way to take over a Syrian Army position on the road leading to the T-4 airbase (isdarat.tv; YouTube, July 12, 2015)



The T-4 military airbase, east of Homs (Wikimapia)

Damascus province

Al-Zabadani

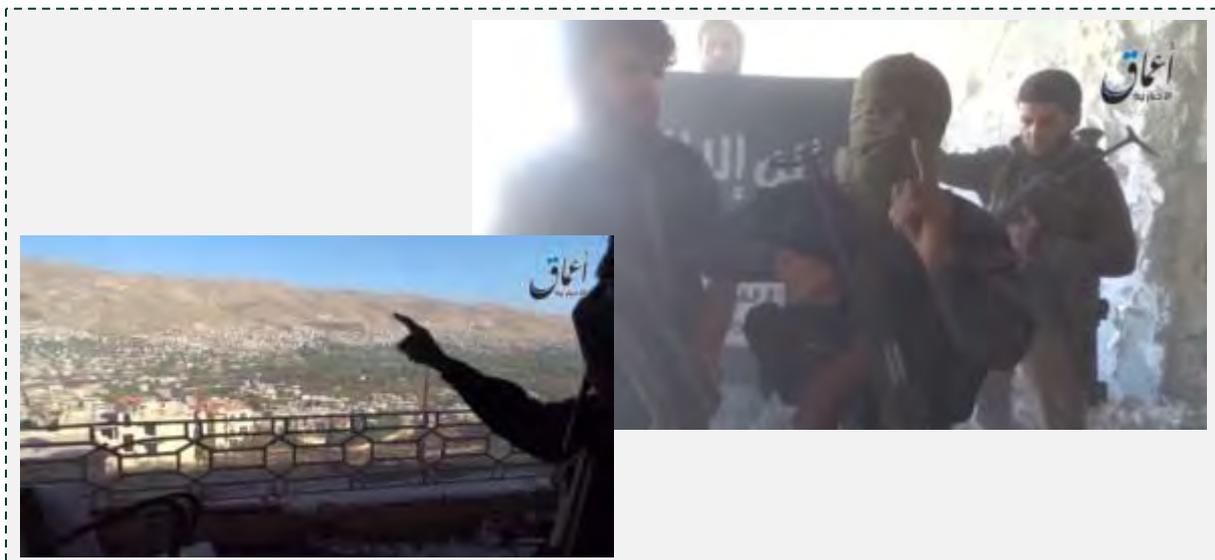
- During the week, clashes continued between the Syrian security forces and Hezbollah and Jaysh al-Islam, ISIS and other organizations in and around the city of Al-Zabadani, northwest of Damascus. Reports about events in the city are contradictory, with each side boasting of its so-called successes. The rebel organizations reportedly regained control of positions that the Syrian security forces had managed to seize (Al-Mayadeen, July 8, 2015). Syrian forces and Hezbollah tried repeatedly to break into Al-Zabadani with heavy artillery shelling and with air support from the Syrian Air Force, so far without success (Al-Mayadeen, July 9, 2015).¹
- On July 12, 2015, a Lebanese news website reported that Hezbollah forces, in cooperation with the Syrian Army, had managed to take over the Al-Zalah neighborhood, located in southern Al-Zabadani. According to subsequent reports, Hezbollah forces continue to make progress in the Al-Zahra neighborhood, in the northwestern part of the city (alhadathnews.net, July 12, 2015). ISIS operatives, on their part, have denied reports that Syrian regime forces have managed to enter the city. They said that they had managed to stop an attempt by the Syrian regime forces and Hezbollah to advance towards the city (aljazeera.net, July 12, 2015).

¹ According to senior US officials, Hezbollah's increasing involvement in the Syrian crisis is threatening to ruin its image as an invincible organization. Western officials estimate that **Hezbollah has lost 700-1,000 operatives in battle in Syria**. They say that if Hezbollah loses control over Al-Zabadani, it would be a severe blow for the organization, since the area previously served as a logistics center for sending Iranian weapons to Hezbollah (Foreign Policy, July 11, 2015).



Map of the areas under the control of the forces of the Syrian regime and Hezbollah vs. ISIS operatives in the north of the city of Al-Zabadani, according to Hezbollah (almayadeen.net, July 13, 2015)

- On July 11, 2015, a video was posted on YouTube by one of ISIS's media arms, showing ISIS operatives in the city of Al-Zabadani shooting at the forces of the Syrian regime and Hezbollah, on a mountain range overlooking the city. In the video, explosions are heard and heavy smoke can be seen surrounding the city (YouTube, July 11, 2015).



Left: Armed ISIS operative pointing at the city and the mountain range overlooking it. Right: ISIS operatives against the background of an ISIS flag in the city of Al-Zabadani (YouTube, July 11, 2015)



The city of Al-Zabadani (Google maps)

The Al-Yarmouk refugee camp

■ According to reports, on July 8, 2015, Al-Nusra Front operatives mounted an attack on the Al-Yarmouk refugee camp, on the southern outskirts of Damascus. During the attack, they managed to take over five of the six streets in the northwestern part of the camp that had been under the control of Palestinian armed groups (Zaman al-Wasl; Twitter account affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front in Damascus, July 8, 2015). It should be noted that a previous attempt by ISIS to take over the camp failed.

Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (Google Maps)

Al-Anbar province

■ Local battles continue in various battle zones in the Al-Anbar province, most of which is controlled by ISIS. Each side claims to have made achievements. The Iraqi government announced that it had begun a major military operation to oust ISIS from key areas in the Al-Anbar province. **The Iraqi government's statements do not seem to be supported by facts on the ground.**

■ Main battle zones:

- **Ramadi:** according to reports, the city of Ramadi is surrounded by the Iraqi Army, which is waiting for the right time to embark on a campaign to liberate the city (Sky News in Arabic, July 12, 2015). On its part, an ISIS force is trying to break through the encirclement around the city. According to other reports, on July 11, 2015, intense fighting took place on the outskirts of Ramadi between ISIS and the Iraqi Army, in which 20 Iraqi soldiers and 25 ISIS operatives were killed (Al-Jazeera TV, July 11, 2015).

- **Haditha:** on July 11, 2015, ISIS issued a video documenting the organization fighting on the outskirts of the city, which ISIS is finding it hard to take over. This is an attack by ISIS that took place on July 6, 2015 (isdarat.tv, July 11, 2015).
- **Fallujah:** according to Iraqi security sources, the Iraqi Army is now completing its preparations for an operation to take over the city. The Iraqi Army has recently carried out artillery attacks and airstrikes on the city (Oruba News, July 12, 2015).

Salah al-Din province

Baiji

- Fighting in the area continues between the Iraqi Army and Shiite militias and ISIS, with neither side emerging the victor. On July 10, 2015, ISIS's media arm issued a video documenting ISIS's takeover of southern Baiji (Aamaq, July 10, 2015). On the other hand, the Iraqi Army report progress in its efforts to take over the city (Twitter, July 12, 2015).



ISIS operatives in the south of the city of Baiji. It is clear that one of the fighters is a child (Aamaq, July 10, 2015)

Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

IED explosion in front of the Italian Consulate in Cairo

- **On July 11, 2015, an IED exploded near the Italian Consulate in Cairo.** One man was killed and ten wounded. The casualties were Egyptian civilians and police officers. None of the casualties worked at the consulate. The attack occurred **when a car bomb parked near the building was detonated.** An initial examination of the

area of the attack indicated that **the car contained a large amount of explosives** that were detonated by remote control. The entrance to the consulate was completely destroyed. According to Egyptian security sources, the attack was carried out using the same type of car and the same modus operandi used in the recent assassination of Egypt's Prosecutor General **Hisham Barakat**.

■ **According to a Twitter account affiliated with the Sinai province of the Islamic State, the Islamic State itself (and not the Sinai province of the Islamic State) claimed responsibility for the attack.** Shortly after its publication, the posting was deleted from the Twitter page. Another statement affiliated with the Sinai province also advises all Muslims to stay away from the bases of the Egyptian security forces because they are “legitimate targets” for attacks by the jihad fighters.



Left: ISIS's official claim of responsibility for the car bomb explosion in Cairo (muslm.org, July 12, 2015). Right: Damage caused to the Italian Consulate in Cairo (ahram.org, July 11, 2015).

At this stage, the ITIC has no reliable information about the identity of the perpetrators, apart from the Sinai province's announcement. The announcement states that **the attack was carried out by the Islamic State (i.e., ISIS) itself** and not by the Sinai province of the Islamic State. The existence of an independent branch of ISIS in Egypt, with operational capabilities, requires further verification. If this is true, **this could expose Egypt to terrorist activities on a broader scale, in light of ISIS's capabilities and its fundamental interest to expand the campaign against the Egyptian regime.** The choice of the Italian Consulate may indicate ISIS's intention to add Western diplomatic missions in Arab countries to its list of targets to attack.

The battle between the Sinai province of the Islamic State and the Egyptian security forces

- **During the week, the Egyptian security forces continued their intensive activity against operatives of the Sinai province of the Islamic State.** To this end, the forces manned many roadblocks and checkpoints in order to detain suspects. Naval forces and border police imposed a security blockade on the coastal strip and the international border with the Gaza Strip, in order to prevent the infiltration of terrorist operatives (Al-Youm al-Sabea, July 10, 2015). The security forces are also working to detain operatives, defuse IEDs, confiscate cars and motorcycles and destroy infrastructure (Al-Masry al-Youm, July 11, 2015).
- According to a report by the Egyptian security forces (updated to July 11, 2015), since the combined attack against the Egyptian forces, the following results have been achieved in the fight against the jihadists: Egyptian forces have killed 252 terrorist operatives, detained 13 wanted men, destroyed 18 staging zones of terrorist operatives, defused 32 IEDs and destroyed dozens of cars and motorcycles. The Egyptian forces have also confiscated a large amount of weapons and ammunition (the Facebook page of the Egyptian armed forces spokesman, July 12, 2015).
- **Despite the intense activity of the Egyptian security forces, and despite the achievements that they boast of, operatives of ISIS's Sinai province continue to carry out terrorist activity against the Egyptian security forces in northern Sinai:**
 - On **July 7, 2015**, a number of operatives planted two IEDs on the highway at the entrance to Al-Arish. The IEDs exploded when a minibus carrying policemen passed by on the road. The blast wounded 20 policemen and a civilian (Al-Youm al-Sabea, July 9, 2015). The Sinai province of the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the incident (the Sinai province's Twitter page, July 9, 2015).



Photos documenting the damage to the Egyptian police vehicle (Twitter, July 9, 2015)

- **On July 13, 2015**, Sinai province operatives used IEDs to blow up the homes of two policemen in Al-Arish. There were no casualties because the houses were empty. The houses were completely destroyed (Al-Youm al-Sabea, July 13, 2015). The Sinai province of the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the incident on its Twitter page.
- **On July 14, 2015**, mortar shells were fired at an army vehicle in the area of Sheikh Zuweid. An Egyptian soldier was killed (Ma'an News Agency, July 14, 2015). A claim of responsibility for the shooting was posted on a Twitter account affiliated with the Sinai province.

Palestinians

Report on the death of a Palestinian operative in Iraq

- The death of **Mousa Hassan Hijazi**, aka **Abu Mousa**, was reported on July 11, 2015. He was a Gaza City former operative in the Hamas military wing, and was killed fighting in the ranks of ISIS. He was killed in a suicide bombing attack carried out by means of a booby-trapped APC in the city of Fallujah in Iraq. It is unknown when he left the Gaza Strip and joined the ranks of ISIS. A video was once posted showing him executing Iraqi Army prisoners, in which he stated that he was a "Sharia graduate" and that "he had killed Jews in Gaza." A mourning tent was erected in Gaza City (theshamnews.com, July 12, 2015; Twitter pages from July 11 and July 12, 2015).



Left: Hijazi in a video in which he and other ISIS operatives execute Iraqi Army soldiers (theshamnews.com, July 12, 2015). Right: Mousa Hijazi (Twitter, July 12, 2015).

The global jihad in other countries

Libya

Benghazi

- In a video distributed by ISIS in Libya, ISIS admits that it has lost its positions in the city of Derna, after battles with operatives of the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna, which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda. The video shows an ISIS operative, codenamed **Abu Suleiman the Sudanese**, wearing a military uniform, addressing groups that fought against ISIS and promising to hunt them down, activate car bombs against them and slaughter them (Al-Arabiya and Akhbar Libya, July 12, 2015).
- On July 10, 2015, the air force of the secular government in Libya attacked multiple targets of ISIS and of a coalition of local jihadi operative in the city of Benghazi (the Shura Council of the Rebels of Benghazi). This was done in order to curb their attempt to take over the city (Al-Bayan News, July 11, 2015). ISIS reportedly incurred losses, including **Abu Nadir al-Yamani**, the mufti of ISIS (Akhbar Libya, July 12, 2015).
- While **ISIS is under pressure in eastern Libya and is experiencing failures there**, it is trying to establish itself and **expand its areas of influence in central Libya**. On July 12, 2015, ISIS took over the town of **Al-Washka** (120 km southeast of Misrata) without any resistance, after Libyan Dawn's militia forces had withdrawn from the area. ISIS operatives continue to advance toward the **Abu Qarin** area (west of Al-

Washka), where Libyan Dawn's forces are concentrated. According to an intelligence source, ISIS managed to advance towards Misrata, concurrently with the withdrawal of Libyan Dawn's forces.



The area between Misrata and Sirte: The center of ISIS's effort (source: Google Maps)

Khorasan

- According to an announcement by Afghanistan's national defense administration, **Hafez Saeed Khan**, the Emir of ISIS's Khorasan province in eastern Afghanistan, was killed in a US airstrike carried out with a UAV. American sources have not confirmed the report (longwarjournal.org, July 11, 2015).
- In order to refute the report of his death, ISIS published an audio recording of Hafez Saeed Khan's voice on July 13, 2015. It is not yet possible to verify the authenticity and reliability of the audio recording. Last year, Hafez Saeed left the Taliban and joined the ranks of ISIS in Afghanistan, and was appointed as ISIS's Emir in Khorasan in January 2015 (Al-Sharq, January 28, 2015).



Hafez Saeed Khan, Emir of ISIS's Khorasan province (Al-Sharq, January 28, 2015)

Counterterrorism and preventive activity

North Africa

■ According to US media reports, the US is negotiating with North African countries to obtain authorization to use their territories to operate UAVs. **The purpose of the request is to improve the monitoring of ISIS's activity in Libya** and to provide the US Army and American intelligence agencies with **real-time information about ISIS's activity in Libya**. According to US sources, so far no country in North Africa has consented to the request (Wall Street Journal, July 12, 2015).

Tunisia

■ According to reports by Tunisian experts, the number of young people who embrace jihadi ideology is on the rise. They say in the past three months **they have prevented the departure of about 15,000 young men and women to Syria and Iraq to join the ranks of ISIS**. This is in comparison with 12,000 young people who were denied exit in 2014 until the beginning of 2015. The same experts have also expressed concern about a serious phenomenon of jihadi operatives infiltrating government institutions, first and foremost the ranks of the Army (Ayn Libya, July 10, 2015; Al-Shorouk, July 10, 2015).

Turkey

■ On July 10, 2015, Turkish authorities detained 21 operatives in several cities, including Istanbul. On July 12, 2015, Turkey announced that it had detained 45 ISIS operatives on the Syrian border. Some were detained at the bus station in the city of

Gaziantep. Many of the detainees are **citizens of Tajikistan, who will probably be deported** (ibtimes.com.uk, July 12, 2015). According to data from the Turkish Prime Minister's Office, Turkey has deported 1,500 suspected ISIS operatives and has prevented 15,000 people from 98 countries from entering Turkey (World Bulletin, July 11, 2015).

Britain

■ **Amira Abbas**, a schoolgirl from east London, is one of three 16-year-old girls who left Britain and joined ISIS in Syria. According to a recent report, she has married an ISIS operative from Sydney, Australia. The operative has appeared several times in ISIS videos intended to recruit operatives. The young Australian, **Abdullah Elmir**, aka **the Ginger Jihadist**, confirmed his marriage to the British girl (The Guardian, July 13, 2015).



Abdullah Elmir the Australian (YouTube)

China

■ The Chinese government reported that **more than a hundred Chinese members of the Uighur Muslim minority** were sent back to China from Thailand after the Thai authorities suspected that they were on their way to join the jihad in the Middle East. The 109 illegal immigrants were on their way to Turkey and from there probably to Syria or Iraq. Thirteen of them fled from China after being charged with terrorist activity (Daily Mail, July 12, 2015).

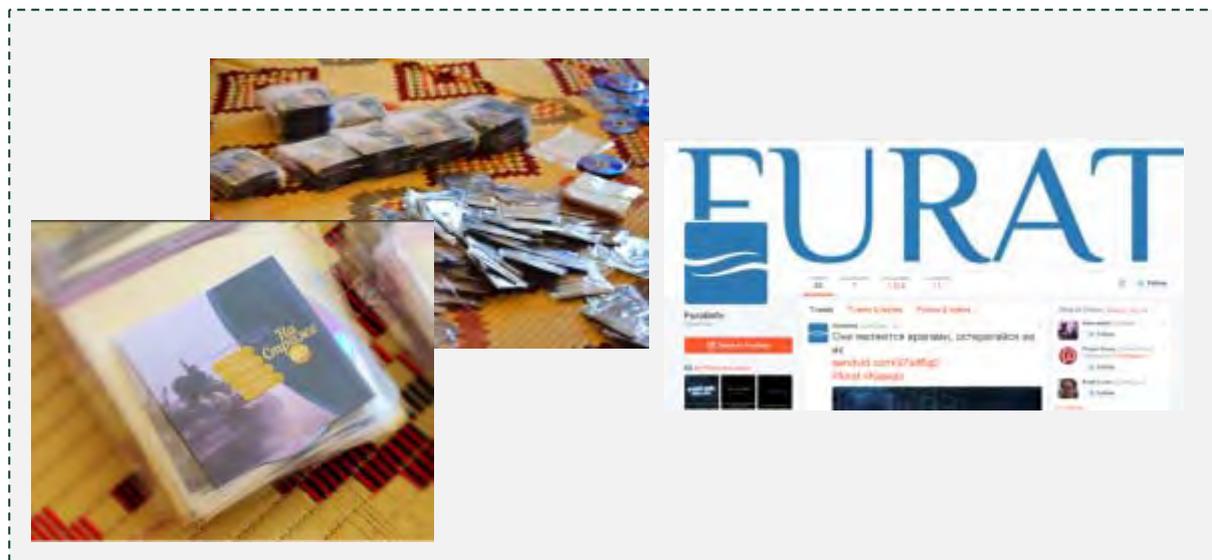


Chinese operatives sent back to China (Chinese TV, July 11, 2015)

The battle for hearts and minds

The establishment of a Russian-language media platform

- On June 5, 2015, the establishment of ISIS's new Russian-language media platform was announced. The media platform, named **Furat Media**, began to operate on June 18, 2015, on Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr. **The establishment of the North Caucasus province of the Islamic State was announced** by this arm. The Russian-language media arm has released videos containing interviews with Russian-speaking operatives in Iraq and Syria.
- The main objective of the establishment of the media arm is **to recruit additional Russian operatives into the ranks of ISIS, especially from the North Caucasus and Central Asia**. It is also intended as a means of communication between the Russian-speaking operatives in Syria and Iraq and as an ideological bridge between operatives in Syria and Iraq and those who are still in North Caucasus. According to Russian Foreign Minister **Sergei Lavrov, an estimated 2,000 operatives from Russia are fighting in Syria and Iraq** (Guardian, July 13, 2015).



Left: Propaganda tapes intended for distribution. Right: Twitter page of ISIS's Russian-language media arm (Twitter page of ISIS's Russian-language media arm)

ISIS's cyber war

■ A group calling itself the **Cyber Army of the Khilafah of ISIS** has reportedly hacked the website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), headed by Rami Abdul Rahman, and threatened to kill him. A photomontage uploaded to the website by ISIS hackers shows Abdul Rahman dressed in orange clothes (the attire of those condemned to death by ISIS) and to his right, holding a knife, Jihadi John (ISIS's English-speaking executioner who has executed Western hostages). **The London-based SOHR website documents human rights abuses committed by all those involved in the fighting in Syria, including ISIS** (alarabiya.net, July 8, 2015).