



Spotlight on Global Jihad (June 23 - 29, 2016)



Main events of the week

- The main event of the week was the **mass-killing attack carried out by three suicide bombers at the international airport in Istanbul**. The number of fatalities is now 41 (updated to the morning of June 30), but it is liable to rise. So far, no terrorist organization has claimed responsibility for the attack, **whose operational characteristics are in line with the modus operandi of ISIS** (which is waging a campaign of terrorism against Turkey). Turkish Prime Minister Yildirim said that according to security officials, the initial signs indicated that ISIS carried out the attack.
- On the ground, **ISIS continues to suffer blows** in the areas under its territorial control in the various arenas. **This week saw the completion of the takeover of Fallujah**, ISIS's remaining prominent stronghold in the Sunni Al-Anbar Province. **For ISIS**, the loss of Fallujah, a city of symbolic importance, **is a blow in military terms and a blow to its image**. During his "victory visit" to Fallujah, **Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi** declared **that victory in Mosul was near**. However, in the ITIC's assessment, ISIS's campaign against Iraq is far from over. Both the city of Fallujah and the Al-Anbar Province have not yet been cleansed of ISIS operatives, and **ISIS continues to conduct guerrilla and terrorist warfare in Baghdad and in the various regions taken over by the Iraqi forces**.
- **There are two other arenas** where ISIS is facing a **threat of losing important strongholds** in the near future. **In the Syrian arena**, the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are advancing towards **the city center of Manbij**, an important ISIS stronghold west of the Euphrates River. **In the Libyan arena**, fighting continues **in the city of Sirte**, and the area of the city under ISIS's control is shrinking. At the same time, the forces of General Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan Army in western Libya, are **cleansing the city of Benghazi** from the presence of jihadi groups that control part of the city (ISIS and organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda).

Terrorist attack at the Istanbul international airport (Overview updated on June 29)

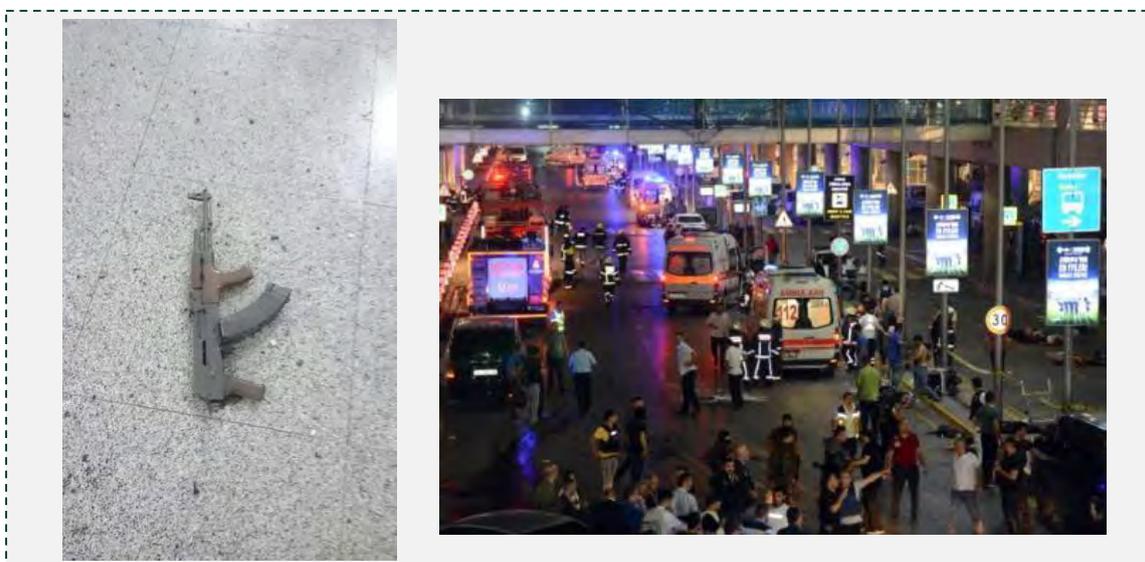
- On the night of June 28-29, 2016, a terrorist attack was carried out at Istanbul Atatürk Airport. The attack was carried out by **three terrorists** who, according to the

Turkish Prime Minister, had arrived by taxi. According to an eyewitness, the three terrorists were wearing black jackets, where they hid their weapons (Reuters, June 29, 2016).

■ According to the Turkish media, the attack **was carried out in two locations:**

- **The first location** was at the **entrance to the international terminal**. Two terrorists with Kalashnikov assault rifles opened fire on passengers waiting at the crowded security checkpoints. One of them began to move toward the passenger lounge. While shooting, he was injured by a security guard. As a result, the second suicide bomber blew himself up near a baggage scanner.
- **The second location was on the bottom floor**, near the parking area. A terrorist began firing at the crowds rushing to their cars. Once the security force arrived, the terrorist blew himself up.

■ According to the Turkish justice minister, 31 people were killed and another 147 were wounded. Prime Minister Yildirim later announced that **the number of fatalities had risen to 36** (updated on the morning of June 29; the number has since risen to 41). So far, **no terrorist organization has claimed responsibility for the attack, whose modus operandi matches that of ISIS**, which is waging a campaign of terrorism against Turkey. **Turkish Prime Minister Yildirim said** that according to security officials, the initial signs indicated that **ISIS carried out the attack**. The initial assumption prevalent among American intelligence officials is that ISIS or an organization operating under its auspices carried out the attack (CNN, June 29, 2016).



Right: Security and rescue forces outside the airport in Istanbul. Left: Kalashnikov rifle used by one of the terrorists in the attack (Twitter page of New Straits Times, June 28, 2016)



Right: The entrance to the airport after the attack (Al-Marsad News Agency, June 29, 2016).
Left: The moment of the first explosion, caught on the airport security cameras (YouTube, June 29, 2016)



Right: The first site of the attack: the security check entrance at the international terminal.
Left: The devastation in the passenger hall (milliyet.com, June 29, 2016)

The US-led campaign against ISIS

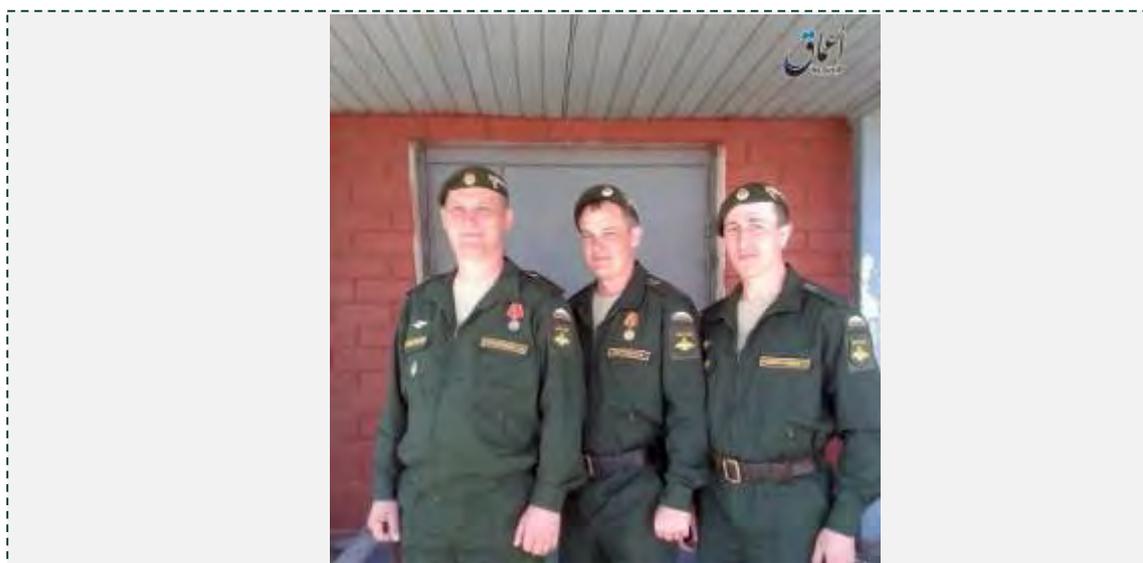
Airstrikes

- This week as well, the US-led coalition carried out intensive airstrikes in Iraq and Syria. **In Iraq**, the airstrikes were concentrated in the area of Fallujah, in support of the Iraqi Army campaign to liberate the city. Airstrikes were also carried out elsewhere in the Al-Anbar Province, in the town of Qayyarah, south of Mosul (where the Iraqi Army is laying the groundwork for a future attack on Mosul), and in the area of Sinjar (in northwestern Iraq), among other places. **In Syria**, the airstrikes were concentrated in

the areas of Al-Raqqah, Deir al-Zor, the area of the city of Manbij (in support of the attacking SDF forces), and in the area north of Aleppo.

Russia's involvement in the fighting

■ ISIS's propaganda machine published a photo showing three Russian officers who, according to ISIS, were killed in battles between ISIS and the Syrian Army. The three were allegedly killed in the area between Ithriya and Tabqa, where the Syrian Army was mounting an attack (Amaq, June 23, 2016). **The Russian Defense Minister's spokesman was quick to deny the news.** According to him, all the Russian soldiers whose photos were published by ISIS are alive and with their units (TASS News Agency, June 23, 2016).



Three Russian officers who, according to ISIS, were killed in clashes with it in the area between Ithriya and Tabqa (Amaq, June 23, 2016). A Russian spokesman denied the report.

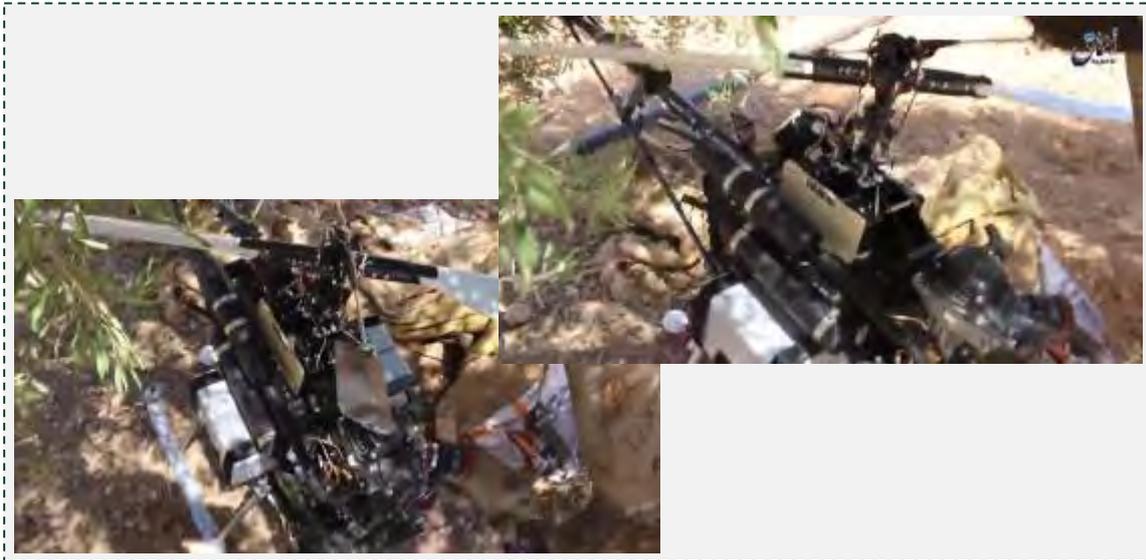
Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (www.nationsonline.org)

The campaign to take over the city of Manbij

- **The SDF forces continued their advance towards the Manbij city center.** This week they took over Sharia Square, located about 1.8 km from the city center. On June 26, 2016, the SDF troops took over the Al-Hawatmeh neighborhood in northern Manbij. According to media reports, the SDF forces now control about 20%-30% of the city. In addition, the SDF troops took over the **Manbij silos** from ISIS. The silos, located approximately 2.5 km south of the city, overlook southern Manbij (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), June 24, 2016). An ISIS offensive to take over the silo area was halted by the SDF.
- ISIS's propaganda machine claimed last week that 157 Kurdish fighters had been killed in clashes with the Kurdish forces in the area of Manbij. ISIS also claimed that on June 22, its operatives had shot down a small unmanned helicopter used to collect intelligence.



Small unmanned intelligence collection helicopter allegedly shot down by ISIS operatives on the outskirts of Manbij (Amaq, June 25, 2016)

The campaign in the Aleppo area

■ Fighting continues in and around the city of Aleppo. The Kurdish neighborhood of Sheikh Maqsud, in northern Aleppo, was shelled by the rebel organizations. There were clashes between Islamic rebel organizations and the Syrian Army in the neighborhood of Sayf al-Dawla, in southwestern Aleppo (SOHR, June 25, 2016). The rebel organizations reportedly foiled the Syrian forces' attempts to advance towards several neighborhoods in northern Aleppo (Local Coordination Committees, June 26, 2016).

■ In a speech by Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah (June 24, 2016), he highlighted the importance of the battle in Aleppo against the “terrorist groups.” Following are the main points that he made (Al-Manar TV, June 24, 2016):

- Thousands of foreign fighters of various nationalities from around the world recently arrived in Aleppo via the border between Syria and Turkey, which is open to them. Their goal is “to topple what is left of the Aleppo region, and the city of Aleppo in particular.” Therefore, Nasrallah claims, “the fighting in Aleppo [means] defending the rest of Syria. It [means] defending Damascus, defending Lebanon, defending Iraq and defending Jordan [...]”

- Therefore, Nasrallah claims, “Hezbollah is obligated to be in Aleppo and remain in Aleppo.” He admits that the Aleppo campaign is “an exhausting campaign,” in which Hezbollah has lost 26 *shahids* since the beginning of June 2016, in addition to one POW and one MIA. However, he claims that the reports

circulated by the enemies of Hezbollah about hundreds of deaths are exaggerated¹.

- On the other hand, Nasrallah claims that since early June, 617 operatives of the “terrorist groups” have been killed in the battle for Aleppo. In addition, over 800 operatives of these groups were wounded and many weapons were destroyed. With regard to these figures (which, in the ITIC’s assessment, may be exaggerated), Nasrallah claims that “[Hezbollah] has [only] 26 fatalities... In such a battle there should have been many more fatalities [...]”

- In the ITIC’s assessment, Nasrallah’s statements reflect **the importance that Iran and Hezbollah attach to the takeover of Aleppo and its environs**. According to an article by **Ibrahim Hamidi**, a Syrian journalist with access to the regime, **Iran and Syria seek to regain outright control of the city of Aleppo**. In contrast, he says, Russia supports the encirclement of Aleppo but believes that the Syrian Army does not have enough manpower to regain control of the entire city. According to Hamidi, the Russians fear that the takeover of Aleppo would involve heavy losses and would encounter fierce resistance from the US and the Sunni countries in the Middle East (Al-Hayat, June 24, 2016).

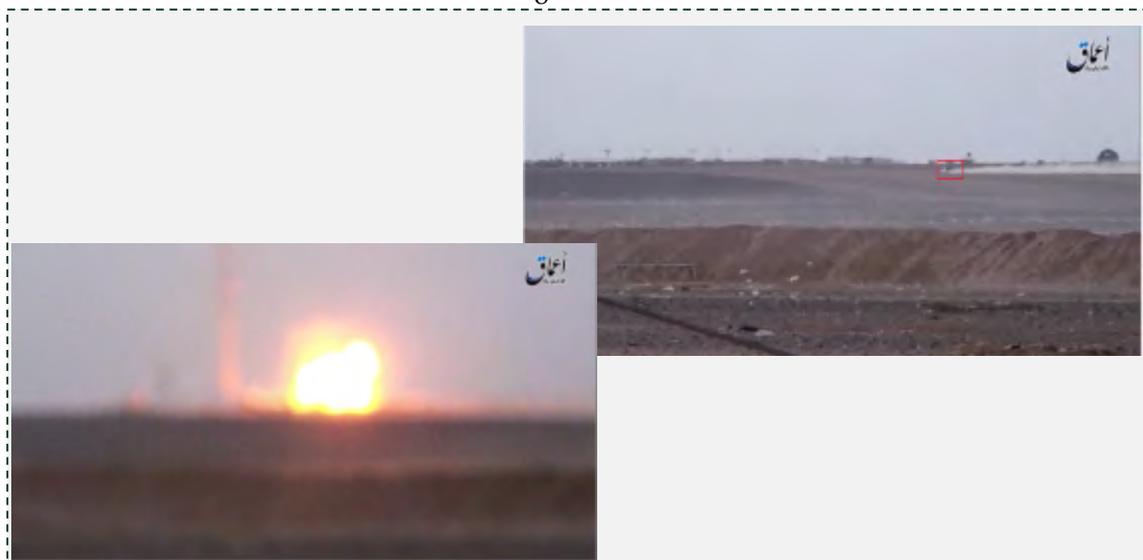
ISIS terrorist attacks and guerilla warfare

Claim of responsibility for the attack against Jordan in Rukban

- On June 26, 2016, the Aamaq Agency, ISIS’s media foundation, reported that an ISIS operative carried out the **suicide bombing attack in Rukban, northeastern Jordan, on June 21, 2016**. The agency **released a video documenting the attack** (Aamaq, June 26-27, 2016).

- A car bomb exploded on June 21, 2016, on a dirt road leading to the Syrian refugee camp located in the area of Rukban, in northeastern Jordan. This is a military base near a camp of Syrian refugees who are based along the border. The attack killed six members of the Jordanian security forces and wounded 14 others. As a result, Jordan closed the border with Syria and declared the Iraqi border area a closed military zone.

¹ Hassan Nasrallah mentions Hezbollah’s many losses in the recent battles with the rebel organizations around the village of Khalasah, south of Aleppo. At least 25 Hezbollah operatives were reportedly killed in these battles (SOHR, June 18, 2016).



ISIS's documentation of the car bomb explosion. Right: The car (marked in red) leaving the Syrian refugee camp on the border. Left: The moment of the explosion (Aamaq, June 27, 2016)

- According to “Jordanian sources,” ISIS’s claim of responsibility is the first of its kind. According to them, ISIS has never before formally claimed responsibility for any attack against Jordan. According to these sources, ISIS-affiliated organizations in southern Syria, such as the Al-Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade and the Islamic Muthanna Movement, may have carried out the attack. They say that the time lag between the attack and the claim of responsibility is due to communication problems between ISIS and its affiliated organizations (Al-Hayat, June 28, 2016).

Series of suicide bombing attacks in the town of Al-Qaa in the northern Bekaa Valley

- **On June 27, 2016, four terrorists equipped with explosive belts carried out a series of suicide bombings in the town of A-Qaa, in the northern Bekaa Valley.** One of the attacks was carried out by a terrorist on a motorcycle who threw a hand grenade at civilians near a church, and blew himself with an explosive belt. Three other terrorists were unable to cause casualties due to the response by the Lebanese Army (Al-Nashra, June 27, 2016).
- According to Lebanese media reports, **these attacks killed 15-20 people.** So far, no terrorist organization has claimed responsibility for the attacks. Hezbollah condemned the attacks, noting that they were the “result” of the radical Wahhabi ideology, which was spreading in the area like an epidemic (Lebanese News Agency, June 27, 2016).

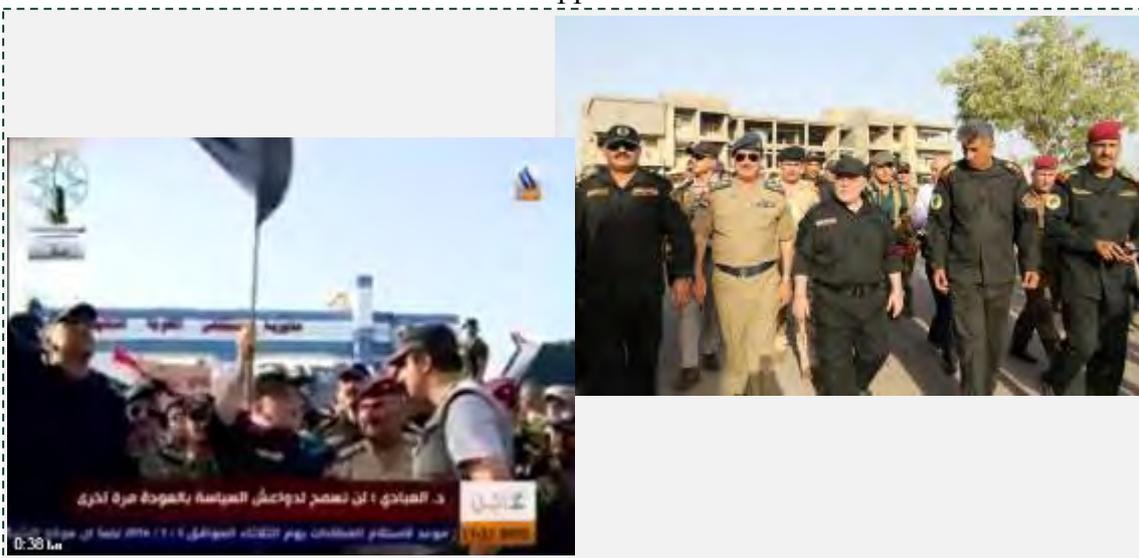
On June 26, 2016, Abd al-Wahhab al-Al-Saadi, the Iraqi commander of the operation, announced that the city had been completely liberated. According to him, at least 1,800 ISIS operatives were killed in the operation (Twitter account of the Iraqi Army's Special Operations Division, June 26, 2016). As a result, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the victory in Fallujah. He noted that the victory in Mosul was approaching, after which ISIS would be driven out of Iraqi territory (Al-Iraqiya TV, June 26, 2016). On June 26, 2016, the day the liberation of the city was announced, the Iraqi Prime Minister made a high-profile visit to Fallujah, accompanied by senior Iraqi Army officers.



Right: Abd al-Wahhab al-Al-Saadi (in a T-shirt on the left), announcing the liberation of Fallujah from the hands of ISIS (Twitter account of the Iraqi Army's Special Operations Division, June 26, 2016). Right: Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announcing the liberation of Fallujah (Al-Iraqiya TV, June 26, 2016)



Right: Iraqi Army soldiers celebrating the victory in Fallujah (Twitter account of the Iraqi Army's Special Operations Division, June 26, 2016). Left: Iraqi Army forces in the ruins of Fallujah (Al-Arabiya, June 26, 2016)



Right: Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi (center) visiting Fallujah, accompanied by senior Iraqi Army officers (Twitter account of the Iraqi Army's Special Operations Division, June 26, 2016).
 Left: Victory photo: Al-Abadi waving the Iraqi flag in Fallujah (Al-Iraqiya TV, June 26, 2016)

■ Al-Jazeera TV, which relies on sources close to ISIS, said that following the takeover of the city, **ISIS vacated positions that it had held around Fallujah without fighting** (Al-Jazeera TV, June 27, 2016). According to a report from June 27, a mechanized infantry division of the Iraqi Army launched an **operation to complete the cleansing of the west bank of the Euphrates River, west of Fallujah**. The goal of the operation is to **take over the area of Halabsah**, west of the city (Iraqi Media Network, June 27, 2016).

Creating a territorial control base in preparation for the battle over Mosul

■ This week, the Iraqi Army **continued to cleanse the town of Qayyarah**, located 63 km south of Mosul, from the presence of ISIS operatives. Their (declared) goal is **to prepare this area for future use as a launching point for taking over the city of Mosul**. The military activity in this area is being carried out with air support by the international coalition (Al-Arabiya, June 26, 2016).

Repelling ISIS's assault on Rutba

■ On June 27, 2016, ISIS carried out a failed attempt to retake the city of Rutba, near the Iraq-Syria-Jordan tri-border area. The city was taken over by the Iraqi Army on May 17, 2016. Iraqi police forces, with the support of Sunni tribal operatives, reportedly blocked an attack by ISIS from the west. A car bomb driven by a suicide bomber was destroyed before it was activated. Several ISIS operatives were killed and the rest fled (Al-Sumaria, June 27, 2016). ISIS, on its part, claimed that 26 Iraqi soldiers were killed in an attack carried out north of Rutba (Aamaq, June 27, 2016).

The global jihad in other countries

Libya

The campaign over Sirte

■ The campaign to liberate the city of Sirte from ISIS continues inside Sirte and is apparently **nearing its final stages**. According to reports from this week, an area of about 10 km² in the city center is still under ISIS's control. This area includes infrastructure facilities (the conference center and Ibn Sina Hospital) and a number of neighborhoods. Fighting still continues in this area.

■ During the battles, the forces fighting against ISIS took over **government installations** (the electric company's headquarters and the radio station). They also took over an ISIS workshop for manufacturing explosives (Facebook page of the information center of the campaign over Sirte, June 21-22, 2016).

The campaign to liberate Benghazi

■ **On June 22, 2016**, the forces of **General Khalifa Haftar**, commander of the Libyan Army in western Libya which supports the Tobruk government, launched a **campaign to cleanse western Benghazi from the presence of jihadi organizations** that control part of the city (ISIS and the Shura Council of the Revolutionaries in Benghazi). This campaign was apparently inspired by two factors. The first is **the success of the Government of National Accord forces** in taking over large areas around Sirte. The second is the assessment that **the jihadi organizations in the city of Benghazi, and ISIS in particular, are now in a weak position that should be exploited**.

■ According to spokespersons for **General Khalifa Haftar's** forces, the attacking forces took control of several areas in the western neighborhoods of Benghazi and are advancing towards the coastal road (Al-Wasat Portal, June 23-24, 2016; alarabiya.net, June 24-25, 2016). According to a spokesman for Haftar's forces, ISIS's Emir in Benghazi, whose codename was **Ayyub the Tunisian**, was killed in battle on June 24, 2016 (Bawabat Ifriqya al-Ikhbariya, June 25, 2016). ISIS, on its part, issued an announcement on June 24, 2016, claiming that its operatives had repelled an attempt by Haftar's forces to advance in the area of the "Chinese Buildings" in western Benghazi (justpaste.it, June 24, 2016).



Photos from the battles waged by ISIS operatives against the forces of Khalifa Haftar in the area of the “Chinese Buildings” in western Benghazi (justpaste.it, June 24, 2016)

- The city of Benghazi, located in eastern Libya, is controlled in part by jihadi operatives. Some of them are affiliated with Al-Qaeda, some are affiliated with ISIS, and some are independent. **ISIS suffers from a position of weakness in Benghazi** due to the separation of the city from ISIS’s center of control in Sirte, the city’s proximity to the Libyan Army loyal to the Tobruk government, and the large number of rival militias in the city. In the ITIC’s assessment, following the fall of ISIS’s control area in Sirte, **ISIS’s strongholds elsewhere in Libya, including the city of Benghazi, are liable to weaken or even fall.**

The battle for hearts and minds

ISIS announces the establishment of a new province in the Philippines

- On June 24, 2016, an ISIS-affiliated website posted a video **announcing the establishment of a new ISIS province in the Philippines**. The video (which is 21 minutes long) shows jihadi operatives pledging allegiance to ISIS’s leader. The pledge **was made by operatives of four so-called battalions, which previously operated as part of Abu Sayyaf** (a terrorist organization operating in the Philippines, which was affiliated with Al-Qaeda until recently) (ISIS-affiliated Al-Bayan Radio website; openload.com file-sharing website, June 21, 2016).
- **The video shows several ISIS operatives from Southeast Asia:** an operative codenamed **Abu Walid the Indonesian**, who praises the Caliphate of ISIS; Another operative, codenamed **Abu Ayn the Malaysian**, calls on Muslims in Southeast Asia to pledge allegiance to ISIS and promises to fight the so-called infidels; A third operative,

codenamed **Abu Abdullah the Filipino**², lists the names of Filipino tribes that are considered infidels and those that are Muslim. The video then shows three Southeast Asian operatives beheading three men accused of being agents of the international coalition.



Right: The emblem of ISIS's new province symbol in the Philippines (Al-Bayan Radio website and openload.com file-sharing website, June 21, 2016). Left: Spokesman for the Abu Dajana Battalion of the Abu Sayyaf organization in Basilan, the Philippines, reciting the pledge of allegiance to ISIS (Al-Bayan Radio website and openload.com file-sharing website, June 21, 2016)



Right: ISIS operative in Al-Raqqah codenamed Abu Walid the Indonesian praising the Islamic Caliphate. Left: ISIS operative in Al-Raqqah codenamed Abu Abdullah the Filipino listing Filipino tribes that are considered infidels and others that are Muslim (Al-Bayan Radio website and openload.com file-sharing website, June 21, 2016)

² According to The Long War Journal website, the operative codenamed Abu Abdullah the Filipino is the Emir of ISIS's new province in the Philippines.



The three men accused by ISIS as being agents of the international coalition before their execution in Al-Raqqah. The execution was carried out by the three Southeast Asian operatives who appeared in the video (Al-Bayan Radio website and openload.com file-sharing website, June 21, 2016).