



Spotlight on Global Jihad (June 30 - July 6, 2016)



Main events of the week

■ This week, ISIS carried out a **series of terror attacks** in various places in and outside the Middle East, following the mass-killing attack at the international airport in Istanbul (45 fatalities so far):

- The most prominent of the terror attacks was a **car bomb attack in a crowded shopping center in a Shiite neighborhood in the heart of Baghdad** (250 fatalities so far). In addition, an IED exploded in a Shiite neighborhood in northern Baghdad (12 fatalities). The purpose of the attacks in Baghdad was to **send a message to Iraq and the international coalition states that even after the fall of Fallujah, ISIS retains operational capabilities to continue its wave of terror, disrupt the lives of the residents in Baghdad, and harm the Iraqi regime.**
- **A series of suicide bombing attacks in Saudi Arabia** in three places: **near the US Consulate in Jeddah, in a Shiite mosque in the Qatif Governorate** in eastern Saudi Arabia, and **near the Grand Mosque in the city of Medina**. ISIS has not yet claimed responsibility for the attacks but Saudi security sources reported that the attacks were carried out by ISIS. In the ITIC's assessment, **the attacks were intended to send a threatening message that Saudi Arabia is also in ISIS's crosshairs.**
- Twenty people, nearly all foreigners, were killed in another attack carried out by local ISIS operatives in a **restaurant in the city of Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh**. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.

■ The wave of terror carried out by ISIS and its supporters **is taking place concurrently with the increasing pressure on ISIS in its "core areas" in Iraq, Syria, and Libya**. We are therefore **witnessing two processes taking place simultaneously: ISIS's territorial "shrinking"** accompanied by **increasing damage to its military and governmental capabilities**; and an **increased effort by ISIS and its supporters to carry out mass-casualty showcase attacks** (planned attacks like the one in Istanbul and attacks "inspired by ISIS" like the one in Orlando). The current wave of terror attacks demonstrates that **ISIS and its supporters possess considerable operational capabilities in various places in the Middle East and around the world, which the local security services find it difficult to cope with.**

Mass-killing attack at the international airport in Istanbul (update)

■ According to the Turkish media, the number of fatalities in the terror attack at Istanbul Atatürk Airport **has risen to 45**. In addition, **147 people were wounded** (updated to July 4, 2016). The fatalities include 19 tourists (Al-Arabiya, June 30, 2016). According to Turkish police sources and Turkish media reports, **the following picture is emerging with regard to the attack** (updated to July 4, 2016):

- **The airport attack was carried out by ISIS, which sent a squad of five terrorists to Turkey about a month ago. The three operatives who carried out the attack were members of the squad. The squad was sent from Al-Raqqa, ISIS's stronghold in Syria.** The three terrorists who carried out the attack had rented an apartment **in Istanbul's Fatih district** (a district which is densely populated and many Islamist organizations operate there). When they rented the apartment, the three operatives presented Russian passports and signed a one-year lease.
- The police investigation revealed that Rıza Coşkun, the real estate agent who rented the apartment to the terrorists, **had been arrested about six months ago on suspicion of belonging to ISIS, but was released.** The Turkish security forces managed to identify Coşkun from a phone call between him and one of the three terrorists, which was made before the attack (milliyet.com.tr).
- The three terrorists were carrying **explosive belts/vests, Kalashnikov assault rifles and hand grenades** (two hand grenades did not explode and were found after the attack). On the evening of the attack, the three terrorists stopped a taxi and asked the driver (in Turkish) to take them to Atatürk Airport. The taxi dropped them off near the international terminal. They waited for half an hour in the square next to the terminal and then each of them went in a different direction to carry out the attack.
- The attack was carried out in **three different locations**. In the ITIC's assessment, this was based on **advance planning and intelligence gathering**. One of the three went through the **entrance gate for international departures** and opened fire indiscriminately. He was shot by a member of the security forces and then blew himself up. The second operated on the **bottom floor**, where he shot at passengers and their companions and at taxi drivers. The third terrorist

entered through the **employee entrance** and was shot by a customs policeman (hurriyet.com.tr, June 30, 2016).

■ According to President Erdoğan, speaking to journalists, the Turkish security forces have detained around **39 people suspected** of involvement in the attack. Investigation of the incident revealed that the three perpetrators were **foreign operatives**: an **Uzbek** national, a **Kyrgyzstan** national and a Russian national from **Dagestan**. The detainees also include a **Chechen** national named **Ahmed Çatayev**, **suspected of having planned the attack at the airport in Istanbul and the two previous attacks in Istanbul, which were directed at tourist destinations** (the attacks on Istiklal Street and in Sultan Ahmet Square¹).

■ According to Turkish media reports, **the attack was carried out by terrorists sent from Al-Raqqah (ISIS's so-called capital in Syria), who were assisted by local operatives and supporters in Turkey**. According to the reports, before the attack the squad had stayed in a rented apartment in Istanbul. **ISIS has so far refrained from formally claiming responsibility for the attack**. In the ITIC's assessment, the reason for this may be the desire not to endanger its operatives and collaborators in Turkey, who are liable to be rounded up by the Turkish security forces, and perhaps also a desire not to give Turkey a pretext for more severe acts of revenge against ISIS (ISIS still has strongholds near the Turkish border and Turkey is still ISIS's main logistical center).

The US-led campaign against ISIS

■ 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 Mosul and in various places in the Al-Anbar Province where there are still ISIS operatives (Fallujah, Baghdadi, Al-Qaim, Ramadi, etc.). **In Syria**, the airstrikes were concentrated in the area of Aleppo and the city of Manbij, where fighting continues between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and ISIS.

¹ On the morning of **January 12, 2016**, there was a powerful explosion in Sultan Ahmet Square in Istanbul, near the Blue Mosque. Ten people, all of them tourists, were killed in the blast, and 15 others were wounded. According to the Turkish prime minister, the attack was carried out by an ISIS suicide bomber. In the assessment of the Turkish security services, the terrorist was Nabil Fadel, 28, who was born in Saudi Arabia and stayed in Syria. The dead included nine German tourists. On the afternoon of **March 19, 2016**, a **suicide bombing attack was carried out on Istiklal Street**, one of the main streets in the city of Istanbul, where many tourists visit. A terrorist wearing an explosive belt blew himself up among a group of Israeli tourists who were walking in the street. The four people killed in the attack were **three Israelis and one Iranian**.

Russia's involvement in the fighting

- According to a report in The Washington Post, **US President Barack Obama proposed to Russia that the two countries cooperate in attacking targets of the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria.** According to the report, the US sent Russian government officials an agreement detailing the increased cooperation between the two countries. In return, **Russia President Putin will undertake to pressure Syrian President Bashar Assad to refrain from attacking the moderate rebels in Syria** (The Washington Post, June 30, 2016). According to **Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov**, US and Russian forces in Syria conduct a daily dialogue in order to coordinate the airstrikes against terrorist targets. According to him, "an active effort" is being made to differentiate between organizations that cooperate with the US-led coalition and operatives of ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front (TASS News Agency, July 5, 2016).
- According to a Russian diplomatic source (who did not identify himself), **the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov will take part in attacking terrorist targets in Syria, starting in October of this year.** The aircraft carrier will be equipped with 15 Su-33 and MiG-29K aircraft and more than 10 helicopters. Russian airstrikes in Syria will be launched from Hmeymim Base in Syria, and from the aircraft carrier to be stationed in the eastern Mediterranean (TASS News Agency, July 2, 2016).

Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (www.nationsonline.org)

The SDF's campaign to take over Manbij

- **Fighting continues in the city of Manbij.** This week, the SDF forces advanced in several neighborhoods in southern Manbij, took over several streets, and defused IEDs left behind by ISIS. ISIS's response was a car bomb explosion carried out by suicide bombers.
- In an interview with Le Monde, **Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu** said that **Turkey had arrived at a secret military agreement with the US regarding Manbij.** He did not elaborate further (haber.star.com, July 5, 2016).



Right: The Al-Assadiya neighborhood in southeastern Manbij, which was taken over by the Military Council of Manbij. Left: Military Council of Manbij operative being interviewed in the Al-Assadiya neighborhood (ANHA website; Ajansa Hawar ANHA's YouTube channel, July 2, 2016)

Failed attempt to take over Abu Kamal from ISIS

- The rebel organization the **New Syrian Army**, which is supported by the United States, attacked the city of Abu Kamal and its environs. The city is located near a border crossing between Syria and Iraq, and its takeover is liable to pose operational and logistical difficulties for ISIS. The New Syrian Army operatives came within several kilometers of the suburbs of Abu Kamal but were stopped by ISIS (Al-Jazeera, June 29, 2016).
- On June 29 and June 30, 2016, ISIS published announcements stating that its operatives had repelled the attack. According to the announcements, ISIS operatives killed 40 New Syrian Army combatants in the area of Al-Hamdan Airport northwest of Abu Kamal and captured 15 others. They also seized weapons and vehicles (Al-Jazeera, June 29, 2016; Haqq, June 29, 2016).



Right: New Syrian Army vehicle seized by ISIS in the area of Abu Kamal. Left: Explosives and a crate of ammunition seized in the area of Abu Kamal (Amaq, June 29, 2016)

Southern Syria

■ At dawn on July 3, 2016, a suicide bomber (or possibility two) carried out an attack at the home of a senior officer in the Free Syrian Army. The attack was carried out in the town of Ankhal, in the rural area of Daraa. The terrorist who carried out the attack was a **Jordanian codenamed Abu Hamza, who belongs to Khaled bin al-Walid Army, a new framework comprising three ISIS-affiliated organizations that was established in the tri-border area of Syria, Jordan and Israel.** Several senior operatives in the Free Syrian Army were killed in the attack (all4syria, July 3, 2016). According to operatives in the rebel organizations, the Khaled bin al-Walid Army carried out several other attacks against Free Syrian Army positions and operatives in Daraa since June 30, 2016.



Right: Jordanian codenamed Abu Hamza, who carried out the attack. Left: The ruins of the house that was damaged in the suicide bombing attack in Ankhel (all4syria, July 3, 2016)

Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (www.nationsonline.org)

Mass casualty attacks in Baghdad

- On July 2, 2016, a car bomb exploded at a shopping center in **the Karrada neighborhood** in central Baghdad². The attack was carried out at the height of the shopping frenzy in preparation for Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan. A total of **250 people were killed in the attack** (BBC in Arabic, July 6, 2016). **Nearly 100 people were wounded.**
- ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, alleging that it was carried out against a crowd of Shiites by a terrorist codenamed **Abu Maha the Iraqi**. The day before (July 1, 2016), another attack was carried out in **the Al-Shaab neighborhood in northern Baghdad, most of whose residents are Shiites**. An IED exploded late at night, **killing 12 people and wounding 12 others** (Bawabat Al-Arab news website, July 4, 2016).



Right: The shopping center in Baghdad before and after the attack (Haqq, July 3, 2016). Left: Photo from the scene of the attack (Al-Sumaria, July 3, 2016)

- In the ITIC's assessment, ISIS carried out these two attacks, **which killed around 260 people**, in order to convey a message to the Iraqi government and the international coalition countries. The message is that **even after the fall of Fallujah, ISIS retains the operational capabilities to continue its wave of terror and guerrilla warfare in Baghdad and its environs**. Moreover, the attacks in Baghdad were intended to **raise the morale of ISIS's operatives** after the loss of Fallujah, a **city of great symbolic significance to ISIS** and to radical Islam.

² This is an upper middle-class neighborhood. Its population is mostly Shiite but there is also a significant Christian minority.

Cleansing Fallujah and the intention to rebuild the city

■ The Iraqi government estimates that over the next few weeks, residents who fled from Fallujah will begin to return. Photos from the city show that it sustained considerable damage. According to the Iraqi planning minister, his ministry's first step is opening the office of the Fallujah district in order to restore community services to the city's residents (Al-Jazeera, July 2, 2016).



Destruction in the city center (Al-Jazeera, July 3, 2016)

■ Meanwhile, the Iraqi security forces, with air support from the US and coalition countries, **continue to cleanse the area of Fallujah**. According to a report from this week, the Iraqi Army has launched a campaign **to liberate the area of Al-Khalidiya**, located between Fallujah and Ramadi (Al-Sumaria; Sky News in Arabic July 2, 2016). The Iraqi commander of operations in the Al-Anbar Province announced the death of a senior ISIS commander codenamed **Abu Hafsa the Libyan** along with eight of his companions, during the campaign to liberate Al-Khalidiya (Sky News, July 2, 2016).

Severe blows to ISIS in US and coalition airstrikes

■ **The area of Fallujah:** According to reports by US sources from this week, **at least 250 ISIS operatives were killed in a coalition airstrike against an ISIS convoy in the area of Fallujah**. US officials have released a video clearly showing the damage caused to ISIS's vehicles (Al-Hurra, June 30, 2016).



ISIS vehicles destroyed in airstrikes (Al-Hurra, June 30, 2016)

■ **The area of Mosul:** According to US Department of Defense spokesman Peter Cook, two of ISIS's senior military commanders were killed in an airstrike by the international coalition near Mosul on June 25, 2016. The two commanders who were killed, ISIS's "deputy war minister" Bassim Mohammad Ahmad Sultan al-Bajari and another senior commander named Hatim Talib al-Hamduni (US Department of Defense website, July 1, 2016). According to Peter Cook, Al-Bajari was an experienced terrorist operative and a former member of Al-Qaeda. According to him, the coalition airstrikes are systematically eliminating the leadership of ISIS wherever its operatives are hiding (dailymail.co.uk).

The Sinai Peninsula

■ The Egyptian security forces, supported by combat helicopters, continued to act against ISIS operatives in northern Sinai. According to reports from this week, they have killed dozens of operatives, arrested suspects, demolished bases and blown up large explosives warehouses. The Egyptian security forces reportedly blew up a 3 km long "strategic tunnel" in Rafah that belonged to the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (Veto portal, July 4, 2016). ISIS, on its part, continued its guerrilla warfare against the Egyptian forces in northern Sinai, inter alia by attacking Egyptian convoys and planting roadside IEDs.

■ According to an announcement by ISIS's Sinai Province from June 30, 2016, priest Moussa Azmi of the Mar Girgis church in Al-Arish was shot dead by ISIS operatives. According to the announcement, he was gunned down near his home (Haqq, June 30, 2016). Elsewhere it was reported that the priest was shot to death outside the church (The Orthodox Church, July 1, 2016).

Palestinians and Israeli Arabs

- On July 2, 2016, the Salafist jihadi Ibn Taymiyyah Media Center in the Gaza Strip announced the death of **Ali Hisham al-Saidani** in a coalition airstrike in the area of Manbij in Syria. Ali al-Saidani is the son of Hisham al-Saidani, aka Abu Walid al-Maqqisi, one of the jihadi leaders in the Gaza Strip, who was killed in an IDF targeted killing on the night of October 12-13, 2012.



Announcement of the death of Ali Hisham al-Saidani in the city of Manbij (Haqq, July 2, 2016)

The conduct of the Islamic State

ISIS imposes restrictions on the reception of TV broadcasts and use of the Internet

- On June 1, 2016, the information office of the Al-Raqqah Province released a video titled: Smash the Satellite Receivers. The video calls on Muslims to remove their TV sets and satellite dishes from their homes and smash them. This is because they serve as a tool in the hands of the enemy in its war against the Islamic State, “disseminating infidel beliefs” and “polluting ethics.” Moreover, according to a report by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) from June 29, 2016, ISIS has closed all the Internet cafés in the city of Al-Mayadeen, in the rural area north of Deir al-Zor (SOHR, June 29, 2016).

■ In the ITIC's assessment, these restrictions have been imposed in light of the severe blows that ISIS suffered in recent months in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. **The loss of territories and of large numbers of operatives have created an image problem** for ISIS among the population in the areas under its control. In response to the problem, ISIS is trying to **control information and prevent the exposure of residents to information coming from TV stations and the Internet.**

The global jihad in other countries

Libya: The battles in Sirte and Benghazi continue

■ The forces of the Government of National Accord continue to fight near the **Sirte city center**. They have reportedly completed the takeover of "Neighborhood 700," south of the city center, and are surrounding the convention center used by ISIS as its headquarters in the city. At the same time, the forces of General Khalifa Haftar continue their operation to cleanse western Benghazi, which is held by ISIS and a jihadi organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda. This week, Haftar's forces reportedly took over the western outskirts of the city (alarabiya.net, July 3, 2016).

Bangladesh: shooting attack at a restaurant in Dhaka

■ On July 1, 2016, six ISIS operatives carried out a **terrorist attack at a restaurant in the diplomatic district of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh**. Hostages were taken in the attack, and **20 diners at the restaurant were killed**: nine Italians, seven Japanese, three Bengalis and one Indian. In addition, two policemen were killed in the exchange of fire and three were wounded.

■ The attack in Dhaka was carried out by **six local ISIS operatives**, five of whom were wanted by the local authorities. The six were killed in the exchange of fire with the security forces that broke into the restaurant. **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack** and released photos of five operatives who allegedly carried it out.



Two of the operatives who carried out the attack at the restaurant in Dhaka. Right: Abu Rahiq the Bengali. Left: Abu Muslim the Bengali (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, July 2, 2016)

Saudi Arabia: series of suicide bombing attacks

■ On July 4, 2016, suicide bombers blew themselves up at three different locations throughout Saudi Arabia: near the US Consulate in Jeddah, in a Shiite mosque in the Qatif Governorate in eastern Saudi Arabia, and near the Grand Mosque in the city of Medina. The attacks were carried out on the last day of Ramadan. ISIS, which has demonstrated its ability to carry out attacks in Saudi Arabia in the past, was apparently behind these suicide bombing attacks, but has not yet claimed responsibility for them. Saudi “security sources” believe that the attacks were carried out by ISIS operatives, under the direction of its senior command in Iraq and Syria (Al-Arabiya, July 6, 2016).

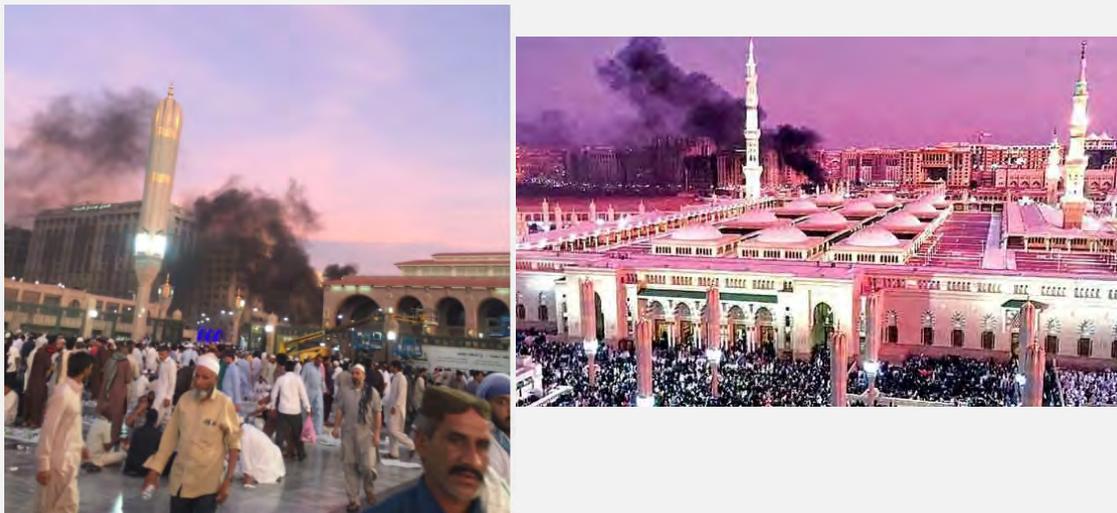
■ Below is an initial report on the attacks based on Arab and Saudi Arabian media reports (updated to July 5, 2016):

- **The US Consulate in Jeddah:** a suicide bomber blew himself up near the Consulate. Two people were reportedly injured. According to a spokesman for the Saudi Interior Ministry, the terrorist who carried out the attack is not a Saudi but was staying in Saudi Arabia.
- **The Shiite mosque in the Qatif Governorate:** the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber near the mosque. He blew himself up after being unable to approach the area due to the presence of local “defense committees” (Al-Alam, July 4, 2016). It is unclear whether there were any casualties.



The scene of the attack near the Shiite mosque in Qatif (Al-Arabiya, July 4, 2016)

- **The Grand Mosque in Medina:** a suicide bomber blew himself up near the Grand Mosque in the city of Medina. Security guards identified the terrorist and tried to stop him in the parking lot, but he managed to blow himself up with his explosive belt. Four security guards were killed and five others were wounded.



The scene of the attack in Medina, near the Grand Mosque (Al-Diyar; Al-Arabiya, July 4, 2016)

Afghanistan: ISIS operatives attack Taliban position

- On July 2, 2016, **ISIS's Khorasan Province**, which operates in Afghanistan, announced that its operatives had carried out **an attack against a Taliban position**. The attack was carried out in the **Nangarhar Province**, west of the capital Kabul (near the border with Pakistan). It was reported that during the attack, ISIS operatives seized the position, capturing and executing three Taliban operatives (one of them was executed by a boy). A video distributed by ISIS shows an operative who carried out

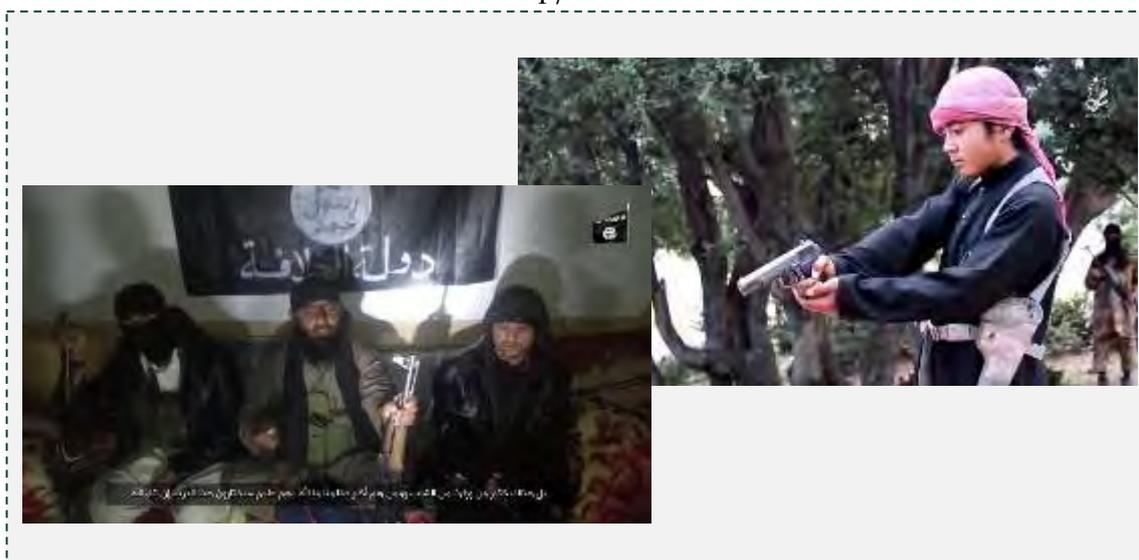
the suicide bombing attack in the Pakistani Consulate in the city of Jalalabad, the provincial capital (Haqq, July 3, 2016). **Note:** The attack against the Pakistani Consulate in Jalalabad was carried out on January 13, 2016. During the attack, terrorists stormed the Consulate and one of them blew himself up with his explosive belt.



Nangarhar Province (pink), whose capital is the city of Jalalabad, west of the capital Kabul, near the border with Pakistan (Google Maps)



Right: Damaged Taliban position. Top left: ISIS operatives taking over the position (Haqq, July 2, 2016).



Right: Boy executing one of the Taliban operatives captured by ISIS. Left: ISIS operative (center) who blew himself up in an attack against the Pakistani Consulate in Jalalabad (Haqq, July 2, 2016)

Another pledge of allegiance to ISIS's leader by a jihadi organization operating in the Philippines

■ On June 24, 2016, ISIS announced that operatives of the Abu Sayyaf organization from the Philippines (which previously belonged to Al-Qaeda) pledged allegiance to it and announced the **establishment of a new province in the Philippines**. On July 4, 2016, another Salafist-jihadi organization named the **Al-Muhajer Battalion**, operating in the Philippines, pledged allegiance to ISIS's leader and joined ISIS (muslm.org, July 4, 2016). The organization is also called "The Foreigners" (*Al-Ghurabaa*), since most of its operatives are foreigners, **mainly from Indonesia and Malaysia** (Al-Arabiya, July 5, 2016).



Right: Al-Muhajer Battalion operatives armed with rifles and bearing the ISIS flag. Left: Al-Muhajer Battalion operatives pledging allegiance to ISIS's leader (www.muslm.org, July 4, 2016)



Al-Muhajir Battalion operatives displaying the ISIS flag (www.muslim.org, July 4, 2016)