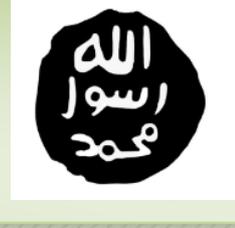




## Spotlight on Global Jihad (July 7-13, 2016)



### Main events of the week

- **ISIS continues its terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare in Iraq against the regime, the Shiite community, and the security forces.** One of the attacks was carried out by five suicide bombers at a Shiite shrine north of Baghdad (50 dead, 65 wounded). Last week, 250 people were killed at a shopping center in the heart of Baghdad. It seems that ISIS is **trying to destabilize the internal situation in Iraq, to increase inter-community tension, and to convey the message that its operational capabilities have not been compromised, not even after the takeover of Fallujah.** The Iraqi interior minister resigned following the series of attacks in Baghdad which has fanned the flames of the domestic tension in the country.
- While the Syrian regime declared a ceasefire for Eid al-Fitr, its forces launched an attack on the northern outskirts of Aleppo and on the vital traffic artery leading from the north into the city's neighborhoods that are held by the rebel organizations. In the ITIC's assessment, the aim of the attack was **to complete the encirclement of the city** in advance of its takeover by the Syrian forces. Although the Syrian regime has claimed achievements, it seems that the encirclement of Aleppo has not been completed and battles are still taking place in its northern outskirts.

### The US-led campaign against ISIS

- The US-led international coalition continued to carry out airstrikes. **In Iraq**, the scope of the attacks decreased somewhat this week, focusing mainly on Mosul, Ramadi, and Erbil. **In Syria**, the airstrikes were concentrated in the area of Aleppo and the city of Manbij (US Department of State website, July 10, 2016).
- **US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter** made a surprise visit to Baghdad to meet with Iraqi officials and US Army commanders. According to Carter, **the US-led international coalition will use the Air Force Base in Qayyarah** to retake the city of Mosul (Al-Arabiya; Sky News, July 11, 2016). It was also reported that the United

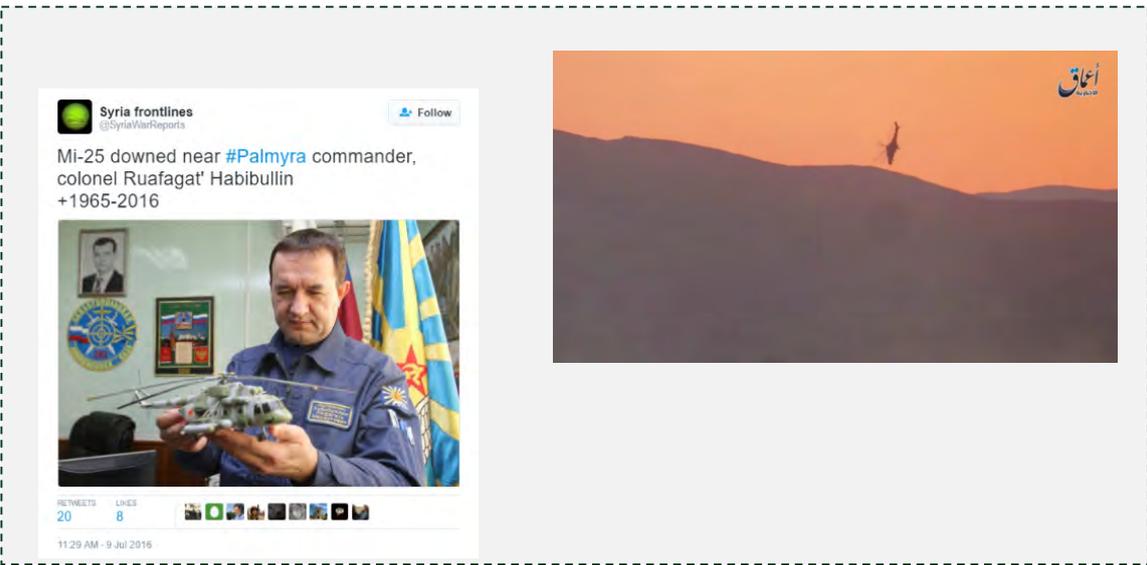
States would send another 560 soldiers to support the Iraqi Army in the attack on Mosul (The Long War Journal, July 13, 2016). **In recent weeks, the Iraqi Army has established its control of the town of Qayyarah and its environs, about 63 km south of Mosul, which is perceived as a launching pad for taking over the city of Mosul.** The Iraqi Army recently took over the Qayyarah airfield (Airfield Q-West).

■ The US Department of Defense has asked the US Congress to approve the transfer of USD 20 million for coping with ISIS's drones. According to the Pentagon, ISIS recently began to threaten US and Iraqi forces with **civilian drones equipped with improvised bombs or surveillance cameras** (The Daily Telegraph, July 9, 2016).

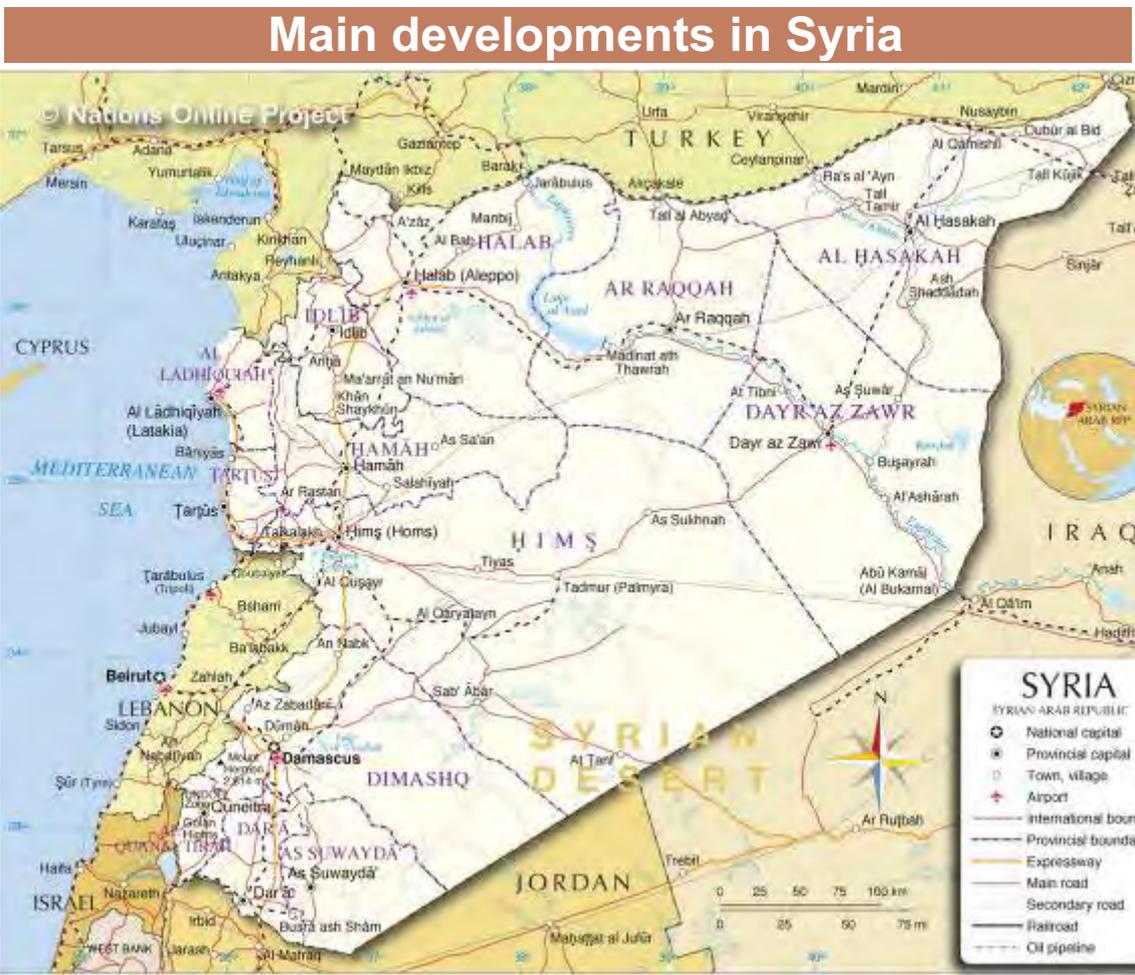
## Russia's involvement in the fighting

■ **Russian President Vladimir Putin** spoke by telephone with US President Barack Obama. According to the Russians, both sides have confirmed their **willingness to increase their military cooperation in the fighting in Syria**. Putin stressed the **importance of distinguishing between the forces of the "moderate Syrian opposition" and the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups** that are not part of the ceasefire agreement (TASS News Agency, July 6, 2016). **The importance of distinguishing between the various organizations in Syria** is a topic that has also arisen in statements made by other top Russian officials.

■ According to a report by the Russian Ministry of Defense, **a Russian helicopter engaged in attacking terrorist targets in the Palmyra area was shot down by ISIS**. Two combat pilots, Col. Ryafagat Khabibullin and Lt. Yevgeny Dolgin, were killed in the crash. **This raised the official count of Russian soldiers killed in Syria to 10** (Russian Defense Ministry website eng.mil.ru, July 10, 2016). **ISIS's Homs Province claimed responsibility for shooting down the helicopter** while it was trying to attack one of its outposts. According to the announcement, the helicopter was destroyed and the crew members were killed (Aamaq News Agency, July 8, 2016).



Right: Russian combat helicopter spinning and losing altitude east of Palmyra (Haqq, July 10, 2016; Vimeo, July 9, 2016). Left: Colonel Ryafagat Khabibullin, who was killed in the helicopter crash near Palmyra (Syria frontlines@SyriaWarReports, July 9, 2016)

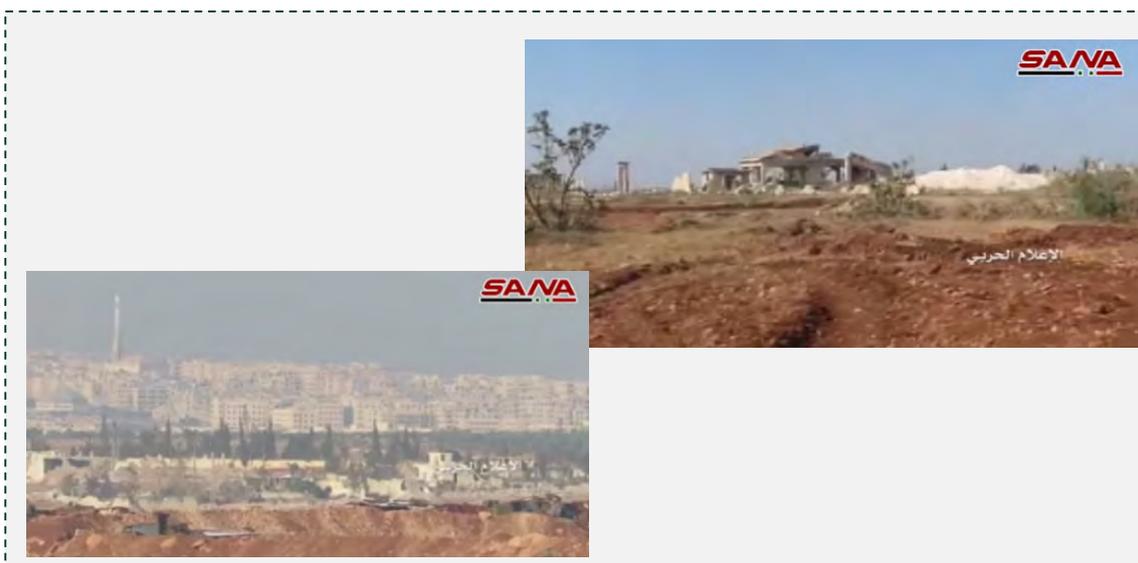


Map of Syria (www.nationsonline.org)

## The Syrian forces' achievements north of Aleppo

■ While the Syrian regime declared a ceasefire for Eid al-Fitr, the Syrian Army launched a military campaign in northern Aleppo, with Russian air support. On July 7, 2016, the Syrian forces took over the Al-Mallah Farms area, on the northern outskirts of Aleppo. The Syrian forces reportedly took control of the vital traffic artery known as Castillo Highway. This traffic artery serves as the sole supply route to the area held by the rebels east of Aleppo. Once it was cut off, the Syrian forces actually encircled the city (Syria Mubasher, July 7, 2016). Despite media reports that the encirclement of Aleppo has ended, and that the rebel forces have retreated from the area north of Aleppo, clashes still persist in the northeastern outskirts of the city (updated to July 12, 2016).

■ President Assad congratulated the Syrian Army and its allies for their achievements in the Aleppo area (Facebook pages affiliated with the Syrian regime). In the opinion of Lebanese media outlets with access to Hezbollah, the Syrian forces are now preparing for a major military offensive aimed at taking over the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo, which have been controlled by the rebels for the past three years.



Right: Al-Mallah Farms. Left: The northern part of the city of Aleppo as seen from Al-Mallah Farms (SANA Syrian News Agency, July 9, 2016)



Scenes of fighting this week: Castillo Highway, leading from Aleppo to the rural area to its north, marked with a blue star. Al-Mallah Farms, which were taken over by the Syrian Army, marked with an orange star (Google Maps)

## The campaign to take over the city of Manbij

■ **Clashes continued in the city of Manbij between Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and ISIS.** According to reports by the SDF forces, they have **advanced significantly towards the city center** with air support from the US-led coalition. The SDF reportedly managed to take control of the four entrances to the city and the areas that dominate it from the north. A large number of ISIS operatives were reportedly killed.

## Clashes in additional areas

■ Following the Syrian regime's declaration of a ceasefire for Eid al-Fitr, somewhat of a drop in the intensity and scale of the clashes and airstrikes was felt on the ground. Noteworthy examples:

- **Southern Syria:** there were widespread clashes west of Daraa between the ISIS-affiliated Khaled bin al-Walid Army and the Al-Nusra Front and other rebel organizations.
- **Damascus:** negotiations are being conducted through intermediaries between Syrian officials and the Al-Nusra Front and ISIS over the evacuation of their operatives from the Al-Yarmouk refugee camp south of Damascus. ISIS reportedly controls about 70% of the area of the refugee camp (Al-Watan, July 11, 2016).

## Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq ([www.nationsonline.org](http://www.nationsonline.org))

### ISIS continues its terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare

■ Following the fall of Fallujah, ISIS increased its terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare against the Shiite community, the Iraqi security forces, and the Iraqi regime:

- **Fifty people were killed and 65 others were wounded in an explosion in a Shiite center in the city of Balad, about 70 km north of Baghdad (Safa News Agency, July 8, 2016). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack (Al-Arabiya, July 8, 2016). Five ISIS operatives wearing explosive belts blew themselves up in the city, near the shrine of Mohammad bin Ali al-Hadi, son of the tenth Shiite Imam. According to Iraqi “security sources,” the incident**

began with the launch of mortar shells, after which the three suicide bombers stormed the shrine (Al-Arabiya, July 9, 2016; Haqq, July 9, 2016).



The damage caused to the entrance to the shrine in the city of Balad (Al-Sumaria, July 8, 2016)

- **A total of 30 people were killed and wounded in a series of attacks in the city of Baghdad.** One IED was activated in southern Baghdad, killing three Iraqi soldiers; Another IED exploded on a road to the north of the city, killing five people; A third IED also exploded in southern Baghdad (Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, July 10, 2016).
- Fourteen Iraqi soldiers were killed **in another terrorist attack northwest of Ramadi.**

## Mosul

- This week as well, the Iraqi Army continued to establish its presence **in and around the town of Qayyarah, about 63 km south of Mosul, to use it as a base for a launching an attack on the city of Mosul.** According to a report from July 9, 2016, the Iraqi Army, **with US air support, took over the Air Force base near Qayyarah** from ISIS. At least 38 ISIS operatives were killed in the attack (Sky News, July 8 and 10, 2016). In order to delay the Iraqi forces, **ISIS operatives burned five oil wells in the area of the Qayyarah refinery** and planted mines on the roads leading to it (Shafaq News, July 10, 2016; Al-Qurtas, July 11, 2016).

## 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, blown up explosives warehouses and destroyed tunnels. 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 reports from Egyptian sources, **Mohammed Musa Mohaisen, central Sinai commander of ISIS's Sinai Province, was killed by Egyptian helicopter fire.** The helicopters attacked the place where Mohammed Mohaisen was hiding in central Sinai. Mohaisen was responsible for planning and carrying out a large number of terrorist attacks against the Egyptian security forces. He was also responsible for the transfer and concealment of operatives who had escaped from Rafah and Sheikh Zuweid (Masrawy, July 9, 2016). Three of his assistants were killed along with him (Al-Bawaba; Bawabat Misr, July 9, 2016).

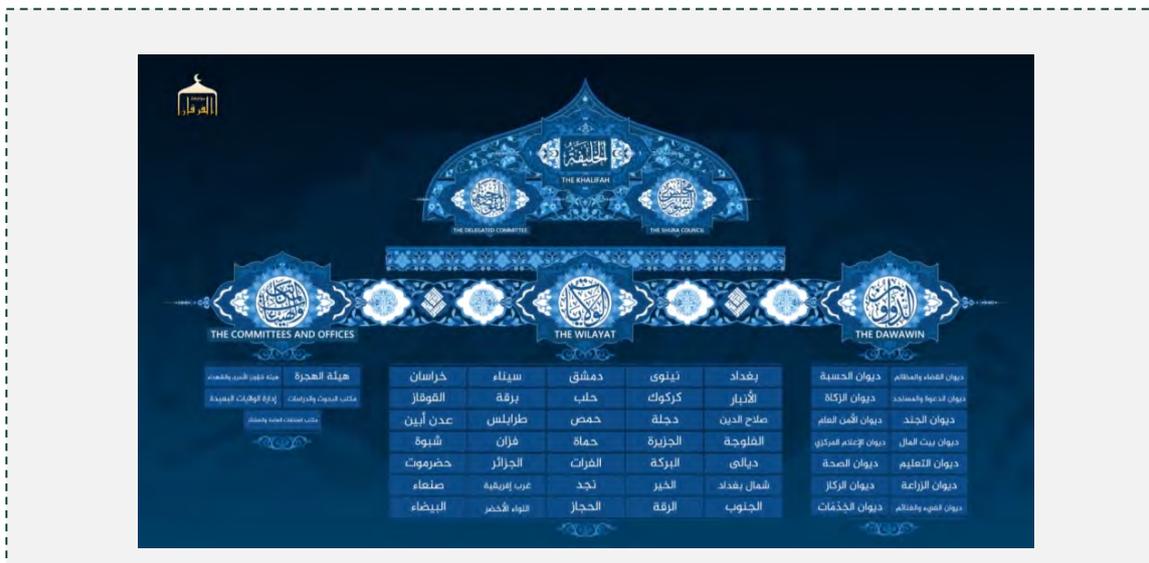
## The conduct of the Islamic State

### The structure of the Islamic State

■ On the eve of Eid al-Fitr, the Al-Furqan Media Foundation (the Islamic State's official media foundation) released a propaganda video showing the structure of the Islamic State. The video shows the hierarchical division of the State into the leadership echelon, the various ministries, and the geographic provinces. Highlights of the structure (Haqq, July 7, 2016):

- **Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** heads the Islamic State. He is responsible for ensuring that his people adhere to Islamic law (*Sharia*). His duties also include spreading Islam, preparing the army, fortifying the outlying cities, and defending the Muslim nation.
- Below him is the **Shura Council**, which assists the Caliph in decision-making.
- **The executive branch comprises the ministries** in charge of the Islamic State's various spheres of operations (the ministries of finance, the army, education, agriculture, da'wa and more). There are also **designated offices** responsible for areas of special interest (for example, the Immigration Administration, the Prisoner and Martyrs Affairs Administration, and the Remote Province Administration, which is in charge of the provinces outside the territory of Iraq and Syria). In total, there are **14 ministries** responsible for the various areas and **five offices dedicated to specific topics**.

- **Geographically**, the Islamic State comprises **35 provinces** (*wilayat*), which are subject to its leadership. There are 19 provinces in Syria and Iraq and 16 around the world.
- The “**committee in charge**” (*Al-Lajna al-Mufawwada*) is the entity that supervises the ministries, offices, and provinces and coordinates their activity.
- The **military structure is not detailed in the video**. The video ends with photos documenting ISIS’s military activity, including firing a variety of weapons, suicide bombing attacks, planting IEDs, executing prisoners, and more.



The organizational structure of the Islamic State, comprising ministries, provinces, and offices (Haqq, July 7, 2016)

■ This is a video **designed for propaganda purposes, to raise morale among ISIS operatives following the blows that it has suffered in recent months**. The video presents the appearance of an ideal Islamic State with a high level of governance, whose institutions are ostensibly run in a hierarchical and established fashion. In practice, however, **the Islamic State is in the process of weakening**, as a result of military defeats, the loss of territory, and a significant drop in revenues. **This process, which is totally absent from the video, makes it difficult for the Islamic State to function and undermines ISIS’s governance capabilities.**

## Reported drop in ISIS’s revenues from oil and oil products

■ According to Operation Inherent Resolve Spokesman Col. Christopher Garver, since the start of the airstrikes (in September 2014), **more than 303 airstrikes have been carried out against ISIS’s oil and gas facilities**. According to

Col. Garver, as a result of these airstrikes, ISIS's revenues have been cut by around 50%, plummeting to the sum of USD 15 million per month (compared with USD 30 million previously, according to US estimates) (Al-Nashra, July 6, 2016; aina.org, July 10, 2016).

## The global jihad in other countries

### Libya

#### Battles continue in Sirte

■ The fighting continues near the Sirte city center. This week, **the fighting was concentrated in the city's convention center, where ISIS's headquarters is located** (Al-Wasat Portal, July 7 and 9, 2016). According to a report from the operations room of the forces loyal to the Government of National Accord, they **foiled an attack by ISIS operatives against the Port of Sirte**. In the attack, two ISIS operatives blew themselves up with their explosive belts (Facebook page of the information center of the campaign over Sirte, July 5, 2016; aljazeera.net, July 6, 2016; Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, July 6, 2016).



**Right: The explosive belt of one of ISIS operatives killed in the attack on the Port of Sirte. Left: ISIS's weapons that were seized (Facebook page of the information center of the campaign over Sirte, July 5, 2016)**

■ ISIS announced that it had shot down a drone belonging to the forces fighting against it on the outskirts of Sirte (justpaste.it, July 7, 2016).



Drone shot down by ISIS (justpaste.it, July 7, 2016)

## The campaign to take over Benghazi

■ The forces of General Khalifa Haftar are encountering fierce resistance from ISIS operatives and the Shura Council of the Revolutionaries of Benghazi in the battle in west Benghazi and are sustaining heavy losses. On July 7, 2016, a car bomb exploded in a concentration of Haftar's forces, killing 12 and wounding more than 30 others. The terrorist attack was apparently carried out by the jihadi organization the Shura Council of the Revolutionaries of Benghazi. Around 30 soldiers were killed and more than 45 others were wounded in the battles between Haftar's forces and jihadi operatives (Al-Wasat Portal, July 7, 2016; aljazeera.net, July 7, 2016; Al-Naba TV, July 7, 2016).

## Niger

■ On July 7, 2016, **ISIS's West Africa Province** (based on the Nigerian organization Boko Haram) released a video documenting its operatives taking over a **Niger Army camp in the area of Bouza, in the south of the country** (near the border with Nigeria). The voice heard in the background is that of **Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi**, the former leader of Al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq, which evolved into ISIS. The video also includes the voice of **ISIS spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani**, praising the jihad against the "infidels". The end of the video shows large quantities of weapons that were seized (Haqq, July 7, 2016).



Photos from the video documenting the takeover of the army camp in southern Niger. Right: Preparations for the departure - the commander of the force briefing the organization's operatives. Left: Weapons that fell into the hands of ISIS's branch (Haqq, July 7, 2016)

## The series of terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia (update)<sup>1</sup>

- According to *Liwa* (General) Mansour al-Turki, security spokesman for the Saudi Interior Ministry, the initial investigation of the series of terrorist attacks indicates that there was coordination between the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Medina and Qatif. According to General Al-Turki, the suicide bombers were instructed to attack the same type of target (mosques) at the same time (during the fast-breaking meal). Moreover, the attacks were planned in Syria by ISIS and carried out by ISIS operatives in Saudi Arabia. According to him, ISIS operatives in Saudi Arabia obtained the explosive belts used in the terrorist attacks from abroad (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, July 4, 2016).
- With regard to the suicide bomber who blew himself up in Jeddah, General Al-Turki said that he was not a Saudi but a Pakistani who had worked in the kingdom. According to him, security officials are still investigating the incident in order to ascertain his identity and uncover his motives and objectives, which are not clear at present (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, July 4, 2016).

<sup>1</sup> 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 Province in eastern Saudi Arabia, and near the Grand Mosque in the city of Medina. ISIS was apparently behind these suicide bombing attacks.

## Counterterrorism and preventive activity

### South Africa

■ **The South African Police foiled a planned terrorist attack against the US Embassy in Pretoria and against Jewish institutions in the country.** According to the South African police, 24-year-old twin brothers from Johannesburg affiliated with ISIS were behind the plan to carry out the terrorist attacks, along with two others. **The four were arrested before boarding a flight to Syria.** They were arrested after a ten-month long investigation. Hand grenades and ammunition were found in the home of one of them in Johannesburg. According to the police, in the past, South Africa has prevented a few Muslims from going to Syria to join the ranks of ISIS, but this was the first arrest carried out in this regard (The New York Times July 11, 2016).