



Spotlight on Global Jihad (July 14-20, 2016)



Main events of the week

- The main events of the week were two terrorist attacks in **France and Germany**, carried out by lone wolf terrorists: **a vehicular attack on the promenade in the city of Nice** was carried out by a young Frenchman of Tunisian descent, using a refrigerated truck. The attack killed 84 people and wounded around 200 others. **On a train travelling near the city of Würzburg in Bavaria**, a young man of Afghan descent, **armed with an axe**, attacked passengers. Five passengers were injured. In both cases, the attackers were killed by the security forces.
- **In both cases, ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks.** The terrorist in France had a criminal record and was far from religious. The young Afghan in Germany took pictures of himself before the attack and announced his intention to carry out a suicide bombing attack against “the infidels”. A hand-painted ISIS flag was found in his possession. **In the ITIC’s assessment, in both cases these were ISIS-inspired attacks**, i.e., deadly terrorist attacks carried out by individuals on their own initiative, **in response to ISIS’s call to kill civilians in the West (“Fight the infidels in their countries”)**.
- Some two months ago, ISIS called on its supporters in the West to carry out attacks intended to kill civilians indiscriminately (“Know that in the land of the Crusaders [...] there is no such thing as innocents [...]"). **Following ISIS’s calls, a series of ISIS-inspired attacks were carried out in France, the United States, and Israel.** It was the first time an ISIS-inspired attack was carried out in Germany, where large numbers of refugees have found shelter.

Attacks inspired by ISIS

Vehicular attack in Nice

- On July 14, 2016, a terrorist carried out a mass-casualty attack on the promenade in the city of Nice, in the south of France. In the evening, a refrigerated truck sped towards the crowd at the Bastille Day celebrations. The truck driver drove at high

speed for around two kilometers into the crowd, running over anyone in his path. The terrorist fired several shots at three policemen near the Negresco Hotel. The policemen returned fire and chased the truck, which managed to travel for another 300 meters. The policemen fired at the terrorist and killed him.

- In total, 84 people were killed and 202 others were wounded, of whom 74 are still hospitalized (around 20 of them were seriously wounded). A dummy hand grenade and replica Kalashnikov and M-16 rifles were found in the truck. The terrorist rented the truck two days before the attack and parked it on the street for around nine hours before beginning his killing spree.



Right: The refrigerated truck used by the terrorist (Twitter). Left: Dead bodies lying on the promenade in Nice after the attack (YouTube).

- The terrorist who carried out the attack was a **Tunisian-born French citizen** named **Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel**, a resident of Nice, 31, the father of three. According to the Tunisian authorities, Mohamed Bouhlel left Tunisia in 2005 and visited there four years ago. Upon his arrival in France, he married a Tunisian-born French citizen, with whom he is now in divorce proceedings. He worked as a courier and was known to the police as a criminal, mainly for property offenses and violence. He was convicted five times. In March 2016, he was sentenced to six months in prison for using a weapon.

- According to his father, he suffered from mental problems and was undergoing psychotherapy. His name was well known to the police, but the security services had no information linking him to religious extremism. According to initial reports, he began to embrace Islam just two weeks before the attack, having previously led a life of debauchery, far from religious standards.



Terrorist Mohamed Bouhlel's carte de séjour (Twitter)

■ Two days after the terrorist attack, ISIS's Amaq News Agency released a **statement that the attack was carried out by “a soldier of the Islamic State” in response to ISIS’s call to harm “infidels” where they live.** So far the ITIC has no information linking Mohamed Bouhlel with ISIS or with other Salafist-jihadi elements. It is possible that it was an **ISIS-inspired attack**, i.e., a terrorist attack carried out in response to ISIS’s call to carry out attacks against Western civilians in any way possible, including stabbing attacks, vehicular attacks and burning.

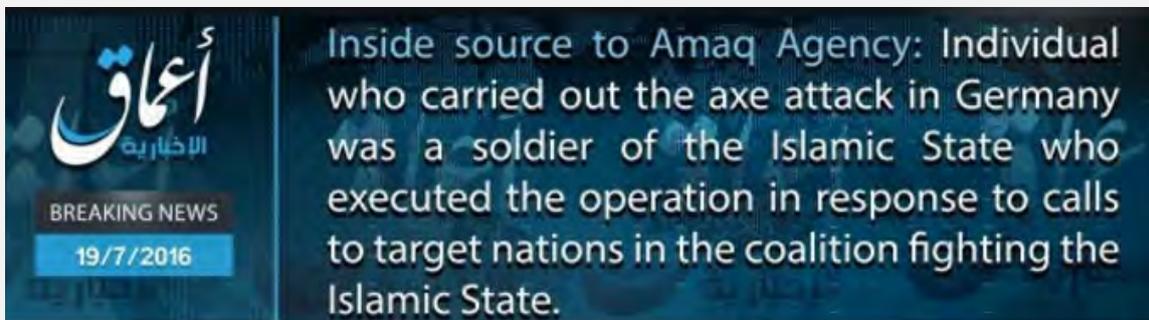
On April 16, 2016, ISIS released a German-language video of ISIS spokesman **Abu Mohammad al-Adnani** calling on every devout Muslim to **“kill the infidels: the Americans, the French and their allies.”** Al-Adnani says that those who cannot do so with an IED or by shooting **should act in other ways, such as throwing stones, slitting throats, running over people, and burning homes and businesses** (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 16, 2016). **On May 21, 2016**, ISIS released an audio recording of a speech by Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, in which he calls to attack the Crusaders [i.e., Christians] and kill them. Al-Adnani stresses that there is no need to shirk from harming civilians, **because in the lands of the Crusaders there are no innocents.** In his speech, Al-Adnani says that ISIS will continue to fight, even if it loses the areas under its control in Syria, Iraq and Libya (YouTube, Khalifa Mubasher, May 21, 2016). The events since Al-Adnani’s calls prove that **they did not fall on deaf ears.**

Axe attack near the city of Würzburg in Bavaria (Initial overview)

- On the night of July 18, **Muhammad Riyad**, 17, carried out an axe attack (a knife was also found in his possession). The attack was carried out on a train traveling around 16 km southeast of Würzburg, Bavaria. Muhammad Riyad **was a young asylum seeker from Afghanistan**, who emigrated to Germany around two years ago and lived in an institution for refugees. Local police shot him to death when he fled from the train after the attack.
- Five members of a family from Hong Kong were wounded, two of them seriously. Fourteen other passengers suffered shock. According to eyewitnesses, the attacker shouted “Allahu Akbar” during the attack. A hand-painted ISIS flag and a farewell letter to his father were found in Muhammad Riyad’s room. **According to a statement released by ISIS**, he was a soldier of the Islamic State who carried out the operation in response to calls to harm the countries of the coalition fighting against the Islamic State.
- ISIS’s Aamaq News Agency released a video (July 19, 2016) made before the attack by the terrorist, who identified himself as Muhammad Riyad. In the video, he discloses his intention to carry out the attack. The terrorist says in Pashto (Aamaq released the video with English subtitles) that he is a “soldier of the Islamic Caliphate.” He says: “I want to perform a sacrificial act in Germany on behalf of Allah. O infidels, Allah willing, your time has passed. The time when you come to our countries and kill our men, women and children, has passed [...] Now that the Caliphate has been established in Iraq, Syria, Khorasan (i.e., Afghanistan and Pakistan), Libya and Yemen, the soldiers of the Caliphate will come to you, [they] will slaughter you in your homes and they will occupy your homes and your bases. **I will slaughter you in your homes and in your streets, and I will make you forget about the operation in France** [i.e., the vehicular attack in Nice]. **I will slaughter you with this knife [He says this while brandishing the knife] and I will slit your throats with an axe [...]**” He called on Muslims to wake up and pledge allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The video ends with the words: **“Fight the infidels in your countries”** (Aamaq, July 19, 2016).



Photo from the video made by Muhammad Riyad before the attack (Aamaq, July 19, 2016)



ISIS's announcement in English that the axe attack in Germany was carried out by a soldier of the Islamic State (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, July 19, 2016)



Right: The terrorist holding the axe, as documented by the security cameras. Left: The scene of the attack in daylight (Al-Ikhbariya al-Tunisiya, July 18, 2016)

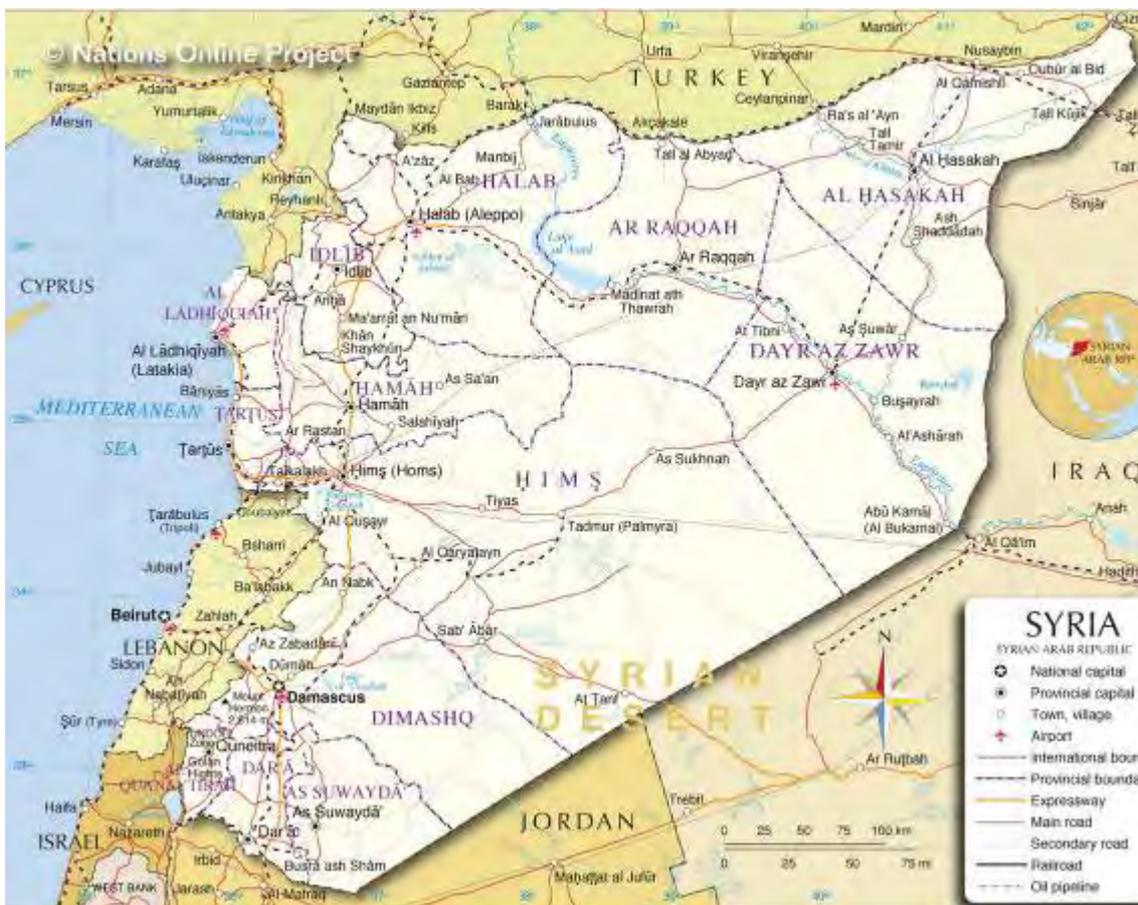
The US-led campaign against ISIS

- During the week, the US-led coalition continued its airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq. **In Syria**, the airstrikes were concentrated in the areas of Manbij, Al-Raqqah, Deir al-Zor and Abu Kamal. **In Iraq**, the airstrikes were concentrated in the areas of Mosul, Ramadi, Sinjar, Habbaniyah, Qayyarah and Kisik (US Department of Defense website). Following the abortive coup in Turkey, international coalition airstrikes from Incirlik Air Force Base in the south of the country were suspended for two days. On July 17, 2016, the Pentagon spokesman said that the Turkish government had announced that Incirlik Air Force Base had resumed activity. As a result, airstrikes against targets in Syria and Iraq from the base resumed (The New York Times, July 17, 2016).
- A Washington Post reporter has uncovered the **draft of a new military coordination agreement between the US and Russia in the fight against ISIS and Al-Qaeda**, proposed by the US. According to the proposal, **a military headquarters would be set up in Amman, Jordan**, staffed by senior military and intelligence officials whose mission would be to **coordinate the targets of the airstrikes in Syria**. The Syrian Air Force would avoid flying in these areas (The Washington Post, July 13, 2016). The Russians refused to comment on the American proposal, noting that they would comment after the meeting to be held between the US Secretary of State, the Russian President, and the Russian Foreign Minister (Sky News, July 14, 2016).

Russia's involvement in the fighting

- According to reports by the Russian Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Defense, **six Tu-22M3 long-range strategic bombers attacked ISIS targets east of Palmyra**. The aircraft took off from a Russian Air Force base and returned to the base after the airstrike. According to the Ministry of Defense, the airstrikes destroyed an ISIS command center, army camp and two oil pumping sites. A large number of operatives were also hit (RT, July 14, 2016).
- According to a report by the Ministry of Defense from July 8, 2016, a Russian helicopter was shot down in this area and its two crew members were killed. The Kremlin spokesman denied any connection between the airstrike and the downing of the aircraft, stressing that this was not revenge but rather ongoing activity carried out in Syria.

Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (www.nationsonline.org)

The Aleppo campaign

■ The Syrian forces are gradually tightening the encirclement of the city of Aleppo, although it is not yet complete. The Syrian forces and their allies are fighting against the rebel organizations in areas north of Aleppo. One of the rebel organizations, the Ahrar al-Sham Movement, announced the start of a campaign to remove the blockade imposed by the Syrian forces on the rebel organizations in Aleppo's eastern neighborhoods (Al-Ahed, July 19, 2016).

The Manbij campaign

■ In the area of Manbij, fighting continued between ISIS operatives and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). SDF fighters advancing to the city center from the west reportedly took over a number of neighborhoods near the city center this week. They also reportedly took over ISIS headquarters located in a hospital in the western part of the city (Reuters, July 19, 2016). ISIS operatives are using sniper fire and IEDs to halt the advancing forces. ISIS also detonated several car bombs in Manbij and the surrounding areas controlled by the SDF.

■ According to ISIS, on July 16, 2016, its operatives **killed 199 Kurdish fighters in the area east of the Tishreen Dam**. According to the announcement, ISIS operatives attacked several villages to the east and southeast of the dam, and were aided by five suicide bombers (Haqq, July 17, 2016). At this stage, this report has not been verified. **The Tishreen Dam area serves as a launching ground for the campaign against Manbij and for the SDF's operations west of the Euphrates River.**

■ US and coalition aircraft have intensified their attacks against ISIS positions in the western neighborhoods of Manbij. According to the US Army Central Command spokesman, during the takeover of Manbij, the SDF forces seized more than 10,000 documents and 4.5 terabytes of information belonging to ISIS (US Department of Defense website, July 15, 2016).

Additional events

■ Fighting continued in other areas in Syria, although the intensity was relatively low. Noteworthy examples:

- **The area of Damascus:** Al-Nusra Front operatives have reportedly **begun to leave the Al-Yarmouk refugee camp in the direction of Idlib, as part of an agreement reached with the Syrian Army**. The withdrawal is supposed to take place in two stages: first the civilians will leave, and then the operatives, who will

take their light and heavy weapons with them (Rai Al-Youm, 12 July 2016). According to another report, negotiations over the removal of gunmen from the Al-Yarmouk refugee camp are still ongoing (Dimashq al-Aan, July 19, 2016).

- **Southern Syria:** In the Daraa region, there were battles between the Syrian forces and the rebel organizations, including the Al-Nusra Front. The military council of the village of Jassem, in the Daraa region, reported that it had arrested several operatives of ISIS sleeper cells and had confiscated equipment and weapons. Council sources said that the confiscated equipment included explosives and explosive belts (Al-Durar al-Shamiya, July 16, 2016).

- **In the area of Deir al-Zor:** According to ISIS, its air defense shot down a Syrian MiG in the area of Mount Al-Thurdah, south of Deir al-Zor.



Wreckage of the Syrian MiG shot down by ISIS near Mount Al-Thurdah, south of Deir al-Zor (Haqq, July 14, 2016)

Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (www.nationsonline.org)

ISIS continues its terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare

■ **ISIS continues its terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare against targets of the Shiite community, the Iraqi security forces, and the Iraqi regime:**

- **On July 12, 2016**, a car bomb exploded in the Al-Rashidiya neighborhood in northern Baghdad. The blast killed at least 12 people and injured 30 others (BBC in Arabic, July 12, 2016). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that it was directed against Shiite militias.
- **On July 14, 2016**, ISIS claimed responsibility for a double suicide bombing attack in the Al-Taji area northwest of Baghdad. The attack was carried out near

an Iraqi Army base. According to ISIS, 23 Iraqi soldiers were killed (Amaq, July 14, 2016).

- **On July 16, 2016**, there was a series of terrorist attacks in Baghdad and its environs. Six people were killed and 17 others were wounded. One of the attacks was an IED explosion in an open market in the Al-Taji area.

Cleansing operation in the Al-Anbar Province

- On July 17, 2016, the Iraqi Army began an operation to cleanse **the area of Al-Dolab**, about 20 km northwest of the city of Hit, which lies on the banks of the Euphrates River. In the operation, the Iraqi Army was supported by local tribal forces and coalition aircraft (Al-Sumaria, July 17, 2016). On July 18, 2016, the Iraqi Army announced that the area had been liberated (Al-Sumaria, July 18, 2016). The city of Hit was taken over by the Iraqi forces on April 8, 2016. The area of Al-Dolab was probably used by ISIS as a staging zone and for launching attacks.



The Iraqi Army operation to cleanse the Al-Dolab area, supported by tribal forces (Al-Sumaria, July 17, 2016)

The Sinai Peninsula

- The Egyptian security forces, supported by combat helicopters, continued to act against ISIS operatives in northern Sinai. This week, the activity was concentrated **in the city of Al-Arish**. Increased deployment of the security forces in Al-Kawthar neighborhood of Sheikh Zuweid was also reported. Following the terror attack in Nice, the alert level was raised in the Sinai Peninsula and the main route connecting the Sinai Peninsula to the south was closed, in order to prevent the infiltration of terrorist operatives. Checkpoints were set up in several other locations and security checks

and searches were carried out (Al-Watan, July 14, 2016). ISIS operatives in the Sinai Peninsula continued their guerrilla activities against the Egyptian security forces, mainly by planting IEDs and sniper fire.

The conduct of the Islamic State

The killing of a senior ISIS military commander

- On July 13, 2016, ISIS's Amaq News Agency published an official announcement **of the death of ISIS's senior commander, Omar the Chechen**. According to the announcement, he was killed in battle around the city of Mosul. It didn't say when he was killed (Amaq, July 13, 2016).
- According to an announcement by the US Army from early March 2016, Omar the Chechen was killed in an airstrike on the city of Shadadi, south of Al-Hasakah (which had fallen into the hands of the Kurdish forces). According to the version of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), Omar the Chechen survived the airstrike but was seriously injured and taken to hospital in Al-Raqqah (SOHR; Al-Arabiya, March 13, 2016). It is unclear whether Omar the Chechen died of his injuries from the previous attack, or whether this was a new event.

- **Omar the Chechen's death represents a severe blow to ISIS's top command.** Omar the Chechen was a Chechen jihadi operative from Georgia (in the Caucasus). Until the end of 2013, he was the head of an elite military unit called the Army of Emigrants, which was affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front. In early 2014, he defected to the ranks of ISIS and was appointed as its commander in northern Syria. Initially, his activity was concentrated in the Aleppo region, but in the first half of 2014 he expanded his activity to the east as well, all the way to Deir al-Zor. According to later reports, he served as head of the military council of the Islamic State. American sources called him ISIS's war minister.



Omar the Chechen (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, July 14, 2016)

The global jihad in other countries

Libya

Fighting in Sirte continues

■ Fighting continues between the forces of the Libyan Government of National Accord and ISIS in a number of neighborhoods in the city of Sirte. One scene of fighting is the **Ouagadougou Conference Center, which serves as ISIS's headquarters in Sirte**. This week, the attack on the conference center was repulsed by ISIS operatives, who used snipers and fired mortar shells. ISIS also attempted to detonate several car bombs, in some cases unsuccessfully (Libya al-Khabar, July 15, 2016; Al-Wasat Portal, July 16, 2016). According to the information office of the campaign, relying on intelligence estimates, there are **about 300 ISIS operatives in Sirte** (AKI Agency, July 13, 2016).



Mortars, sniper fire and machine gun fire by ISIS operatives during the battles in Sirte (justpaste.it, July 13, 2016)

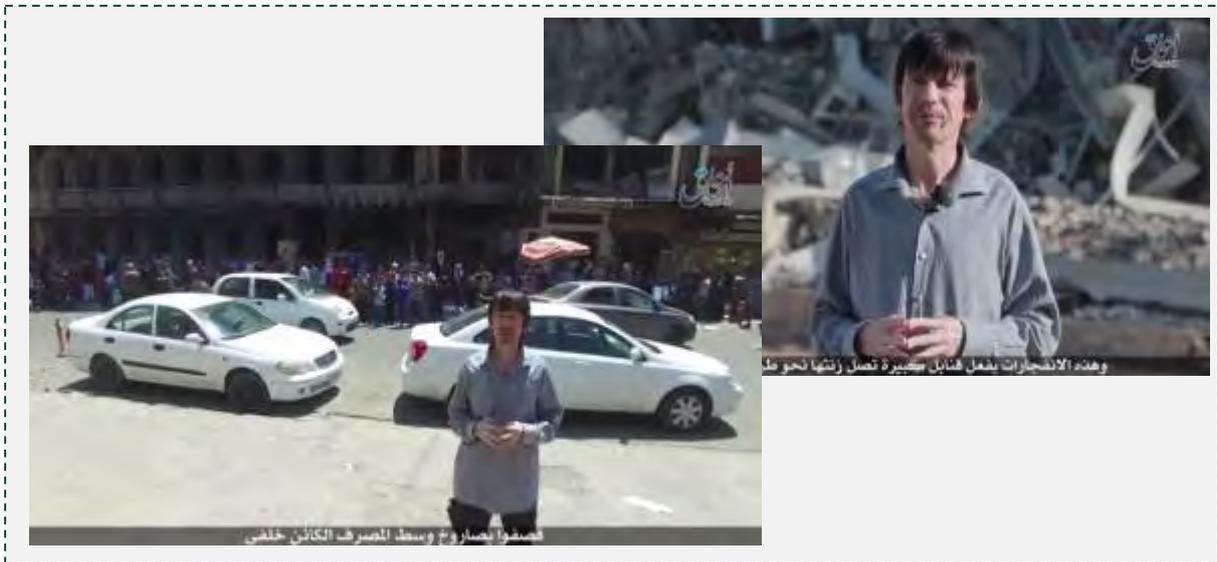


Russian-made anti-tank missile fired by ISIS operatives during the battles in Sirte (justpaste.it, July 13, 2016)

The battle for hearts and minds

ISIS makes use of a kidnapped British journalist for propaganda purposes, to denounce the coalition airstrikes

- On July 12, 2016, ISIS's media foundation Amaq released a propaganda video of kidnapped British journalist John Cantlie (who was previously used for propaganda purposes). The video shows Cantlie near the ruins of the University of Mosul, and in one of the neighborhoods of Mosul, condemning the airstrikes by the international coalition countries and what he calls the killing of civilians (Amaq, July 12, 2016).



Right: Kidnapped journalist John Cantlie, against the backdrop of ruins at the University of Mosul (Amaq, July 12, 2016). Left: John Cantlie in the Mosul city center, near a bank which, according to him, was attacked by coalition aircraft (Amaq, July 12, 2016)