



# Spotlight on Global Jihad

## December 31, 2020 – January 6, 2021



### Main events of the past week

- ▶ This year's Christmas festivities throughout the Christian world, which were held on a limited scale due to the spread of COVID-19, passed without attacks by ISIS supporters, despite their public threats.
- ▶ Routine attacks continued in ISIS's various provinces in Syria, Iraq and throughout Africa and Europe. Noteworthy examples:
  - ◆ **Syria:** ISIS operatives continued their intensive activity in the **desert region west of the Euphrates Valley**. One noteworthy incident was the attack on a bus carrying Syrian military personnel near Al-Sukhnah. According to ISIS, 40 soldiers were killed. According to the Syrian regime, they were civilians. In another incident, a convoy of oil tankers was attacked. According to ISIS, seven security guards were killed. According to the Syrian regime, the fatalities were civilians.
  - ◆ **Iraq:** ISIS's activity in northern and western Iraq focused on activating IEDs and sniper fire, and attacks on the Iraqi security forces, with no unusual incidents.
  - ◆ **The Sinai Peninsula:** ISIS's intensive activity continues in the northern Sinai Peninsula. The main types of attack were activating IEDs, firing at Egyptian army forces, and abducting civilians.
  - ◆ **Pakistan:** ISIS operatives abducted and executed 11 coal miners, members of the Hazara Shiite ethnic minority in the province of Balochistan (in southwestern Pakistan). Attacks against Shiite minorities in Pakistan and Afghanistan are occasionally carried out by ISIS, which perceives Shiites as infidels who are fair game.
  - ◆ **Chechnya:** In central Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, a stabbing attack was carried out against two policemen. One was killed and the other was wounded. Both of the attackers were shot dead. ISIS claimed responsibility.

## The Syrian arena

### The Idlib region

**In the Idlib region**, exchanges of artillery fire continued between the Syrian army and the forces supporting it, and the rebel organizations. The incidents occurred mainly on the northeastern part of the Al-Ghab Plain (about 40 km southwest of Idlib). Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) reported that its snipers had fired at forces supporting the Syrian army and killed four fighters (Ibaa, January 5, 2021).

### ISIS's activity in Syria<sup>1</sup>

#### The region of Deir ez-Zor and Al-Mayadeen

► **On January 4, 2021**, an RPG rocket was fired at an oil tanker apparently belonging to the SDF, about 20 km southeast of Deir ez-Zor. The tanker was destroyed (Deir ez-Zor 24 Twitter account, January 4, 2021). So far, no organization has claimed responsibility for the incident. However, ISIS was probably behind it.

► **On December 31, 2020**, an SDF motorcycle was targeted by machine gun fire about 40 km northwest of Deir ez-Zor (on the east bank of the Euphrates River). Two fighters were killed.

#### The desert region (Al-Badia)

##### Deadly attack against a bus on the Deir ez-Zor-Palmyra road

► **On December 30, 2020**, a bus carrying civilians was attacked on the Deir ez-Zor-Palmyra highway, about 50 km southwest of Deir ez-Zor. According to the Syrian regime, **25 civilians were killed and 13 wounded**. Sources in the Syrian opposition reported **39 killed** (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 31, 2020; SANA, December 30, 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> According to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram



The site of the attack against the bus (Google Maps)

► **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, but claimed that those killed were Syrian soldiers rather than civilians.** According to ISIS, **several IEDs were activated against a bus carrying soldiers of the 4th Division (a Syrian regime elite force) near Al-Sukhnah.** After the IEDs were activated, ISIS operatives shot at the bus and it went up in flames. According to ISIS, **40 soldiers of the 4th Division were killed** and six soldiers were severely wounded (Amaq, December 31, 2020).



The bus which ISIS claims carried soldiers going up in flames (ALBADIA24 Twitter account, December 30, 2020)

► **On January 1, 2021, forces of the Syrian army 17th Division and the Homeland Defense Forces launched searches for ISIS operatives,** with the aim of securing the Deir ez-Zor-Palmyra highway (ALBADIA24 Twitter account, January 1, 2021).

► **On December 24, 2020, ISIS activated an IED and fired at a bus carrying Republican Guard soldiers about 30 km southwest of Deir ez-Zor. Ten soldiers were killed. This may indicate that ISIS regards Syrian army vehicles moving in the desert region west of the Euphrates Valley as a preferred target.**

## Attack against a convoy of oil tankers

► On January 3, 2021, an ambush was set up for a convoy of oil tankers west of Ithriya. According to the Syrian regime, a “terror attack” was carried out **against a convoy of oil tankers and three buses moving on the Ithriya-Salamiyah road**. Nine civilians were killed and four were wounded (SANA, January 3, 2021).

► **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack**. According to ISIS’s statement, its operatives set up an ambush and fired various weapons **at a convoy of tankers carrying oil for the Syrian regime**. According to the statement, the convoy was secured by forces of Hussam al-Qaterji (the owner of the Syrian Al-Qaterji oil company). **Seven security guards were killed and three were wounded**. Ten tankers went up in flames (Amaq and Telegram, January 5, 2021).



The site of the ambush for the convoy of the oil tankers (Google Maps)

## Other attacks

► On December 31, 2020, an IED was activated against a force supporting the Syrian army in the **Jabal al-Bishri region**, about 75 km west of Deir ez-Zor. A Homeland Defense Forces fighter was killed (ALBADIA24 Twitter account, December 31, 2020).

► On December 30, 2020, an IED was activated against a Syrian army vehicle east of Hama. The passengers were killed or wounded.

## Counterterrorism activities in the desert region

► On January 5, 2021, Russian fighter jets carried out airstrikes against ISIS in the desert region of Deir ez-Zor. The airstrikes mainly targeted ISIS hiding places. Several tunnels, where ISIS operatives were hiding, were destroyed. The airstrikes were reportedly carried out in

preparation for a ground operation of searches for ISIS squads in the desert region (Khotwa, January 5, 2021).

## Al-Raqqah region

► **On January 4, 2021**, an SDF roadblock was targeted by machine gun fire about 20 km east of Al-Raqqah. Three fighters were killed and another was wounded. An assault rifle was seized.

► **On January 4, 2021**, an IED was activated against an SDF intelligence operative's vehicle in the northwestern part of Al-Raqqah. He was wounded.

► **On January 1, 2021**, an SDF vehicle was targeted by machine gun fire about 30 km east of Al-Raqqah. Seven fighters were killed or wounded.

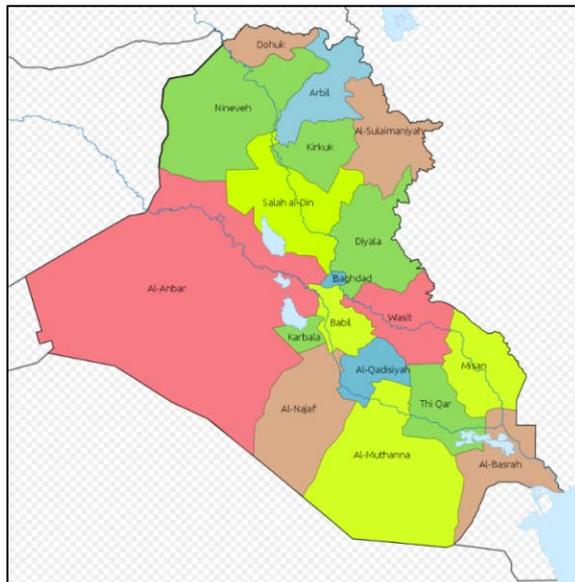
## An unusual attack of the Guardians of Religion Organization against a Russian army base

► **On January 1, 2021, a car bomb was activated at the entrance to a Russian base in the village of Tal al-Saman, about 30 km north of Al-Raqqah.** Afterwards, several ambulances arriving at the base were targeted by intensive gunfire. **Five operatives of the Guardians of Religion Organization were reportedly killed during the attack and two Russians (apparently soldiers) were wounded** (Kurdistan24, January 1, 2021). The Al-Qaeda-affiliated **Guardians of Religion Organization claimed responsibility for the attack**, which is the first of its kind carried out by the organization in this region (a Twitter account affiliated with Al-Qaeda, January 1, 2021).



The village of Tal al-Saman, north of Al-Raqqah, where the Russian army base was attacked (marked with an icon of an explosion) (Google Maps)

## The Iraqi arena



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

### ISIS attacks in the various provinces<sup>2</sup>

#### Salah al-Din Province

- ▶ **On January 3, 2021**, a Tribal Mobilization fighter was targeted by machine gun fire about 60 km north of Baghdad. He was killed.
- ▶ **On January 3, 2021**, ISIS operatives in the Baiji region fired machine guns and RPG rockets at a Popular Mobilization compound. Several fighters were wounded.

#### Diyala Province

- ▶ **On January 2, 2021**, Iraqi soldiers were targeted by machine gun fire about 80 km northeast of Baqubah. Two soldiers were killed and six were wounded.
- ▶ **On December 29, 2020**, Tribal Mobilization fighters were targeted by sniper fire about 80 km northeast of Baqubah. One fighter was killed and another was wounded.

#### Kirkuk Province

- ▶ **On December 29, 2020**, an IED was activated against an Iraqi police vehicle about 40 km southwest of Kirkuk. The passengers were killed or wounded. In addition, an Iraqi policeman was killed by machine gun fire.

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<sup>2</sup> According to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

## Counterterrorism activities by the Iraqi security forces

### Kirkuk Province

- ▶ **On January 3, 2021**, Coalition aircraft carried out an airstrike about 30 km south of Kirkuk. Two ISIS operatives were killed (Facebook page of Iraqi Armed Forces Spokesman Yahya Rasoul, January 3, 2021).
- ▶ **On January 2, 2021**, the Iraqi security forces carried out searches about 30 km south of Kirkuk. They found and destroyed four ISIS hiding places (Facebook page of Iraqi Armed Forces Spokesman Yahya Rasoul, January 2, 2021).

### Diyala Province

- ▶ **On January 2, 2021**, the Iraqi security forces captured an ISIS operative in the western part of Baqubah. He was responsible for the activation of an IED on December 25, 2020, against a liquor store in the Diyala Province. Following his interrogation, another IED that he had planted was neutralized (Al-Sumaria, January 2, 2021).

### Nineveh Province

- ▶ **On January 4, 2021**, the Iraqi security forces operated about 100 km northwest of Mosul, in the region close to the Iraqi-Syrian border. The forces captured four suspects (apparently ISIS operatives) who had infiltrated into Iraq from Syria (Facebook page of Iraqi Armed Forces Spokesman Yahya Rasoul, January 4, 2021).
- ▶ **On December 31, 2020**, teams of the Nineveh Province Intelligence Directorate captured 12 wanted ISIS operatives (Al-Sumaria, December 31, 2020).

## The Sinai Peninsula

### ISIS's activity in northern Sinai<sup>3</sup>

**This week, there has been an increase in the intensity of the activity of ISIS's Sinai Province in the northern Sinai Peninsula.** The main forms of activity were the activation of IEDs, gunfire at Egyptian forces, and the abduction of civilians.

- ▶ **On January 3, 2021**, an IED was activated against an Egyptian army vehicle in the village of Tafaha, south of Bir al-Abd. The passengers were killed or wounded.
- ▶ **On January 2, 2021**, according to local sources, **armed men abducted nine civilians from a farm in the Bir al-Abd area** (Shahed Sinaa – al-Rasmia Facebook page, January 2, 2021). So

<sup>3</sup> According to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

far, no organization has claimed responsibility for the abduction. In the ITIC's assessment, it was ISIS.

► **On January 1, 2021**, an IED was activated against Egyptian soldiers in the village of Tafaha, south of Bir al-Abd. Several soldiers were killed or wounded (Telegram, January 1, 2021). Subsequently, it was reported that an Egyptian sergeant was killed by the IED (Shahed Sinaa – al-Rasmia Facebook page, January 1, 2021).



**Egyptian sergeant killed by the IED (Shahed Sinaa – al-Rasmia Facebook page, January 1, 2021)**

► **On December 31, 2020**, an Egyptian army bulldozer was targeted by gunfire west of Rafah. The driver was wounded.

► **On December 30, 2020**, an IED was activated against an Egyptian army bulldozer west of Rafah. It was damaged.

► **On December 30, 2020**, ISIS operatives tricked an Egyptian army force into entering a booby-trapped house in a village west of Rafah. One soldier was killed and three others were wounded.

► **On December 29, 2020**, an IED was activated against an Egyptian army tank in the village of Tafaha, south of Bir al-Abd. The tank crew members were killed or wounded.

► **On December 29, 2020**, Egyptian army forces were targeted by gunfire west of Sheikh Zuweid. Several soldiers were killed or wounded.

## ISIS's activity around the globe<sup>4</sup>

### Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces in late December 2020

- ▶ ISIS released an infographic summarizing its activity **on December 24-30, 2020**. During this period, **ISIS operatives carried out 45 attacks in the various provinces in Asia and Africa**, compared to 60 attacks in the previous week. **Most of the attacks were carried out in Syria (13)**. Attacks were also carried out in ISIS's other provinces: Iraq (8); West Africa (7); Khorasan, i.e., Afghanistan (7); Sinai Peninsula (6); Central Africa (3); and the Caucasus (1) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, December 31, 2020)
- ▶ A total of 161 people were killed and wounded in those attacks, compared to 154 in the previous week. The largest number of casualties was in West Africa (41). The other casualties were in the following provinces: Syria (35); Khorasan, i.e., Afghanistan (31); Central Africa (25); Iraq (15); Sinai Peninsula (12); and the Caucasus (2) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, December 31, 2020).

### ISIS's activity around the globe in 2020

ISIS's activity around the world in 2020 **was characterized by an increase in the scope of activity in Iraq**, which continues to represent ISIS's center of activity. **There was also a significant increase in ISIS's activity in Africa**. In the ITIC's assessment, ISIS's achievements in Africa stemmed from the failure of the local regimes to provide an adequate military response to ISIS's attacks, and from the meager assistance by the West to the countries coping with ISIS's threat. **ISIS gained in strength in Nigeria** and in additional African countries, taking advantage of the spread of COVID-19 and the population's dire economic situation. **This year in Afghanistan, ISIS seemed to have regained power**, after suffering a severe blow at the hands of Afghan government forces, supported by the United States. **In Southeast Asia** (especially in India and the Philippines), there were relatively few attacks but the potential for a larger scope is high. In addition, **there were several terrorist attacks in Europe carried out by ISIS supporters**.

<sup>4</sup> According to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

► **Terrorist researcher Tore Hamming published an annual summary of ISIS's activity in 2020 in the JIHADICA blog** (whose contributors are several senior terrorist researchers). The summary is based on an analysis of the information published by ISIS's media network. His conclusion is that **ISIS is still far from being defeated and that 2020 was actually a positive year for the organization**. Hamming claims ISIS remains largely active, especially in **Africa, Syria and Iraq** (JIHADICA.COM, December 31, 2020).

► Hamming's main findings:

◆ **Iraq remains the province with the highest number of attacks** (1,405 attacks, in which 2,676 people were killed and wounded). **The West Africa Province is in second place** (385 attacks, in which 2,555 people were killed and wounded). **Syria is in third place** (579 attacks, in which 1,195 people were killed and wounded). According to Hamming, these figures suggest that **ISIS's center of gravity is leaning towards the sub-Saharan African countries**.

◆ Hamming notes that **the provinces of West Africa, Central Africa and Khorasan (i.e., Afghanistan) carried out the most deadly attacks** in terms of the ratio between the number of attacks and the number of casualties per attack. According to him, although Iraq remains ISIS's most active front, ISIS operatives in Iraq did not carry out the deadliest attacks compared to Afghanistan and Africa. **The ratio of casualties per attack is much higher in the Khorasan Province (Afghanistan) (835 casualties in 82 attacks), West Africa (2,555 casualties in 385 attacks) and Central Africa (627 casualties in 87 attacks)**. Close to them is the East Asia Province (215 casualties in 37 attacks). According to the researcher, the high operational level of ISIS operatives is clearly evident **in Iraq and the West Africa Province, which includes Nigeria, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso**.

◆ Hamming concludes that the developments in 2020 indicate that **Africa is now the most important region for ISIS at the global level**. According to him, this is also reflected in the fact that 39% of the front pages of ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly in 2020 were devoted to Nigeria, 10% to the Sahel, 6% to Mozambique and 2% to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the last two countries are part of ISIS's Central Africa Province).

## Africa

### Nigeria

► **On January 5, 2021**, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army foot patrol near the border between Nigeria and Chad. Nine soldiers were killed.

► **On December 29, 2020**, ISIS operatives attacked a Nigerian army compound in Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria. Several soldiers were killed or wounded. A tank was also destroyed.

► **On December 29, 2020**, ISIS operatives ambushed and fired machine guns at Nigerian soldiers near the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon. Several soldiers were killed or wounded.

### Democratic Republic of the Congo

► **On December 31, 2020**, ISIS operatives attacked a Congolese army compound in the Beni region in northeastern Congo. One soldier was taken prisoner. ISIS operatives set fire to the compound.

### Niger

► **On December 31, 2020**, ISIS operatives ambushed and fired machine guns at Nigerian soldiers in southwestern Niger (about 10 km from the border between Niger and Nigeria). One soldier was killed and others were wounded.

## Asia

### Afghanistan

► **On January 4, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle of the forces supporting the Afghan army in the city of Jalalabad. Four fighters were killed and three others were wounded.

► **On January 3, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle of the official in charge of the Afghan National Directorate of Security in the city of Jalalabad. The official was apparently killed, although this was not stated in the claim of responsibility.

► **On December 31, 2020**, an IED was activated against an Afghan police vehicle in the city of Jalalabad. Two policemen were wounded.

## Pakistan

### Abduction and killing of Shiite coal miners in western Pakistan

► **On January 3, 2021**, armed men abducted at least 11 coal miners, members of the Hazara ethnic minority, most of whom are Shiites, near a coal mine about 60 km southeast of Quetta, the capital of the Balochistan Province (Hindustan Times, January 3, 2021; DW (Deutsche Welle), January 3, 2021).



**The site of the abduction of the Shiite coal miners (Google Maps)**

► The coal miners were taken to nearby hills, **where they were executed**. According to an official of the local gendarmerie, six of the miners were killed on the spot, and five others, who were fatally wounded, died on their way to the hospital. They were apparently abducted from a hostel near the coal mine where they worked (Hindustan Times, January 3, 2021; DW (Deutsche Welle), January 3, 2021).

► **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack**. According to its claim of responsibility, ISIS operatives attacked members of the Hazara Shiite minority in Pakistan. Eleven Shiites were captured and their throats were slit (Telegram, January 3, 2021). **Attacks against Shiite minorities in Pakistan and Afghanistan are occasionally carried out by ISIS, which perceives Shiites as infidels who are fair game.**

## Chechnya

### Stabbing attack in Grozny

► **On December 28, 2020**, two men armed with knives attacked policemen in central Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. **One policeman was killed and the other was wounded. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack**. The claim of responsibility states that “two soldiers of

the Caliphate” stabbed policemen in Grozny and that one policeman was killed and the other was wounded (Al-Naba’, December 31, 2020). According to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, the attackers were two brothers who moved to Chechnya from the Republic of Ingushetia in 2012. According to him, the two were shot dead while trying to grab the weapons of patrol officers (The Moscow Times, December 28, 2020).



**Right:** Members of the Russian security forces next to the two policemen stabbed by ISIS operatives (@nofficial MOSSAD Twitter account, December 28, 2020). **Left:** Two ISIS operatives who carried out the stabbing attack (Geopolog@Geopolog Twitter account, January 2, 2021)

## Activity of ISIS’s Khorasan Province

### Regional context of the Khorasan Province’s activity

In his latest article, Indian researcher Kabir Taneja, an expert on India’s relations with its neighbors in Asia, examines ISIS’s Khorasan Province and its impact on the security situation in South Asia.<sup>5</sup> ISIS’s Khorasan Province operates in a number of countries: **Afghanistan, Pakistan, the state of Kerala in southern India, and Tajikistan.** Most of the attacks by ISIS’s operatives in the Khorasan Province were carried out in Afghanistan. The province’s violent activity has implications for the security situation in South Asia, which requires an examination of the emerging situation in Afghanistan-Pakistan.

► South Asian states are characterized by ideological, theological and cultural fissures that exist within the same geographies. **Analysts generally agree that this is why these countries have not been able to arrive at a singular, cohesive approach to terrorism.** However, they cooperate when it comes to combating terrorism led by international forums.

<sup>5</sup> Kabir Taneja, **IS Khorasan, the US-Taliban Deal, and the Future of South Asian Security.** ORF (Observer Research Foundation), Occasional Paper No. 289, 15 December 2020.

When it comes to the bilateral and regional level, there are only a few entities that deal with it, for example the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).<sup>6</sup>

► **The regional threat currently facing South Asia stems from the activity of ISIS’s Khorasan Province and the Taliban.** There is no framework for dealing (both legally and politically) with returning fighters who had been detained. **These terrorists have adapted more quickly than their adversaries to the use of modern technology** such as the Internet, social media and virtual currencies that serve as a means of circumventing financial systems.

► The center of activity of ISIS’s Khorasan Province is in **the Afghanistan–Pakistan corridor, i.e., the border area between the two countries.** Where Pakistan comes into play will not only be critical to the success of the Taliban–US negotiations but will be crucial in the kind of peace that the Afghans will inherit, if at all. **The April 2020 arrest of Pakistani militant and ISIS’s Khorasan Province leader Munib Mohammed revealed that he had served as a liaison between ISIS’s Khorasan Province and Pakistan’s intelligence apparatus.** This highlights the multiple avenues **that Pakistan has operationalized to make sure that a post-US Afghanistan is not anti-Pakistan Afghanistan.**

### ISIS’s Khorasan Province’s activity in and outside Afghanistan

► **The activity of ISIS’s Khorasan Province was first identified in 2015 and has continued continuously since then.** This activity included terrorist attacks carried out in and around the capital city of Kabul. The Khorasan Province took advantage of political uncertainty in Afghanistan to expand its footprint not only in the country but in the entire region. **The relative rise of the Khorasan Province comes at a time when Afghanistan is embarking on a long process of reconciliation and potential peace with the Taliban, as the US plans its military withdrawal.**

► **ISIS’s Khorasan Province maintains ties with other terrorist organizations operating in the region.** The Haqqani Network<sup>7</sup> and the Taliban criticize ISIS’s Khorasan Province, but the fact that some members of these two organizations defected to join the Khorasan Province

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<sup>6</sup> This is a regional intergovernmental organization that unites several countries in South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The organization was founded in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, in December 1995 and is headquartered in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal.

<sup>7</sup> **The Haqqani Network** is described as an Afghan guerrilla organization fighting the forces of the US, the United Nations and the Afghan government. The organization pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda in 1995 but its leaders claim that the organization is not an independent network but part of the Taliban. In 2012, the United States declared it a terrorist organization. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haqqani\\_network](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haqqani_network)

cannot be ignored. The defection from these organizations served ISIS, since these defectors were former commanders with leadership aspirations to promote jihad in Afghanistan. **The Taliban, Al-Qaeda and ISIS's Khorasan Province are only three of the many groups operating in Afghanistan's jihadist ecosystem. More than 20 terror groups, most of them from Pakistan, hold control on these spaces.**

► **Lashkar-e-Taiba<sup>8</sup> (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed<sup>9</sup>, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan<sup>10</sup> (TTP) all support the Taliban.** Lashkar-e-Taiba and operatives of ISIS's Khorasan Province in Pakistan are working together to continue the jihad war and persuade the Taliban to advance their interests, including against local militias funded and equipped by the CIA. Terrorist groups located in Pakistan are a significant part of the fighting cadre of ISIS's Khorasan Province. **This province continues to rely on the strategic and tactical assistance of the Pakistani intelligence service. This gives Pakistan access to the ramified regional terrorist system,** enabling it to manipulate the system and its components to carry out activity that serves its geopolitical interests.

### **Attacks carried out by the Khorasan Province in India**

► A group of 22 men and women left the state of Kerala, India, and joined ISIS's Khorasan Province in Afghanistan. One of them was **Ijas Kallukettiya Purayil**, one of the suicide bombers killed during the deadly attack on a prison in Jalalabad, Afghanistan (August 2020). ISIS's Khorasan Province claimed responsibility for an attack on a Sikh temple in March 2020. These attacks raise questions about the scope of activity of this province in the Indian subcontinent. **There has been a clear increase in the number of attacks by ISIS-affiliated operatives in India.** These operatives have been in contact with the Khorasan Province and not with ISIS's main leadership. The fluidity of **the Khorasan Province's** structures and the early access Pakistani fighters attained within the group **make it ripe for being used, as an**

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<sup>8</sup>A Pakistani terrorist organization that became known due to the terrorist attack carried out by its operatives at a hotel in Mumbai, India in November 2008. See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from December 21, 2008, "Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani Islamic organization that is part of global jihad, was responsible for the Mumbai terrorist attack (November 2008). More than 170 people (including six Israelis/Jews) were killed in the deadly attack."

<sup>9</sup> A Pakistani Sunni-Islamic terrorist organization. It is designated as a terrorist organization in various countries, including Australia and the United States and carries out attacks against Indian targets in the state of Jammu-Kashmir.

<sup>10</sup> A radical Islamic armed group. It is an umbrella organization of various similar organizations operating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. It was established in December 2007. Its objective is to overthrow the Pakistani regime terrorism. It is affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

**entire entity or parts of the entity, to target Indian interests both in Afghanistan and in Kashmir.** The competition between Pakistan and India and their mutual subversive activity in Afghanistan will **enable ISIS to operate more easily in the coming months.**

### **Propaganda use of digital and print media**

► **Sawt al-Hind (The Voice of India)<sup>11</sup> is an online propaganda publication that supports ISIS.** This publication is issued by the Al-Qitaal [literally, the fighting] Media Center. **The publication includes translations into Urdu, Hindi and Bengali** – all widely-spoken languages among Muslim residents of northern India. **The publication is designed to promote propaganda aimed at arousing the Muslim population in India.** The English-language translations stress Bangladesh as one of ISIS’s targets.

### **Implications of the planned American withdrawal on the security situation in the Indian subcontinent**

► **The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is liable to lead to a crisis in the capitals of South Asia.** These countries should see agreement between the US and the Taliban as a “withdrawal” agreement rather than a “peace” agreement. **Groups like ISIS’s Khorasan Province and Al-Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent pose a significant threat to a country like India as well.** The Afghan problem is a regional issue, which also reflects Pakistan’s desire to make use of the Afghan arena as a springboard if an armed conflict develops between it and India.

► **Another danger is that the existence of the Khorasan Province is liable to serve as a springboard for local and foreign jihadi groups** to carry out local and regional attacks under a false identity. **This is because ISIS’s Khorasan Province is first and foremost a product of the rifts in the Afghan jihadi arena and only then is it a local-regional ISIS province.**

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<sup>11</sup> For further details about Sawt al-Hind, see: Animesh Roul, Islamic State Hind Province’s Kashmir Campaign and Pan-Indian Capabilities. *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 18, Issue No. 22, 3 December 2020.