An Enduring Threat: Europe’s Islamist Terror Networks Then and Now

Emma Webb and Rupert Sutton
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Executive Summary

- This report is the first major comparison between the terrorist networks associated with al-Qaeda which targeted Europe in the early 2000s and the Islamic State (IS) networks which struck Europe between November 2015 and March 2016. It examines the proposition that the danger posed to Europe by IS networks represents a new kind of threat, comprehensively profiling those behind the Paris and Brussels attacks, including individuals connected to the attackers through recruitment, logistics provision, and operational direction. The report then compares this network to a similar European network linked to al-Qaeda which existed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It identifies the similarities between the two networks, and highlights the implications for challenging such networks in future;

- The biographical profiles included cover two networks of extremists separated by over ten years and associated with two different Islamist groups now violently at odds with one another. Despite this, they show there is a clear continuity between the Islamism-inspired terrorist activity in Europe during the late 1990s and early 2000s and the threat faced by the continent today. The report highlights a number of similarities appearing between the networks, with these parallels suggesting that lessons which could have been learned from the disruption of the older networks were not acted on sufficiently;

- The most striking of these similarities is the direct connections between the two networks. Several terrorists profiled in the old network were later convicted of involvement in a network which recruited men to fight in Syria, including Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the leader of the team which carried out the Paris attacks, and Najim Laachraoui, one of the suicide bombers who struck Brussels airport. In addition, a network connected to the al-Qaeda recruiter, Djamel Beghal, included a man who would go onto become an IS theatre commander for Europe and allegedly play a significant role in organising the Paris attacks;

- A second similarity identified was the extent to which members of both networks had received training or combat experience from jihadist groups overseas. Many of the old network members involved in terrorism plots had gained such experience, and past Henry Jackson Society (HJS) research data has suggested individuals with such history have been disproportionately involved in the most serious Islamism-inspired terrorism plots. Despite this, the development of new recruitment networks which channelled individuals overseas to gain training and combat experience was not challenged swiftly enough in both France and Belgium;

- Other biographical similarities, such as a history of petty crime and drug use among network members, both prior to radicalisation and to fund terrorist activity, was also be shown to be a common factor across both networks by the report.
Key Implications

Given the likenesses between these two networks, it is likely any future European Islamist terrorist networks will share some of the same characteristics. If these networks are to be successfully challenged before they develop, government policy and law enforcement practice must take a number of implications into account. These include:

Understanding that future terrorist networks will be fuelled by recruitment networks which channel people overseas, and the necessity of disrupting these networks as early as possible;

- Recruitment networks which sought to send people to Afghanistan and Syria were not broken up by law enforcement agencies before dozens of individuals had travelled. Asssessing how long to gather evidence prior to arresting those involved in terrorist activity has been one of the most difficult challenges facing the police and security services, but this report suggests that even when convictions are achieved, if the network has operated for too long there can still be devastating consequences.

Dealing more effectively with recidivism and propagandising to ensure those convicted of offences are not able to recruit in future;

- Those who have been convicted of terrorism offences must be prevented from passing on their ideology, experience, and contacts to a younger generation, as in the cases highlighted in this report. Licence conditions can only go so far in this case, and as such, developing policies to deal with recidivism and better identify individuals associating with previously convicted terrorists must be considered a key policy task. Meanwhile, organisations which seek to promote material produced by imprisoned terrorist recruiters must also be challenged.

Ensuring individuals returning from jihadist conflicts are dealt with as rigorously as the law allows, and developing policy to address gaps in legislation and law enforcement;

- Given the threat posed by individuals with combat training or experience, it is clear that approaches suggesting foreign fighters be allowed to return home when disillusioned or be subject to increased surveillance/deradicalisation programmes on return rather than arrest must be reassessed. However, this faces the difficulty that simply travelling to such conflict zones is not illegal. Ensuring as many individuals who can be proven to have fought with proscribed groups are prosecuted to the full extent of the law, expanding the list of proscribed organisations, and significantly prioritising the development of programmes to challenge returning/aspirant fighters will be vital if this issue is to be dealt with effectively.

Improving efforts to challenge radicalisation in prisons and developing more effective policy to prevent offenders being drawn into terrorism;

- One of the most prominent biographical details identified as common to members of both networks was a history of petty crime. The extent crime featured in the backgrounds of network members suggests processes to recognise the risk of radicalisation to petty criminals have not been developed effectively enough, and that there has been a gross failure to take prison radicalisation seriously. It also highlights the importance of improving the processes for identifying the signs of increasing radicalism in offenders both prior to any imprisonment and following release.
Understanding domestic security is tied to overseas conflicts and removing safe havens for terrorist groups through diplomatic and military action must be part of counter-terrorism policy;

- Many of the terrorist plots detailed in the biographical profiles of the old al-Qaeda-linked network had their germination in Afghanistan, while the safe haven available to IS in Syria gave senior members the ability to plan and train for the Paris attacks. Removing these safe havens can disrupt the ability of groups to plan and carry out complex attacks, and policy-makers must be prepared to use all diplomatic and military options on the table to do so, as well as to make the case that this action will be as important in challenging terrorist networks as the smaller-scale measures working to identify those at risk of radicalisation.
Introduction

On 13 November 2015, IS gunmen and suicide bombers descended on Paris, launching simultaneous attacks in multiple locations, outside the Stade de France, in the 10th and 11th arrondissements, and at the Bataclan concert hall, killing 130 and wounding hundreds. On 22 March 2016, what remained of the network behind the Paris attacks successfully launched another mass-casualty attack in Brussels, detonating suicide bombs in the Zaventem international airport and the Maelbeek metro station, killing 32 and wounding many more.

As more information became available on the network of attackers, accomplices, facilitators, financiers and planners behind the attacks in IS, the extent of the threat posed by such a large network became apparent. Belgian terrorism expert Pieter Van Ostaeyen stated that he believed the cell to be larger than previously thought, with “potentially (...) at least another 60 to 70 members”. In the wake of the attacks, it was suggested that the attackers were a “new type of jihadist: part terrorist, part gangster”, and that Europe faced a different threat to the one it had faced previously.

This report seeks to examine that proposition, profiling the members of the networks behind the Paris and Brussels attacks, as well as a number of individuals connected to the attackers through recruitment networks, logistics provision, and operational direction from Syria. It compares this network to a similar network linked to al-Qaeda which existed across Europe from the late 1990s to the early 2000s which included a number of cells planning mass-casualty attacks and a wider recruitment network. Following this comparison, it identifies the similarities and differences between the two groups and seeks to understand the reasons behind the greater success of the IS-linked networks which struck Europe during 2015 and 2016.

Methodology

This report examines the details of the pan-European networks behind the major Islamist terror attacks carried out by individuals associated with IS in comparison with similar plots attempted by al-Qaeda in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in order to assess the extent to which the new networks may be said to present a new threat as a result of differences in the structure of the networks and the relationships of its members.

To this end, the report profiles members of the network behind the November 2015 Paris attacks and the March 2015 Brussels attacks alongside those involved in the failed al-Qaeda-linked plots to attack the US Embassy and Cultural Centre in Paris, the Christmas market outside of Strasbourg Cathedral, and the Kleine Brogel NATO airbase in Belgium in 2000-2001.

The report is structured in three parts:

- **Part One:** Profiles of the individuals which make up the networks behind the Brussels-Paris attacks, including accomplices, associates and senior IS operatives linked to the plot or attackers;

- **Part Two:** Profiles of the individuals which made up the networks behind the al-Qaeda-inspired plots of the early 2000s in Belgium, France and Germany, as well as any accomplices, associates, and financiers/recruiters;

- **Part Three:** Analysis of the direct connections between the two networks, as well as the identification of any trends in similarities and differences which can be identified in the biographical data of network members.

**Criteria for Inclusion**

- To be profiled, individuals must have a direct and significant link to the plots or attacks examined, or to a member of the network. A significant link includes:
  - Direct involvement in a successful attack as a bomber/gunman or involvement as a failed bomber;
  - A criminal conviction for involvement in an attack, planned attack or recruitment network, as well as the provision of logistical support for any planned attacks;
  - Criminal charges or reputable sources reporting allegations of the provision of logistical support;
  - A direct personal connection to an individual convicted for involvement with another significant network or attack when arrested in relation to Islamism-inspired terrorism;
  - An operational role relating to an attack profiled as a member of a proscribed terrorist group such as IS.

- Due to the contemporary nature of the IS networks, not all included have been convicted as some cases are ongoing and others have been killed in attacks or fighting abroad. Where relevant, this is indicated in the profile, for example, by referring to their connection or involvement as “suspected”;

- Those initially arrested in connection with a plot or attack but later cleared are excluded, except in instances where, although charges were initially dropped, individuals were later convicted in connection to the plot or attack;
• The profiles are ordered by attack, beginning with the most recent. Within each attack, plot or network, profiles are ranked according to significance (e.g. main attackers precede minor operatives, accomplices, and other significant connections);

• In cases where an individual took part in more than one plot or attack, they are categorised in the most recent, and their participation in other plots or attacks is indicated in their profile.
1. Profiles: Brussels-Paris related networks

1.1 Brussels: Attackers

NAJIM LAACHRAOUI aka Soufiane/Soutane Kayal

Role: Suicide bomber, Brussels airport; suspected of being the bomb and suicide-belt maker for Paris attacks; rented a house in Aulnay in October 2015 used by the Paris attackers.1

Bio: Born 18 May 1991 in Morocco, the 24-year-old was raised in Schaerbeek, Brussels, with five younger siblings. He attended a private Catholic school in the Schaerbeek neighbourhood of Brussels until he was 18, after which he studied engineering at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. He did not complete his degree, moving on to Université Catholique de Louvain where he stayed from 2010-11 and studied electro-mechanics.2 He is believed to have worked at the European Parliament as a cleaner between 2009 and 2010.3 Laachraoui travelled to Syria in 20134 and joined IS, working as a guard for the group and becoming involved in the torture of hostages, such as Alan Henning and David Haines, as well as carrying out mock executions.5

Foreign training/combat: Described as a “suspected ISIL commander” who travelled to Syria in 2013.6

Movements: Laachraoui was stopped at the Austria-Hungary border on 19 September 2015 with Salah Abdeslam and Mohamed Belkaid; he gave authorities his alias ‘Soufiane Kayal’.7

Criminal history: No known criminal history.

Known to the authorities: Laachraoui was known to the authorities through his link with the radical preacher Khalid Zerkani. He was one of those indicted in absentia in an investigation into the network,

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with the ruling pending when he carried out his attack.\textsuperscript{10} As a result of this indictment he was subject to an international arrest warrant prior to the Brussels attacks.\textsuperscript{17}

### Known networks and associates:

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016):** Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, Khalid el-Bakraoui [both brothers died in suicide attacks on the airport and metro, respectively];\textsuperscript{19} Mohammed Abrini [Abrini is suspected to be the third man involved in the attack on the Brussels airport].\textsuperscript{19}

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Laachraoui rented a house in Auvelais in which some of the Paris attackers are thought to have met before the attacks;\textsuperscript{20} Laachraoui’s DNA was found on “a piece of cloth” left at the Bataclan and on “an explosive device” discovered at the Stade de France,\textsuperscript{21} leading to suggestions he may have produced bombs for both attacks;\textsuperscript{22} Salah Abdeslam [Laachraoui was stopped in September 2015 at the Hungary-Austria border in a car driven by Abdeslam];\textsuperscript{23} Laachraoui’s DNA was also found in a house in Schaerbeek\textsuperscript{24} where police also found a fingerprint belonging to Abdeslam];\textsuperscript{25} Abdellahamid Abaaoud [Laachraoui allegedly became associated with Abaaoud in Syria];\textsuperscript{26} Ahmad al-Mohammed, M al-Mahmod [it is suggested that Mohammed and Mahmod may have stayed at the house rented by ‘Kayal Soufiane’], a variation on Laachraoui’s alias, in Auvelais;\textsuperscript{27} Laachraoui’s DNA was also found at the Auvelais house.\textsuperscript{28}

- **Zerkani network:** Khalid Zerkani [Laachraoui was due to go on trial in absentia in May 2016 in connection with his relationship with the radical preacher].\textsuperscript{29}

- **Other:** Mohamed Belkaid [Laachraoui was allegedly seen in a car with Belkaid in September 2015 at a Hungary-Austrian police checkpoint];\textsuperscript{30} Mohammed Bakkali [Bakkali, a resident of the house in Auvelais rented by Laachraoui, was arrested in relation to the attacks];\textsuperscript{31} Amr al-Abisi [Laachraoui was part of Abisi’s group in Syria before he returned to Europe to carry out his attacks].

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attacks),^{32} Mohammed Emwazi [Laachraoui allegedly worked with the IS executioner from Britain in Syria].^{33}

**KHALID EL-BAKRAOUI aka Ibrahim Maaroufi**

**Role:** Brussels Metro suicide bomber; suspected of playing a role in the logistics of the Paris attacks,^{34} including providing ammunition.^{35} He rented apartments used by the Paris attackers in Charleroi, Belgium using the alias ‘Ibrahim Maaroufi’,^{36} and other apartments in the Forest and Schaerbeek areas of Brussels.^{37}

**Bio:** Khalid el-Bakraoui, 27 years old,^{38} grew up with his brother Ibrahim in Laeken, Brussels, their father a butcher who had emigrated from Morocco.^{39} Both Bakraoui brothers are alleged to have been plotting another attack in which radioactive material could have been scattered over a populated area; in particular, they have been linked to the surveillance of a senior Belgian nuclear authority. It is believed the plot involved the kidnapping of a nuclear expert to make a ‘dirty bomb’. The passes of 11 nuclear workers were consequently revoked.^{40}

**Foreign training/combat:** Unknown.

**Movements:** Unknown.

**Criminal history:** In 2009, el-Bakraoui was involved in four car-jackings and a bank robbery, kidnapping a bank employee in October 2009 and forcing her to deactivate alarm systems before stealing €41,000 euros. He was convicted of criminal conspiracy, armed robbery and possession of stolen goods and sentenced to five years in September 2011, being freed on parole in 2013 or 2014.^{41}

**Known to the authorities:** Just months after his brother, Ibrahim, was stopped at the Turkish border with Syria, an arrest warrant for Khalid was issued by Interpol because he had violated his parole conditions.^{42} Khalid was also allegedly put on the US counterterrorism watch list soon after the Paris attacks on 13 November 2015^{43} and Interpol issued a red notice for him in December 2015.^{44} New York police also issued an alert for both brothers on 16 March 2016 which was passed on to the Dutch authorities.^{45}

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^{33} Hunter, M., ‘Brussels airport bomber tortured British ISIS prisoners before they were beheaded... and regularly taunted them that it would be their ‘death tomorrow’’, Daily Mail Online, 13 May 2016.


^{36} Tomlinson, S., ‘Revealed: Bomber brothers were gangland criminals and wanted by Interpol - but were STILL able to provide ammunition for Paris attacks and rent flat for Brussels mastermind’, Daily Mail Online, 23 March 2016, available at: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3506131/Bomber-brothers-gangland-criminals-jailed-murdering-Kalashnikovs-sable-provide-ammunition-Paris-attacks-rent-flat-ISBrussels-mastermind.html, last visited: 9 August 2016.


^{43} ibid.


^{46} ibid.
Network and associates:

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016):** Ibrahim el-Bakraoui [brother and fellow attacker], Najim Laachraoui [fellow attacker]; Mohamed Abrini [Abrini visited the Charleroi safe house] rented by Khalid el-Bakraoui; Youssef El Ajmi [Childhood friend who provided el-Bakraoui with messages on flight times from Zaventem airport and visited him at a house in Etterbeek, Brussels].

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Abdelhamid Abaaoud, Brahim Abdeslam, Salah Abdeslam, Bilal Hadfi [finger prints of Abaaoud and Hadfi found at a safe house in Charleroi visited by both Abdeslam brothers] and which was rented by Khalid el-Bakraoui; Hadfi’s DNA was also found in an apartment in Schaerbeek which was rented by Khalid el-Bakraoui, while Salah Abdeslam hid there after the Paris attacks; Mohamed Belkaid [Khalid el-Bakraoui rented an apartment in the Forest area of Brussels in which Belkaid was killed and Abdeslam’s DNA was discovered - he is believed to have fled during the police raid].

- **Other:** Soufiane Ayari [Escaped from the Forest flat during a police raid on 15 March 2016, where his fake Belgian ID in the name Amine Choukri was discovered]; Mohamed Belkaid [Killed during the police raid on the Forest flat].

**IBRAHIM EL-BAKRAOUI**

**Role:** Brussels airport suicide bomber; suspected of playing a role in the logistics of the Paris attacks, including providing ammunition.

**Bio:** Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, 29 years old, grew up with his brother Khalid; They grew up in Laeken, Brussels, their father a butcher who had emigrated from Morocco. Both Bakraoui brothers are alleged to have been plotting another attack in which radioactive material would be scattered over a populated area; in particular, they have been linked to the surveillance of a senior Belgian nuclear authority. It is

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74 Tolnayson, S., ‘Revealed: Bomber brothers were gangland criminals and wanted by Interpol – but were STILL able to provide ammunition for Paris attacks and rent flat for Brussels mastermind’, Daily Mail Online, 23 March 2016.


believed the plot involved the kidnapping of a nuclear expert to make a 'dirty bomb'. The passes of 11 nuclear workers were consequently revoked. Ibrahim left an audio-note to his mother on a computer discarded in a bin in Schaerbeek claiming that he preferred to be a suicide bomber than be sent to jail.

**Foreign training/combatt**: Bakraoui travelled to Antalya, Turkey, in June 2015, and was subsequently detained by Turkish authorities in Gaziantep after he was identified as “a potential foreign fighter” intending to travel to Syria. It is unclear if he was able to make contact with militants.

**Movements**: Detained by Turkish authorities in Gaziantep, Turkey (June 2015); Turkey to Netherlands, entered via Schiphol airport (15 July 2015).

**Criminal history**: In January 2010, Ibrahim opened fire on police officers while a lookout during a robbery in Brussels. In August 2010, he was sentenced to nine years for attempted murder and was released on parole by October 2014. [Another source claims he was sentenced to nine years in October 2010].

**Known to the authorities**: Turkish authorities claim to have notified the Belgian authorities after arresting Ibrahim in June 2015, and it is reported Belgian authorities stated they had previously released him on the grounds there was insufficient evidence of terrorist links. However, Dutch and Belgian authorities deny these claims. Ibrahim was also on the US counter-terrorism watch list prior to the Paris attacks and New York police issued an alert for both brothers on 16 March 2016.

**Networks and associates**:

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016)**: Khalid el-Bakraoui [brother], Najim Laachraoui [fellow attacker]; Mohamed Abrini [Khalid el-Bakraoui profile for details].

- **Paris attacks (November 2015)**: Abdelhamid Abaaoud, Ibrahim Abdeslam, Salah Abdeslam, Bilal Hadfi [Sources suggest Ibrahim was involved in renting properties in Charleroi and Schaerbeek alongside his brother. See Khalid el-Bakraoui profile for details].

- **Other**: Abu Sulayman al-Faransi [Ibrahim el-Bakraoui’s computer contained evidence of contact with al-Faransi and it is believed the Brussels attack plans were ‘submitted’ by Ibrahim to al-Faransi].

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8 Holehouse, M., ‘All Belgian residents issued with iodine tablets to protect against radiation’, *The Telegraph*, 28 April 2016.
16 *Sources say Ibrahim el Bakraoui was on US counterterrorism watch list before Paris attacks–live*, *Daily Telegraph*, March 2016.
1.2 Brussels: Accomplices

MOHAMED ABRINI

**Role:** Failed suicide bomber;" bio logistics;" Abrini is also believed to have driven with Abdeslam before the Paris attacks.

**Bio:** 30 years old, of Moroccan origin, Abrini lived in the same area as the Abdeslam brothers and Abdellahid Abaoud and was a close childhood friend of Salah Abdeslam. Before Abrini became involved with extremists, he is believed to have begun training as a welder aged 18 before giving it up" and is believed to have worked in a bakery. His younger brother was killed in Syria in 2014" and Abrini is believed to have travelled to Syria in April 2015 after flying to Istanbul following his release from prison after being convicted for a number of robberies." He is then believed to have travelled to the UK, meeting with Islamists in Birmingham, London, and Manchester in July 2015.

**Foreign training/combat:** Believed to have fought in Syria and undergone training before returning to Belgium.

**Movements:** Turkey/Syria (April 2015); Paris (November 2015); Birmingham/London/Manchester (June 2015)

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"Mohammed Abrini: 'Man in the hat' planned terror attacks in UK', *Express*, 10 April 2016.


"Mothers of ISIS: The hunt for the Paris attackers', *IBT*, 14 April 2016.


"Mohammed Abrini: 'Man in the hat' planned terror attacks in UK', *Express*, 10 April 2016.

Criminal history: Abrini has a long history of petty crime, including theft and drug possession and had been jailed on this account on previous occasions.

Known to the authorities: Reports suggest Abrini may have been monitored by Belgian police in July 2015 over concerns related to Syria. Before his arrest after the Brussels attacks, Abrini, who had been a suspect since the Paris attacks in November 2015, had been described as one of Europe’s “most wanted” men.

Networks and associates:

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016):** Najim Laachraoui [see above]; Khalid el-Bakraoui, Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, Osama Krayem [fellow attackers; DNA found in the apartment used by the Brussels attackers].

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Brahim Abdeslam, Salah Abdeslam [Believed to have rented an apartment with Salah Abdeslam in Paris which was used by the attackers; Caught on CCTV with Salah Abdeslam on 11 November 2015; Abrini was also a regular at a bar run by Salah and Brahim Abdeslam until it was shut down for its connections to drug dealing]; Other unspecified attackers [Abrini’s DNA and fingerprints were found in a car used by the Paris attackers].

**OSAMA KRAYEM aka Naim al Ahmed/Al-Hamed**

Role: Charged in relation to the Brussels attack on the Metro; had planned to detonate a suicide bomb but backed out. Believed to have bought the bags used to hide the bombs. Krayem carried a bag of explosives to the metro station. He also stands accused of plotting another attack on Paris.

Bio: 23-year-old Swedish citizen and member of IS. Krayem grew up in the Seved neighbourhood of Malmo, Sweden. Sources claim he is the “son of Syrian exiles” from Rosengard, Malmo, which has a “reputation for crime and ethnic segregation.” A friend of Krayem described the latter “living it up” in the Seved neighbourhood. It is believed he was radicalised in 2015 and that before leaving for Syria early that year he tried to recruit others from his mosque. He accompanied Khalid el-Bakraoui to,...
Maelbeek metro station, and has claimed he was due to target Petillon metro station before losing his nerve. After fleeing the scene, he was arrested on 8 April 2016 alongside Mohamed Abrini.

**Foreign training/combat:** Krayem is believed to have fought for IS in Deir Ezzor, Syria.

**Movements:** Krayem travelled with a fake Syrian passport under the name Naim al-Ahmed/al-Hamed on 20 September 2015 from Syria to Europe via the Greek island of Leros on a migrant boat. He was picked up by Salah Abdeslam and travelled to Belgium via Ulm, Germany.

**Criminal history:** Krayam was known to be a petty criminal and drug taker, though it is unclear if he was ever convicted of any offences.

**Known to the authorities:** Unknown.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016):** Khalid el-Bakraoui [Krayam was filmed on CCTV in Maalbeek metro station talking to el-Bakraoui just before he detonated his suicide bomb]; unspecified attackers [His DNA and fingerprints were found in the Brussels apartments used by the airport bombers, and he was captured on CCTV purchasing the bags used in the airport bombing].

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Salah Abdeslam [Krayam was in a car with Abdeslam stopped in Ulm, Germany in October 2015]; unspecified attackers [His fingerprints and DNA are reported as having been found on “several hideouts” used by the Paris attackers prior to the attacks; his DNA was also found in the car used during the Paris attacks].

- **Other:** Soufiane Ayari [Krayam was in a car with Ayari stopped in Ulm, Germany in October 2015. Ayari used false ID with the name Amine Choukri].

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113 ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’, France 24, 24 April 2016; and Watkinson, W., ‘Brussels attack: Who is Osama Krayem the jihadi from Malmo arrested with ‘Man in the Hat’’, International Business Times, 10 April 2016.

114 ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’ France 24, 21 April 2016.

115 ibid.


118 ‘Brussels attack: Who is Osama Krayem the jihadi from Malmo arrested with ‘Man in the Hat’’, International Business Times, 10 April 2016.


**SOUFIANE AYARI aka Amine Choukri** aka Monir Ahmed Alaaj

**Role:** Believed to have been planning a shooting attack with Salah Abdeslam and Mohamed Belkaid to accompany the Brussels attacks.126

**Bio:** Little is known about Ayari, who was arrested in Molenbeek on 18 March 2016 alongside Salah Abdeslam, but it is claimed he has connections with extremists in Germany.128 Using false names and identity papers he was able to evade detection as he crossed Europe from Syria. He gave the name Monir Ahmed Alaaj when stopped alongside Abdeslam in Ulm in October 2015.129 Ayari was with Abdeslam when he escaped from a flat in Forest raided by the police on 15 March135 and gave another false name, Amine Choukri, when the two were arrested.132

**Foreign training/combat:** Ayari is believed to have travelled into Europe from Syria, though details of his activity in Syria are unspecified.133

**Movements:** Believed to have travelled into Europe from Syria via Greece. He was stopped in October 2015 with Salah Abdeslam and Osama Krayem in Ulm, Germany.134

**Criminal history:** Unknown.

**Known to the authorities:** Unknown.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016):** Osama Krayem [Stopped in October 2015 with Osama Krayem in Ulm, Germany].125
- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Salah Abdeslam [Stopped alongside Abdeslam in Ulm, Germany, in October 2015.130 Ayari was with Abdeslam when he escaped from a flat in Forest raided by the police on 15 March137 and arrested alongside Abdeslam].138
- **Other:** Abid Aberkan [Described as the “landlord” of Salah Abdeslam and Ayari];140 Mohammed Belkaid [Ayari escaped from the apartment in Forest during the police raid in which Belkaid was killed.141 Ayari, Belkaid and Abdeslam are believed to have been planning a shooting attack to accompany the Brussels attacks].141

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127 ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’ France 24, 21 April 2016.
130 Ibid.
133 Ibid.134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
SMAIL and IBRAHIM FARISE: Brothers charged in connection with the Brussels attacks. Smail (born 1984) and Ibrahim (born 1988) are linked to a house in Avenue des Casernes, Etterbeek, Brussels, raided on 16 April 2016; was used by Khalid el-Bakraoui and Osama Krayem. Smail is believed to have rented the flat and his younger brother Ibrahim, to have cleaned it to remove evidence; Ibrahim denies his involvement.

YOUSSEF EL AJMI: Arrested on 17 June, El Ajmi (born 1985) is described as a childhood friend of Khalid el-Bakraoui who worked at Zaventem Airport, where he allegedly had access to aircraft. Messages between El Ajmi and el-Bakraoui related to aircraft heading to Israel, Russia and the US were found on El Ajmi’s computer, and he was also alleged to have met el-Bakraoui at a flat in Etterbeek, Brussels. He was charged with terrorist murder and participation in the activities of terrorist group on 18 June.

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143 'Brussels bombings: Two more charged with terrorist murder', BBC News, 12 April 2016.
144 ibid.
145 'Attentats à Bruxelles: la détention de Youssef El Ajmi prolongée', La Libre, 8 July 2016.
1.3 Paris: Attackers

ABDELMAMID ABAOUD aka Umar al-Balji# and Abu Omar**

** Role: Abaaoud planned and oversaw the Paris attacks. He is reported to have been present near the Bataclan during the Paris attacks and to have participated in attacks on cafés and restaurants, as well as providing transport for at least one suicide bomber. Abaaoud had also planned an attack in the La Defense area of Paris and has been connected to a number of other plots. He is also believed to have been involved in recruiting IS operatives in Syria for attacks in Europe.

***Bio: Abaaoud is believed to have been born in the Anderlecht area of Brussels on 8 April 1987 and was a Belgian national of Moroccan ancestry. He attended a prestigious Catholic school in Brussels for one year before dropping out, and after being thrown out by his parents at 16 he eventually ended up leading a life of a petty criminal in the Molenbeek area of Brussels. After numerous convictions, he was sent to prison in 2011 and again in 2012, being released in September that year. He is believed to have become involved with extremists while in prison and on his release became close to a group recruiting young men to travel to Syria, and left for the country in March 2013, returning to abduct his younger brother before leaving again in January 2014. After this, he is believed to have returned to Europe on a number of occasions before he travelled to carry out the Paris attacks. In November 2015 he was killed in a police raid in the Parish suburb of Saint Denis.

Foreign training/combat: Abaaoud first left to fight in Syria in 2013 before returning and then travelling again in January 2014. He identified himself as a member of IS in March 2014, posting videos of himself on the front lines, including one in which he was filmed driving a truck to which dead bodies were

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*See networks and associates sections.


*ibid.


attached. He is suspected of having been a member of IS brigade *Katibat al-Battar* and has been referred to as an IS military commander, acting as the group’s “Emir of War” in Deir Ezzor.68

**Movements:** Abaaoud travelled back and forth between Syria and Europe via Greece several times and boasted of the ease with which he travelled back and forth between Syria and Belgium in IS propaganda. He is reported to have travelled to the UK in the summer of 2015, using a fake passport to enter the country through Kent before travelling on to London.69 Greek media has also reported that he stayed at an apartment in Pangrati, Athens, in January 2015.

**Criminal history:** Before travelling to Syria, Abaaoud was described as a “repeat offender”.70 In 2006 he was convicted for concealing stolen goods, and three years later for violence and resisting police officers. In 2010, he broke into a garage in Ottignies, near Brussels, with Salah Abdeslam, and was convicted in 2011. The same year he was convicted of theft with violence and given 18 months in prison, before being jailed in 2012 for hitting someone in Dendermonde.

**Known to the authorities:** Western intelligence agencies were aware of Abaaoud’s role within IS by early 2015 and were working hard to capture him.71 It is also likely that he had been on the radar of Belgian authorities once he began to associate with the network of extremists around Khalid Zerkani, which had been being monitored since April 2012. Abaaoud was convicted in absentia and sentenced to 20 years for his role with the group in early 2015.72

**Networks and associates:**

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016):** Najim Laachraoui [became associated with Abaaoud in Syria; Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, Khalid el-Bakraoui [Abaaoud’s fingerprints were found at the Charleroi property rented by the el-Bakraoui brothers,73 and his fingerprints and DNA were found at an apartment the brothers rented in Schaerbeek].74

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Salah Abdeslam, Brahim Abdeslam, Chakib Akrouh, Sami Aminmour, Bilal Hadfi [Abaaoud is suspected of being a member of IS brigade *Katibat al-Battar*, of which Hadfi was a member];75 Ahmad al-Mohammed, M al-Mahmod, Omar Ismail Mostefai, Fouse Mohamed Aqgad [fellow Paris attackers].76

- **Zerkani network:** Khalid Zerkani [Abaaoud was given a 20 year sentence in absentia in connection with his involvement with Zerkani’s network],77 Gelel Attar [Attar was given a five

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year sentence arising from the same investigation into the Zerkani network, and was arrested in Morocco in January 2016;\(^3\)\(^5\) Attar built a relationship with Abaaoud while in Syria;\(^7\) Reda Kriket [convicted in absentia alongside Abaaoud as part of the same network]\(^8\), Yassine Lachriri [IS jihadi sentenced to 20 years in Brussels in July 2015; “deemed close” to Abaaoud and recruited by Khalid Zerkani].\(^9\) Yoni Mayne [travelled to Syria with Abaaoud in 2014; known to be one of Zerkani’s disciples].\(^1\)

**Islamic State:** Amr al-Abi [A member of IS’s Shura Council,\(^1\(^1\) referred to as the group’s “kidnapper-in-chief”,\(^1\(^1\) head of media\(^1\(^1\) and at one point Emir of Aleppo\(^1\(^1\) and provincial leader in Homs,\(^1\(^1\) Abi was killed in March 2016. Abaaoud was part of al-Abi’s group in Syria before he returned to Europe to carry out attacks];\(^1\(^1\) Fabien Clain [Abaaoud is reported to have been working with Clain in Raqqa to recruit French and Belgian fighters for attacks in the West];\(^1\(^2\) Charaf al-Mouadan [An IS fighter and French national killed in December 2015, Mouadlan is claimed to have had a direct link with Abaaoud and been planning attacks in the West].\(^1\(^2\)

- **Other:** Younes Abaaoud [on his second trip to Syria, Abaaoud took his 13-year-old brother, Younes, with him to fight for IS];\(^1\(^3\) Hasna Aitboulahcen [cousin and accomplice; died in explosion during the police raid in which Abaaoud was also killed];\(^1\(^3\) Mehdi Nemmouche [Abaaoud has been described as having guided Mehdi Nemmouche, alleged to have carried out the May 2014 attack on a Jewish Museum in Brussels.\(^1\(^3\) The two had met in Syria\(^1\(^3\) and four days before Nemmouche left from Cologne airport in January 2014, the men had a 24 minute phone call];\(^1\(^3\) Khalid Ben Larbi, Soufiane Amghar [In January 2015, Abaaoud oversaw a plot to kill police officers with the two men (known as the Verviers Cell) who were both killed in a shoot-out
BRAHIM ABDESLAM

Role: Suicide bomber in the Paris attacks, targeted the Comptoir Voltaire café. 209

Bio: Brahim, 31, an unemployed Brussels-born 204 trained electrician, was married for two years and known to be involved with drugs 202 with the bar he managed with his brother, Salah, shut down in 2015 201 in connection with drug related activity. 204 His brother, Mohamed, and friends have suggested he began to change around six months before the attacks and have claimed he only recently became religious. 202

Foreign training/combat: His family claimed that he had spent a “long time” in Syria, 208 though knowledge of this was denied by his brother Mohamed. 207

Movements: Unspecified.

Criminal history: Brahim spent time in jail on two occasions, serving a three month and six month sentence for theft, with one of these believed to relate to stealing Belgian ID cards. 201 His bar was shut down in 2015 206 in connection with drug-related activity, 205 and he was involved with drug trafficking in his teens. 211

with police;" Abaaoud successfully escaped back to Syria.;" Sid Ahmed Ghlam [Abaaoud has been connected to Ahmed Ghlam’s planned April 2015 attack on churches in the Villejuif and Ayoub El Khazzani’s unsuccessful attack on an Amsterdam-Paris train in August 2015];" Reda Hame [received weapons training from Abaaoud in Raqqa in June 2015][10]; Nourreddine Abraimi [brother of Lazez Abraimi, who allegedly assisted Salah Abdeslam after the Paris attacks; 108 provided logistical support to the Verviers cell in January 2015]. 17


207 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 28 March 2016.


212 Roberts, H., ‘The pot smoking Paris suicide bomber: Ex-wife reveals blood brother terrorist was a jobless layabout who spent his time taking drugs and sleeping... and never went to the mosque’, Daily Mail Online, 17 November 2015.


216 Roberts, H., ‘The pot-smoking Paris suicide bomber: Ex-wife reveals blood brother terrorist was a jobless layabout who spent his time taking drugs and sleeping... and never went to the mosque’, Daily Mail Online, 17 November 2015; and Roberts, H., ‘Mother of Paris suicide bomber says her son may have blown himself up because of STRESS... while his brother says the family ‘are thinking of the victims’ after he is released without charge”, available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3520417/Mother-Paris-suicide-bomber-says-son-did-not-mean-kill-claims-blown-STRESS.html, last visited: 9 August 2016.
Known to the authorities: Brahim was placed on a police list in 2015 over potential connections to Islamist fighters.\textsuperscript{212}

Networks and associates:

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Salah Abdeslam [brother], Abdelhamid Abaaoud [Brahim appears alongside Abaaoud in several police files relating to criminal cases between 2010-11; details unknown], Chakib Akrouh, Bilal Hadfi, Ahmad al-Mohammed, M al-Mahmod, Omar Ismail Mostefai, Sami Aminour, Foued Mohammed Aggad [fellow attackers].\textsuperscript{213}

**CHAKIB AKROUH**

Role: Suspected of being one of the Paris gunmen who targeted cafes and restaurants.\textsuperscript{214}

Bio: Akrouh was a 25-year-old Belgian-born Belgian-Moroccan who lived near the Abdeslam brothers in Molenbeek. He became associated with the extremist network related to Khalid Zerkani before travelling to Syria, returning to carry out the Paris attacks.\textsuperscript{215} He died alongside Abaaoud when he detonated his suicide vest during the police raid.\textsuperscript{216}

Foreign training/combat: He travelled to between Syria in September 2012 and early 2013 with Gelel Attar.\textsuperscript{217} He first joined *Katibat al-Muhajirin* before joining IS.\textsuperscript{215}

Movements: Unspecified.

Criminal history: Akrouh was sentenced in absentia to five years in July 2015 for “participating in a terrorist organisation” in connection with his relation to the Zerkani network.\textsuperscript{218}

Known to the authorities: See above.

Network and associates:

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Abdelhamid Abaaoud, Salah Abdeslam, Brahim Abdeslam, Bilal Hadfi, Ahmad al-Mohammed, M al-Mahmod, Omar Ismail Mostefai, Sami Aminour, Foued Mohammed Aggad [fellow Paris attackers].\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{212} ibid.
\textsuperscript{213} Farmer, B. et al., ‘Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the Isil attackers’, The Telegraph, 18 March 2016.
\textsuperscript{214} ‘Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?’, BBC News, 27 April 2016.
- **Zerkani network**: Khalid Zerkani, Gelel Attar [see above]; Ilias Mohammadi [An alleged member of the Zerkani network who returned from Syria to Belgium. Official documents state that he was close to Akrouh].

- **Other**: Hasna Aitboulahcen [Akrouh died alongside Hasna when an apartment was raided in search of Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who was also killed].

**BILAL HADFI**

**Role**: Suicide bomber at the Stade de France during the Paris attacks.

**Bio**: A 20-year-old French citizen, Hadfi lived in Needer-over-Heembeek, Belgium. He was raised in Belgium and schooled in Diest, 60km north-east of Brussels. After leaving school he is believed to have trained as an electrician. He is alleged to have become radicalised by an unnamed extremist Imam before travelling to Syria, returning to Belgium and disappearing at some point in 2015.

**Foreign training/combat**: Hadfi is believed to have been a member of Katibat al-Battar, an IS brigade which included Abdelhamid Abaaoud. Under the aliases Abu Moudjahid Al-Belgiki and Bilal Al Mouhajir, he fought in Syria in the spring of 2015. He appears alongside fellow Paris attacker Sami Aminour (aka Abu Qital al-Faransi) in an IS video, released after the Paris attacks, taking part in beheadings.

**Movements**: Syria.

**Criminal history**: No known criminal history.

**Known to the authorities**: When he returned to Belgium he was being monitored by the Belgian authorities, but disappeared.

**Network and associates**: Paris attacks (November 2015): Abdelhamid Abaaoud [Abaaoud is suspected of being a member of IS brigade Katibat al-Battar, of which Hadfi was also a member]; Salah Abdeslam, Brahim

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15. Ibid.
17. Farmer, B. et al., ‘Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the Isil attackers’, *The Telegraph*, 18 March 2016.
Abdeslam, Chakib Akrouh, Ahmad al-Mohammed, M al-Mahmod, Omar Ismail Mostefai, Sami Aminmour, Fouded Mohammed Aggad [fellow Paris attackers].

- **Other**: Samir Zarioh [A French national, Zarioh was arrested on 29 November 2015 whilst trying to fly to Morocco. He is believed to be part of Hadfi’s group, and had tried to travel to Syria twice previously]; Pierre Ndjeka [Belgian national arrested on 29 November 2015 suspected of involvement in recruiting jihadists for Syria. Detained after a search on his Molenbeek home, he is also thought to be part of Hadfi’s group].

**AHMED AL-MOHAMED aka Ukasah al-Iraqi**

**Role**: Suicide bomber at the Stade de France during the Paris attacks.

**Bio**: Al-Mohamed’s real identity is unknown. IS propaganda magazine, Dabiq, may have identified Mohamed as an Iraqi, under the alias Ukasah al-Iraqi.

**Foreign training/combat**: Unknown.

**Movements**: It is believed that al-Mohamed entered Europe as an asylum seeker two months before the attack and his fingerprints matched those taken under the same name in Greece in October 2015. He was carrying a fake Syrian passport during the attack and the passport’s use in registration shows that al-Mohamed travelled through Leros, Greece on 3 October 2015, Serbia on 7 October, Croatia on 8 October and then Austria, finally ending up in Paris. The Greek authorities report that before arriving in Greece he had come from Turkey, arriving in a migrant boat. It is also reported that he travelled through Hungary.

**Criminal history**: Unknown.

**Known to the authorities**: Unknown.

**Network and associates**:

- **Paris attacks (November 2015)**: Abdelhamid Abaaoud, Salah Abdeslam, Brahim Abdeslam, Chakib Akrouh, Bilal Hadfi, M al-Mahmod, Omar Ismail Mostefai, Sami Aminmour, Fouded Mohammed Aggad [fellow Paris attackers].

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233 ‘Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?’, BBC News, 27 April 2016.
235 ibid.
238 ibid.
241 Farmer, B. et al., ‘Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the Isil attackers’, The Telegraph, 18 March 2016.
242 ibid.
244 Farmer, B. et al., ‘Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the Isil attackers’, The Telegraph, 18 March 2016.
245 ibid.
246 ‘Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?’, BBC News, 27 April 2016.
\textbf{MAL-MAHMOD aka Ali al-Iraqi\textsuperscript{29}}

**Role:** Suicide bomber at the Stade de France during the Paris attacks.\textsuperscript{28}

**Bio:** Al-Mahmod’s real identity is unknown. IS propaganda magazine, Dabiq, may have identified Mahmod as an Iraqi under the alias Ali al-Iraqi.\textsuperscript{29}

**Foreign training/combat:** Pictured in Syria.\textsuperscript{28}

**Movements:** Al-Mahmod entered Leros, Greece, on 3 October 2015, with Ahmed al-Mohamed.\textsuperscript{23} Both men also bought ferry tickets to leave Leros.\textsuperscript{22}

**Criminal history:** Unknown.

**Known to the authorities:** Unknown.

**Network and associates:**

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Ahmed al-Mohamed [fellow Paris attacker and suicide bomber at the Stade de France; travelled from Iraq to Europe via Greece with Mohamed], Abdelhamid Abaaoud, Salah Abdeslam, Brahim Abdeslam, Chakib Akrouh, Bilal Hadfi, Omar Ismail Mostefai, Sami Aminour, Foued Mohammed Aggad [fellow Paris attackers].\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{OMAR ISMAIL MOSTEFAI}

**Role:** Gunman at the Bataclan concert hall during the Paris attacks.\textsuperscript{27}

**Bio:** 29 years old and of Algerian ancestry, Mostefai was born in Courcourronnes, a suburb south of Paris, and grew up in the area’s Le Canal estate. He is believed to have moved south to Chartres in 2009-10, possibly taking a young daughter with him. Following this move, he appears to have come to the attention of French authorities over radicalisation concerns, though it is unclear what triggered these worries. He is reported to have attended the Generation 2000 Mosque in Luce and may have been radicalised by a Belgian-born radical Imam who also attended the mosque. He is then believed to have visited Syria, leaving in late 2013 and returning in 2014, where he was identified as being involved with a group of Salafists in Chartres.\textsuperscript{27}


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} ‘Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?’, \textit{BBC News}, 27 April 2016.


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Foreign training/combat: Mostefai is believed to have travelled to Syria in late 2013 or early 2014, with reports suggesting he travelled via Turkey in October 2013 and returned to France early in 2014. It is unclear if he gained combat experience while in Syria.⁵⁶

Movements: He appears to have travelled through Turkey to Syria around October 2013.⁵⁷

Criminal history: A petty criminal described as a “delinquent” in his youth,⁵⁸ Mostefai was arrested eight times between 2004 and 2010 but never jailed.⁵⁹

Known to the authorities: Mostefai had come to the attention of the French authorities in 2010 as a radicalisation concern,⁶⁰ and is reported to have been “the subject of a police “S” file for radicalisation”.⁶¹

Network and associates:


*SAMI AMIMOUR aka Abu Qital al-Faransi,⁶³ Abu Hajia⁶⁴

Role: Gunman at the Bataclan concert hall during the Paris attacks.⁶⁵

Bio: A 28-year-old French citizen, Amimour was born and lived in Drancy, in the north of Paris.⁶⁶ He graduated from school with his baccalaureate and worked as a bus driver. By 2012, friends had noticed a change in his behaviour, and in October 2012 he was arrested over alleged plans to travel to Yemen.⁶⁷ He disappeared in 2013 and several months later his father travelled to Raqqa, finding Amimour fighting with IS. Amimour refused to return and is reported to only have reappeared in Paris shortly before the attacks.⁶⁸

Foreign training/combat: Amimour travelled to Syria sometime in September 2013. Once in Syria, where he fought for IS and was injured, he lived in Raqqa and married.⁶⁹

Movements: Travelled to Syria in 2013.

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⁶⁰ ibid.
⁶² ‘Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?’, *BBC News*, 27 April 2016.
⁶⁵ Farmer, B. et al., ‘Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the ISil attackers’, *The Telegraph*, 18 March 2016.
⁶⁶ ibid.
⁶⁸ Farmer, B. et al., ‘Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the ISil attackers’, *The Telegraph*, 18 March 2016.
Criminal history: No known history of petty crime, but charged with “conspiracy to commit terrorism” after arrested in October 2012 before being released on bail.270

Known to the authorities: Following his arrest in October 2012, Aminour was added to “a watch list of potential terrorists” and “placed under judicial supervision” which required him to report to a police station once a week. An international arrest warrant was issued for him by French police when he went missing in 2013.271

Network and associates:


FOUED MOHAMMED AGGAD

Role: Gunman at the Bataclan concert hall during the Paris attacks.273

Bio: A French-born 23-year-old274 from Wissembourg near Strasbourg, Aggad was the son of Moroccan immigrants. He is not reported to have held down a job, and was known to the police as a petty criminal.275

Le Parisien has connected him to a group of young men who travelled to Syria from Strasbourg in 2013, and he is believed to have fought there before returning to France to carry out the Paris attacks.276

Foreign training/combat: Aggad fought in Syria with his brother,277 having travelled to Raqq a with a group of friends via Aleppo in 2013. Two of the group died in March 2014 and the rest returned to France and were arrested278 while Aggad stayed on in Syria.279

Movement: Travelled to Syria in 2013. It is unclear how he returned to France.

Criminal history: Known to police as a petty criminal before traveling to Syria, but no known convictions.

Known to the authorities: Allegedly “subject to an Interpol arrest warrant” after the arrest of his fellow travellers during 2014.280

271 Farmer, B. et al., ‘Who is Salah Abdeslam and who were the Paris terrorists? Everything we know about the Isil attackers’, The Telegraph, 18 March 2016; and ‘Paris attacks: Samy Aminour, the ‘nice guy’ who became a jihadi’, Financial Times, 19 November 2015.
272 ‘Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?’, BBC News, 27 April 2016.
273 ‘Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?’, BBC News, 27 April 2016.
274 ‘Who was third Bataclan attacker Foued Mohamed Aggad?’, BBC News, 9 December 2015.
Network and associates:


- **Other:** Mourad Fares [Arrested in Turkey in 2014, Fares is believed to have recruited Aggad and his fellow travellers to Syria]; Karim Mohammed Aggad [Brother and fellow IS militant arrested along with the remaining jihadists with whom Aggad travelled to Syria].

### 1.4 Paris: Accomplices

**SALAH ABDESLAM**

**Role:** Abdeslam played a logistical role in the Paris attacks and claims to have failed to carry out a suicide bombing at the Stade de France. Accused of “terrorist murder” and is believed to have been planning a shooting attack with Soufiane Ayari and Mohamed Belkaid to accompany the Brussels attacks.

**Bio:** A Belgian-born French national of Moroccan descent, Abdeslam was born in Brussels on 15 September 1989 and grew up in the Molenbeek area of the city. Involved in petty crime including drug trafficking in his teens, he worked as a transport technician for the state-owned Belgian railway firm Société des Transports Intercommunaux de Bruxelles (STIB) from 2009 to 2011 before being fired. During this time he was also “jailed briefly for burglary” alongside childhood friend Abdellahamid Abaaoud. By 2013, he was running a bar with his brother, Brahim, as well as a grocery store. The bar was later shut down in connection with drug offences in 2015, and Salah Abdeslam was fined for possession of cannabis in the Netherlands in February of that year.

By 2015, it also appears that he was becoming more closely involved with extremists, and was placed on a police list for links to IS fighters in Syria along with his brother. In the months leading up to the Paris attacks, he began to travel across Europe to pick up fighters returning from Syria as they gathered for the attacks, including Najim Laachraoui, believed to be the bomb-maker. He travelled between Brussels and Paris several times in September and October, buying detonators, and booked apartments and hotel rooms for the attackers.

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On the day of the attack, he played a major role and drove a team of suicide bombers to the Stade de France. However, he failed to carry out his own attack, disposed of his suicide belt, and called friends to drive him back to Brussels. This fits with the recording claiming IS’s responsibility which features the voice of Fabien Clain, and mentions an attack on the 18th arrondissement. No such attack took place, but Salah Abdeslam’s car was found abandoned in the spot where Clain appears to have expected an attack to take place. Abdeslam appears to have spent the months between the Paris attacks and his arrest on 18 March 2016 hiding in and around Brussels, including in a flat in Forest raided by police. 

**Foreign training/combat:** Unknown.

**Movements:** A former Slovak Interior Ministry official claimed Abdeslam spent three weeks in Nitra, Slovakia in the summer of 2015. Abdeslam travelled by boat from Italy to the Greek port of Patras in August 2015 alongside Ahmed Dahmani, later arrested in Turkey; He visited Keleti railway station in Budapest in mid-September 2015, leaving with two men who had been travelling as a refugee. He was stopped by police on the border between Hungary and Austria in the same month with Mohamed Belkaid and Najim Laachraoui. He then visited three men in a refugee shelter in Ulm, Germany in October 2015, and was stopped by police alongside Soufiane Ayari and Osama Krayem; Paris (November 2015); Brussels.

**Criminal history:** Abdeslam was jailed for burglary in 2010. His bar was shut down in 2015 in connection with drug-related activity, and he was involved with drug trafficking in his teens. Fined for possession of cannabis in the Netherlands in February 2015.

**Known to the authorities:** Belgian authorities questioned Abdeslam in February 2015 and he was placed on a police list for links to IS fighters in Syria early that year. It has been reported that Belgian authorities dropped an investigation into both Abdeslam brothers six months before the Paris attacks.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016);** Najim Laachraoui [Laachraoui was stopped in September 2015 at the Hungary-Austria border in a car driven by Abdeslam; Laachraoui’s DNA was also found

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in a house in Schaerbeek where police also found a fingerprint belonging to Abdeslam;\footnote{Cendrowicz, L., ‘Najim Laachraoui: Belgian police launch manhunt for suspect who could have made suicide belts for Paris attacks’, Independent, 21 March 2016.} Osama Krayem [Krayem was in a car with Abdeslam stopped in Ulm, Germany in October 2015];\footnote{‘Paris attacks: Salah Abdeslam in Paris’, Independent, 24 November 2015, last visited: 9 August 2016.} Mohammed Abrini [Believed to have rented an apartment with Salah Abdeslam in Paris which was used by the attackers];\footnote{‘Paris attacks: Salah Abdeslam’s luck runs out’, BBC News, 19 March 2016.} Caught on CCTV with Salah Abdeslam on 11 November 2015;\footnote{‘Paris attacks: Salah Abdeslam’s luck runs out’, The Telegraph, 22 March 2016.} Abrini was also a regular at a bar run by Salah and Brahim Abdeslam until it was shut down for its connections to drug dealing.\footnote{‘Paris attacks: Salah Abdeslam’s luck runs out’, France 24, 21 April 2016.}


**MOHAMED BELKAID aka Samir Bouzid**

**Role:** Believed to have been one of the co-ordinators of the Paris attacks and to have been in telephone contact with the Paris attackers on the night of the attacks. Believed to have been planning a shooting attack with Soufiane Ayari and Salah Abdeslam to accompany the Brussels attacks.

**Bio:** A 35-year-old Algerian, Belkaid appears to have been unknown to the authorities as an extremism risk and told IS recruiters in 2014 he had no experience as a jihadist and that his former occupation was as a confectioner. He was shot and killed by Belgian police on 15 March during the raid on the apartment in Rue de Dries, Forest, which led to the later arrest of Salah Abdeslam on 18 March.

**Foreign training/combat:** Travelled to Syria in April 2014.

**Movements:** Belkaid claimed to have travelled throughout Europe, including to Spain, Germany and France, and “listed his residence as Sweden”. He used a fake Belgian ID under the name Samir Bouzid. Belkaid travelled with Salah Abdeslam to pick up Najim Laachraoui, who was travelling back from Syria, from Hungary.

**Criminal history:** Reported to be known to Belgian police in relation to a theft case in 2014.

**Known to the authorities:** Following the Paris attacks was known to investigators only as Samir Bouzid.

**Networks and Associates:**

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016):** Khalid el-Bakraoui [El-Bakraoui rented the apartment in Forest in which Belkaid was killed]; Najim Laachraoui [Belkaid travelled with Abdeslam to pick up Laachraoui in Hungary in September 2015];

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Salah Abdeslam [killed in the raid that led to Abdeslam’s arrest, Belkaid also travelled to Hungary with Abdeslam]; Believed to have been one of the coordinators of the attacks.

- **Other:** Hasna Aitboulahcen [the two were in contact by telephone and he wired money to her]; Belkaid’s fake ID was used to transfer money to the bank account of Hasna, Abaaoud’s cousin; Soufiane Ayari [Ayari escaped from the apartment in Forest during the police raid in which he was shot and killed by Belgian police on 15 March];

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12 'How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?', *France 24*, 21 April 2016.


17 ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’, *France 24*, 21 April 2016.


19 ‘Two suspects still on run after Brussels anti-terror raid that killed one’, *Guardian*, 16 March 2016.

20 ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’, *France 24*, 21 April 2016.

21 'Brussels suicide bombers identified as police hunt suspect caught on CCTV', *Guardian*, 23 March 2016.

22 ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’, *France 24*, 21 April 2016.

23 ‘Ibid.

Belkaid was killed.\textsuperscript{10} Ayari, Belkaid and Abdeslam are believed to have been planning a shooting attack to accompany the Brussels attacks.\textsuperscript{11}

HASNA AITBOULAHCEN: 26-year-old Aitboulahcen died alongside her cousin Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Chakib Akrouh during the raid in Saint Denis.\textsuperscript{12} She was also in contact with Mohammed Belkaid – the two had been in contact by telephone\textsuperscript{13} and he had wired money to her account using a fake ID.\textsuperscript{14} She also allegedly had contact with a man identified as Abdoullah C after the Paris attacks.\textsuperscript{15} Aitboulahcen was also under surveillance in a narcotics operation.\textsuperscript{16}

MOHAMED AMRI and HAMZA ATTOU: Amri and Attou were charged in November 2015 for participation in terrorist activity,\textsuperscript{17} after they were seen and videoed driving Abdeslam from France to Belgium after the attacks.\textsuperscript{18} Attou was extradited to France on 29 June 2016.\textsuperscript{19}

LAZEZ ABRAIMI: A 39-year-old Moroccan from Brussels,\textsuperscript{20} Lazez allegedly drove Salah Abdeslam across Brussels after the Paris attacks.\textsuperscript{21} Two handguns were discovered in his car, though he claims these were part of a business deal.\textsuperscript{22} Lazez is the brother of Noureddine Abraimi.\textsuperscript{23}

ALI OULKADI: A 31-year-old French national based in Molenbeek who admits to driving Abdeslam around Brussels on 14 November 2015.\textsuperscript{24}

DJAMAL EDDINE OUALI: Italian police arrested the 40-year-old Algerian in Salerno in connection with the supplying of fake documents to the Brussels and Paris attackers. Specifically, he provided the fake ID for Najim Laachraoui. He is suspected of being part of a criminal network providing fake IDs for illegal immigration.\textsuperscript{25}

AHMED DAHMANI: 26-year-old Dahmani, a Belgian of Moroccan descent, was arrested in Turkey suspected of having scouted out target locations for the Paris attack. He was arrested in a hotel in Antalya, Turkey having travelled from Amsterdam on 14 November 2015.\textsuperscript{26} He had previously travelled with Salah Abdeslam in August 2015 from Italy to the Greek port of Patras by boat.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{11} ‘Suspects linked to the Paris, Brussels attacks’, Reuters, 8 April 2016.
\textsuperscript{12} Allen, P., ‘Female jihadi in Paris attacks died of asphyxiation, say prosecutors - as her family sue French police claiming she was murdered by police’, Daily Mail Online, 21 January 2016; and Fenwick, J., ‘Paris suicide bomber who killed Diesel the dog FINALLY named by police’, Express, 13 January 2016.
\textsuperscript{13} ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’, France 24, 21 April 2016.
\textsuperscript{14} ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’, France 21, 24 April 2016.
\textsuperscript{16} ‘Is Europe still at threat from Paris attacks?’, France 24, 11 April 2016.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} ‘Factbox: The hunt for the Paris attackers’, Reuters, 24 December 2015.
MOHAMMED BAKKALI: Bakkali was arrested on 26 November 2015 in connection with the Paris attacks and accused of playing a leading role in planning the attack. He has a history of petty crime and lived in Auvelais, renting a car which was used to travel to safe houses in Auvelais, Charleroi and Schaerbeek. His extradition to France was approved on 9 June 2016 over claims he rented the apartment in which the suicide vests used in the Paris attacks were made.

Bakkali is also reported to have been a key suspect in an alleged “dirty bomb plot”, with police raids finding ten hours of footage in Bakkali’s wife’s flat from a hidden camera targeting the house of an executive from the Centre for the Study of Nuclear Energy who had access to radioactive isotopes.

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368 Holehouse, M., ‘All Belgian residents issued with iodine tablets to protect against radiation’, The Telegraph, 28 April 2016.
1.5 Zerkani Network

KHALID ZERKANI

Role: Zerkani ran a recruitment network in the Brussels area, using petty crime to fund the recruitment of fighters for IS. He put potential jihadist fighters in contact with Turkish smugglers who would help them reach Syria.

Bio: Born in Zenata, Morocco, the 42-year-old Zerkani gained Belgian residency in 2002 after periods spent living in Spain and the Netherlands. Operating from mosques in Molenbeek, he ran a network aiming to radicalise and recruit young men to fight in Syria. Unemployed since at least 2010 and possibly earlier, he financed his recruitment efforts with the proceeds of petty theft of phones, cars, laptops and cash. In 2012, Belgian police began an investigation into his network and arrests began in 2014. Arrested in February 2014, Zerkani was found to be carrying a large quantity of money in multiple currencies. He was jailed for 12 years in July 2015, and this was extended to 15 years in April 2016 by an appeal court. Zerkani was due to be tried again in May 2016 in connection with a second group of recruits sent to Syria, including Brussels attacker Najim Laachraoui, but the trial has since been postponed until 5 September 2016.

Foreign training/combat: Zerkani has been described as a veteran of Afghan jihad.

Movements:

Criminal history: Convicted for recruiting young men to travel to Syria and jailed for 12 years in July 2015. This was extended to 15 years in April 2016 by an appeal court. Belgian authorities have also stated he was involved in petty crime including shoplifting before becoming involved in recruitment.

Known to the authorities: Under investigation since 2012, Zerkani has been in prison since his arrest in February 2014.

Networks and associates:

- Brussels attacks (March 2016): Najim Laachraoui [Described as an “associate” of Zerkani and was due to go on trial in absentia alongside Zerkani in May 2016].

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64 Graham, C. et al., ‘Sources say Ibrahim el Bakraoui was on US counterterrorism watch list before Paris attacks- live’ Daily Telegraph, 26 March 2016.
69 At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 28 March 2016.
73 ‘Belgian court sentences jihadist recruiter to 15 years in prison’, France 24, 14 April 2016.
- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Abdelhamid Abaaoud [Abaaoud was given a 20 year sentence in absentia in connection with his involvement with Zerkani’s network],\(^{205}\) Chakib Akrouch [became associated with the extremist network related to Khalid Zerkani before travelling to Syria].\(^{206}\)

- **Zerkani network:** Fatima Aberkan [Convicted in July 2015 of involvement in Zerkani’s recruitment network];\(^{387}\) Soufiane Ailou [22-year-old Zerkani network recruit who travelled to and from Syria five times before getting caught];\(^{388}\) Abderrahmane Ameroud [Described as “linked” to the Zerkani network, though the nature of the link is unclear];\(^{389}\) Gelel Attar [Attar was given a five year sentence arising from the same investigation into the Zerkani network, and was arrested in Morocco in January 2016];\(^{390}\) Youssef Bouyahrem [An alleged Zerkani recruit who tried and failed to join both al-Shabaab and IS];\(^{391}\) Reda Kriket [convicted in absentia in July 2015 as part of the Zerkani network];\(^{392}\) Yassine Lachriri [Sentenced in July 2015 in Brussels to 20 years and recruited by Zerkani];\(^{393}\) Yoni Mayne [Attended Zerkani’s meetings and became more radical in the process before travelling to Syria];\(^{394}\) Ilias Mohammadi [An alleged member of the Zerkani network who returned from Syria to Belgium using false ID and was arrested with “a significant amount of ammunition”];\(^{395}\) Sami Zarrouk [An IS fighter who attended Zerkani’s meetings and was convicted in absentia alongside Zerkani in July 2015].\(^{396}\)

- **Other:** Mohammed Khemir [A Sharia4Belgium member described as lieutenant to Jean-Louis Denis, a leading member of Sharia4Belgium].\(^{397}\) Khemir travelled with Zerkani to take a French recruit travelling to Syria to the airport in Brussels; Jean-Louis Denis [A leading member of Sharia4Belgium, he attended the same meetings with Zerkani which included Khemir].\(^{398}\)

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**FATIMA ABERKAN**

**Role:** Member of the Zerkani network involved in the recruitment and logistics of sending young men to fight for jihadist groups overseas.\(^{399}\)

**Bio:** A 55-year-old who has been connected to extremist groups since at least 2007, Aberkan appears to have played a major role in recruiting young men to fight in Syria and has been dubbed the “mother of Brussels jihad”.\(^{400}\) She is believed to have travelled to Syria in 2013 and 2014, making a number of trips to

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\(^{205}\) Khalid Zerkani, Brussels’ jihadist preacher who ‘perverted a generation’, [France], 24, 26 March 2016.


\(^{207}\) ‘Papa Noel’ the militant recruiter in Brussels who groomed young men for violence, Los Angeles Times, 28 March 2016 and Brussels jihadist Belgian recruiter Zerkani given longer term, [BBC News], 14 April 2016.


\(^{388}\) Khalid Zerkani, Brussels’ jihadist preacher who ‘perverted a generation’, [France], 24, 26 March 2016.

\(^{389}\) Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, [Emmejihad], 26 January 2016.


\(^{392}\) Un djihadiste belge échangé par la Turquie contre des otages de l’Etat islamique’, Le Soir, 10 March 2016


\(^{394}\) Ibid.

\(^{395}\) Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, [Emmejihad], 26 January 2016.


\(^{397}\) Sharia4Belgium, headed by Fouad Bellacaen, are a Belgian Islamist group that have been prolific in their recruitment of fighters involved in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. It is estimated that 80 fighters are ‘clearly linked’ with Sharia4Belgium. Most of their recruitment is believed to have taken place between 2012 and 2014. Many of these recruits became incorporated into the brigade associated with Amr al-Abi (see Van Vlierden, G., ‘The Zerkani Network: Belgium’s Most Dangerous Jihadist Group’, The Jamestown Foundation, 12 April 2016; see also profile ‘Amr al-Abi’).


\(^{399}\) Ibid.

\(^{400}\) Van Vlierden, G., ‘PROFILE: PARIS ATTACK RINGLEADER ABDELLHAMID ABAAOUD’, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 15 December 2015.
via Turkey, and taking two of her daughters to the country, and sending four of her sons to fight there, one of whom was killed in action. Aberkan was arrested and tried alongside Khalid Zerkani for her role in the recruitment network, and was imprisoned in July 2015.

**Foreign training/combat:** Unknown.

**Movements:** Aberkan travelled to Syria at least twice in 2013 and 2014. She is also believed to have stayed in Turkey facilitating travel and finances for those individuals recruited to fight in Syria.

**Criminal history:** Convicted in July 2015 of involvement in Zerkani’s recruitment network and sentenced to eight years. This was increased to 15 years by an appeal court in April 2016.

**Known to the authorities:** In 2007, Aberkan and her friend, Malika el-Aroud, were arrested on suspicion of involvement in a plot to free Nizar Trabelsi, a convicted al-Qaeda terrorist, from prison. Aberkan was released without charge.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Zerkani network:** Abdelhouaid Aberkan [Brother. Convicted as a member of the Zerkani network in July 2015 and in 2003 for his role in the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud]; Abid Aberkan [Nephew]; Khalid Zerkani [Convicted alongside Zerkani]. See Khalid Zerkani profile for full list of other network associates Aberkan may have associated with.

- **Other:** Nizar Trabelsi [Aberkan provided Trabelsi with a mobile phone in prison and was suspected of involvement in a plot to free him]; Malika el-Aroud [Aberkan was close friends with el-Aroud and arrested alongside her in the Trabelsi case]. El-Aroud was convicted of recruiting fighters to send to Afghanistan in May 2010; Moez Garsallaoui [A high ranking al-Qaeda member and husband of Malika el-Aroud, Aberkan acted as a “go-between” for the couple]; Soufiane Alilou [Son and 22-year-old Zerkani network recruit who travelled to and from Syria five times before getting caught].

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403 Ibid.
402 ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, *La Meije*, 26 January 2016.
401 Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, *La Meije*, 26 January 2016.
GELEL ATTAR aka Abou Ibrahim*

Role: Member of the Zerkani network.  

Bio: 26-year-old Attar has dual Belgian-Moroccan nationality and lived in Molenbeek. As early as 2012, he is believed to have hosted meetings in his apartment in Molenbeek’s Rue de Ribaucourt which discussed armed attacks on Western democracy. He then travelled to Syria, with Belgian prosecutors claiming he did so “with one of the suicide bombers of Saint Denis”. He was arrested near Mohammadia in Morocco in January 2016. He is believed to have been in “close contact” with the leadership of IS while in Syria.

Foreign training/combat: Attar fought for both Jabhat al-Nusra and IS in Syria.

Movements: Attar travelled from Belgium to Syria on 4 January 2013 and returned in May 2013. He then travelled to Morocco and returned to Syria. He is then believed to have left Syria via Turkey and travelled through Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands before being arrested in Morocco.

Criminal history: Attar was convicted in absentia for involvement in terrorist activity in 2015 as part of the Zerkani network and sentenced to five years in prison.

Known to the authorities: Allegedly known to the Belgian authorities for have hosted meetings discussing Islamism-inspired terrorism as early as April 2012.

Networks and associates:

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Abdelhamid Abaaoud, Chakib Akrouh [Attar travelled to Syria in 2013 with Akrouh and built a relationship with Abaaoud whilst in Syria].

- **Zerkani network:** Khalid Zerkani [Attar was given a five year sentence for his role in the Zerkani network and has been described as Zerkani’s lieutenant]; Ilias Mohammadi [An alleged member of the Zerkani network. Official documents state that he was close to Attar]; See Khalid Zerkani profile for full list of other network associates Attar may have associated with.

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* Ibid.

* Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, *Emmejihad*, 26 January 2016.


* Ibid.

* Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, *Emmejihad*, 26 January 2016.


* Ibid.

* Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, *Emmejihad*, 26 January 2016.

* Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, *Emmejihad*, 26 January 2016.
**SAMI ZARROUK aka Abu Hudayfa al-Tunisi**

**Role:** Member of the Zerkani network and IS fighter.

**Bio:** Tunisian-born Sami Zarrouk was born on 13 September 1983 and lived in Molenbeek, Brussels, where he attended Khalid Zerkani’s meetings. According to leaked IS administrative documents he claims to have been in Belgium for four years and to have previously worked in media. He is reported to have tried to convince his wife to travel with him to Afghanistan to become a suicide bomber, and in July 2013 travelled to Syria. He is described by IS as having been dispatched to Homs.

**Foreign training/combat:** IS fighter.

**Movements:** Zarrouk told IS he had visited France. He travelled to join IS in Syria via Rome then Turkey.

**Criminal history:** Unknown.

**Known to the authorities:** He was convicted in absentia in July 2015 in relation to the Zerkani network. An international warrant for his arrest was issued by Belgian authorities in February 2015.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Zerkani network:** Khalid Zerkani [Zarrouk attended meetings led by Zerkani at Mosque Loqman and in Molenbeek apartments]. See Khalid Zerkani profile for full list of other network associates Zarrouk may have associated with.

**REDA KRIKET**

**Role:** Kriket is the main suspect in a foiled Paris attack, charged with possessing and transporting arms and explosives and holding fake documents. Convicted in absentia as part of the Zerkani network and claimed to be one of the network’s financiers, allegedly providing €12,000 to help recruits join IS.

**Bio:** Little is known about the background of 34-year-old French national Kriket. He appears to have had a history of petty crime, including theft, before travelling to Syria in 2014. In July 2015, he was sentenced to ten years in prison in absentia for recruiting people to fight in Syria. Kriket was arrested in Boulogne-
Billancourt, near Paris, on 24 March 2016.112 When police raided his apartment in Argenteuil, Paris, they discovered TATP explosive, five assault rifles and seven handguns.113

Foreign training/combat: Kriket travelled to Syria in 2014 and 2015, though it is unclear if he saw combat.

Movements: Kriket “made several trips” to France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and spent time in Syria in 2014 and 2015.114

Criminal history: Kriket had “multiple convictions for robbery, possession of stolen goods and acts of violence.” He was also convicted in absentia in July 2015 for his role in financing Khalid Zerkani’s recruitment network.115

Known to the authorities: Known to be involved in jihadist activity following his conviction in July 2015, an international arrest warrant had already been issued for Kriket in March 2015, several months before his conviction.116 Regarded as “extremely dangerous”, Kriket was placed on a “Most Wanted police list” in January 2016.117

Networks and associates:

- Paris attacks (November 2015): Abdelhamid Abaaoud [Both men convicted in absentia for their role in the Zerkani network];118 Chakib Akrouhi [Both men were part of the Zerkani network and travelled to Istanbul together in January 2013].119

- Zerkani network: Khalid Zerkani [Kriket was convicted for his role in funding Zerkani’s network];120 Abderrahmane Ameroud [Charged with involvement with Kriket’s plot121 and described as “linked” to the Zerkani network, though the nature of the link is unclear];122 See Khalid Zerkani profile for full list of other network associates Kriket may have associated with, 

- Foiled Paris plot: Rabah Meniker [34-year-old Algerian charged with helping Kriket in the foiled Paris plot];123 Yassine Alami [33-year-old Belgian citizen charged in connection to the foiled Paris plot],124 125 Anis Bahri [32-year-old arrested in Rotterdam in connection with the foiled Paris plot. It is believed Bahri and Kriket travelled to together Syria in late 2014 to early 2015].126

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114 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
**ABDERRAHMANE AMEROUD**

**Role:** Charged with involvement in Reda Kriket’s foiled plot to attack Paris.\(^4\)

**Bio:** A 38-year-old Algerian, Ameroud was involved in petty crime as a youth along with his older brothers before graduating to violent extremism. He is claimed to have visited al-Qaeda training camps in the late 1990s\(^6\) and to have been involved in the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud. He is reported to have been sentenced to seven years in prison for his role in this attack in 2005.\(^9\) He has also been described as “linked” to the Zerkani network, though the nature of the link is unclear.\(^8\) Ameroud was shot in the leg and arrested in Schaerbeek in March 2016 in relation to Reda Kriket’s foiled plot to attack Paris.\(^7\)

**Foreign combat experience:** Reports in the French media suggest he travelled to an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan in 1999.

**Movements:** Afghanistan.\(^3\)

**Criminal history:** Ameroud was convicted in 2005 as an accomplice to the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud in 2001 and sentenced to seven years.\(^9\)

**Known to the authorities:** Known to the authorities following his conviction in 2005.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Zerkani network:** Reda Kriket [Charged with involvement with Kriket’s plot]; Khalid Zerkani [Described as “linked” to the Zerkani network]; See Khalid Zerkani profile for full list of other network associates Ameroud may have associated with.

**ILIAS MOHAMMADI:** An alleged member of the Zerkani network who returned from Syria to Belgium using false ID the day after the 24 May 2014 attack on a Jewish museum in Brussels and was arrested with “a significant amount of ammunition”. Official documents revealed that he knew Gelel Attar and Chakib Akrouh.\(^4\)

**YONI PATRIC MAYNE:** A 25-year-old\(^4\) Belgian-Malian, Mayne had worked in a video store\(^5\) before attending Zerkani’s meetings and became more radical in the process.\(^2\) On 20 January 2014, he travelled to Syria with Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Abaaoud’s brother, Younes, flying from Cologne to Istanbul. However, he is first believed to have travelled to Syria in April 2013. He was arrested on his return, but

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\(^6\) ‘Terror suspect shot and held by Brussels police ‘had been jailed for seven years for helping Taliban assassinate Afghan leader two days before 9/11’, Daily Mail Online, 26 March 2016.


\(^8\) Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, Emmejihad, 26 January 2016.


\(^9\) At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 28 March 2016.

quickly released. Photos emerged in March 2014 claiming to show that he had been killed,\textsuperscript{475} but despite this France’s internal security directorate has issued instructions to keep looking for Mayne.\textsuperscript{474}

**YOUSSEF BOUYABAREM**: An alleged member of the Zerkani network who attended meetings at Gelel Attar’s apartment in 2012. Tried unsuccessfully to join *al-Shabaab*, for which his brother, Moustapha Bouyabarem, already fought, and also failed in an attempt to travel to Syria.\textsuperscript{477}

\textsuperscript{475}``At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris‘, CNN, 28 March 2016.
\textsuperscript{477} Van Vlierden, G., ‘Belgium knew in 2012 already that Paris suspects were plotting attacks’, *Emmejihad*, 26 January 2016.
1.6 Islamic State

**SALIM BENGALEHM**

**Role:** Recruitment and organisation. There has been speculation over whether Salem was the primary organiser of the Paris attacks above Abdellahim Abaaoud. He has been described as IS’s theatre commander for Europe.

**Bio:** Bengalem, who grew up in the Cachan suburb to the south of Paris, is reported to have been a sociable young man who drank and took drugs while working in a number of jobs including as a supermarket cashier. He became involved in gang violence and fled to Algeria in 2001 after being accused of attempted murder. He returned to France and was arrested in 2002, and was held on remand until his conviction in 2007, when he was sentenced to 11 years. He was released in 2010 and appears to have become radicalised while in prison. He was involved in a plot to free a convicted Islamist extremist from jail in 2010 alongside Charlie Hebdo shooter Cherif Kouachi and the Hypercache supermarket shooter Ahmedy Coulibaly on his release in 2010, and is also believed to have travelled to Yemen with Kouachi in 2011. He is thought to have travelled to Syria in 2013.

Since arriving in Syria, Bengalem is alleged to have worked as an IS “police chief” in al-Bab district of Aleppo where he lives. US officials have referred to him as “chief executioner” because he is believed to have been involved with the kidnap and torture of Western hostages. He has also been described as France’s top IS recruiter and has also been involved with IS propaganda. In January 2015, he praised the Paris attacks of that month in an IS video, and he was also filmed calling on French Muslims to carry out terror operations in France a month later. In early January 2016, Bengalem was sentenced in absentia by a Paris court to 15 years for recruiting for IS. He has since been reported to have received injuries to his legs in a coalition airstrike.

**Foreign training/combat:** Believed to have travelled to Yemen in 2011 and come “under the influence” of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) leader Anwar al-Awlaki. In 2013, he travelled to Syria and is believed to be there currently.

**Movements:** Algeria (2001); Yemen (2011); Syria (2013).
**Criminal history:** Convicted of attempted murder in 2007. Convicted of recruiting for IS in January 2016."

**Known to the authorities:** Known to French authorities for terrorism-related links following his involvement in a plot to free Smaïn Ait Ali Belkacem from prison in 2010."

It is subject to a European Arrest Warrant.**

In 2014, he was added to a US list of ten Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT), and according to the US State Department is subject to a European Arrest Warrant."

**Networks and associates:**

- Paris attacks (November 2015): Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium have suggested that Benghalem may have played a significant role in organising the Paris attacks."

- Buttes-Chaumont Group: Mohamed el-Ayouni [leader of the group, believed to have met Benghalem in prison]; Said and Cherif Kouachi [Charlie Hebdo attackers and members of the Buttes-Chaumont network.** Benghalem was involved in a planned jail-break with Cherif Kouachi in 2010 and travelled to Yemen with him in 2011]; Ahmady Coulibaly [Kosher supermarket attacker and associate of Benghalem involved in jail-break plans].

- Other: Anwar al-Awlaki [Benghalem was allegedly influenced by the AQAP ideologue while in Yemen]; Mehdi Nemmouche [The two men were jailers for IS in Aleppo between July and December 2013, during which time they guarded French hostages]."

**FABIEN CLAIN aka Omar**

**Role:** There is speculation that he may have taken over Abaaoud’s role of recruiting IS operatives to carry out attacks in Europe. His voice was identified as that on the recording claiming responsibility for the Paris attacks, while his past discussions with French militants about attacking the Bataclan concert hall has led to suggestions he may have had input into target selection."

**Bio:** A French convert from Toulouse, Clain converted to Islam in the 1990s and became radicalised in the early 2000s. He and his brother, Jean-Michel, were involved with the Salafist community in Toulouse. Originally from Reunion, he has been described as a “veteran of [the] radical Islamist networks” of Toulouse and it is reported he was close to the family of Mohammed Merah when living in France in 2012."

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"French IS group recruiter sentenced to 15 years in absentia’, France 24, 7 January 2015; and ‘Paris attacks: Was Salim Benghalem the real ringleader?’ BBC News, 23 January 2015."


"Robinson, M., ‘Revealed: French voice behind chilling ISIS Paris massacres message is also a homegrown terrorist behind other attacks in his own country’, Daily Mail Online, 18 November 2015.


"Ibid.


"Robinson, M., ‘Revealed: French voice behind chilling ISIS Paris massacres message is also a homegrown terrorist behind other attacks in his own country’, Daily Mail Online, 18 November 2015."
in Toulouse.\textsuperscript{44} Clain and his brother travelled to Egypt and the Netherlands in the early 2000s, and are believed to have become associated with Olivier Corel, who “has since been accused of radicalizing a number of young Muslims”. In 2009, Clain was jailed for recruiting fighters to send to Iraq, and on his release in 2012 he moved to Normandy, living there for two years before fleeing to Syria in 2014.\textsuperscript{45}

Clain is now believed to live in Raqqa, where he is thought to be involved with a cell producing and distributing IS propaganda.\textsuperscript{46} He is also believed to have directed Sid Ahmed Ghlam, who failed in his efforts to target churches in the Villejuif suburb of Paris after shooting himself in the leg, communicating with Ghlam online.\textsuperscript{47}

**Foreign training/ combat:** Clain travelled to join IS Syria in 2014.

**Movements:** Netherlands, Egypt (Early 2000s); Syria (2014)

**Criminal history:** Clain was sentenced to five years in prison in 2009 for recruiting fighters to travel to Iraq. He was released in 2012.\textsuperscript{48}

**Known to the authorities:** Clain has been known to the authorities since at least 2009, when he was associated with a plot to attack the Bataclan\textsuperscript{49} and convicted for recruiting fighters to travel to Iraq.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Abdelhamid Abaaoud [Abaaoud is reported to have been working with Clain in Raqqa to recruit French and Belgian fighters for attacks in the West].\textsuperscript{50}

- **Other:** Sid Ahmed Ghlam [French-Algerian student who failed who failed in his efforts to target churches in the Villejuif suburb of Paris in April 2015. Clain is described as Ghlam’s “point of contact”];\textsuperscript{51} Mohammed Merah [Clain is described as a close friend of the Merah family].\textsuperscript{52}

**AMR AL-ABSI aka ’Abu Atheer’**

**Role:** A member of IS’s Shura Council and described as the group’s “kidnapper-in-chief” and head of media. Believed to have served as the IS provincial leader in Homs from mid-2014\textsuperscript{53} and governor of Aleppo before being killed in March 2016.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{44} Brisard, J., ‘THE PARIS ATTACKS AND THE EVOLVING ISLAMIC STATE THREAT TO FRANCE’, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 14 December 2015.

\textsuperscript{45} Taylor, A., ‘A French Muslim convert living in Syria is believed to play a key role in European terror’, The Washington Post, 21 November 2015.


\textsuperscript{47} Taylor, A., ‘A French Muslim convert living in Syria is believed to play a key role in European terror’, The Washington Post, 21 November 2015.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Brisard, J., ‘THE PARIS ATTACKS AND THE EVOLVING ISLAMIC STATE THREAT TO FRANCE’, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 14 December 2015.

\textsuperscript{50} Van Vlierden, G., ‘PROFILE: PARIS ATTACK RINGLEADER ABDELHAMID ABAAOUD’, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 15 December 2015.

\textsuperscript{51} Taylor, A., ‘A French Muslim convert living in Syria is believed to play a key role in European terror’, The Washington Post, 21 November 2015.


\textsuperscript{54} Spencer, R., ‘Four jihadists, one prison: all released by Assad and all now dead’, The Telegraph, 11 May 2016.
Bio: A 36-year-old Saudi-born Syrian, al-Absi and his older brother, Firas al-Abisi (an associate of al-Qaeda in Iraq head Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi) joined IS while it was still affiliated with al-Qaeda. The brothers led a group they called the Majlis Shura Mujadeddin (MSM) which they had set up in 2012 and Amr al-Abisi took over the group after Firas was killed later that year. In 2013, he incorporated the MSM into IS and was later appointed the group’s governor of Aleppo. From then until his death in 2016, he is described as having played an “important role” in IS’s Shura Council, potentially as IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s Syrian deputy, and directed the production of IS’s online propaganda. He was also called the group’s “kidnapper-in-chief” and his hostages included James Foley, John Cantlie, Alan Henning and David Haines.

Foreign training/combat: See above.

Movements: Unknown.

Criminal history: Unknown.

Known to the authorities: Al-Abisi was added to the UN sanctions list in September 2015.

Networks and associates:

- **Brussels attacks (March 2016):** Najim Laachraoui [Part of al-Abisi’s group in Syria; alleged to have been put in charge of the interrogation of hostages].

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Abdelhamid Abaaoud [Believed to have been at one time close to al-Abisi].

- **Other:** Mehdi Nemmouche [Tortured hostages under the command of al-Abisi]; Mohammed Emwazi [Part of al-Abisi’s group in Syria, he was one of al-Abisi’s jailers].

**ABU SULEYMAN AL-FARANSI**

Role: Alleged to be a director of IS’s external intelligence operation, the Amn al-Khairji, it has been suggested al-Faransi may have “conceived and planned” the Paris attacks, and may have also seen and approved the Brussels attack plans.

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522 Ibid.


525 Spencer, R., ‘Four jihadists, one prison: all released by Assad and all now dead’, The Telegraph, 11 May 2016.


527 Spencer, R., ‘Four jihadists, one prison: all released by Assad and all now dead’, The Telegraph, 11 May 2016.

528 Spencer, R., ‘Four jihadists, one prison: all released by Assad and all now dead’, The Telegraph, 11 May 2016.

529 Spencer, R., ‘Four jihadists, one prison: all released by Assad and all now dead’, The Telegraph, 11 May 2016.

530 Weiss, M., ‘Is This Frenchman Running ISIS Terror Networks in the West?’, The Daily Beast, 2 May 2016.

Bio: While little is known about al-Faransi other than that he used to be a gym manager, his pseudonym indicates that he is probably a French national, with IS sources claiming he was born and educated in France and is of North African heritage. He is believed to be living in al-Bab in Aleppo district, northern Syria, with his wife and two children. An IS defector claims al-Faransi started out as a low-ranking officer in IS’s security services before presenting IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi with plans for the Paris attacks. Reports suggest he was promoted to “operations chief” after the attacks and a French security source has described him as the “head of overall operations in Europe”.

Foreign training/combat: See above.

Movements: Unknown.

Criminal history: Unknown.

Known to the authorities: Unknown.

Networks and associates:

- Brussels attacks (March 2016): Ibrahim el-Bakraoui [El-Bakraoui passed plans of the plot on to al-Faransi].

- Paris attacks (November 2015): Alleged to have potentially “conceived and planned” the Paris attacks.

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530 Weiss, M., ‘Is This Frenchman Running ISIS Terror Networks in the West?’, The Daily Beast, 2 May 2016.
532 Weiss, M., ‘Is This Frenchman Running ISIS Terror Networks in the West?’, The Daily Beast, 2 May 2016.
1.7 Other

KHALID BEN LARBI

**Role:** A member of the Verviers cell.

**Bio:** A 23-year-old from Molenbeek, Ben Larbi had a history of petty crime including theft, and is believed to have travelled to fight in Syria with **Katibat al-Battar** in 2014 before returning to Belgium in December 2014. Having used false identity papers, Ben Larbi was killed in a gun battle with Belgian police during a raid on the cell on 15 January 2015. Police discovered **Kalashnikovs**, bomb-making equipment and police uniforms at the scene.

**Foreign training/combatt:** Katibat al-Battar, a militia in Syria associated with IS claimed Ben Larbi had fought with them in Syria.

**Movements:** Syria (2014).

**Criminal history:** Ben Larbi reportedly had a history of petty crime, including theft and robbery.

**Known to the authorities:** Both Ben Larbi and his associate, Sofiane Amghar, were under Belgian surveillance before the police raid in which they were killed.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Paris attacks (November 2015):** Abdelhamid Abaaoud [Believed to have been plotting to kill police officers with Abaaoud].

- **Verviers cell:** Sofiane Amghar [Plotted together to attack Belgian police]; Marouane el-Bali [Suspected of providing logistics for the cell and present in the house during the firefight].

SOFIANE AMGHAR

**Role:** A member of the Verviers cell.

**Bio:** A 26-year-old from Molenbeek, Amghar had a history of petty crime, and is believed to have travelled to fight in Syria with **Katibat al-Battar** in 2014 before returning to Belgium in December 2014. Having used false identity papers, Amghar was killed in a gun battle with Belgian police during a raid on the cell.

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on 15 January 2015. Police discovered Kalashnikovs, bomb-making equipment and police uniforms at the scene.\textsuperscript{162}

Foreign training/combat: \textit{Katibat al-Battar}, a militia in Syria associated with IS claimed Amghar had fought with them in Syria.\textsuperscript{160}

Movements: Syria (2014).\textsuperscript{149}

Criminal history: Amghar reportedly had a history of petty crime, including theft and robbery.\textsuperscript{150}

Known to the authorities: Both Amghar and his associate, Khalid Ben Larbi, were under Belgian surveillance before the police raid in which they were killed.\textsuperscript{152}

Networks and associates:

- Paris attacks (November 2015): Abdelhamid Abaaoud [Believed to have been plotting to kill police officers with Abaaoud].\textsuperscript{123}

- Verviers cell: Sofiane Amghar [Plotted together to attack Belgian police];\textsuperscript{123} Marouane el-Bali [Suspected of providing logistics for the cell and present in the house during the firefight].\textsuperscript{154}

MEHDI NEMMOUCHE: Nemmouche, alleged to be responsible for a gun attack on a Brussels Jewish Museum in May 2014,\textsuperscript{155} is linked to Abdelhamid Abaaoud. The two men had met in Syria\textsuperscript{148} and four days before Nemmouche left from Cologne airport in January 2014 the men had a 24 minute phone call.\textsuperscript{156} Nemmouche has been described as a “sadistic jailer”\textsuperscript{158} who allegedly tortured prisoners for IS under the command of Amr al-Absi.\textsuperscript{159} He had previously been imprisoned for robbery for five years and was released in 2012.\textsuperscript{156}

AYOUB EL KHAZZANI: A 25-year-old Moroccan who attacked an Amsterdam-Paris train in August 2015, Khazzani’s attack failed when he was incapacitated by passengers. Originally from Tetouan, Morocco, he moved to Spain from 2007 to 2014 before moving to France, and then Belgium. In Spain he attended a well-known radical mosque in Algeciras and was involved in drugs trafficking, and was already known to the Spanish authorities for “comments defending jihadists”.\textsuperscript{150} Abdelhamid Abaaoud is believed to have been involved with the attack.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{163} Waterfield, B., ‘Belgian police admit seeking wrong man as Vervier shooting jihadists named’, \textit{The Telegraph}, 22 January 2015.
\textsuperscript{165} Waterfield, B., ‘Belgian police admit seeking wrong man as Vervier shooting jihadists named’, \textit{The Telegraph}, 22 January 2015.
\textsuperscript{167} ibid.
\textsuperscript{168} Waterfield, B., ‘Belgian police admit seeking wrong man as Vervier shooting jihadists named’, \textit{The Telegraph}, 22 January 2015.
\textsuperscript{171} At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 28 March 2016.
\textsuperscript{173} ‘Masterminds of Terror’, Raconteur, Mar 2016.
\textsuperscript{174} ‘France arrests Syria jihad suspects as Nemmouche held’, \textit{BBC News}, 1 June 2014.
\textsuperscript{176} ‘Paris attacks: Who was Abdelhamid Abaaoud?’, \textit{BBC News}, 19 November 2015.
SID AHMED GHLAM: A 24-year-old Algerian computer science student, Ghlam plotted to attack churches in the Villejuif suburb of Paris. The plot failed when he accidentally shot himself and called an ambulance. A cache of weapons was discovered in his car. Ghlam is also believed to have been involved in the murder of Aurelie Chatelain, found dead in Villejuif the day Ghlam was arrested. According to French officials, Ghlam was already known to the security services over his desire to travel to Syria, and Abdelhamid Abaaoud is believed to have been involved in the plot.

NOUREDDINE ABRAIMI: The 29-year-old brother of Lazez Abraimi, Noureddine travelled from his home in Molenbeek to Syria at the end of 2014, leaving behind his wife and children. Noureddine allegedly provided logistical support to Abdelhamid Abaaoud as part of the foiled plot against Belgian police in Verviers, January 2015 and is said to have been recruited by Abaaoud. His home was raided in January 2015 and he will be tried in absentia in connection to the Verviers plot. His brother’s lawyers claim Noureddine is currently in Syria.

NICHOLAS MOREAU: Charged with involvement in a “conspiracy related to terrorist enterprise”, Moreau claimed Abdelhamid Abaaoud was responsible for vetting potential European recruits. Before Moreau converted to Islam in prison, he had been a petty criminal. He left Nantes to fight in Syria in 2014 and was arrested on his return in 2015. After his arrest, he revealed crucial information about the inner workings of IS’s external operations, including that selected fighters were given £40,000 to fund attacks.

REDA HAME: A 29-year-old French computer technician, Hame was arrested in August 2015 and suspected of plotting a hostage-taking at a concert hall in Paris. He revealed that he had received weapons training from Abaaoud in Raqqa in June. Hame claimed IS was using encrypted communication technology to connect with European operatives and that Abdelhamid Abaaoud had given him the tools to do so. Abaaoud is believed to have been his handler and to have trained him and an associate to hit targets in France and Spain. Hame was arrested after his accomplice was arrested in Spain.

ABID ABERKAN: The nephew of Fatima Aberkan, and accomplice to Salah Abdeslam and Soufiane Ayari, acting as their “landlord”. He has been described as “a distant cousin” of Abdeslam’s, and Abdeslam was eventually arrested at Aberkan’s mother’s address.

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575 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 28 March 2016.
577 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
584 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 28 March 2016.
587 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
588 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
589 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
590 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
591 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
592 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
593 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
594 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
595 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
596 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
597 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
598 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
599 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
600 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
601 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
602 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
603 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
604 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
605 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
606 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
607 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
608 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
609 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
610 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 29 March 2016.
2. Profiles: Al-Qaeda-inspired Networks

2.1 The Rotterdam Cell: US Embassy and Cultural Centre Plot

DJAMEL BEGHAL

Role: Described as the “ringleader” of the plot to attack the US Embassy in Paris. Beghal was convicted in France in 2005 of involvement in the 2001 al-Qaeda plot to bomb the US Embassy and Cultural Centre in Paris.

Bio: A former dual French-Algerian national born in Algeria in 1965, Beghal grew up in the Parisian suburb of Corbeil-Essonnes. Having worked “menial jobs”, he began to visit radical mosques and was arrested in 1994 in connection with a network of Algerian militants. Following this, he began to speak in mosques and Islamic centres and “raised money for jihadists in Chechnya and Bosnia”. In 1997 he moved to Leicester, where he is thought to have recruited extremists and to have been a bridge between al-Qaeda and European members of Takfir wal-Hijra. He has also been linked to the Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat (GSPC). During this time he also regularly visited Finsbury Park Mosque and became involved with Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada, as well as with other extremists including Abu Walid, Zacarias Moussaoui, and Kamel Daoudi. He also travelled frequently to Europe, and was arrested and questioned in France in 1999.

In November 2000, Beghal travelled to Jalalabad, Afghanistan. Once there, he admits to having visited Osama bin Laden to discuss the plot to bomb the US embassy, and told police in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that he was told to travel to Europe through Morocco and Spain by Abu Zubaydah, a senior al-Qaeda logistics hub, though he later retracted these claims. When returning from Afghanistan in July 2001, Beghal was arrested in Dubai carrying a false passport (or forged visa extension) provided by Brahim Benmerzouga and Baghdad Meziane. He was extradited to Paris from the UAE in October 2001. In 2003, Beghal was sentenced to ten years in prison for his involvement in the plot.

After Beghal was released from prison in 2010 he moved to Cantal, a town in Auvergne, southern France, and with Ahmedy Coulibaly and Cherif Kouachi plotted to free Smain Ali Belkacem, imprisoned for his...
involvement with an attack on the Paris metro in 1995.\(^{243}\) Coulibaly and Beghal were convicted of involvement and Beghal was sentenced to ten years and stripped of his French nationality.\(^{243}\)

**Foreign training/combat:** Believed to have spent time at training camps in Afghanistan in 2001.\(^{246}\)

**Movements:** Moved to France aged 22; Moved to the UK in 1997;\(^{247}\) Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and France (1997-2000); London to Afghanistan (November 2000); Afghanistan to Dubai (July 2001).\(^{248}\)

**Criminal history:** Convicted of involvement in the 2001 *al-Qaeda* plot to bomb the US Embassy and Cultural Centre in Paris (2005);\(^{249}\) Convicted of involvement in plot to free Smai Ali Belkacem (2010);\(^{250}\) Organised the kidnapping of Azzedin Journazi’s children in 2000, but does not appear to have been convicted of involvement. He was already imprisoned when associate Mustafa Abushima was convicted in 2003.\(^{251}\)

**Known to the authorities:** Beghal was arrested in 1994 in connection with a network of Algerian militants.\(^{252}\) In 1996, French authorities found that a suspected terrorist was in possession of Beghal’s phone number and he was questioned,\(^{253}\) and Beghal was stopped and questioned again by French authorities in 1999. Before his arrest in July 2001, he had been under surveillance for two years, though the French had “lost track” of him when he left for Afghanistan. On his return, the CIA is claimed to have “insisted Beghal be held and questioned”.\(^{254}\)

**Networks and associates:**

- **Al-Qaeda:** Baghdad Meziane, Brahim Benmerzouga [Convicted *al-Qaeda* financiers, Beghal has been described as a “close friend” of the two men\(^ {255}\) and visited them before travelling to Afghanistan];\(^{49}\) Richard Reid [Reid was recruited by Beghal after the men met at Finsbury Park Mosque where Reid was staying];\(^ {256}\) Zacharias Moussaoui [Convicted of involvement with the 9/11 attacks, Moussaoui is believed to have been recruited by Beghal];\(^ {257}\) David Courtallier [Assisted Beghal in the kidnapping of Azzedin Journazi’s children];\(^ {258}\) Abu Zubaydah [Senior *al-Qaeda* operative and logistics hub who met with Beghal in Afghanistan].\(^ {259}\)

- **US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001):** Nizar Trabelsi [Trabelsi was to be the suicide bomber to attack the Embassy and cultural centre. He had attended Abu Qatada’s study sessions

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\(^{246}\) Halliday, J. et al., ‘Menor of Charlie Hebdo gunman has been UK-based’, *Guardian*, 14 January 2015.


\(^{252}\) Halliday, J. et al., ‘Menor of Charlie Hebdo gunman has been UK-based’, *Guardian*, 14 January 2015.


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with Beghal;[62] Kamel Daoudi [A co-conspirator alongside Beghal, Daoudi was Beghal’s “number two” who used an apartment in Corbeil owned by Beghal];[63] Jerome Courtiault [Convicted in the Netherlands in 2004 for involvement in the 2001 plot to bomb the US Embassy in Paris. Courtiault is believed to have been converted to Islam by Beghal].[64]

- **Finsbury Park Mosque:** Abu Qatada [Beghal has been described as “a constant presence” at Finsbury Park Mosque, where Qatada preached and is said to have been close to Qatada];[65] Abu Walid [Abu Qatada’s “right-hand man”, Beghal and Walid were close associates];[66] Abu Hamza al-Masri [Beghal frequented Finsbury Park Mosque, and security sources have claimed the two men were “close”].[67]

- **Other:** Cherif Kouachi [Charlie Hebdo attack gunman believed to have been radicalised by Beghal whilst in prison from January 2005 to October 2006. Kouachi visited Beghal while he was under house arrest, and was seen playing football and trekking with him. He was arrested alongside Beghal due to alleged involvement in the plot to free Smaïn Ali Belkaïm but later released];[68] Ahmedy Coulibaly and Hayat Boumeddiène [Hypercache supermarket shooter and his wife. Coulibaly met Beghal in prison between January and August 2005. Both Coulibaly and Boumeddiène visited Beghal after his release for “cross-bow practice”. Coulibaly was convicted alongside Beghal of involvement in the plot to free Smaïn Ali Belkaïm];[69] Smaïn Ali Belkaïm [Imprisoned for an attack on the Paris metro in 1995. Beghal was in phone contact with Belkaïm].[70]

**KAMEL DAOUDI**

**Role:** Responsible for logistics and communications in the 2001 plot to bomb the US Embassy in Paris and convicted alongside Djamel Beghal in 2005.[71]

**Bio:** Daoudi, a French national of Algerian origin moved from Algeria to France at the age of five. He grew up in Paris and was a promising student before dropping out of his university course and working in

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[69] ibid.
[76] ibid.

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a cyber-café. He has since been described as a computer expert. He is thought to have travelled to Afghanistan and spent time in *al-Qaeda* training camps and to have been designing a bomb for the attack on the US Embassy and cultural centre. After Beghal’s arrest in July 2001, Daoudi fled Paris for Leicester and made contact with Brahim Benmerzouga and Baghdad Meziane. On 25 September, all three were arrested and “files on conventional, guerrilla and nuclear warfare” as well as a *Taliban* statement were found with Daoudi. He was extradited to France on 30 September 2001 and convicted in 2005, receiving a nine year sentence. Daoudi was released from prison in April 2008, and the European Court of Human Rights ordered France to suspend attempts to deport him to Algeria. He is currently under house arrest in Carmaux, southern France.

**Foreign training/combat:** *Al-Qaeda* training camp in Afghanistan (2001)

**Movements:** Afghanistan (2001); UK (2001).

**Criminal history:** Convicted of involvement in the 2001 *al-Qaeda* plot to bomb the US Embassy and Cultural Centre in Paris (2005).

**Known to the authorities:** Monitored by MI5 following his escape from Beghal’s Paris flat and travel to Leicester.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Al-Qaeda:** Brahim Benmerzouga, Baghdad Meziane [Visited by Daoudi in Leicester in early 2001 to arrange travel to training camps in Afghanistan. Daoudi was arrested at Benmerzouga’s home in September 2001 after fleeing there following Beghal’s arrest].

- **US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001):** Djamel Beghal [Convicted alongside Beghal, Daoudi was Beghal’s “number two” and used an apartment in Corbeil owned by Beghal]; Nizar Trabelsi [Trabelsi attended Abu Qatada’s classes in London with Daoudi, and was claimed to have been the suicide bomber to be used to attack the US Embassy by Beghal].

- **Finsbury Park Mosque:** Abu Qatada [Attended classes in London before he went to Afghanistan].

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639 ibid.


641 ibid.


643 ibid.


**NIZAR TRABELSI aka Qaqa Tunisi**

Role: Convicted in 2003 of plotting a suicide attack on a NATO airbase in Kleine Brogel, Belgium in 2001.\(^\text{605}\) Beghal claimed Trabelsi was to be the suicide bomber used to attack the US Embassy,\(^\text{606}\) yet it has also been suggested Trabelsi’s attack in Belgium was intended to take place at the same time as attacks on the US Embassy and Strasbourg’s Christmas markets.\(^\text{607}\)

Bio: Trabelsi, a Tunisian, signed for Fortuna Dusseldorf in 1989 before being released and moving from team to team as he became increasingly involved with drugs including cocaine. After a number of criminal offences he was jailed, though it is unclear for how long. On his release, he is believed to have come under the influence of Islamist radicals in Dostrum, Germany, potentially at a mosque visited by Djamel Beghal\(^\text{608}\) and it has been claimed he was recruited by Beghal.\(^\text{609}\) French authorities say he attended classes run by Abu Qatada in London before travelling to Afghanistan,\(^\text{610}\) where he claimed to have met Osama bin Laden in 1999 and asked to be allowed to carry out a suicide attack.\(^\text{611}\) Trabelsi then appears to have returned to Belgium and was arrested in Brussels on 13 September 2001.\(^\text{612}\) When Trabelsi was arrested, the authorities discovered a machine gun and bomb-making instructions in his Brussels apartment.\(^\text{613}\) The materials for a bomb were also discovered in a Brussels restaurant.\(^\text{614}\) Trabelsi was tried alongside 23 others, 18 of whom were found guilty of crimes relating to the bomb plot, acting as al-Qaeda recruiters and forgery, and was given a ten year sentence.\(^\text{615}\) In 2006, he was indicted by a US court over his trip to Afghanistan and his extradition was requested in 2008. He was extradited to the US in October 2013\(^\text{616}\) and is currently awaiting trial.\(^\text{617}\)

Foreign training/combat: Trabelsi spent time in training camps in Afghanistan in the late 1990s.\(^\text{618}\)

Movements: Germany (1989); UK (1990s); Afghanistan (1999); Belgium (Unclear date of return).\(^\text{619}\)

Criminal history: Trabelsi had a history of petty crime, drug abuse and violence prior to his radicalisation and spent time in prison on at least one occasion.\(^\text{620}\) Convicted in 2003 of plotting a suicide attack on a NATO airbase in Kleine Brogel, Belgium in 2001.\(^\text{621}\)

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\(^{615}\) Ibid.


\(^{618}\) Ibid.


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Known to the authorities: Unknown.

Networks and associates:

- Al-Qaeda: Osama bin Laden [Trabelsi claimed to have met Osama bin Laden in 1999]; Mohammed Amor Sliti, Tarek Ben Habib Maaroufi [Convicted alongside Trabelsi for running a recruitment network for al-Qaeda and trafficking in false documents]. Trabelsi met Mete in 1999;[666] Mohammed Amor Sliti, Tarek Ben Habib Maaroufi [Convicted alongside Trabelsi for running a recruitment network for al-Qaeda and trafficking in false documents];[666] Richard Reid [Stayed with Trabelsi, who has been described as Reid’s handler in the 2001 shoe bomb plot];[669] Saajid Badat [Badat was sent from Afghanistan to meet Trabelsi in September 2001, who has been described as his handler in the 2001 shoe bomb plot];[671] David Courtailler [al-Qaeda operative in Europe described as a “close contact” of Trabelsi].[672]

- US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001): Djamel Beghal, Kamel Daoudi [Trabelsi is claimed to have been recruited by Beghal and attended Abu Qatada’s classes in London with Beghal and Daoudi. Beghal claimed Trabelsi was planned to have been the suicide bomber used to attack the US Embassy];[674] Jerome Courtailler and Mohammed Berkous [Dutch prosecutors claimed wiretaps showed Courtailler and Berkous had been in contact with Trabelsi to arrange a safe house in the Netherlands and passports, and Courtailler was convicted of involvement in 2004].

- NATO Airbase Plot network: Abdelcrim El-Haddouti [Described as Nizar Trabelsi’s “zealous lieutenant”, El-Haddouti supplied chemical ingredients for bomb-making in the NATO airbase plot.]

- Finsbury Park Mosque: Abu Qatada [Trabelsi attended Qatada’s study sessions in London].

JEROME COURTAILLER


Bio: French national Courtailler was raised with his brother, David, in Bonneville in the French Alps. The son of a butcher, he worked for a time in the trade before his father’s business failed and his parents

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divorced, and he became involved with alcohol and drug abuse. By 1997, Jerome appears to have been living in the UK with David and to have converted to Islam under the influence of Djamel Beghal, as well as praying at the Finsbury Park Mosque. He is alleged to have travelled to Afghanistan at some time in the late 1990s alongside David, before returning and moving to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Courtailler was arrested on 13 September 2001 in Rotterdam and found to be in possession of fake passports, extremist material, and bomb-making information. He was believed to have been connected to the supplying of fake documentation to those involved in the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud in 2001 and had been recorded by Dutch intelligence discussing the provision of fake documents with Nizar Trabelsi. In 2002, he was acquitted of involvement in the US Embassy bomb plot and was released, moving to St.-Pierre-en-Faucigny in southern France. He was then convicted on appeal in absentia in June 2004 and sentenced to six years, giving himself up on 24 June.

**Foreign training/combat:** Trained in Afghanistan.

**Movements:** UK (1997); Afghanistan (late 1990s); Netherlands (Unclear); France (2002).

**Criminal history:** Involved with drug abuse prior to his radicalisation. Convicted in 2004 for involvement in the 2001 plot to bomb the US Embassy in Paris.

**Known to the authorities:** Came under surveillance from Dutch intelligence on moving to Rotterdam.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Al-Qaeda:** David Courtailleur [Brother; the two men are believed to have lived in Brixton with Zacarias Moussaoui and travelled to Afghanistan together]; Zacarias Moussaoui [Shared an apartment with Courtailleur in Brixton]; Omar Altimimi [Altimimi stayed at an apartment in Rotterdam in which Courtailleur had also lived]; Richard Reid [Courtailleur met Reid in the Netherlands]

- **US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001):** Djamel Beghal [Courtailleur is believed to have been converted to Islam by Beghal]; Nizar Trabelsi [Dutch intelligence intercepted phone calls between Courtailleur and Trabelsi discussing the provision of fake documentation]; Abdelghani

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82 'Sentences of up to six years sought for Dutch terrorism suspects', Agence France Presse, 4 December 2002.
84 'Suspect arrested in foiled embassy plot', The Chicago Tribune, 23 June 2002.
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Rabia, Adel Tobbichi [Tried and acquitted alongside Courtalier in 2002. Both convicted alongside Courtalier in 2004].

- Finsbury Park Mosque: Abu Qatada [Courtalier met Qatada while living in London].

2.2 Rotterdam Cell: Accomplices

ABDELGHANI RABIA


Bio: An Algerian national, Rabia was arrested in the days after the 9/11 attacks alongside Jerome Courtalier. Accused of providing fake travel documents and credit cards to militants intending to carry out the attack on the US Embassy, he was acquitted by a Rotterdam court in 2002 after evidence was ruled inadmissible. Following this, he is thought to have been deported to Algeria. In June 2004, he was convicted in absentia after an appeal and was sentenced to four years in prison, and an arrest warrant was issued.

Foreign training/combat: Unknown.

Movements: Unknown.


Known to the authorities: Unknown.

Networks and associates:


AMINE MEZBAR aka Adel Tobbichi

Role: Acquitted of involvement in the US Embassy bomb plot, but convicted alongside other members of the plot in June 2004 for belonging to a criminal group that produced false passports.
Mezbar had lived in Montreal since April of that year. He was extradited to the Netherlands in 2002 to stand trial alongside Courtailleur and Rabia over alleged involvement in the US Embassy bomb plot. Mezbar was accused of doctoring travel documents to aid those involved in the plot to travel across European borders and his fingerprints were found at the site of passport thefts across Netherlands in 1997 and 1999. He was acquitted in 2002 and then convicted on appeal and sentenced to 12 months “for belonging to a criminal group that produced false passports”.

Foreign training/combat: Unknown.

Movements: Unknown.

Criminal history: Convicted alongside members of the US Embassy plot in June 2004 for belonging to a criminal group that produced false passports.

Known to the authorities: Unknown.

Networks and associates:


BRAHIM BENMERZOUGA

Role: Financier. Arrested in connection with the US Embassy bomb plot, Benmerzouga was convicted of funding al-Qaeda through counterfeit credit cards from almost 200 stolen bank details.

Bio: Benmerzouga lived in the UK illegally following his entry from Algeria in 1997 from Algeria, where he is alleged to have been a member of the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) and used fake French passports to gain access to services including bank accounts and benefits. He lived in Leicester and worked at a sandwich factory in nearby Corby. Using at least three fake passports, Benmerzouga worked alongside Baghdad Meziane to develop a vast credit card fraud, as well as purchasing military equipment. He was visited by al-Qaeda members involved in the US Embassy bomb plot including Djamel Beghal and Kamel Daoudi, and facilitated Daoudi’s travel to Afghanistan. After Beghal’s arrest in July 2001,
Daoudi fled to Leicester and contacted Brahim Benmerzouga, who was put under surveillance. On 25 September, he was arrested alongside Daoudi and Meziane, with police finding forged documents and at least “60 films promoting suicide bombings and martyrdom, including 19 copies of a video of Osama bin Laden”. He was convicted of conspiracy to defraud and entering into a funding arrangement for the purpose of terrorism in April 2003 and jailed for 11 years. He was deported to Algeria on 26 January 2010.

**Foreign training/combat:** Unknown – believed to have been a member of the GIA in Algeria.

**Movements:** UK (1997).

**Criminal history:** Arrested in December 1999 for opening a bank account with a fake passport and disappeared after being released on bail. Convicted of conspiracy to defraud and entering into a funding arrangement for the purpose of terrorism in April 2003.

**Known to the authorities:** Not in relation to terrorism until he was put under surveillance following Kamel Daoudi’s arrival in the UK in 2001.

**Networks and associates:**

- **US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001):** Baghdad Meziane [Convicted together in April 2003]; Kamel Daoudi [Arrested together after Daoudi fled to his house following Beghal’s arrest, Benmerzouga had helped Daoudi travel to Afghanistan]; Djamel Beghal [Beghal visited Benmerzouga in Leicester en route to train in Afghanistan].

**BAGHDAD MEZIANE**

**Role:** Financier. Arrested in connection with the US Embassy bomb plot, Meziane was convicted of funding al-Qaeda through counterfeit credit cards from almost 200 stolen bank details.

**Bio:** Like Benmerzouga, Meziane lived in the UK illegally following his entry from Algeria in 1997, and is also alleged to have been a member of the GIA. He claimed asylum in 1999, having previously done so in Germany and settled in Spinney Hill, Leicester, working at the same sandwich factory as Benmerzouga and possessed a passport in the name of Cyril Jacob which he had used to get a job and gain benefits. He worked alongside Brahim Benmerzouga to run a fraud and forgery operation which raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for al-Qaeda and provided other extremists with false identities.
He was visited by *al-Qaeda* members involved in the US Embassy bomb plot including Djamel Beghal and Kamel Daoudi, and is thought to have provided Daoudi with a false passport allowing him to travel to Afghanistan. He was placed under surveillance after Daoudi fled to Leicester following Beghal’s arrest and was arrested alongside Daoudi and Benmerzouga on 25 September 2001. Police found a “forger’s kit” and material relating to the 9/11 attacks in his house. He was convicted of conspiracy to defraud and entering into a funding arrangement for the purpose of terrorism in April 2003 and jailed for 11 years. He was released in 2009 and has been successfully fighting against deportation to Algeria since.

**Foreign training/combat:** Unknown – believed to have been a member of the GIA in Algeria.

**Movements:** Germany (Unclear); UK (1997).

**Criminal history:** Convicted of conspiracy to defraud and entering into a funding arrangement for the purpose of terrorism in April 2003.

**Known to the authorities:** Not in relation to terrorism until he was put under surveillance following Kamel Daoudi’s arrival in the UK in 2001.

**Networks and associates:**

- **US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001):** Brahim Benmerzouga [Convicted together in April 2003]; Kamel Daoudi [Arrested together after Daoudi fled to the UK following Beghal’s arrest, Meziane had helped Daoudi travel to Afghanistan]; Djamel Beghal [Beghal visited Benmerzouga in Leicester en route to train in Afghanistan and Meziane had known Beghal when he had lived in Leicester].

- **Finsbury Park Mosque:** Abu Qatada [Meziane has been described as a “follower” of Qatada’s and the two are believed to have been in “daily contact” by telephone].

**MOHAMMED BERKOUS:** Rotterdam prosecutors linked Algerian Berkous to Jerome Courtailler and Nizar Trabelsi. Along with Courtailler, Berkous was claimed to have spoken to Trabelsi discussing the provision of fake documentation.

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17 Count 1, private correspondence, Leicester Crown Court, 10 June 2009; and ‘Terror-link pair jailed’, *BBC News*, 1 April 2003.
20 Algerian pair ‘plotted to wage holy war’, *BBC News*, 5 February 2005.
21 Count 1, private correspondence, Leicester Crown Court, 10 June 2009.
23 Count 1, private correspondence, Leicester Crown Court, 10 June 2009.
2.3 The ‘Frankfurt Cell’: Strasbourg Market Plot

**MOHAMMED BENSAKHRIA aka Mohammed Ben Aissa**

**Role:** One of the leaders of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ which planned a bomb attack on Strasbourg Christmas market.

**Bio:** An Algerian national who has been described as “passing himself off as a businessman” in Germany. Bensakhria is alleged to have been one of Osama bin Laden’s representatives in Europe. Following the arrest of four of his co-conspirators in Frankfurt in December 2000, Bensakhria fled to Spain, where he disguised himself as a “poor North African migrant worker,” and used the aliases Mohammed ben Aissa and Meliani. He lived in a van in North African immigrant neighbourhood in Alicante, and was arrested by Spanish police in June 2001 on the basis of an arrest warrant issued by French authorities. He was extradited to France and convicted of “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” and sentenced to ten years in December 2004.

**Foreign training/combat:** The Strasbourg market plotters were alleged to have learned bomb-making techniques in Afghanistan, but is unclear which individuals attended training camps there.

**Movements:** Germany (Unclear); Spain (2000).

**Criminal history:** Bensakhria is believed to have had a history of petty crime including theft and assault, fraud and drug dealing while in Germany. Convicted of “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in December 2004.

**Known to the authorities:** Wanted by French authorities following his escape in December 2000, as well as by Interpol and US law enforcement agencies.

**Networks and associates:**

- The ‘Frankfurt Cell’: Slimane Khalfaoui Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Abdelkader Tcharek, Meroine Berrahal, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchi, Nicolas Belloni [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in December 2004, Bensakhria was in direct contact with Khalfaoui and Aknouche]; Fouhad Sabour, Lamine

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Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aerobi Beandali [‘Frankfurt cell’ members convicted in March 2003, Bensakhria had fled Germany prior to their arrest].77

- **Al-Qaeda**: Said Arif [Bensakhria was reportedly in contact with Arif when the latter moved to Germany after his time with *al-Qaeda* in Afghanistan].77

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### SLMANE KHALFAOUI

**Role:** One of the leaders of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ which planned a bomb attack on Strasbourg Christmas market.772

**Bio:** A joint French-Algerian national and significant member of *al-Qaeda*, Khalfaoui had travelled to fight in Bosnia and spent time in Afghanistan and London before he settled in France. He was arrested in November 2002 after a raid at his sister’s apartment in Montefermeil, Paris, from which he attempted to escape. Stolen and falsified passports were discovered in the apartment and Nicolas Belloni, his brother-in-law, was also arrested during the same raid.773 Khalfaoui was convicted of “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in December 2004 and sentenced to ten years in prison.774

**Foreign training/combat:** According to the French authorities, Khalfaoui admitted to having fought in Bosnia and allegedly spent seven months in Afghanistan in 1998.

**Movements:** Bosnia (Unclear); Afghanistan (1998); UK (Unclear); France (Unclear).

**Criminal history:** Unknown.

**Known to the authorities:** Authorities had been looking for Khalfaoui in connection to French network recruiting fighters for training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan,775 and he had “been on wanted lists since 1996”.776

**Networks and associates:**

- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’**: Mohamed Bensakhria, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Abdelkader Tcharek, Meroine Berrahal, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchi, Nicolas Belloni [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in December 2004, Khalfaoui was in direct contact with Bensakhria and Aknouche and was arrested at Belloni’s house, which had also received calls from Kadre];777 Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aerobi Beandali [‘Frankfurt cell’ members convicted in March 2003].778

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771 Hafez, M., ‘Suicide Bombers in Iraq’, United States of Peace Press, 2007, available at: https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=0I8m2CnuVooC&pg=PA204&lpg=PA204&dq=said+arif+mohammed+bensakhria&source=bl&ots=-wLg6ZqXlU9yfOYGi0ZvqI6fPSbKfL0l&sig=HbOddzjNhZylWwNvbP6PEq0t4Uho&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjv_KHI8pjNAhWkKMAKHbEfDCsQ6AEIJDAB#v=onepage&q=said%20arif%20mohammed%20bensakhria&f=false, last visited: 9 August 2016, p. 204.


**RABAH KADRE**

**Role:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market.  

**Bio:** An Algerian national based in the UK, Kadre helped to establish Abu Doha's European network of extremists. He was regarded as his "second in command", and had been spotted inside Finsbury Park Mosque in 1998. Following Doha’s arrest in February 2001, he is believed to have taken over much of the network – having been arrested himself and then released, disappearing for 18 months. In November 2002, Kadre was arrested again, this time suspected of involvement with a plot to carry out a ricin attack and was charged in February 2003, while a warrant for his arrest in relation to the Strasbourg plot had been issued by the French authorities the same month he was arrested. Kadre was convicted in the UK of owning a false passport after the ricin-related charges were dropped, and was then convicted in absentia by a French court of “of criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in relation to the Strasbourg plot and given a six year prison term. He was then held in the UK while he awaited extradition to France, and was transferred in June 2006. He was released in April 2008 and deported to Algeria.

**Foreign training/combat:** Unknown. Is alleged to have been a member of the GSPC.

**Movements:** UK (Unclear).

**Criminal history:** Convicted of owning a false passport (2003); Convicted of “of criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in 2004.

**Known to the authorities:** Identified in 1998 by intelligence agents in Finsbury Park Mosque and monitored until his arrest in 2002.

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Known associates and networks:

- **Ricin plot (2002):** Kamel Bourgass, Mohammed Meguerba [Bourgass was convicted in connection with the ricin plot while Merguba was tried in Algeria after skipping bail]. Both are alleged to have been associates of Kadre through the Finsbury Park Mosque.

- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’:** Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khalfaoui, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Abdelkader Tcharek, Merouane Berrahal, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchi, Nicolas Belloni [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in December 2004, Kadre had called Belloni’s home, where Khalfaoui also lived]; Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aeroubi Beandali [‘Frankfurt cell’ members convicted in March 2003], Kadre’s fingerprints were found in Beandali’s home; Merouane Benahmed [Reported to have been in contact with Kadre].

- **Abu Doha network:** Abu Doha [Kadre helped establish Abu Doha’s European network of extremists and is believed to have taken over as leader of the network].

- **Al-Qaeda/GIA:** Said Arif, Mabrouk Echiker [GIA fighters associated with al-Qaeda. Kadre helped both men leave Europe following the arrest of Abu Doha].

**YACINE AKHNOCHE**

**Role:** Organising al-Qaeda cells in France and Germany. Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market.

**Bio:** An Algerian and former chemistry student, Aknouche appears to have travelled to Germany in the early 1990s, before using a false passport to flee to England following an arrest for credit card fraud. He continued to be involved with similar frauds while splitting his time between London and Paris, something he said was approved by preachers at Finsbury Park Mosque. He claims to have met Ahmed Ressam and Zacarias Moussaoui while there between at least 1998 and 2000 before returning to France, where he was arrested in Paris. He has been chosen to travel to Afghanistan by Abu Doha sometime after this, using a fake French passport to travel to the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He claims to have met al-Qaeda-linked militants including Ahmed Ressam and Zacarias Moussaoui while there between at least 1998 and 2000 before returning to France, where he was arrested.
in Paris as part of the investigation into the Strasbourg plot. Convicted of “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in December 2004 and sentenced to eight years in prison.

**Foreign training/combat:** Trained at an *al-Qaeda* camp in Afghanistan and has been reported to have spent up to four years in the country.

**movements:** Germany (Unclear); UK (Unclear); France (Unclear, 2000); Afghanistan (1996/8-2000).

**criminal history:** Arrested previously in Germany for credit card fraud and appears to have been involved in similar activity in the UK. Convicted of “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in December 2004.

**Known to the authorities:** Unclear

**Networks and associates:**
- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’**: Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khalfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Abdelkader Tcharek, Meroine Berrahal, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchi, Nicolas Belloni [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in December 2004, Aknouche was in direct contact with Bensakhria and Khalfaoui]; Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aerobi Beandali [‘Frankfurt cell’ members convicted in March 2003].
- **Abu Doha Network**: Abu Doha [Aknouche and Doha are believed to have worked together, and he named Doha as Osama bin Laden’s “UK recruiter”].
- **Al-Qaeda**: Osama bin Laden [Aknouche claimed he had met bin Laden several times while in Afghanistan]; Abu Zubaydah [ Alleged to have known Zubaydah, likely while in Afghanistan); Zacarias Moussaoui, Richard Reid, Ahmed Ressam [Aknouche confessed to having met the three men while in Afghanistan].

**Fouhad Sabour**

**Role:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market. Gathered bomb-making material and carried out reconnaissance.

**Bio:** Described as a French citizen of Algerian origin, Sabour is believed to have moved to London in 2000 after living in both Bosnia and Pakistan, and having spent two years between 1998 and 2000 in

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811 Multiple sources, see biographical section.


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It is unclear where he was based prior to this, but he had been convicted in absentia in 1995 by a French court for involvement in a series of bombings in Paris, so is likely to have spent some time in France prior to 1995. In October 2000, he moved on to Frankfurt, where he met up with Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aeroubi Beandali and Mohamed Bensakhria. During December, he and the other men purchased chemicals used for bomb-making and filmed a reconnaissance tape, as well as contacting Abu Doha to request additional funds. After the phone call, and surveillance which suggested the men were moving weapons, they were arrested on 26 December 2000, with the police finding explosives, firearms, fake and stolen IDs and a significant haul of hashish. Charged with conspiracy to murder, Sabour was convicted in March 2003 and sentenced to 11 years and six months in prison.

**Foreign training/combat:** Sabour spent two years in Afghanistan between 1998 and 2000 and was taught how to build bombs.

**Movements:** Bosnia (Unclear); Pakistan (Unclear); Afghanistan (1998-2000); London (July 2000); Germany (December 2000).

**Criminal history:** Convicted in absentia in 1995 for bombings in France. Convicted of conspiracy to murder in March 2003.

**Known to the authorities:** Sabour appears to have come to the attention of the authorities after French intelligence alerted German authorities to the plot, after which the group came under surveillance.

**Networks and associates:**

- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’**: Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aeroubi Beandali [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in March 2003]; Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khalfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tlii, Abdelkader Tcharak, Merouane Berralah, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchy, Nicolas Belloni [‘Frankfurt cell’ members convicted in December 2004].

- **Abu Doha network:** Abu Doha [Doha was contacted by the cell members to request more money in late December 2000].

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**LAMINE MARONI**

**Role:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market. Gathered bomb-making material and carried out reconnaissance.

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20 Harris, P. et al., ‘Al-Qaeda’s bombers used Britain to plot slaughter’, *Guardian*, 21 April 2002.
22 Harris, P. et al., ‘Al-Qaeda’s bombers used Britain to plot slaughter’, *Guardian*, 21 April 2002.
27 Harris, P. et al., ‘Al-Qaeda’s bombers used Britain to plot slaughter’, *Guardian*, 21 April 2002.
Bio: An Algerian, Maroni travelled to Afghanistan in 1998 and stayed there until August 2000 when he travelled to the UK and claimed asylum, moving to Sheffield where he claimed to be an odd-job man and dealt cannabis. He is believed to have associated with Sabour and Salim Boukhari before moving to Frankfurt in November with Boukhari using false or stolen documentation. In Frankfurt, the two men met up with Sabour, Aeroubi Beandali and Mohamed Bensakhria. During December, he and the other men purchased chemicals used for bomb-making and filmed a reconnaissance tape, as well as contacting Abu Doha to request additional funds. After the phone call, and surveillance which suggested the men were moving weapons, they were arrested on 26 December 2000, with the police finding explosives, firearms, fake and stolen IDs and a significant haul of hashish. His UK flat was raided soon after, and the explosive TATP was found there. Charged with conspiracy to murder, Maroni was convicted in March 2003 and sentenced to 11 years in prison.

Foreign training/combat: Maroni spent two years in Afghanistan between 1998 and 2000 and was taught how to build bombs.


Criminal history: Maroni dealt cannabis while in the UK and Italian authorities have suggested he may have been convicted of robbery. Convicted of conspiracy to murder in March 2003.

Known to the authorities: Maroni appears to have come to the attention of the authorities after French intelligence alerted German authorities to the plot, after which the group came under surveillance.

Networks and associates:

- The ‘Frankfurt Cell’: Fouhad Sabour, Salim Boukhari, Aeroubi Beandali [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in March 2003]; Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khalfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Abdelkader Tcharek, Merouane Berralial, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchi, Nicolas Belloni [‘Frankfurt cell’ members convicted in December 2004].

- Abu Doha network: Abu Doha [Doha was contacted by the cell members to request more money in late December 2000].

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831 Harris, P. et al., ‘Al-Qaeda’s bombers used Britain to plot slaughter’, Guardian, 21 April 2002.
834 Harris, P. et al., ‘Al-Qaeda’s bombers used Britain to plot slaughter’, Guardian, 21 April 2002.
**SALIM BOUKHARI**

**Role:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market. Gathered bomb-making material and carried out reconnaissance.\(^{412}\)

**Bio:** Born in Algeria, Boukhari moved to France to study in the early 1990s before moving to London. He worked as a security guard and trained to be a chef, living in Leyton, East London, as well as attending the Finsbury Park Mosque. He became increasingly radical and decided to travel to Afghanistan, travelling via Pakistan to Jalalabad.\(^{413}\) He is believed to have stayed there between 1998 and 2000, meeting Strasbourg plot cell members Fouhad Sabour and Lamine Maroni while there before returning to London in the summer of 2000. He travelled to Frankfurt that November alongside Maroni\(^{414}\) and met up with Sabour, Aeroubi Beandali and Mohamed Bensakhria.\(^{415}\) During December, he and the other men purchased chemicals used for bomb-making and filmed a reconnaissance tape, as well as contacting Abu Doha to request additional funds. After the phone-call, and surveillance which suggested the men were moving weapons, they were arrested on 26 December 2000, with the police finding explosives, firearms, fake and stolen IDs and a significant haul of hashish.\(^{416}\) Charged with conspiracy to murder, Boukhari was convicted in March 2003 and sentenced to 12 years in prison.\(^{417}\)

**Foreign training/combat:** Boukhari spent two years in Afghanistan between 1998 and 2000 and was taught how to build bombs.

**Movements:** France (Early 1990s); UK (1990s, August 2000); Afghanistan (1998-2000); Germany (November 2000).\(^{418}\)

**Criminal history:** Convicted of conspiracy to murder in March 2003.\(^{419}\)

**Known to the authorities:** Boukhari appears to have come to the attention of the authorities after French intelligence alerted German authorities to the plot, after which the group came under surveillance.\(^{420}\)

**Networks and associates:**

- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’:** Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Aeroubi Beandali [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in March 2003]; Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khalfouini, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tilib, Abdelkader Tcharek, Merouane Berrahal, Laurent Mourad Djoumak, Samir Karchi, Nicolas Belloni [‘Frankfurt cell’ members convicted in December 2004].\(^{421}\)

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\(^{414}\) Harris, P. et al., ‘Al-Qaeda’s bombers used Britain to plot slaughter’, Guardian, 21 April 2002.


\(^{416}\) Harris, P. et al., ‘Al-Qaeda’s bombers used Britain to plot slaughter’, Guardian, 21 April 2002.

\(^{417}\) *Strasbourg bomb plotters jailed*, BBC News, 10 March 2003.


\(^{419}\) *Strasbourg bomb plotters jailed*, BBC News, 10 March 2003.


\(^{422}\) French court convicts group in Strasbourg Christmas market bomb’, *Agence France Presse*, 16 December 2004.
AN ENDURING THREAT: EUROPE'S ISLAMIST TERROR NETWORKS THEN AND NOW

- **Abu Doha network**: Abu Doha [Doha was contacted by the cell members, with Boukhari believed to be the main contact, to request more money in late December 2000].

**AEROUBI BEANDALI aka Mustapha Kelouli aka Djilali Benali**

**Role:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market. Gathered bomb-making material and carried out reconnaissance.

**Bio:** Believed to be a French citizen of Algerian origin. Beandali claims to have travelled from Algeria to Germany in 1992 and to have lived an irreligious lifestyle, using alcohol and drugs. After being shocked by images from the Algerian Civil War in 1998, he became more religious and decided to travel to Afghanistan, flying first to a religious school in Pakistan and then to a training camp in Afghanistan where he “learned about weapons and explosives” and met Salim Boukhari. After spending nine months at the training camp, Beandali appears to have returned to Germany, as he was living in Frankfurt when Boukhari brought Sabour and Maroni to his apartment in November 2000. He claims to have supplied the cell's weapons. During December, he and the other men purchased chemicals used for bomb-making and filmed a reconnaissance tape, as well as contacting Abu Doha to request additional funds. After the phone call, and surveillance which suggested the men were moving weapons, they were arrested on 26 December 2000, with the police finding explosives, firearms, fake and stolen IDs and a significant haul of hashish. Charged with conspiracy to murder, Beandali was convicted in March 2003 and sentenced to ten years in prison despite showing repentance.

**Foreign training/combat:** Spent nine months in Afghanistan where he received weapons training.

**Movements:** Germany (1992); Afghanistan (late 1990s).

**Criminal history:** Beandali was known to the police through his drug dealing. Convicted of conspiracy to murder in March 2003.

**Known to the authorities:** Beandali appears to have come to the attention of the authorities after French intelligence alerted German authorities to the plot, after which the group came under surveillance.

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853 Harris, P. et al., 'Al-Qaeda's bombers used Britain to plot slaughter', *Guardian*, 21 April 2002.
855 'German prosecutors seek heavy jail terms for bomb plot suspects', *Agence France-Presse*, 11 February 2003.
860 Harris, P. et al., 'Al-Qaeda's bombers used Britain to plot slaughter', *Guardian*, 21 April 2002.
861 Beandali was known to the police through his drug dealing.
Networks and associates:

- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’**: Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in March 2003]; Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khalfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknounche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tlili, Abdelkader Tcharek, Merouane Berrahal, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchi, Nicolas Belloni ['Frankfurt cell' members convicted in December 2004].

- **Abu Doha network**: Abu Doha [Doha was contacted by the cell members, with Boukhari believed to be the main contact, to request more money in late December 2000].

### 2.4 Frankfurt Cell: Accomplices

**LAZHAR BEN MOHAMMED TLILI**

**Role:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market and is believed to have provided logistical support.

**Bio:** A Tunisian national, who made a living dealing drugs, Tlili became involved with extremists while living in Milan in the 1990s and frequented an Islamic centre described by the US Treasury as an “al-Qaeda station house”. He travelled to Afghanistan for military training and received instruction in bomb-making and the use of weapons for ten months before losing a hand in an accident and returning to Europe. He was arrested in France in 2002 over involvement in the Strasbourg plot, convicted of “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in December 2004, and sentenced to five years in prison. Tlili was extradited to Italy in 2006 over the procurement and selling of “military items” and entered Italian witness protection scheme in return for information on detainees in the US and Italy who had attended Afghan training camps. He was released from prison in January 2007 and removed from the UNSC al-Qaeda sanctions list in April 2015.

**Foreign training/combat:** Received instruction in bomb-making and the use of weapons in training camps in Afghanistan.

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Known to the authorities: Designated as involved in logistical support or terrorism in the US in August 2002 following his arrest in connection to the Strasbourg plot.

Networks and associates:

- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’**: Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khalfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknounche, Abdellkader Tcharek, Merouane Berrahal, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchi, Nicolas Belloni [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in December 2004]; Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aeroubi Beandali [‘Frankfurt cell’ members convicted in March 2003].

**ABDELKADER TCHAREK**

Role: Provided logistical support to leader Mohammed Bensakhria and convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market.

Bio: An Algerian arrested with five other Algerians in Strasbourg in November 2001 before being transferred to Paris over allegations that he had provided logistical support to Strasbourg plot leader Mohammed Bensakhria. Tcharek was also accused of having violated immigration procedures and utilising false documents for terrorist purposes. He was convicted of “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in December 2004 and sentenced to two and a half years in prison, with an 18 month suspension.

Foreign training/combat: Unclear

Movements: Unclear

Criminal history: Convicted of “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise” in December 2004.

Known to the authorities: Unclear

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Associates and networks:

- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’**: Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khabfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Merouane Berrahal, Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, Samir Korchi, Nicolas Belloni [Convicted alongside as members of the ‘Frankfurt cell’ in December 2004.][72] Tcharek met Bensakhria several times and held numerous phone calls with him][892] Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aerobi Beandali ['Frankfurt cell' members convicted in March 2003].[894]

**LAURENT MOURAD DJOUMAKH:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market alongside Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khabfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Merouane Berrahal, Abdelkader Tcharek, Samir Korchi, and Nicolas Belloni[895] and is believed to have provided logistical support.[896] Said Arif, an Algerian al-Qaeda operative,[897] travelled to Georgia in 2001 using Djoumakh’s passport.[898]

**NICOLAS BELLONI:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market alongside Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khabfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Merouane Berrahal, Abdelkader Tcharek, Samir Korchi, and Laurent Mourad Djoumakh and given three years with an 18 month suspension.[899] Believed to have provided logistical support[900] Belloni’s brother-in-law, Slimane Khabfaoui, was arrested alongside Belloni at his apartment in Montefermeil, Paris, where stolen and falsified passports were discovered.[901] Belloni’s home telephone had also received calls from Rabah Kadre.[902]

**SAMIR KORCHI:** A Moroccan national, Korchi, moved to France in the 1980s with his family.[903] Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market alongside Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khabfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Merouane Berrahal, Abdelkader Tcharek, Nicholas Belloni, and Laurent Mourad Djoumakh, he was sentenced to four years in December 2004.[904] He is believed to have provided logistical support[905] and was expelled to Morocco in April 2005 on completion of his sentence.[906]

**MEROUANE BERRAHAL:** Convicted of involvement in the plot to bomb Strasbourg Christmas market alongside Mohamed Bensakhria, Slimane Khabfaoui, Rabah Kadre, Yacine Aknouche, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili, Nicholas Belloni, Abdelkader Tcharek, Samir Korchi, and Laurent Mourad...
Djoumakh was sentenced to six years in December 2004. Believed to have provided logistical support.

MOHAMED AOUANI aka Heni ben Lased: Aouani acted as a liaison between the ‘Frankfurt cell’ and an Italian al-Qaeda cell, and was also involved in weapons and explosives trafficking. Born in Tunis on 5 February 1970, he was thought to be Libyan, claiming to be Heni ben Lased. Other aliases include Al-Asad ben Hani and Mohamed ben Belgacem Awani. Italian authorities issued a warrant for his arrest over links to a criminal gang and he was arrested in Munich on 10 October 2001. He was alleged to be involved in smuggling and document forgery, was wanted for providing logistical support to al-Qaeda, and was claimed to have been in regular contact with the ‘Frankfurt cell’ between August and November 2000. He was tried in Milan, charged with trafficking chemical weapons, explosives and arms, and sentenced to six years. According to the UN Security Council he was deported on the 27 August 2006 from Italy to Tunisia.

MEROUANE BENAHMED: Suspected of having provided bomb-making expertise to the Strasbourg cell, Benahmed is also thought to have been the leader of a plot to blow up the Russian Embassy in Paris. An Algerian former commander of the GIA and expert in bomb-making and electronics, Benahmed is alleged to have visited militant training camps in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Georgia. He had extensive contacts within European Islamist networks and with the GSPC. These contacts also included Rabah Kadri. Benahmed was convicted in 2006 and sentenced to ten years for conspiring to attack in France as part of a ‘Chechen Network’ between 2001 and 2002.
2.5 NATO Airbase Plot Network

MOHAMMED AMOR SLITI

Role: Tried as part of the NATO airbase plot network, and convicted of “recruiting militants and trafficking false passports” in connection with the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Bio: A Belgian citizen of unclear origin, Sliti has been described as both Tunisian and Algerian, and as an alleged founder of the Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG) is most likely to be Tunisian. Sliti was living in Belgium in late 1998 when his cousin, Hisham Bin Amor Sliti, moved in with him. He is alleged to have travelled to Afghanistan in early 2000 and to have been present when the TCG was founded in Jalalabad in June 2000. He is also alleged to have trained new recruits. Sliti was arrested in Iran after fleeing Afghanistan and was extradited to the Netherlands, where he was arrested in February 2002 before being extradited to Belgium to stand trial. Convicted of “recruiting militants and trafficking false passports” in connection with the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud, he was sentenced to five years in prison in September 2003.

Foreign training/combat: Traveled to Afghanistan and was involved in training militants.

 Movements: Belgium (1990s); Afghanistan (2000); Iran (2002).


Known to the authorities: Sliti was wanted in Belgium in connection with the supply of false documents to the killers of Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Networks and associates:

- **NATO Airbase Plot Network**: Nizar Trabelsi [Sliti met Trabelsi in Brussels and maintained contact while both men were in Afghanistan in 1999]. He was convicted alongside Trabelsi in September 2003; Tarek Ben Habib Maaroufi [Convicted alongside Sliti in September 2003].
- **Finsbury Park Mosque:** Abu Qatada [Sliti frequented Finsbury Park Mosque] and it has been suggested Qatada acted as a mentor to Sliti there.\(^{110}\)

- **Other:** Dahmane Abd el-Sattar, Bouraoui El-Ouac [Also known as Karim Touzani and Kacen Bakkali, Sliti aided the two men, who assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud,\(^{111}\) in travelling to Afghanistan and trafficked passports linked to the assassination].\(^{112}\) ‘E’ [A Tunisian former Control Order subject, ‘E’ provided accommodation and false documentation for Sliti in the UK, and he and his network were connected to the men who assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud];\(^{113}\) Hisham Bin Amor Sliti [Cousin. Hisham lived with Mohammed and followed him to Afghanistan. Convicted in absentia in relation to the NATO airbase plot network trial, he was held in Guantanamo Bay and transferred to Slovakia in November 2014].\(^{114}\)

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**TAREK BEN HABIB MAAROUFI**

**Role:** Tried as part of the NATO airbase plot network,\(^{115}\) and convicted of “recruiting militants and trafficking false passports” in connection with the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud.\(^{116}\)

**Bio:** A Tunisian-born Belgian citizen living in Brussels, Maaroufi is believed to have become involved in violent Islamist militancy as early as 1991, when he associated with Rachid Randa, a GIA commander in Europe. He was convicted of involvement in GIA arms trafficking in 1995 and sentenced to three years in prison, though appears to have only served one before being released, allegedly going on to recruit militants to travel to Chechnya. He travelled to Afghanistan in 2000, where he was involved in the formation of the TCG.\(^{117}\) On his return, he appears to have had knowledge of the Strasbourg plot, being recorded by Italian police discussing their arrests,\(^{118}\) and was involved in recruiting extremists including one of Ahmad Shah Massoud’s killers. He was arrested in December 2001\(^{119}\) and tried as part of the NATO airbase plot network. He was convicted of “recruiting militants and trafficking false passports” in connection with the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud in September 2003 and sentenced to six years in prison.\(^{120}\) He was stripped of Belgian citizenship in 2009 before being released and returned to Tunisia.

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\(^{117}\) ‘Major terror trial due in Belgium’, CNN International 21 May 2003.

\(^{118}\) ‘Men jailed over Al Qaeda anti-NATO plot’, ABC News, 30 September 2003.


\(^{120}\) ‘Men jailed over Al Qaeda anti-NATO plot’, ABC News, 30 September 2003.


in 2012,” where he is alleged to have joined Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia, proscribed as a terrorist organisation in the UK in May 2014,” in a non-public role related to its military capacities.”

**Foreign training/combat:** Travelled to Afghanistan in 2000.

**Movements:** Belgium (Unclear); Afghanistan (2000); Tunisia (2012).

**Criminal history:** Convicted in 1995 over GIA arms trafficking. Convicted of “recruiting militants and trafficking false passports” in September 2003, and of “recruiting militants and trafficking false passports” in connection with the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud.

**Known to the authorities:** Known following his GIA-related conviction, Maaroufi was also wanted in connection with the plot to bomb the US embassy in Rome.”

**Networks and associates:**

- **NATO Airbase Plot network:** Nizar Trabelsi [Convicted alongside Trabelsi in September 2003]; Mohammed Amor Sliti [Convicted alongside Sliti in September 2003].
- **Other:** Dahmane Abd el-Sattar [Maaroufi is believed to have recruited Abd el-Sattar, a Tunisian living in Belgium, who was one of Massoud’s killers]; Essid Sami Ben Khemais [The leader of an al-Qaeda-linked cell in Milan cell]; Khemais was in telephone contact with Maaroufi and discussed the arrest of the Strasbourg cell]; ‘E’ [Maaroufi claimed he had met with ‘E’ on a number of occasions]; Sayf Allah Bin Hassine [Founded the TCG alongside Maaroufi].

### 2.6 NATO Airbase Plot Network: Accomplices

HISHAM BIN ALI BIN AMOR aka Ahmad Muhammed Jumr al-Masaudi: Cousin of Mohammed Amor Sliti. He moved in with Mohammed in Belgium in September 1998 after escaping from an Italian prison 11 months into a 44 month sentence for drug offences and worked as a mechanic. He followed Mohammed to Afghanistan in May 2000 and was recruited into the TCG, receiving weapons training and likely taking part in “hostilities against US and Coalition forces in Afghanistan”. He was captured in Pakistan in December 2001 and transferred to Guantanamo Bay. Convicted in absentia in relation to the NATO airbase plot network trial, he was held in Guantanamo Bay and transferred to Slovakia in November 2014.”

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“ibid.


ABDELCRIM EL-HADDOUTI: El-Haddouti, described as Nizar Trabelsi’s “zealous lieutenant”, acted as the supplier of chemical ingredients for bomb-making and was sentenced to five years in prison.\(^\text{77}\)

2.7 Abu Doha Network

ABU DOHA aka Hider Hanani, aka Amar Makhlufi, aka Didier Ajuelos, aka ‘The Doctor’

Role: Al-Qaeda-linked recruiter and alleged plot mastermind and financier linked to the ‘Millennium bomb’ plot at Los Angeles Airport; the Strasbourg Market bomb plot; and a plot to bomb the US Embassy in Rome.

Bio: Doha, who was born in Algeria in 1963, came to Britain in 1994 from France and claimed asylum before settling in Islington, North London, where he became associated with Finsbury Park Mosque. Using the mosque, he allegedly operated as al-Qaeda’s “chief recruiter in Europe” and created “one of the most significant groups of terrorists in the United Kingdom”. Doha travelled to Afghanistan in 1996, where he is said helped to run Khalid bin al-Shahtar’s training camp, established by al-Qaeda in 1998. During this time it is claimed he met Osama bin Laden in Kandahar to discuss collaboration between their networks. He returned to Britain after three years, and in June 2000 his application for asylum was rejected. During this time he is alleged to have conspired with Ahmed Ressam to bomb LAX airport in Los Angeles and to have been in contact with the Strasbourg cell, who contacted him to request more funds in December 2000. Doha was arrested and imprisoned in March 2001 while trying to travel to Saudi Arabia on a false passport. While the charges were dropped in May, he continued to be held over accusations he had breached his admission conditions.

In August 2001, Doha was indicted in the US in connection with Ressam’s plot after Ressam claimed he had overseen the operation. Once the US had requested that Doha be extradited, other countries who claimed to have evidence connecting him to terror plots including France, Canada and Italy dropped their own requests. In 2003, Ressam stopped cooperating with US authorities, leading the US charges to...
be dropped in 2005 and meaning other countries were unable to charge Doha as they had already tried the cases he was alleged to be involved in. Doha was due to be deported Algeria in 2006, but was instead released on bail in 2008. He was jailed again in February 2009 and released to house arrest in 2011.

**Foreign training/combat:** Doha is alleged to have helped to run al-Qaeda’s Khalden training camp in Afghanistan.

**Movements:** France (Unclear); UK (1994, 1999); Afghanistan (1996).

**Criminal history:** No known convictions.

**Known to the authorities:** Following his arrest, it transpired Doha was wanted by authorities in the US, France, Germany and Italy.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Al-Qaeda:** Osama bin Laden [Prosecutors claimed the two men met in Kandahar in December 1998].

- **Finsbury Park Mosque:** Abu Qatada [Qatada has been described as a “close associate” of Doha].

- **The ‘Frankfurt Cell’:** Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Aeroubi Beandali [The four men sought extra funds from Abu Doha for the Strasbourg plot]; Rabah Kadre [Convicted of involvement in the Strasbourg plot, Kadre was Doha’s deputy and successor].

- **Other:** Ahmed Ressam [Ressam alleged Doha had overseen the plot before withdrawing his testimony].

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**AHMED RESSAM**

**Role:** Convicted of plotting to bomb Los Angeles LAX airport on 31 December 1999.

**Bio:** Algerian Ressam was born 19 May 1967 and grew up near Algiers. He travelled to Paris in 1984 for medical treatment and learned more about Algeria’s history, becoming involved with Islamist causes on his return. He was unsuccessful at school, graduating in 1988, and after failing to find work with the Algerian security forces and a stint in a coffee shop he moved to France in 1992. Living illegally in the country, mostly in Corsica, until 1994 he then used a false passport to travel to Montreal, Canada, where

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92 Anonymised SIAC judgement, available on request.

93 Anonymised SIAC judgement, available on request.

94 Anonymised SIAC judgement, available on request.


98 Harris, P. et al., *Al-Qaeda’s bombers used Britain to plot slaughter*, *Guardian*, 21 April 2002.


he claimed asylum, saying he had suffered torture and been falsely accused of terror offences. He lived in Canada for a further four years, staying in an apartment connected to the GIA and supporting himself through theft. His asylum claim was denied in 1995, but he was not deported after he fraudulently obtained a Canadian passport.

Ressam left Canada in 1998 for Afghanistan via Peshawar in Pakistan and met Abu Zubaydah, before travelling on to a training camp in April that year. He returned to Montreal in 1999 via Seoul and Los Angeles and began to formulate his plot to target LAX airport. He moved to Vancouver and began to produce explosives before attempting to cross into the US on 14 December 1999 with the explosives in his car. His car was searched and he was arrested. After associates testified against him,  

Ressam was convicted of conspiracy to commit a terrorist act and smuggling explosives in 2001. He initially cooperated with investigators before withdrawing his testimony in 2003 and was sentenced to 22 years in 2005. In 2010, this was ruled to have been too short, and was increased to 37 years in 2012.

**Foreign training/combat:** Ressam travelled to Afghanistan in 1998 and attended Khalden training camp where he learned how to use light weapons, how to make “explosive devices” and techniques for “sabotage, the selection of targets, urban warfare, tactics (including assassinations), security, and the use of poisons and poisonous gasses”.


**Criminal history:** When living in Canada, Ressam supported himself with petty theft. He was arrested four times and convicted once for robbing tourists. He also trafficked stolen identity documents and bank cards, providing these to other militants.

**Known to the authorities:** Ressam was under CSIS surveillance from 1996 until 1998 when he left Canada for Afghanistan after the phone number of his apartment was discovered on the body of a GIA militant killed in Roubaix, France. In April 1999, Ressam was named in a letter from the French authorities asking the Canadians to search properties linked to Algerian militants. Canadian authorities were looking for Ressam when he used a fake ID to evade them and re-enter the country in 1999.

**Networks and associates:**

- **Al-Qaeda:** Abu Zubaydah [Zubaydah met with Ressam in Peshawar in 1999. Zubaydah approved him and he was sent to a training camp in April 1998]; David Courtailler, Richard Reid, Zacharias Moussaoui [The men all appear to have been at Khalden training camp at the same time].
- **Abu Doha network:** Abu Doha [Ressam alleged Doha had overseen the plot before withdrawing his testimony].
- **Other:** Mokhtar Haouari [Algerian refugee who Ressam worked with to traffic fake and stolen documents and bank cards]; Abdelmajid Dahoumane [Ressam’s accomplice to the LAX plot, ...
the two men set up a bomb factory to make the explosives for the plot. After Ressam’s arrest, Dahoumane escaped to Afghanistan and was later convicted in Algeria.\footnote{Ahmed Ressam’s Millennium Plot, Frontline.}

SAID ARIF: Arif, an Algerian who had left the Algerian army to join \textit{al-Qaeda} in Afghanistan in the late 1990s,\footnote{’Terrorist Designation of Said Arif’, US Department of State, 18 August 2014, available at: http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/230677.htm, last visited: 9 August 2016.} was found to be a member of Abu Doha’s network by a French court in June 2006, something supported by Laurent Djoumakh’s testimony that Arif, who had travelled to Georgia in 2001 using his passport, was involved with Doha’s network.\footnote{’Criminal Association in Relation to a Terrorist Undertaking’, Human Rights Watch, July 2008.} Arif also claimed to have been present at a meeting in Kabul in 2000 at which Doha was present. Arif was also in contact with Mohammed Bensakhria, the leader of the Frankfurt cell, after he moved to Germany and fled to Pakistan to avoid arrest in relation to the Strasbourg plot. Arif was arrested in Syria in May 2003 and extradited to France in June 2004,\footnote{Hafez, M., Suicide Bombers in Iraq: the Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom, (Institute of Peace Press, 2007), p. 205.} where he was convicted, in June 2006, of “membership in a criminal organisation in relation to a terrorist undertaking” and sentenced to nine years, increased in May 2007 to ten years.\footnote{’Criminal Association in Relation to a Terrorist Undertaking’, Human Rights Watch, July 2008.} In October 2013, he fled house arrest in France and travelled to Syria, joining \textit{Jabhat al-Nusra} and Interpol issued a Red Notice.\footnote{’Terrorist Designation of Said Arif’, US Department of State, 18 August 2014.} He was reportedly killed in an airstrike in May 2015.\footnote{Joscelyn, T., ‘Another al Qaeda veteran reportedly killed while leading Jund al Aqsa in Syria’, The Long War Journal, 27 May 2016, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/05/another-al-qaeda-veteran-reportedly-killed-while-leading-jund-al-aqsa-in-syria.php, last visited: 9 August 2016.}

KAMAL BOURGASS: An associate of Rabah Kadre through Finsbury Park Mosque,\footnote{’Killer jailed over poison plot’, BBC News, 13 April 2005.} Bourgass was convicted in June 2004 for the murder of Detective Constable Stephen Oake in 2003 and sentenced to 20 years in prison. He was convicted in April 2005 and sentenced to 17 years in connection with the ricin plot.\footnote{Stuart, H. et al., Islamist Terrorism: The British Connections, 2nd edition (The Henry Jackson Society, 2011), pp. 445-6.}

2.8 Other

**DAVID COURTAILLER**

**Role:** Logistics. Convicted for conspiring to help those engaged in terrorism.

**Bio:** French national Courtailleur was raised with his brother, Jerome, in Bonneville in the French Alps. The son of a butcher, he studied accounting at a Catholic school before his father’s business failed and his parents divorced, and he and Jerome became involved with alcohol and drug abuse. He converted to Islam in 1996 after moving to Brighton and being told it would help with his drug problems. After moving to London with Jerome, David Courtailleur was given money and a fake passport by friends at Finsbury Park Mosque who sent him to train in Afghanistan. He travelled via Pakistan and spent time at Khalden training camp alongside a number of other al-Qaeda militants including Ahmed Ressam and Richard Reid before returning to Europe in August 1998. David stayed in Tangiers, Morocco on his return before he returned to France, where he was arrested in 1999 after shoplifting a pair of shoes leading to the police being notified of his return. Suspected of involvement in the 1998 attacks on the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, he was interrogated in Paris before being released on bail. Courtailleur fled to the UK and is thought to have moved to Leicester, while his fake French driving license was discovered with large quantities of explosives in a Birmingham apartment. In 2000, he was arrested alongside Djamel Beghal in Calais as Beghal oversaw a kidnapping plot, before disappearing again. He appeared in court in France in March 2004 “accused of recruiting for al-Qaeda” and was sentenced to two years in prison with two years suspended after being convicted of “conspiring with criminals engaged in a terrorist enterprise” in May 2004.

**Foreign training/combat:** Trained at Khalden training camp in Afghanistan until 1998.

**Movements:** UK (1996); Afghanistan (1997-98); Morocco (1998); France (1999).

**Criminal history:** Involved with drugs prior to converting to Islam. Arrested for shoplifting in France in 1999. Convicted of “conspiring with criminals engaged in a terrorist enterprise” in May 2004.

**Known to the authorities:** Courtailleur was known to the authorities on his return from Afghanistan, with US intelligence notifying the French authorities he was travelling to Europe in August 1998. He was also detained in 1999 as part of an investigation into the 1998 US Embassy attacks.
Networks and associates:

- **Al-Qaeda:** Zacarias Moussaoui [Convicted of involvement in the 9/11 attacks, he has lived with Courtailler in Brixton and were at Khalden training camp together]; Richard Reid, Ahmed Ressam [Courtailler’s time at Khalden training camp is believed to have coincided with that of both men].

- **US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001):** Djamel Beghal [Courtailler assisted Beghal in the kidnapping of Azzedin Journazi’s children]; Nizar Trabelsi [Courtailler has been described as a “close contact of Trabelsi”].

- **Finsbury Park Mosque:** Abu Hamza al-Masri [Courtailler has been described as “very active in Abu Hamza’s circles”].

- **Other:** Chaouki Baadache, Ahmed Laidouni [Convicted alongside Courtailler in May 2004]; Jamal Zougam [Convicted for his role in the 2004 Madrid train bombings]; Zougam met Courtailler in a Madrid Mosque in 1998; Moinul Abedin [A fake driving licence in Courtailler’s name was found in his house]; Omar Deghayes [Alleged to have given Courtailler telephone numbers for men in Spain and Morocco involved in the Madrid and Casablanca bombings].

**ZACARIAS MOUSSAOUI**

**Role:** Convicted of involvement in the 9/11 attacks, it has been suggested Moussaoui was in fact supposed to carry out a different attack.

**Bio:** A French national whose parents had immigrated to the country, Moussaoui was born in Morocco and raised in Bayonne, south-west France. As a child he became involved with local gangs, as well as with radicals who “ranted about the brutal treatment of their brothers in Bosnia”. He travelled to the UK at least once prior to moving to the country in 1993, and on arrival he attended London South Bank University and enrolled on an MA International Business Studies course. He also spent a significant amount of time at Brixton Mosque, sleeping there when he had nowhere else to live. He began to attend radical meetings, listening to Abdullah el-Faisal’s violent speeches in south London, as well as attending Abu Qatada’s mosque in Baker Street and Finsbury Park Mosque, forming a close connection with extremists including Djamel Beghal and Kamel Daoudi. Moussaoui travelled to Afghanistan in...

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September 1997, arriving at the Khalden training camp by 1998 at the same time as other extremists including Richard Reid and Ahmed Ressam. He was given US$14,000 for flight lessons by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who he is alleged to have met in Afghanistan in 2000 and, after visiting Malaysia where he stayed in an apartment in which two of the 9/11 attackers had stayed, he travelled to the US to attend flight schools in Oklahoma and Oregon in February 2001, proving unsuccessful at both and justifying Mohammed’s claim that he had dispatched Moussaoui to a different training camp to the 9/11 attackers as he did not trust his capabilities. In August 2001, Moussaoui’s odd behaviour attracted attention and he was arrested. Moussaoui was indicted in connection with the 9/11 attacks in December 2001 and pleaded guilty in April 2005. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole in May 2006, with the sentence affirmed in January 2010 despite claims from Osama bin Laden that Moussaoui had not been chosen for a role in the 9/11 attacks.

**Foreign training/combat:** Travelled to Afghanistan in September 1997 and spent time at the Khalden training camp during 1998.

**Movements:** France (Unclear); London (1993); Afghanistan (1997-98, 2000); Malaysia (2000); USA (February - May 2001).

**Criminal history:** Convicted of six counts of conspiracy, including conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism, conspiracy to commit aircraft piracy, and conspiracy to murder United States employees.

**Known to the authorities:** French authorities are believed to have become aware of Moussaoui in 1996 and to have placed him on watch list in 1999.

**Networks and associates:**

- **US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001):** Jerome Courtailler [Courtailler shared an apartment with Moussaoui in Brixton], Djamel Beghal [Moussaoui is believed to have been recruited by Beghal], Kamel Daoudi [Moussaoui was “part of a circle” that involved Daoudi at Abu Qatada’s London mosque].

- **Finsbury Park Mosque:** Moussaoui regularly attended the mosque and associated with other extremists there.

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- **9/11 Attacks (2001):** Mohammed Atta [It has been suggested Moussaoui shared a flat with Atta in Hamburg,

and he allegedly "received two money transfers from a man who shared a flat with Atta in Hamburg"].

- **Al-Qaeda:** Richard Reid [Reid is said to have "hero worshipped" Moussaoui and the two men’s time at Khalden coincided];

David Courtailler [Moussaoui is believed to have lived with Courtailler in Brixton and they were at Khalden training camp together]; Ahmed Ressam [Moussaoui’s time at Khalden training camp is believed to have coincided with that of Ressam];

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed [Allegedly met with Moussaoui in Afghanistan in 2000]; Ramzi bin al-Shibh [An al-Qaeda operative, al-Shibh, wired US$14,000 to Moussaoui from Germany].

- **Other:** Abdullah el-Faisal [Moussaoui was a follower of el-Faisal in South London];

Xavier Djawo [Friend of Moussaoui’s killed in Chechnya in 1998].

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**RICHARD REID aka Abdel Rahmin, aka Tariq Raja**

**Role:** Convicted of attempting to blow up a transatlantic aircraft en route to the US from Europe using explosives hidden in his shoes.

**Bio:** Reid was born in 1973 in Bromley, South London and struggled at school, leaving at 16. He became involved in petty crime as a teenager, including street robbery and drug use, before being convicted of an assault on a pensioner and a string of robberies in 1992. He converted to Islam whilst in prison after being convicted of these offences. After his release in 1996 he became acquainted with extremists when attending Brixton mosque as part of an informal rehabilitation programme for ex-prisoners run by staff there. While attending Brixton mosque he began travelling around the UK to hear preachers speak in Luton, the Midlands and elsewhere in London, and it is believed that it was during this time that he first came into contact with Abu Hamza al-Masri before moving to the Finsbury Park Mosque alongside Zacharias Moussaoui after quarrelling with worshippers in Brixton. At Finsbury Park Mosque he came under the influence of both al-Masri and Djamel Beghal. In 1998, he travelled to Afghanistan, training in Khalden training camp at the same time as other extremists including Ahmed Ressam. On his return, Reid travelled across the Middle East, first acquiring a new passport in Brussels. He visited Israel, Turkey and Egypt and is believed to have been carrying out intelligence-gathering, before returning to Europe and working in kitchens in Belgium and the Netherlands - associating with Nizar Trabelsi in the process.

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Following the 9/11 attacks, he returned to Afghanistan via Pakistan and met with bomb-maker Abu Khabbab al-Masri before returning to carry out his suicide attack. On 22 December he was spotted as he tried to detonate his shoe bomb and was overpowered by passengers. In October 2002, he plead guilty to the attempted attack and was sentenced to life in prison.


Movements: Afghanistan (1998, 2001); Belgium (2001); Israel (2001); Egypt (2001); Turkey (2001); Pakistan (2001); the Netherlands (2001).

Criminal history: Reid was involved in petty crime including robbery and drug use in his youth and was imprisoned in Feltham Young Offenders Institution in 1992 for an attack on a pensioner. Convicted of over 40 counts of burglary in 1992 and imprisoned for three years. Convicted of attempting to blow up a transatlantic aircraft en route to the US from Europe in January 2003.

Known to the authorities: Unknown.

Networks and associates:

- ‘Shoe-bomb’ plot: Saajid Badat [Conspired with Reid to ‘shoe-bomb’ a transatlantic flight but backed out]; Abu Khabbab al-Masri [Reid visited the bomb maker in Jalalabad in November 2001].

- US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001): Djamel Beghal [Reid was recruited by Beghal after the men met at Finsbury Park Mosque where Reid was staying].

- NATO Airbase plot: Nizar Trabelsi [Stayed with Trabelsi, who has been described as Reid’s handler in the 2001 shoe bomb plot].

- US Embassy plot: Jerome Courtailler [Believed to have met Reid in the Netherlands].

- Al-Qaeda: David Courtailler [Courtailler’s time at Khalden training camp is believed to have coincided with that of Reid]; Zacarias Moussaoui [Reid is said to have “hero worshipped” Moussaoui and the two men’s time at Khalden coincided]; Ahmed Ressam [The two men appear to have been at Khalden at the same time].

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1093 ibid, p. 229.
1098 ibid, p. 225.
1099 ibid, p. 229.
1102 ibid.
1103 ibid.
SAAJID BADAT

Role: Admitted conspiring to blow up a transatlantic aircraft en route to the US from Europe using explosives hidden in his shoes.1106

Bio: Born in 1979 in Gloucester, Badat’s parents had immigrated to the UK from Malawi in the 1970s. He grew up in Gloucester and attended a Church of England primary school and grammar school.1106 Badat left school with 10 GCSEs and four A Levels1107 and claims he resisted his father’s wishes he train as an imam, running away to London in 1997 aged 17,1108 where he worked as a kitchen porter and as a security officer.1109 Before leaving home, he become familiar with the recordings of Azzam publications which eulogised the ‘martyrs’ of the Bosnian wars.1111 Badat claims meeting the south-London-based British Muslims known as the ‘Tooting Circle’, which included the owner of Azzam Publications, Babar Ahmad, was central to his radicalisation.1111 According to Badat, Ahmed became his mentor and introduced him to the idea of “taking up arms in the name of Islam”.1112 He also came under the influence of Abu Hamza-al Masri at Finsbury Park Mosque.1113 In 1998, Badat went to Sarajevo, Bosnia, to offer assistance in relief operations,1114 and then travelled to Afghanistan in 1999, where he visited multiple training camps and met with senior al-Qaeda members including Osama bin Laden, Abu Hafs al-Masri, and Saif al-Adel.1115 He worked for a Taliban magazine in the summer and autumn of 2000,1116 and gathered online intelligence on potential Jewish targets in South Africa after a request from Abu Hafs and Saif al-Adel.1117

In September 2001, Badat was dispatched to Belgium by Abu Hafs and Saif al-Adel to meet a man he identified as Nizar Trabelsi and to obtain a replacement passport.1118 He then returned to Afghanistan to collect bombs hidden in shoes, and to meet with bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Muhammed, before Mohammed dispatched him to Karachi to meet his nephew, Ammar Al-Baluchi.1119 After returning to the UK, Badat pulled out of the shoe-bomber plot by emailing his handler in Pakistan telling him that he would not go ahead with the suicide attack and hid the evidence, a detonator, beneath his bed in his parents’ house, though he had already purchased his plane ticket to Amsterdam. He enrolled at an Islamic college, but was later arrested in November 2003.1120 Badat plead guilty1121 and cooperated with British authorities, resulting in his sentence being reduced from 13 to 11 years.1122 He was released from prison in March 2010.1123

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1109 R v Saajid Badat, Prosecution Opening of Facts, p. 2.
1111 R v Saajid Badat, Prosecution Opening of Facts, p. 2.
1113 ibid, p. 31.
1114 ibid, pp. 52-3.
1115 ibid, p. 230.
1117 ibid, p.9.
1118 ibid, p. 18.
1119 ibid, pp. 30-68.
1120 ibid, pp. 53-4.
Badat testified against Adis Medunjanin in 2012, who was subsequently sentenced to life for a plot to carry out suicide bombings on the New York subway. In March 2014, he also testified against al-Qaeda spokesperson and bin Laden’s nephew, Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, sentenced to life for conspiring to kill Americans. In April 2014, Badat testified against Abu Hamza-al Masri, who was subsequently convicted and jailed for life in the US for hostage-taking and plotting to establish a terrorist training camp in Oregon. He also gave testimony which was used during the trial of Babar Ahmed and Syed Talha Ahsan, who plead guilty to providing material support to terrorists. In August 2015, the US State Department removed Badat from its list of designated global terrorists.

**Foreign training/combat:** Badat received six to eight months of training in light and heavy weapons, explosives and intelligence at Derunta training camp, al-Matar (aka al-Obaida) training camp, and al-Farooq training camp.

**Movements:** Bosnia (1998); (Afghanistan 1999, 2001); Belgium (2001); UK (2001).

**Criminal history:** Convicted of conspiracy to destroy, damage or endanger the safety of an aircraft in service in February 2005.

**Known to the authorities:** Unknown.

**Networks and associates:**

- **‘Shoe-bomb’ plot:** Richard Reid [Conspired with Reid to ‘shoe-bomb’ a transatlantic flight]; Nizar Trabelsi [Badat was sent from Afghanistan to meet Trabelsi in September 2001]; Abu Khabbab al-Masri [Badat visited the bomb-maker in Jalalabad in November 2001].

- **Al-Qaeda:** Osama bin Laden [Badat met with bin Laden on more than one occasion, meeting him in 2001 before leaving Afghanistan]; Abu Hafs al-Masri [Al-Qaeda’s military chief, Badat met al-Masri personally and was dispatched to Belgium in September 2001 by him]; Saif al-Adel [Bin Laden’s director of terrorist operations abroad, al-Adel met with Badat and sent him to Belgium in 2001]; Khalid Sheikh Mohammed [Met with Badat before he left Afghanistan in

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1141 ‘Deposition in U.S. v. Adis Medunjanin’, pp. 7, 12, 19, 63, 64 and 74.


1143 Saajid Badat, trial record sheet, private correspondence, Central Criminal Court, 17 June 2009.


1148 ibid, p. 35.


1150 Deposition in U.S. v. Adis Medunjanin’, p. 18.

2001 and\textsuperscript{114} told him to travel to Karachi to meet his nephew;\textsuperscript{115} Ammar al-Baluchi [Nephew of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed who acted as one of Badat’s handlers].\textsuperscript{116}

- **Finsbury Park Mosque:** Badat stayed at the mosque.\textsuperscript{117} Feroz Abbasi [Badat was instructed to “look after” Abbasi in Kandahar and claims to have seen Abbasi at al-Farouq training camp in 2001. He acted as Abbasi’s translator in his meeting with two senior al-Qaeda figures].\textsuperscript{118}

- **The ‘Tooting Circle’:** Babar Ahmad [The founder of Azzam Publications\textsuperscript{119} and Bosnian veteran,\textsuperscript{120} Badat claims Ahmad became his mentor and introduced him to the idea of “taking up arms in the name of Islam”].\textsuperscript{121}

**OMAR ALTIMIMI**

**Role:** Described as a “sleeper”, Altimimi was convicted of possession of material for a purpose connected with terrorism, including material on how to establish cells.\textsuperscript{122}

**Bio:** Altimimi came to the UK in 2004 from the Netherlands\textsuperscript{123} and sought to claim asylum for himself and his family, moving to Bolton and looking for work in teaching and law enforcement.\textsuperscript{124} In 2006 he was arrested on suspicion of money laundering, which led to a police search of his home. Information seized from his computer contained files on the organisation of a terror cell, how to make explosives, ‘bombing strategies,’ details of targets and recordings of executions. He was also found to have created multiple identities for himself. In July 2007, Altimimi was sentenced to nine years in prison for six counts of possessing documents for the purposes of terrorism and three years for offences relating to the proceeds of crime.

**Foreign training/combat:** Unknown.

**Movements:** UK (2004).

**Criminal history:** Initially arrested on suspicion of money laundering, Altimimi was convicted of possessing documents for the purposes of terrorism and offences relating to the proceeds of crime.

**Known to the authorities:** Originally investigated over money laundering suspicions.\textsuperscript{125}

**Networks and associates:**

- **US Embassy and Cultural Centre plot (2001):** Jerome Courtailleur [Altimimi stayed at an apartment in Rotterdam in which Courtailleur had also lived].

\textsuperscript{114} ‘Deposition in U.S. v. Adis Medunjanin’, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{117} Former al-Qaeda operative turned informant testifies in Abu Hamza trial’, Guardian, 28 April 2014.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, pp. 52-3.
\textsuperscript{125} Altimimi and Abdullah’, The Counter-Terrorism Division of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).
- **Other:** Junade Feroze [Jailed for 22 years for his part in Dhiren Barot’s bomb plots, Feroze’s phone number was found in Altimimi’s home]; Raschid Messoukat [It is believed Altimimi transferred £8,000 to Messoukat, who has been convicted of terrorism-related offences in Europe].

CHAOUKI BAADACHE: An Algerian sentenced to ten years in prison in France in 2004 alongside David Courtailler and Ahmed Laidouni for providing support to Islamist terrorists in Europe. Part of a seven year enquiry into the networks involved in aiding French individuals to travel to Afghanistan to join al-Qaeda-linked groups, Chaouki’s conviction was on the same charge as David Courtailler – conspiring with criminals engaged in a terrorist enterprise.

AHMED LAIDOUNI: A French national, Laidouni was sentenced to seven years in prison in France in 2004 alongside David Courtailler and Chaouki Baadache for providing support to Islamist terrorists in Europe.


MOINUL ABEDIN: A Bangladeshi-born resident of the UK arrested in Birmingham in November 2000, police discovered bomb-making handbooks and material used in making explosives on Abedin’s rented premises. David Courtailler’s false British driving licence was also discovered in his home. Abedin was sentenced to 20 years in prison in February 2002 and released on licence in August 2012 before breaching his release terms over the use of a computer. He was returned to prison and will not be eligible for release until November 2020.

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1160 ‘Police investigation: How many more are out there?’, Independent, 23 July 2004.
3. Analysis

3.1 Introduction

The biographical profiles in this report cover two networks of extremists separated by over ten years and associated with two different Islamist groups now violently at odds with one another. While many of the men involved in the networks and plots of the later 1990s and early 2000s were associated with al-Qaeda and its Afghan training camps, or with al-Qaeda-linked North African groups like the GIA or GSPC, those behind the recent attacks in Brussels and Paris appear to have instead been closely connected to IS. Despite this, there is a clear continuity between the Islamism-inspired terrorist activity in Europe of the late 1990s and early 2000s and the threat faced by the continent today. The most striking evidence of this is the direct connections between individuals involved with the older al-Qaeda-inspired networks and the modern networks associated with IS. When the extent of this network’s involvement in the Paris and Brussels attacks are documented, it is clear a direct line exists between the violent extremism and terrorism of the old and new networks.

The repeated failure of the police and security services to recognise quickly enough the pernicious impact of recruitment networks responsible for radicalising people and providing them with access to training and combat experience overseas also demonstrates this continuity. In both cases, the networks used similar structures to recruit individuals and aid their travel to areas in which attacks could be planned and training provided. These structures meant members of the networks were able to exploit access to safe havens overseas where training, networking and attack planning could take place, showing the importance of challenging both the recruitment networks and the groups which provide sanctuary for terrorist training. Other biographical similarities, such as a history of crime and drug use among network members prior to their involvement in Islamism-inspired terrorism, are also a common factor across both networks, and highlight further the endurance of the Islamist threat to Europe.

These similarities demonstrate the extent to which the threat facing Europe from Islamist terrorism today mirrors that of the late 1990s and early 2000s, and highlight their importance for those seeking to challenge radicalisation and terrorism. However, it is also important to understand why the modern networks affiliated with IS have had greater success than those connected to al-Qaeda. The network created by Abaaoud was able to commit a second large-scale attack, with those involved in logistical roles during the Paris attacks transitioning to operational roles in the Brussels attacks, a unique development for an Islamism-inspired network in Europe. The experience provided by the connections to the old network, differences in the way connections developed between the modern network members, and the operation of network members on ‘home territory’ may be behind this increased robustness – something policy-makers and practitioners seeking to counter future attacks should look to take into account.

3.2 Network Connections

The existence of direct connections between individuals involved with the older al-Qaeda-inspired networks and the groups which would attack Paris and Brussels are of particular concern as they appear to show those peripherally involved in terrorist activity going on to be involved in the recruitment of the next generation of militants. This suggests that even when the original networks were broken up and individuals involved convicted of offences, an element of recidivism remained a significant problem,

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raising questions about how to ensure those found guilty of offences do not return to illegal Islamist activism on release. The identification of these connections also raises questions about how those on the fringes of the networks, as documented below in the case of Fatima Aberkan, can be identified and engaged with prior to their greater involvement in terrorist networks.

3.3 The Zerkani Network and al-Qaeda

The connections in question revolve around the assassination of the Afghan militia commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, murdered in a suicide bombing two days before the 9/11 attacks. It has been suggested that the attack on Massoud, carried out by Tunisians Dahmane Abd el-Sattar and Bouraoui El-Ouaer, was ordered by Osama bin Laden in anticipation of any role Massoud might play should the US target Afghanistan and his Taliban hosts following the 9/11 attacks. Several terrorists profiled as part of the older network were involved in the assassination of Massoud, and a number of Belgium-based extremists convicted of involvement in the attack or associated with those involved would later be imprisoned for their involvement in the so-called ‘Zerkani network’. This group radicalised and recruited young men to travel to fight in Syria, including Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the leader of the team which carried out the Paris attacks in November 2015, and Najim Laachraoui, one of the suicide bombers who struck Brussels airport in March 2016.

Abdelhouaid Aberkan, convicted as a member of the Zerkani network in July 2015, had previously been convicted in 2003 for his role in the assassination of Massoud, and is believed to have driven Abd el-Sattar to the airport as he departed on his mission to kill the Afghan warlord. Aberkan’s sister, Fatima Aberkan, meanwhile, was a close associate of Abd el-Sattar’s wife Malika el-Aroud and was arrested alongside her in 2007 in relation to an alleged plot to free the convicted al-Qaeda terrorist, Nizar Trabelsi, from prison before being released without charge. Fatima Aberkan was convicted in July 2015 of involvement in Zerkani’s recruitment network and sentenced to eight years in prison, which was increased to 15 years by an appeal court in April 2016. A third member of the Zerkani network involved with the assassination of Massoud, Abderrahmane Ameroud, was convicted in 2005 as an accomplice to the attack and sentenced to seven years in prison.

These historic connections between members of the Zerkani network who would radicalise the next generation of militants and the al-Qaeda-linked militants behind the assassination of Massoud demonstrate the direct line which exists between the Islamist terrorism of the early 2000s and today. The clearest example of this is the radicalisation of Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who became associated with the Zerkani network on his release from prison in 2012 and was given a 20 year sentence in absentia in connection with his involvement with the network. Another of the Paris attackers, Chakib Akrouh, became associated with the extremist network related to Khalid Zerkani before travelling to Syria and was

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1178 ‘Terror suspect shot and held by Brussels police ‘had been jailed for seven years for helping Taliban assassinate Afghan leader two days before 9/11’’, Daily Mail Online, 26 March 2016.
also convicted in absentia in July 2015 for “participating in a terrorist organisation” in connection with his relation to the network, receiving a five year prison sentence.1172 Like Abaaoud, Akrouh was to return from Syria to carry out the Paris attacks and was killed alongside Abaaoud during a police raid on 18 November 2015.1173

Salah Abdeslam, arrested in March 2016 after having played a key logistical role in the Paris attacks,1174 was eventually discovered alongside a man called Abid Aberkan at Aberkan’s mother’s address.1175 Aberkan is Fatima Aberkan’s nephew, and as such it is possible Abdeslam had some connection to the wider Zerkani network of which Fatima Aberkan was such an important part.1176 Just days after Abdeslam’s arrest, his associate Najim Laachraoui, who had been stopped in September 2015 at the Hungary-Austria border in a car driven by Abdeslam,1177 carried out a suicide attack on Zaventem airport in Brussels. He had been due to go on trial in absentia in May 2016 in connection with his relationship with the Zerkani network and has been described as an associate of the radical preacher.1178 Meanwhile, Reda Kriket, another man convicted in absentia in July 2015 as part of the Zerkani network1179 is the main suspect in a foiled Paris attack, charged with possessing and transporting arms and explosives and holding fake documents.1180 In yet another connection between the old and new networks, Abderrahmane Ameroud was also shot in the leg and arrested in Schaerbeek in March 2016 in relation to his suspected involvement in Kriket’s foiled plot.1181

3.04 The Buttes-Chaumont Connection

Away from the attacks on Paris and Brussels, the profiles also highlight direct connections between recent mass-casualty attacks and those involved in the al-Qaeda-linked networks of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Cherif Kouachi, one of the gunmen who targeted the Charlie Hebdo magazine offices in January 2015 is believed to have been radicalised by the notorious al-Qaeda recruiter, Djamel Beghal, whilst in prison from January 2003 to October 2006.1182 Kouachi visited Beghal, profiled as one of the key nodes in the old network, while Beghal was under house arrest,1183 playing football and trekking with him.1184 Kouachi was later arrested alongside Beghal due to his alleged involvement in a plot to free a convicted Islamist militant from prison, but released.1185 In addition, the Hypercache supermarket shooter, Ahmedy Coulibaly, met Beghal in prison between January and August 20051186 and visited him after his release.1187 Coulibaly was later convicted alongside Beghal of involvement in the prison break plot which Kouachi had been dropped from.1188

1186 Ibid.
The so-called Buttes-Chaumont network involved in this plot also featured Salim Benghalem, profiled in the new networks section of this report as an IS theatre commander for Europe and suggested to have played a significant role in organising the Paris attacks.1189 Benghalem was involved in a plot which Beggah was convicted for, and is also believed to have travelled to Yemen with Kouachi in 2011. He is thought to have travelled to Syria in 2013,1190 from where he is believed to have become involved in recruitment, being described as France’s top IS recruiter1191 and sentenced in absentia by a Paris court to 15 years for recruiting for IS.1192 While the extent of his connections to the Paris attack are unclear, his involvement with Beggah’s post-prison network demonstrates further evidence of the cross-over between the older al-Qaeda-linked militants of the early networks and the IS members currently working to recruit fighters and target the West.

3.5 Foreign Training and Combat Experience

The failure of the police and security services to deal swiftly enough with recruitment rings in both networks also raises concerns. Given the extent to which individuals with foreign training or combat experience have been involved in Islamist terrorism both in these networks and beyond, this suggests the lessons which should have been learned from the widespread foreign travel present in the old al-Qaeda-linked network were not taken into account. It also alludes to a wider similarity in the structures which have made up the networks operating within Europe over the past 15 to 20 years. Responsible for radicalising people and providing them with access to training and combat experience overseas, both networks featured recruiters with religious authority such as Abu Doha and Khalid Zerkani, as well as cell leaders tasked with identifying individuals who could be used to carry out operational and logistical roles, such as Djamel Beggah and Abdelhamid Abaaoud.

The threat posed by foreign fighters is clear, with data collated by the Henry Jackson Society previously demonstrating the extent to which the most serious terrorism plots in the UK have been influenced by individuals with overseas combat or training experience. This research found that “individuals who had previously fought in jihadist conflicts or trained abroad have been disproportionately involved in the most serious Islamism-inspired terrorism offences in the UK”. Between 1999 and 2010, 134 people were either convicted of such offences or killed themselves in suicide attacks, and almost one in five (19%, n=26/134) had attended foreign terrorist training camps and/or obtained combat experience abroad. Of eight major terrorism bomb plots planned or executed during this period, 41% of participants or plotters had attended foreign terrorist training camps and/or obtained combat experience abroad. Individuals with foreign terrorist training/combat experience were, therefore, much more prominent among the major Islamism-inspired terrorist offenders than they were among all Islamism-inspired terrorist offenders (41% and 19% respectively).1193 When this evidence is taken into account alongside the preponderance of ‘foreign fighter’ involvement in both the old al-Qaeda-linked networks and the plots in Europe planned by IS-directed networks, it is clear that this is an element of violent extremism which has not changed since the late 1990s. It also demonstrates the importance of taking the threat posed by individuals with such skills seriously, given their involvement in terrorist plots across Europe over the past 15 years, and of understanding the

1190 ibid.
1192 ibid.
significance and necessity of space for training and operational planning to militants. Given that both networks sought to gain access to these spaces and used them to prepare for attacks, it also highlights the need to remove the ability to operate freely in these spaces – either through targeted military action or cooperation with local allies. Finally, it suggests that despite the widespread role of foreign/returned fighters in attack plots, European governments are still struggling to uncover these networks early enough or identify these individuals on their return.

### 3.6 The Afghan Connection

Of those individuals profiled, the failure to effectively challenge Khalid Zerkani’s recruitment network until up to 40 people had left for Syria and Iraq echoes the inability to properly identify and challenge the networks used to recruit individuals to travel to Afghanistan in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Similarly to Zerkani, Abu Doha was allegedly able to use Finsbury Park Mosque to operate as one of the most significant al-Qaeda recruiters in Europe, creating “one of the most significant groups of terrorists in the United Kingdom.” Djamel Beghal, meanwhile, frequented Finsbury Park Mosque and targeted the vulnerable young men who attended in his predatory efforts “to assemble a team of malleable volunteers” for al-Qaeda. These included Richard Reid, recruited by Beghal after the men met at Finsbury Park Mosque where Reid was staying, and Zacharias Moussaoui, and possibly even Jerome Courtailler, believed to have been converted to Islam by Beghal. The recruitment network at Finsbury Park Mosque also provided the means for new recruits to travel to Afghanistan, with David Courtailler given money and a fake passport by friends at Finsbury Park Mosque who sent him to train in Afghanistan.

Of those profiled in the early networks, over twenty individuals had some of military training, most commonly training which had been provided in camps linked to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. These include the individuals closely associated with the circles which developed at Finsbury Park Mosque such as Djamel Beghal, Kamel Daoudi, and Nizar Trabelsi, as well as those men Beghal and others are believed to have helped recruit at the mosque and elsewhere across London, such as Jerome and David Courtailler, Zacharias Moussaoui, Richard Reid, and Saajid Badat. Abu Doha, meanwhile, travelled to Afghanistan and is alleged to have taken part in the administration of Khaled training camp, while his Canadian contact, Ahmed Ressam, attended the training camp in 1998.

However, other networks also featured a significant number of men with foreign combat training, including the so-called ‘Frankfurt cell’. Slimane Khaflaoui allegedly admitted to having fought in Bosnia...

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123 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
132 ‘Sources: Reid is al Qaeda operative’, International CNN, 6 December 2003.
133 ‘Deposition in U.S. v. Adis Medunjanin’, pp.7, 12, 19, 63-4 and 74.
and spent time in Afghanistan, while Yacine Aknouche, Fouhad Sabour, Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Lazhar Ben Mohammed Tili and Aeroubi Beandali all spent time in Afghanistan. Another al-Qaeda operative connected to the plot, Said Arif, had travelled to Afghanistan in the late 1990s and would later flee to Syria following the outbreak of the conflict there before being killed in a Coalition airstrike. In addition to the ‘Frankfurt cell’ members, at least two of the men convicted as part of the NATO airbase plot other than Nizar Trabelsi had experience of Afghan training camps, with Mohammed Amor Sliti involved in training militants and his cousin Hisham bin Ali bin Amor receiving weapons training and fighting against Coalition forces.

Other members of the networks are likely to have gained training with other Islamist militant groups, with the al-Qaeda financiers Baghdad Meziane and Brahim Benmerzouga believed to have been members of the GIA in Algeria. Similarly, Abu Doha’s protégé, Rabah Kadre, is alleged to have been a member of the GSPC. Others, including Beghal, have been named as members of the GIA or GSPC who then travelled on to Afghanistan, including Merouane Benahmed, described as a former GIA commander and Tarek Maaroufi, convicted of involvement in GIA arms trafficking before he travelled to Afghanistan.

3.7 The Syria/Iraq Connection

The Brussels-Paris networks offer a similar story. A recent interview with IS defector Abu Khaled suggested that IS operatives, raised in Europe and trained in Syria, are being deployed by IS to form networks with the sole purpose of attacking the West. Abu Khaled claimed that the IS leadership are “trying to make sleeper cells all over the world. [They] asked people to stay in their countries and fight there, kill citizens, blow up buildings, whatever they can do”. This has been echoed by the suggestions that IS uses ‘theatre commanders’ to oversee attacks who originate in the regions over which they preside, with the theatre commander thought to be connected to the Paris-Brussels networks a French national called Salim Benghalam.

As a result, similarly to the older al-Qaeda-linked networks, many of those behind the Brussels and Paris attacks and associated cells travelled overseas to gain combat experience. Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the ringleader of the Paris attacks, is believed to have been close to IS Shura Council member Amr al-

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121 Brothers-in-law, one considered key player, investigated in French Strasbourg bomb plot, Associated Press International, 29 November 2002.
122 London al-Qaeda suspect will face extradition, Sunday Times, 10 March 2002.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
136 Spencer, R., ‘Four jihadi nists, one prison: all released by Assad and all now dead’, The Telegraph, 11 May 2016.
Absi is suspected of having been a member of Katibat al-Battar, a militia in Syria associated with IS, and an IS military commander. Other members of the Paris cell who had travelled overseas seeking combat experience or training included Chakib Akrouh, Bilal Hadfi, Sami Aminnour, Omar Ismail Mostefai, and Foad Mohammed Aggad. Of the men who would go on to strike Brussels in March 2016, Najim Laachraoui was described as a “suspected ISIL commander” who travelled to Syria in 2013, while Ibrahim Bakraoui travelled to Turkey in June 2015, and was identified as “a potential foreign fighter” intending to travel to Syria. A number of the group’s associates also travelled to Syria, including Osama Krayem, Mohamed Abrini, and Mohamed Belkaïd.

In addition, those involved in the recruitment of some of the network’s senior members also had experience of overseas conflict, including Khalid Zerkani, who has been described as a veteran of Afghan jihad. Abderrahmane Ameur, who reports claim travelled to an al-Queda training camp in Afghanistan in 1999, and Fatima Akeran, who is thought to have travelled to Syria in 2013 and 2014. A number of the wider network members also spent time in Syria, including Gelel Attar, Sami Zarrouk, and Reda Kriket, while two members of the so-called Verviers cell were claimed as former members by Katibat al-Battar.

3.8 Petty Crime and Fraud and Forgery

The extensive criminal history of members of the networks which struck Paris and Brussels over the past 18 months has led to members being referred to as a “new type of jihadist: part terrorist, part gangster”, yet this history of petty crime is not new or unique to the Brussels-Paris network, nor to Islamist terrorists more widely. In the UK it can be found in the biographies of prominent paramilitaries in Northern Ireland such as Loyalists Lenny Murphy and Billy Wright, and Republican Martin Mcгарland. It can also be found in the backgrounds of 7/7 plotters Hasib Hussain, cautioned for shoplifting, and Shehzad...

Profiles of individuals involved in both networks covered, as well as the biographies of more recent attackers such as the man who carried out the 14 July attack on Nice,\footnote{Mohamed Lahouaij-Bouhlel: who was the Bastille Day truck attacker?, Guardian, 15 July 2016, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/15/bastille-day-truck-driver-was-known-to-police-reports-say, last visited: 9 August 2016.} also suggest involvement in petty crime has often been the only point of contact between individuals involved in terrorist attacks and the authorities. As such, it can be suggested identifying this history as a significant risk factor in an individual’s susceptibility to radicalisation, particularly if this involves a history of violent crime, may be crucial in helping provide policy-makers and practitioners with a better understanding of how to recognise those who may be at risk of recruitment and recognise behaviour which may be of concern. In addition to histories of petty crime prior to radicalisation, the profile also show that criminality was used as a means of funding violent Islamist activities by members of these networks. This provides further evidence individuals involved in the networks may come into contact with the authorities in relation to offences after their recruitment but prior to involvement in violence, providing further intervention opportunities.

### 3.9 Criminality in the Paris/Brussels Networks

The extent of the criminal histories identified by the profiles can be seen most clearly in the highly connected network of petty criminals which went on to form the heart of the IS-affiliated Islamist terror network that would launch two mass-casualty attacks in France and Belgium. Khalid and Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, who detonated suicide bombs in the Brussels Metro and Zaventem airport respectively, were known to the police owing to their long-term involvement in violent crime. Khalid had a history of car-jackings and bank robbery, as well as kidnap,\footnote{Ibrahim and Khalid el-Bakraoui: From Bank Robbers to Brussels Bombers, International New York Times, 24 March 2016.} while his brother, Ibrahim, had a more substantial criminal record, opening fire on police officers during a violent robbery.\footnote{Kirby, P., ‘Paris attacks: Salah Abdeslam’s luck runs out’, BBC News, 19 March 2016.} Like the el-Bakraoui brothers, the Abdeslam brothers also had a history of criminality. Salah Abdeslam and his brother Brahaim had managed a bar which was shut down in 2015\footnote{‘Is Europe still at threat from Paris-Brussels terror “supercell”?, France 24, 11 April 2016.} in connection with drug-related activity,\footnote{Ibid.} and Salah was detained and fined in 2015 after being caught in possession of cannabis.\footnote{Ibid.} In addition to their involvement with drugs, Salah was jailed for burglary in 2010,\footnote{‘Profile: Hasib Mir Hussain’, BBC News, 11 May 2006, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4762863.stm and ‘Profile: Shehzad Tanweer’, BBC News, 6 July 2006, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4762913.stm. Both last visited: 9 August 2016.} while Brahaim had been jailed for theft on at least two occasions.\footnote{Ibid.}

This criminal activity has also been connected to other individuals who would go on to form the backbone of the networks behind the Brussels and Paris attacks. Salah Abdeslam was jailed along with childhood friend and ring-leader of the Paris attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, for a 2010 burglary\footnote{‘Profile: Abdelhamid Abaaoud’, Combating Terrorism Center, 15 December 2015.} when the two broke into a garage in Ottignies, near Brussels.\footnote{Ibid.} Abdelhamid Abaaoud has been described as a “repeat
offender” who associated with a “loosely organised” gang of youths in Brussels, which included Salah and Brahim. As early as 2006, Abaaoud was convicted for concealing stolen goods, and three years later for violence and resisting police officers. In 2011 he was convicted of illegal entry, and later sentenced for theft with violence and assault in 2012. Mohammed Abrini, meanwhile, who was involved with both the Paris and Brussels attacks, was another of Salah’s childhood friends who had been jailed for crimes including theft and drug possession. Abaaoud’s cousin, Hasna Aitboulahcen, who sheltered him while he was hiding from the authorities, was also under surveillance in relation to a narcotics operation at the time of the police raid in which she was killed alongside Abaaoud.

As well as within this network of friends and relatives, a history of criminality also features in the biographies of a number of the attackers and accomplices. Paris attacker, Omar Ismail Mostefai, was known as a “delinquent” who, though never jailed, had been arrested eight times between 2004 and 2010. Mostefai’s fellow Batalgan gunman, Foued Mohammed Aggad, was allegedly known to police as a petty criminal before he fled Strasbourg to travel to Syria. Mohammed Belkaid, one of the accomplices in the Paris attacks, was known to the authorities following a 2014 theft; while Mohammed Bakkali, arrested on 26 November 2015 in connection with the Paris attacks, is also alleged to have had a history of petty crime. Brussels attacks accomplice, Osama Krayem, has also been alleged to have been involved in petty crime and drug use in Sweden, though it is unclear if he was ever convicted of any offences. In addition to these Europe-based individuals, the IS theatre commander connected to the Paris attacks, Salim Benghalem, also has a history of criminality and was convicted of gang-related attempted murder in 2007 over an offence committed several years before.

Further examples of individuals connected to these networks having a history of petty crime can also be found outside of the two major plots, with Abaaoud’s associates in the Verviers cell reportedly having a history of theft and robbery. Mehdi Nemmouche, the alleged Brussels Jewish Museum gunman, had previously been imprisoned for robbery, while Ayoub el-Khazzani had a history of drugs trafficking and Nicholas Moreau had been involved with petty crime in Nantes before leaving to fight in Syria. Meanwhile, a number of those connected to the Zerkani network which Abaaoud and Laachraoui were part of had similar histories. Yoni Mayne allegedly had a history of petty crime, Reda Kriket had “multiple convictions for robbery, possession of stolen goods and acts of violence”, and Abderramane

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1245 ibid.
1246 ibid.
1247 ibid.
1248 ‘Brussels suspect: Check-in area for Tel Aviv flight was targeted’, The Times of Israel, 14 April 2016.
1252 ‘Who was third Bataclan gunman Foued Mohammed Aggad?’, BBC News, 9 December 2015.
1255 Watkinson, W., ‘Brussels attack: Who is Osama Krayem the jihadi from Malmö arrested with “Man in the Hat”?’, International Business Times, 10 April 2016.
1256 ‘French IS group recruiter sentenced to 15 years in absentia’, France 24, 7 January 2015; and ‘Paris attacks: Was Salim Benghalem the real ringleader?’, BBC News, 23 January 2015.
1258 ‘France arrests Syria jihadi suspects as Nemmouche held’, BBC News, 1 June 2014.
1259 ‘French train shooting: Attack was well prepared’, BBC News, 26 August 2015.
Ameroud, who along with his brothers is believed to have transitioned from petty crime to violent extremism, have all been connected to the network.

### 3.10 Criminality in the al-Qaeda-linked Networks

Petty crime including drug use and fraud also features prominently in biographical details of members of the older al-Qaeda networks. Nizar Trabelsi, for example, who is alleged to have been involved with two major plots, had a history of petty crime, drug abuse and violence, while another key figure, Djamel Beghal, had helped organise a kidnapping in 2000. Beghal’s associates in the UK, Brahim Benmerzouga and Baghdad Meziane, had a history of fraud arrests and worked together to develop a vast credit card fraud, while several of those he is suggested to have recruited had a history of drug abuse or petty crime, including David Courtailler, Jerome Courtailler, and Richard Reid.

Other cells, such as the Frankfurt cell which planned to attack the Strasbourg Christmas market were made up of members with similar histories of petty crime to the new IS networks. Mohammed Bensakhria, the group’s leader, is believed to have had a history of theft, assault, fraud and drug dealing, while several of those he is suggested to have recruited had a history of petty crime, Including David Courtailler, Jerome Courtailler, and Richard Reid. Other cells, such as the Frankfurt cell which planned to attack the Strasbourg Christmas market were made up of members with similar histories of petty crime to the new IS networks. Mohammed Bensakhria, the group’s leader, is believed to have had a history of theft, assault, fraud and drug dealing, while several of those he is suggested to have recruited had a history of petty crime, Including David Courtailler, Jerome Courtailler, and Richard Reid.

Other extremists profiled as part of the old al-Qaeda-linked networks had also been involved in petty crime before being radicalised, with Hisham bin Ali bin Amor convicted of drug offences in Italy before escaping from prison and travelling to live with his cousin. Others used petty crime to support them themselves. The LAX airport bomb plotter Ahmed Ressam stole suitcases and wallets from tourists and was also involved in the trafficking of stolen driver’s licences, bank cards, social security cards, passports and other identity documents. In the UK, Brahim Benmerzouga and Baghdad Meziane used their well-developed fraud and forgery operation to fraudulently raise hundreds of thousands of...
pounds for al-Qaeda and provided other extremists with false identities to help them travel to training camps in Afghanistan.131

3.11 Fraud and Forgery in Both Networks

This illegal creation and dissemination of false documentation was a common feature of the petty crime committed across the network, including in relation to the plot to bomb the US Embassy in 2001. Jerome Courtailler, Abdelghani Rabia, and Adel Tobbichi were all accused of providing fake travel documents to the proposed attackers1312 while Mohammed Berkious was alleged to have discussed providing fake documentation with Nizar Trabelsi.1313 Courtailler was also linked to the supply of fake documents used during the killing of Ahmoud Shah Massoud,1316 while Mohammed Amor Sliti and Tarek Ben Maaroufi1327 were both convicted of “trafficking false passports” in connection with the assassination.1328

When Lamine Maroni, Salim Boukhari, Acroutbi Beandali and Mohamed Bensakhria were arrested in Frankfurt, police discovered fake passports and stolen IDs.1305 Other members of the cell who were linked to similarly fraudulent activities include Yacine Aknouche, who used a false passport to enter the UK1329 and a fake French passport to travel to Afghanistan.1311 Stolen and false passports were also discovered at Nicolas Belloni’s apartment when both he and his brother-in-law, Slimane Khalfaoui, were arrested.1330 Abdelkader Tcharek was found to have used false documents for terrorist purposes,1331 and Mohamed Aouani, linked to the “Frankfurt cell”,1332 allegedly forged and sold false documents, such as passports, identity cards and driver’s licences.

The fraudulent creation and use of false documentation is also apparent in travel of the new IS-affiliated network, with Djamal Eddine Ouali arrested in March on suspicion of being part of a criminal network supplying false documents, and is believed to have provided Najim Laachraoui with fake ID.1333 Laachraoui was able to use the alias ‘Soufiane Kaya’ when he was stopped at the Austria-Hungary border on 19 September 2015 with Salah Abdeslam and Mohamed Belkaid.1336 Belkaid, meanwhile, used a fake Belgian ID with the name Samir Bouzid.1337 In addition to these examples, the Paris attack coordinator, Abdellamid Abaaoud, is reported to have made several trips between Syria and Europe,1338 allegedly entering the UK using a fake passport.1339 Other members of the network used fake documentation as they exploited migrant routes into Europe, with Ahmed al-Mohamadou using a fake Syrian passport1342 and Osama Krayem posing as a migrant using the name Naim al Hamed.1317 Another man,1332 Soufiane Ayari,
used fake identification to travel under the aliases ‘Amine Choukri’ and ‘Monir Ahmed Alaaj’. While it is unclear if he used them, Reda Kriket also possessed an abundance of false documents when he was arrested in March 2016.

3.12 Differences in Militant Networks

Despite the abundance of functional and biographical similarities one obvious difference stands out between the two networks — the increased success of the IS-affiliated plots when compared to the al-Qaeda-linked plots. Given the networks were both structured in much the same way, recruited individuals with similar backgrounds, and provided many of their members with training overseas, the question of what differences enabled the IS-affiliated network to carry out two successful mass-casualty attacks is a vital one. When analysing the biographical data provided in the profiles of both networks, the differences which become apparent are the divergent nature of the way in which connections developed between the modern network members, and the operation of the network members on ‘home territory’ rather than the more rootless nature of the old al-Qaeda-linked groups. It is possible that these two factors contributed to the increased robustness of the new network, with close family and friendship connections more apparent across both the Paris and Brussels plots, and many of those involved facilitating attacks very close to the areas in which they had been raised.

However, before addressing these points, it is also important to return to the importance of the direct connections between the two networks, and the access to hard-won experience provided by individuals from the old networks this offers. Khalid Zerkani, responsible for running one of the major recruitment nodes within the new network, has been described as a veteran of Afghan jihad, while his associate, Fatima Aberkan, had long moved in extremist circles connected to the old al-Qaeda-linked networks profiled in this report, developing communications routes with a senior al-Qaeda fighter based in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Another member of the Zerkani network who was alleged to be involved in a plot to target Paris, Abderrahmane Ameroud, is also believed to have travelled to an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan in 1999. This suggests that the recruitment network would have been able to use the knowledge gained from this history of Islamist activism to aid their efforts to recruit young men to travel to Syria, and impart this knowledge of previous European terrorist networks to their recruits. The same is true of Salim Benghalem’s connection to the network surrounding Djamel Beghal during his time under house arrest, with Benghalem now based in Syria and believed to be involved in attack planning.

3.13 The Family and Friendship Group

Meanwhile, the networks behind the attacks in Paris and Brussels will also have been able to learn from the failures of the cells which sought to target Paris and Strasbourg regardless of whether or not there were any direct personal connections. One of the lessons learned may have been the importance of network security to prevent plots from being uncovered before attacks could be carried out, with an apparent change in recruitment focus to the identification and contacting of a network of old friends and family connections, rather than the long-term predatory grooming of vulnerable individuals. When compared to the old al-Qaeda-linked networks recruited by leaders like Djamel Beghal and Abu Doha, which

1325 ‘How are the Brussels attackers linked to Paris?’, France 24, 21 April 2016.
1328 ‘At least 8 suspects are at large with links to attacks in Brussels, Paris’, CNN, 28 March 2016.
identified at-risk individuals like Richard Reid or Saajid Badat as potential recruits for the cause first and foremost, the core of the Brussels-Paris networks knew each other from childhood and moved through a period of petty crime before becoming involved with the terror network developed by Abaaoud.

However, while the connections to family, friends and neighbourhoods developed by the new network differ from the old al-Qaeda-linked networks associated with Beghal and Doha, where there are fewer instances of familial connection, it is not an unusual element within terrorist networks. Family ties in particular have been identified as important to the development of terrorist networks from the Italian Red Brigades to al-Qaeda in Iraq. They can also be seen in a number of Islamist terror networks which sought to carry out attacks in the UK over the past 15 years, with the failed 21/7 attacks on the London transport network providing a clear example. Hussain Osman’s wife, Yeshimebet Girma, provided transport, a mobile phone and cash for Osman, and cleared his home of evidence following the attacks. Osman also relied upon his sister-in-law, Mulumebet Girma, who provided him with safe houses in Brighton and treated his wounds, and his brother-in-law, Esayas Girma. Meanwhile, the failed bomber at Oval station, Ramzi Mohammed, was provided with a mobile phone and food while in hiding by his brother Wahbi, who was also responsible for the camera on which the bombers filmed their suicide missions. Yassin Omar, the failed Warren Street bomber, relied on a close friend he had been fostered alongside to remove evidence from his flat, and also used a school friend, Adel Yahya, to gather bomb-making information and purchase hydrogen peroxide for use in the bombs.

Mohammed Hafez has suggested that the use of these networks helps “link individuals who share similar beliefs or a social category”, provide environments in which “trust is already established and the risk of talking to the “wrong people” is minimized”, and ensures “defection from the group entails a double betrayal — betraying the cause and betraying one’s family”. In the case of the Paris-Brussels network, it is clear that utilising such connections provided greater success than the al-Qaeda-linked networks plots, and also saw the group able to carry out a second attack just days after the arrest of several of the network’s major members on 18 March 2016.

It is also interesting to note that several attacks linked back to Abaaoud which failed appear to have followed the pattern of recruitment more closely associated with the old networks. Identifying individuals he had no previous connections to while in Syria, Abaaoud sought to recruit fighters for smaller one-off attacks in Europe. These included Reda Hame, trained in weapons usage by Abaaoud and dispatched to Paris but arrested after another unnamed recruit Abaaoud had sent to Spain was arrested and told the authorities of Hame’s plans. Other plots planned in a similar way included Sid Ahmed Ghlam, who accidently shot himself in the leg before he could carry out Abaaoud’s request to strike a Parisian church, and Ayoub el-Khazzani, who was overpowered by passengers as he sought to open fire on a train.

3.14 The Close Connections of the Paris/Brussels Networks

Conversely to the recruitment of these individuals, the exploitation of close family and friendship connections pre-dating Islamist activity was an important characteristic of the IS-affiliated networks responsible for the attacks on Paris and Brussels, with two sets of brothers playing a major role in both attacks, and long-term relationships developed through criminal histories, childhood friendships and

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family connections existing between network members. These later solidified as a result of involvement in the same extremist circles in Europe or contact in Syria and formed the backbone of the terrorist network behind the attacks.

In addition to the close family ties that saw the Abdeslam brothers and el-Bakraoui brothers work together on the attacks, two of the central figures in the plots, Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Salah Abdeslam, had been childhood friends, and had become involved in criminality together from a young age. Despite Abdeslam not traveling to Syria or becoming involved with the extremist networks Abaaoud had associated with before travelling, the connection between the two men was enough that Abaaoud was able to recruit him to play a logistical role in the Paris attacks he was planning. Mohamed Abrini, meanwhile, who was caught on CCTV just north of Paris with Abdeslam and a car used in the attacks had lived in the same area as the Abdeslam brothers and Abaaoud and was a close childhood friend of Salah Abdeslam. Abrini would go on to play a role in the Brussels attacks as well, connecting with other Brussels-based extremists in the process. One of these, bomb-maker and airport suicide bomber Najim Laachraoui, had also become involved with the Zerkani network before connecting with Abaaoud in Syria. Another figure allegedly involved in the Brussels attacks, airport worker Youssf El Ajmi, is reported to have been a childhood friend of Khalid el-Bakraoui.

As well as these personal connections, Abaaoud also exploited a wider family relationship, calling his cousin, Hasna Aitboulahcen, as he sought to hide from the police and asking her “to find him a hideout and spare shoes and clothes”, as well as sheltering with her while he was hiding from the authorities alongside Chakib Akrouh. Like Abaaoud, Akrouh had grown up near the Abdeslam brothers in Molenbeek and become associated with the Zerkani network before travelling to Syria. Similar family connections also straddle the plots and networks involved, with Lavez Abraimi, who is alleged to have driven Salah Abdeslam to Brussels after the Paris attacks, the younger brother of Noureddine Abraimi, who allegedly provided logistical support to Abaaoud as part of the Verviers cell. Senior Zerkani network member Fatima Aberkan’s nephew, Abid Aberkan, also appears to have been involved in sheltering those involved in the attacks. Described as “a distant cousin” of Abdeslam’s, he appears to have provided Abdeslam and Soufiane Ayari with a place to hide at his mother’s house, where the two men were eventually arrested.

As a result of the extent of these long-term personal connections between members of the network, it also appears the network was also able to establish a relationship with areas of Brussels like Molenbeek, which may have provided the terrorist network with a more benign area in which to operate. Mohammed Abrini, the Abdeslam brothers and Abdelhamid Abaaoud all grew up in the same neighbourhood in Molenbeek, while the el-Bakraoui brothers grew up in nearby Laeken and Najim Laachraoui grew

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up in Schaerbeek, where one of the group’s safe houses was found.\footnote{1349} Both Abrini and Abdeslam also returned to Brussels after the Paris attacks.\footnote{1350} In addition to these men, Khalid Zerkani, the recruiter whose network was connected to attackers including Abaaoud, Laachraoui, and Chakib Akrouh also operated out of mosques in Molenbeek.\footnote{1351} This is lacking in the older network, whose members were often born in North Africa before travelling to Europe as young men, and then travelling extensively across Europe after this, with individual institutions like Finsbury Park Mosque playing a more important role than the neighbourhoods they had grown up in.

\footnote{1349} ‘Masterminds of Terror’, Raconteur, May 2016, p. 26
\footnote{1351} ‘Khalid Zerkani, Brussels’ jihadist preacher who ‘perverted a generation’, France 24, 26 March 2016.
4. Conclusions and Implications

4.1 Conclusions

The mass-casualty attacks carried out by IS gunmen and suicide bombers in Paris on 13 November 2015, and Brussels on 22 March 2016, saw the first example of an Islamist network being able to carry out a second strike on a European capital after an initial attack. The scale and complexity of the attacks, which appear to have been organised and directed by senior IS members based in Syria before being overseen by European nationals born and raised in the cities they targeted – as well as the realisation of the interconnectedness of the networks – elicited suggestions that the threat posed by these networks and its members represented something new and unprecedented.

However, this report highlights that significant similarities existed between these networks, documenting direct connections between the older al-Qaeda-inspired networks and the modern networks associated with IS. It also shows how, in both cases, the networks used similar structures to recruit individuals and facilitate access to safe havens overseas where training, networking and attack planning could take place. Other biographical similarities, such as a history of petty crime and drug use among network members prior to their involvement in Islamism-inspired terrorism, can also be shown to be a common factor across both networks.

Despite these similarities, one major difference exists – the success achieved by the new IS-affiliated networks in carrying out their attacks. Identifying key differences, this report highlights how the new network was successfully able to develop around the exploitation of close family and friendship connections pre-dating Islamist activity. Its members were also able to establish an operational relationship with areas of Brussels like Molenbeek as a result of these connections, which appears to have provided them with a more benign area in which to operate. It is possible that these two factors contributed to the increased robustness of the new networks, aiding them in carrying out their attacks, and outline issues which should be taken into account if future networks are to be disrupted before successfully carrying out further attacks.

4.2 Implications

That a network which contained so many similarities to those which sought to target Europe during the early 2000s was able to successfully execute two attacks on Paris and Brussels appears to have been a disastrous failure to learn the lessons provided by past plots. Not only was Europe the target of sophisticated plots once again, but the attacking network was more robust and more successful than many of those that had preceded it, apparently learning from the failures of these past networks in a way in which the governments and security services seeking to challenge their operations had failed to do. Given the urgency which should have been provided by the failed networks profiled in this report, as well as the successful attacks on Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, it is unclear why these lessons were not learned.

Despite the clear threat the older networks had shown they posed, the development of new recruitment networks which channelled individuals overseas to gain training and combat experience were not challenged swiftly enough, allowing large numbers to exploit the opportunity this provided. That a number of individuals involved in these recruitment networks were able to do so despite a long history of involvement in Islamist activism or terrorism is further evidence of a failure to identify the nature of the threat. In addition to these failures, not enough appears to have been done to keep track of fighters
returning from training and combat overseas, or to ensure that they faced sufficient legal sanction, with the threat they posed downplayed by too many. This may have stemmed from a desire to rehabilitate rather than criminalise those who could not be proven to have fought for proscribed terrorist groups, but was also likely a consequence of the sheer number of individuals involved.

The inability to properly identify returning fighters was likely also influenced by the repeated use of false identification documents, with some individuals able to travel and return from Syria – in some cases multiple times. This use of fraud and forgery was a major part of past terrorist networks which operated in Europe, and its successful use by the operational teams which would hit Paris and Brussels shows yet another hole in the efforts to keep Europe safe. The extent to which crime featured in the backgrounds of both networks profiled also suggests processes to recognise individuals who may be at risk of radicalisation and recruitment have not been effective enough in spotting increasing radicalism or the risk posed by extremist recruiters when dealing with petty criminals prior to imprisonment, within the prison system, or following release.

On a geopolitical level, meanwhile, it is also clear that the need to remove safe havens for terrorist groups went unidentified, with disquiet over criticisms following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as limited intervention in Libya, resulting in terrorist groups which sought to target the West able to operate without challenge for too long in Syria.

If similar networks to the one which struck Paris and Brussels are to be successfully challenged in future, government policy and law enforcement practice must take these lessons into account, seeking to ensure that networks are not able to use the same practices to carry out attacks in the future. As such, it is important they:

1. Understand that future terrorist networks will be fuelled by recruitment networks which channel people overseas, and disrupt these networks as early as possible;

The extremist network connected to the recruitment of some of the most senior militants involved in the network which attacked Paris and Brussels was able to operate for two years following an investigation being opened by Belgian authorities. In that time, dozens of individuals were able to leave Belgium for Syria, with the majority, including Abdelhamid Abaaoud, being charged in absentia by the time prosecutors eventually brought charges against the network. The same is true of other networks outside of those profiled in this report, such as that run by Omar Diaby in Nice, France, who began preaching an aggressive version of Islam to young people following his release from prison in 2009. He was arrested in 2011 just before 30 individuals he had allegedly persuaded to travel to Afghanistan were intercepted, but released without charge. Despite this, he was able to operate for another two years, producing Islamist propaganda “credited with inspiring the first wave of jihadist fighters to leave France” before leaving for Syria himself in 2013.

Identifying which individuals to focus on is an extremely difficult task for overstretched intelligence and police services across Europe, and even those known to be of concern simply cannot be monitored consistently, with reports in November 2014 suggesting that MI5 is able to monitor only 50 terrorist

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suspects 24/7. As a result, the authorities across Europe are constantly having to make challenging decisions on which leads to commit resources to and which to consider more marginal. While the focus to date has rightly been on identifying those seeking to carry out attacks as the most pressing targets, this report also highlights the damaging influence individuals involved in recruiting young people to travel overseas can have. These people have been responsible for radicalising people, but also providing them with the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for violent terrorism while associating with groups which aspire to target the West. Targeting such individuals before they send people overseas should therefore be a major priority, with any evidence that they have encouraged people to travel to conflict zones overseas an immediate red flag.

While it may not always be possible to prosecute these recruiters, any such evidence should be considered as justification for increased investigation and surveillance of individuals, with the intention to secure a prosecution in open court at the earliest possible date. Policy-makers should also consider the application of civil orders which could be used to restrict an individual’s access to outlets used to publish propaganda, such as YouTube, as well as to vulnerable individuals such as children or those with a history of petty crime convictions. These orders could also potentially be used to deny individuals platforms within public sector or charitable institutions such as mosques or local authority-funded buildings. Finally, the creation and promotion of material encouraging travel, or speech deemed to do so, could be considered a risk factor worthy of referral to voluntary deradicalisation programmes, such as Channel in the UK, which could ensure individuals remain in contact with the authorities.

2. Deal more effectively with recidivism and propagandising to ensure those convicted of offences are not able to recruit in future;

The presence of individuals within the recruitment network connected to Khalid Zerkani who had been convicted of offences in relation to terrorism carried out by the old al-Qaeda-linked networks, as well as the influence of Djamel Beghal on the Kouachi brothers, Ahmedy Coulibaly, and Salim Benghalem, highlight another element of the recruitment networks which must be challenged in future. Those who have been convicted of terror offences must be prevented from passing on their ideology, experience, and contacts to a younger generation, yet developing policy to ensure this is extremely challenging. One way in which this could be done would be via licence conditions forbidding individuals convicted of serious terrorism offences from proselytising or associating with known recruiters, as well as flagging concerns about potential recruitment to parole officers and any other support staff working with the individual following release.

However, such conditions would only be effective while individuals were on licence, with overly long or disproportionate licence periods likely to be highly unpopular and divisive. Another option could be the imposition of legally mandated deradicalisation programmes for individuals convicted of offences which would continue past the completion of a licence period and remain mandatory until an individual is no longer considered a recruitment threat. In its most recent annual report for the UK’s counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, the government has announced plans for “a new deradicalisation scheme, which will be mandatory where the law allows, for those who are further down the path to radicalisation and who

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need a particularly intensive type of support". Such a programme could be adapted to deal with those convicted of offences who are considered to be likely to seek to recruit individuals in future.

While it is almost certainly already considered serious enough to ensure investigation, contact with convicted terrorists on licence, under house arrest, or subject to any form of civil orders, should also serve as another significant red flag leading to increased investigation and surveillance if the convicted individual was unknown to the visitor prior to conviction. The example provided by Djamel Beghal, who was regularly visited by individuals who would go on to be involved in terrorist attacks while under house arrest, highlights the importance of keeping track of those who visit major nodes within terrorist networks – even if those nodes have completed their sentences.

In addition, the malign influence of those organisations and individuals which regularly promote or advocate on behalf of convicted terrorists should also be considered as worth challenging – particularly where this is done on the property or social media of public sector or charitable institutions. While not direct recruitment, the lionising of men and women convicted of serious crimes risks glorifying their activities and galvanising support for their cause. More serious is the publication of material written by convicted terrorist recruiters from within prison, with the pro-terrorist group, CAGE, publishing Djamel Beghal’s writings on its website in 2013. In one article, Beghal tells readers that other Muslims are being “imprisoned because of their religious convictions” and that the disbelievers are exploiting “the subjugated condition of the Muslims”. By publishing this material, CAGE enabled a convicted terrorist to continue propagandising from within prison, highlighting both the difficulty in preventing those convicted of offences from recruiting and the importance of seeking to do so.

3. **Ensure individuals returning from jihadist conflicts are dealt with as rigorously as the law allows, and develop policy to address gaps in law enforcement;**

The pervasiveness of foreign training or combat experience across terrorists involved in both networks profiled in this report highlights the importance of identifying the threat posed by fighters returning from jihadist conflicts. The same is true of data collected by the Henry Jackson Society, which has identified the central role played within serious bomb plots by those with such experience. Outside of these networks, those responsible for a number of recent terrorist attacks have also sought such training, with Larossi Abballa, responsible for killing French police commander Jean-Baptiste Salvaing and his wife in June 2016, having been previously convicted for his role in a recruitment network “linked to Pakistan and Afghanistan”. Meanwhile, Adel Kermiche, who killed Father Jacques Hamel in July 2016 was reported to have been electronically tagged after seeking to enter Syria twice in 2015.

While there has been considerable focus on the foreign fighter phenomenon since the extent to which individuals had begun travelling to the country became apparent in 2012, it is clear that the threat posed was underestimated. Some academics suggested it could be argued “Syria’s foreign fighters are less of a danger than is often supposed” and wrote that “hounding them with the threat of arrest or otherwise

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creating a sense of alienation can backfire”. Others argued that jihadists who appeared disillusioned should potentially be allowed to return home without prosecution, entering deradicalisation programmes in order to prevent them from becoming “really hardened extremists”. Extremist groups have further clouded the issue by downplaying the threat posed by such individuals, with CAGE claiming in 2014 that it was exaggerated and that there was no evidence of any threat from these fighters. CAGE has also repeatedly criticised prison sentences given to those returning from fighting, claiming it is evidence of a two-tier justice system in the UK which targets Muslims. In addition, the families of at least one individual killed fighting for IS have criticised the UK government for “making it difficult for foreign fighters to return home”.

However, while it is clear this approach needs to be reassessed, the middle ground approach suggested by some has also faced significant challenges. This emphasised a focus on developing increased surveillance of those who have returned from fighting overseas, but cannot be proven to have worked alongside proscribed terrorist groups. While this approach must remain a major part of the solution, it appears to have been overwhelmed by the sheer number of individuals involved, with even those on terrorism watch-lists such as Ibrahim el-Bakraoui going on to carry out major attacks. The same is true of those who have suggested high-intensity and personally tailored deradicalisation programmes, with the development of the capacity to provide such services a huge undertaking requiring credible specialist intervention providers who cannot simply be trained, often requiring long experience of violent extremist activism and rhetoric before they can be effective. As such, it is vital governments now re-think their approach to dealing with those returning from fighting overseas for jihadist groups, as well as individuals with a history of extremist activism who are arrested before they are able to travel.

One facet of this approach could include seeking to prosecute more cases, potentially by proscribing more Syrian militant groups which have a history of involvement in terrorism or war crimes. While this poses the risk of exposing individuals to a prison environment which risks further radicalising them, it could also be used ensure their access to mandatory deradicalisation programmes, as well as providing a punitive threat to deter future travellers. This cannot be the only solution though. Not only is jailing returnees and those aspiring to join proscribed organisations a relatively short-term solution, it also fails to address those who have committed no provable crimes, with wishing to travel to overseas conflict zones like Syria not illegal. However, it is vital those identified as seeking to travel are not allowed to fall off the radar if that travel is not realised due to personal reasons or is frustrated by law enforcement agencies. Should the mandatory deradicalisation programmes mentioned in the 2013 CONTEST review come into force, they could be used to target those who are known to have travelled or sought to do so, with civil orders restricting movement and association with known extremists a sanction for those who refuse to engage. However, this will require increased investment, with the development of programmes to challenge returning and aspirant fighters from jihadist conflict zones seen as a significant law enforcement and counter-terrorism priority.

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1363 ibid.
4. Improve efforts to challenge prison radicalisation and develop more effective policy to prevent offenders being drawn into terrorism;

One of the most prominent details identified by this report to occur in the biographical data of members of both the old al-Qaeda-linked networks and the new IS-affiliated networks is a history of petty crime. The data also highlights that in many cases, particularly with regard to those involved in the attacks on Paris and Brussels, the only contact between the authorities and those who would go on to be involved in terrorism was in relation to this petty crime rather than terrorism offences or known links to extremist groups. While this factor provides an important insight which must be taken into account if European policy-makers and security services are to learn the lessons highlighted by both networks profiled, working out how to do so is extremely difficult. Any policy developed to try and identify those petty criminals which may be most vulnerable risks Muslim offenders being targeted in a discriminatory manner.

However, it is possible to include those most likely to come into contact with those arrested and convicted of petty crimes of specified authorities in any legislative efforts to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. In the UK, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA) mandates these specified authorities to “have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. In practice, this means these authorities must be able to “demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the risk of radicalisation in their area, institution or body”, ensure “staff understand the risk and build the capabilities to deal with it” and “understand how to obtain support for people who may be being exploited by radicalising influences”. The CTSA includes a number of specified authorities where staff are likely to come into contact with those involved in petty crime, including police forces, prisons and young offender institutions, providers of probation services, and local authorities responsible for providing pastoral care facilities for vulnerable individuals. Ensuring these authorities focus on the prevalence of petty crime in the backgrounds of terrorists when training staff could lead to a greater awareness of the risks across these sectors.

It is also vital that prison services across Europe take the threat of radicalisation within their establishments more seriously. It is almost inconceivable that a man as important to so many terrorist networks across Europe as Djamel Beghal was free to radicalise Cherif Kouachi, who would go on to kill 12 people alongside his brother during their attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine offices, while the two men were in prison together from January 2005 to October 2006. Beghal was also able to meet the Hypercache shooter Ahmedy Coulibaly in prison between January and August 2005, with Coulibaly later visiting him at his home before being convicted alongside him. In addition, Abdelhamid Abaaoud is also believed to have become involved with extremists while in prison, as is Salim Bengalem – who would later become involved in the same militant network as Beghal and eventually rise to become an IS “theatre commander”. Both Mehdi Nemmouche and Mohammed Merah have also been named as men radicalised during their time in prison for petty crimes. In the UK meanwhile, the Prison Officers

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Association has claimed there is a serious problem with radicalisation within prisons, and that this is being ignored by those responsible for offender management.\(^{1371}\)

This situation simply cannot continue if future networks similar to those profiled in this report are to be identified or even disrupted prior to their formation. Understanding how extremists have sought to recruit within prisons must be a top priority for institutions, as must the identification of the groups of individuals within prisons who are working to radicalise fellow prisoners and those who are most at risk, as well as those institutions facing the most significant challenge. Repeated contact with known recruiters in prison should be taken into account by staff, and also be passed on to any agencies involved with an individual following release to ensure staff are aware to be vigilant for any behaviour which may suggest continued or increasing radicalism. Developing programmes which can provide those considered vulnerable to radicalisation with the support needed to mitigate the risks posed by recruiters must combine education challenging extremist misinformation and ideology, as well as training/advice addressing reintegration on release, and be delivered by credible and properly vetted delivery staff.

5. **Understand domestic security is tied to overseas conflicts, and that removing safe havens for terrorist groups through diplomatic and military action must be part of counter-terrorism policy;**

Finally, it is important that governments facing the most significant threat from groups such as IS take on board the evidence detailed in the profiles of plots being planned and facilitated from safe havens held by terrorist groups. Many of the terrorist plots detailed in the biographical profiles of old al-Qaeda-linked networks had their germination in Afghanistan, where al-Qaeda operatives met with and provided advice and funding to those who would later be dispatched back to Europe. In addition to the safe haven the country provided for the group, it also provided a space for extremists to meet and develop connections, as well as to form their own jihadist groups – something seen in the case of those network members involved in the formation of the Tunisian Combat Group in Jalalabad. Meanwhile, it is also clear that the safe haven available to IS gave senior members the ability to plan the Paris attacks and train the gunmen who would carry it out. Abdelhamid Abaaoud was also able to use this space to identify and recruit of individuals like Reda Hame inside Syria as he sought to organise numerous small attacks on vulnerable European targets including churches and concert halls. Away from these networks, the territory controlled by AQAP in Yemen has also aided the plotting of attacks, with Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab trained and equipped in the country by AQAP before he attempted to bomb an aircraft over Detroit in 2009.\(^{1372}\)

Removing these safe havens, or at least putting significant military pressure on the groups that operate within them, can therefore potentially disrupt the ability of groups to plan and carry out complex attacks, with the pressure facing al-Qaeda operatives in the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan arguably a significant factor in the group’s failure to carry out major attacks in recent years. The US State Department highlights that “denying terrorists safe haven plays a major role in undermining terrorists’ capacity to operate effectively, and thus forms a key element of U.S. counterterrorism strategy as well as the cornerstone of UN Security Council Resolution 1373”.\(^{1373}\) However, any efforts to implement such policy will continue to face a number of challenges, with the most intractable being the politicisation and unpopularity of military intervention in many of the states facing the threat from terrorism. The recent


release of the Chilcot Report and debate which surrounded it highlighted the ongoing impact the invasion of Iraq has had on the debate in the UK,\footnote{Jones, O., ‘The war in Iraq was not a blunder or a mistake. It was a crime’, Guardian, 7 July 2016, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/07/blair-chilcot-war-in-iraq-not-blunder-crime, last visited: 9 August 2016.} while the results of the limited intervention in Libya continue to be used as an example of why military action should be avoided at all costs.\footnote{‘Everyone says the Libya intervention was a failure. They’re wrong’, Brookings, 12 April, 2016, available at: http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2016/04/12-libya-intervention-hamid, last visited: 9 August 2016.}

As such, it is vital that policy-makers seeking to challenge the threat posed by terrorist networks like those profiled in this report make a strong public case on the need to disrupt the activities of the terrorist groups which organise and train them. This should include credible assessments of the threat, detailing past attacks planned in such safe havens, and clear plans for the aftermath of any military activity – with the failure to provide this in the past alienating those who otherwise support the use of military action to end conflicts in which violent extremism thrives.\footnote{Cox, J., ‘With Regret, I Feel I Have No Other Option But to Abstain on Syria’, The Huffington Post, 2 December 2015, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jo-cox/syria-vote_8658242.html, last visited: 9 August 2016.} It should also include publicising the successes achieved against terrorist groups by both Western forces and their allies within the regions in which these groups operate, showing that military action can drive terrorist groups back and outlining the benefits for those liberated from the rule of such groups. Finally, it should stress the importance of military action being coordinated with allies in the regions in which terrorist groups operate, while refusing to work alongside those regimes which are part of the problem, such as that of President Assad in Syria. Developing this case will be vital if future military action to remove terrorist safe havens is to be a serious option, and will be as important in challenging terrorist networks as the smaller-scale measures working to identify those at risk of radicalisation.
Appendix A: Network Maps
Brussels Attacks (March 2016)

On 22 March 2016, what remained of the network behind the Paris attacks successfully launched another mass-casualty attack in Brussels, detonating suicide bombs in the Zaventem International Airport and the Maelbeek Metro station, killing 32 and wounding many more. A shooting involving Salah Abdeslam, Mohammed Belkaid and Soufiane Ayari is thought to have been planned to accompany the attacks, but was disrupted by Belgium police.

Profiles can be found on pages 8 - 17
On 13 November 2015, Islamic State gunmen and suicide bombers descended on Paris, launching simultaneous attacks in multiple locations, outside the Stade de France, in the 10th and 11th arrondissements, and at the Bataclan concert hall, killing 130 and wounding hundreds. Behind the attacks was an extensive network largely composed of returned foreign fighters and orchestrated by Molenbeek-raised petty criminal turned Islamic State operative Abdelhamid Abaaoud.

Profiles can be found on pages 18 - 33
Zerkani Network

Recruiter and financier, Khalid Zerkani, who has been described as a veteran of Afghan jihad who operated out of Molenbeek mosques, stood at the centre of a vast network of foreign fighters and those plotting attacks at home, including many involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks. His connections extend from the previous al-Qaeda networks to those behind the recent Islamic State attacks and plots in Europe.

Profiles can be found on pages 34 - 41
New Network Connections
The links established between members of the networks behind the attacks targeting Paris on 13 November 2015 and Brussels on 22 March 2016, as well as between the Belgian networks responsible for recruiting extremists to fight in Syria and the Islamic State networks behind the plots.
Under the direction of prolific al-Qaeda recruiter Djamel Beghal the network represented below plotted an attack on the US Embassy and Cultural Centre in Paris, 2001, with former footballer Nizar Trabelsi allegedly designated as the attack’s suicide bomber.

Profiles can be found on pages 50 - 60
Strasbourg Plot/Frankfurt Cell

In 2000 a network led by Mohammed Bensakhria plotted to attack the Christmas Market outside Strasbourg Cathedral by blowing up pressure cookers containing explosives. The main operatives were Bensakhria, Slimane Khalfaoui, Yacine Akhnouche and Rabah Kadri, however, the number of individuals in supporting roles was extensive. Four conspirators were arrested in December 2000, and other members of the plot were arrested in the following years, with two trials seeing convictions in March 2003 and December 2004.

Profiles can be found on pages 61 - 73
Abu Doha was allegedly one of al-Qaeda’s primary recruiters in Europe and head of one of its most significant terror networks. Operating out of Finsbury Park Mosque at the same time as the infamous ideologues Abu Hamza and Abu Qatata, his network’s connections extend to numerous major plots. Not only did he act as financier to the 2000 plot to attack the Christmas market outside of Strasbourg Cathedral, he allegedly conspired with Ahmed Ressam to bomb LAX airport, Los Angeles, in the same year.

Profiles can be found on pages 78 - 81
Old Network Connections

The links established between members of the networks involved in the failed al-Qaeda-linked plots to attack the US Embassy in Paris, the Christmas market outside of Strasbourg Cathedral, and the Kleine Brogel NATO airbase in Belgium in 2000-2001, as well as a number of prominent al-Qaeda-linked individuals connected to the members of those networks.
Network Connections

Connections between the networks behind the Paris and Brussels attacks and the old al-Qaeda networks are significant. Khalid Zerkani’s network acts as a pathway between the two, with Fatima Aberkan and Abderamane Ameroud active in both the past and present networks. The same is true of Djamel Beghal, whose activity as a recruiter spans both the networks, with the Buttes-Chaumont network connected to Cherif Kouachi, Ahmedy Coulibaly, and significantly, Salim Benghalem, the Islamic State theatre commander believed to be behind the Paris attacks.
About the Authors

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About the Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism

The Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism (CRT) at The Henry Jackson Society provides top-quality, in-depth research and delivers targeted, tangible and impactful activities to combat the threats from radical ideologies and terrorism at home and abroad.

About The Henry Jackson Society

The Henry Jackson Society is a think tank and policy-shaping force that fights for the principles and alliances which keep societies free - working across borders and party lines to combat extremism, advance democracy and real human rights, and make a stand in an increasingly uncertain world.