



“WE WILL CONQUER YOUR ROME”

A Study of Islamic State Terror Plots in the West

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Published in 2015 by The Henry Jackson Society

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London SW1P 4QP
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Title: “We Will Conquer Your Rome”: A Study of Islamic State Terror Plots in the West
By: Robin Simcox
ISBN 978-1-909035-22-5

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Terror Plots in the West

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Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Aram Alaaldin, Michael Ettlinger and Nathaniel Greenwold for their research assistance.

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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.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Islamic State (IS) presently controls significant amounts of land throughout Iraq and Syria. However, its ambitions are not restricted to this territory. Within days of announcing its ‘Caliphate’, the self-appointed ‘Caliph’ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi vowed that IS would eventually “conquer Rome”.

IS precursor groups and the individuals which have trained alongside them have displayed an interest in attacking the West for years. However, an audio message released on 21 September 2014, saw Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, an IS spokesman, attempt to ratchet up the threat. He instructed IS supporters to carry out attacks in the West – no matter how crude.

There has subsequently been an increase in IS-linked plots that have emerged in the West. This paper studies all those that have been reported since the declaration of the ‘Caliphate’, and attempts to draw conclusions about any trends that may be developing.

STATISTICS

There were 32 IS plots in the West, between July 2014 and August 2015 (an average of 2.3 a month). These took in 10 separate countries and involved 58 individuals of 14 separate nationalities. A total of 13 attacks took place overall.

- In the majority of plots (a total of 24 cases, or 75%), there was no proof of contact with IS fighters or leaders; but the group’s ideology or propaganda was integral to each schemes’ inspiration.
- IS fighters encouraged, on five occasions (16% of the total number of schemes), individuals with whom they were in contact in the West to carry out attacks in their home countries, though without providing operational guidance.
- There were two cases (6%) where individuals had known connections to IS and contact with the group; but it has not been proved, at time of publication, that the group actually encouraged them to carry out an attack.
- There was also one IS-directed plot (3% of the total). This took place in Belgium, January 2015, and involved fighters who had previously travelled to Iraq/Syria and had since returned to their home country to carry out an attack in the West.

Background

Those involved in plots connected to IS were usually young, home-grown, men. A significant number were religious converts to Islam – particularly in the US – and had past criminal records or were in contact with law enforcement.

- Of the 58 individuals involved in the 32 plots, 97% were men.
- Almost three quarters (74%) were aged under 25 years old. There were 10 teenagers (17%).
- In terms of nationality, 38 of the 58 individuals (66%) were known to be citizens of the country they were targeting.
- Over a quarter (29%) of individuals involved in IS plots were converts to Islam. Twelve of them were American (out of a total of 18 Americans). This is a significantly disproportionate percentage, considering that they comprise only 20% of Muslims throughout the entire United States.
- Over one in five (22%) were known to have had past criminal records or were in contact with law enforcement. The most common felonies related to drugs.

Targets

The US is the most frequently targeted country, with France the most frequently targeted in Europe. Plots in Europe have led to civilian fatalities and a significant number of European cells involved individuals in contact with IS (in contrast to the US). Members of the public are most commonly targeted, followed by the police; with guns the weapon of choice.

- The US has suffered the highest number of plots (12), over double the next two nearest: Australia and France.
- There have been 12 fatalities due to IS-connected attacks. Eleven of these deaths were as a result of gun attacks, and one was due to a vehicular hit-and-run.
- There were an equal number of schemes faced in the US and in Europe as a whole. However, the former has witnessed no fatalities and no operatives actually in contact with fighters in Iraq and Syria. In contrast, the latter has suffered from a total of eight fatalities and a high number of European cells were in contact with IS fighters abroad: 7 out of the 13 plots.
- There are three main groups on which IS and their supporters have focused: members of the public, the police, and the military. Most common targets were members of the public, who featured 16 times.
- Guns were the most commonly used weapons in these plots; while there have also been five IS-connected beheading plots in the West.

Travel and training

IS-associated jihadists in the West have been self-starters with little or no terrorist experience or expertise. However, over 40% of individuals had expressed a desire to travel to the ‘Caliphate’.

- Only 1 of the 32 plots contained individuals who had received any terrorist training or fought in a combat zone – thought to have been Syria. However, 44% of all individuals had expressed an interest in joining up with IS in Iraq and Syria.
- Three individuals are known to have been prevented from going due to passport difficulties – their documents being seized, cancelled, or rejected. All of them then successfully carried out an attack.

Use of the Internet

The Internet has been used in IS plots in the following ways: inspiration; public expressions of loyalty to IS; terrorist instruction; establishing contact; target selection.

- The Internet was known to be of relevance in 27 of the 32 plots (84%) – though, in some of these schemes, it was used for multiple reasons.
- Material accessed online was an inspiration or played a role in the radicalisation of an individual in 15 of the 32 plots (47%). Public expressions of loyalty made online occurred in 13 plots out of 32 (41%).
- At the lower end of the scale, in five plots (19%), the Internet was used to access instructions that would be useful in a terrorist attack; and in another five plots enabled apparently like-minded extremist individuals to connect. In a further four plots (13%), the Internet helped to identify targets for potential attack.

This survey has included cases pending in several countries. To that extent, all comment hypothesises that the prosecution claims will be borne out. We do not explore the detail of any case or offer any judgment. Suspects have in many of the cases pleaded not guilty and must be presumed innocent until proved otherwise.

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic State (IS)¹ presently controls significant amounts of land throughout Iraq and Syria. On 29 June 2014, it announced the formation of a ‘Caliphate’ in this territory, with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its Caliph.

International attention has focused on how to prevent IS from gaining more territory and on expelling them from that which they control. Yet, there has also been a growing recognition that IS does not just pose a threat to Western interests in the Middle East and Africa,² but also to its (the West’s) homelands.

IS precursor groups and the individuals which have trained alongside them have displayed an interest in attacking the West for years.³ This desire has been a feature of IS propaganda,⁴ and, indeed, within days of announcing the ‘Caliphate’, al-Baghdadi vowed that IS would eventually “conquer Rome”.⁵ The brutal beheadings of US and UK hostages in Syria demonstrated the group’s willingness to follow words with action, as did IS’s murder of 38 civilians in the Tunisian beach resort of Sousse, in June 2015 (30 of those killed were British citizens).

In an audio message released on 21 September 2014, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, an IS spokesman, attempted to ratchet up the threat that the group posed within Western communities. He gave the following instructions to supporters, calling on them to carry out attacks – no matter how crude:

[...] strike the soldiers, patrons, and troops of the tawāghīt [those who cross the limits of Allah]. Strike their police, security, and intelligence members, as well as their treacherous agents. Destroy their beds. Embitter their lives for them and busy them with themselves. If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone’s advice and do not seek anyone’s verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling. Both of them are disbelievers [...] If you are not able to find an IED or a bullet, then single out the disbelieving American, Frenchman, or any of their allies. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him.⁶

Instructions of this type – labelled, by one analyst, as “crowdsourced jihad”, or “taking work traditionally performed by ‘employees’ (aka card-carrying members of ISIS) and issuing an open call for individuals outside the organization to carry it out”⁷ – reflect a situation where direct ties between radicalised individuals willing to commit attacks and actual terrorist groups are increasingly weak. This is a model that al-Qaeda has previously looked to, but with limited success; IS, on the other hand, has been able to disseminate its propaganda further and inspire others to take up its call to arms.

The effect can be seen in the increase in IS-linked plots that have emerged in the West. This paper studies all those that have been reported since the declaration of the ‘Caliphate’, and attempts to draw conclusions about any trends that may be developing.

¹ Also known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).

² Definitions for what constitutes ‘the West’ are amorphous. However, in this study, it takes in North America; Europe; and Australia.

³ Simcox, R., ‘ISIS’ Western Ambitions’, *Foreign Affairs*, 30 June 2014, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2014-06-30/isis-western-ambitions>, last visited: 24 August 2015.

⁴ ‘Islamic State video threatens to target White House and US troops’, *The Guardian*, 17 September 2014, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/17/islamic-state-video-threatens-white-house-us-troops>, last visited: 24 August 2015.

⁵ ‘Rome will be conquered next, says leader of “Islamic State”’, *The Telegraph*, 1 July 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10939235/Rome-will-be-conquered-next-says-leader-of-Islamic-State.html>, last visited: 24 August 2015.

⁶ ‘Islamic State spokesman again threatens West in new speech’, *The Long War Journal*, 21 September 2014, available at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/09/islamic_state_spokesman_again.php, last visited: 24 August 2015.

⁷ Silber, M., ‘Crowdsourced Jihad: The New Trend in Homegrown Terror’, *The Cipher Brief*, 8 July 2015, available at: <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/crowdsourced-jihad-new-trend-homegrown-terror>, last visited: 24 August 2015.

Criteria for inclusion

In order to be included in this report, an individual must have been arrested in North America; Europe; or Australasia, between 29 June 2014⁸ and 31 August 2015, for committing; planning; or allegedly planning an act of terrorism.⁹ They also must also either:

- Be a member of IS (defined as having sworn a pledge of loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in person),¹⁰ or
- Have links to IS leadership, for purposes that demonstrably and knowingly furthered IS or a terrorist cause inspired by the group.

Should the individual not have formal connections to IS, they must instead demonstrate inspiration drawn from IS ideology, as shown by any of the following:

- An electronic or self-professed pledge of loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi;
- A self-proclaimed IS-inspired motive;
- Possession of solely IS or IS-inspired propaganda and literature, rather than other terrorist groups’;
- Frequent contact with members of IS, and requests for guidance, as part of the offence; or
- Being identified by law enforcement, intelligence agencies, or a head of government as being inspired by the group.

The requirement for an arrest to have taken place means that the statistics in this report do not reflect the total number of IS plots; some of which will have been disrupted at a stage prior to arrest. For example, in September 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron said that there had been six IS plots against the UK in the last 12 months.¹¹ However, that is not reflected in this report as (for example) Reyaad Khan and Junaid Hussain – the two men behind some of the plots – were based in Syria and killed in drone strikes, not arrested.

Criteria for exclusion

This report errs strongly on the side of caution. While some attacks may be considered acts of terrorism and also match IS’s suggested methodology, there is not always hard evidence proving that the assailant was motivated by support for the organisation. On other occasions, mental-health issues obscure the identification of a clear motive.

Such difficulties have regularly presented themselves with some of the incidents that have occurred in France over the past 12 months. In a particularly unusual case, in July 2015, Yassin Salhi beheaded his boss at the delivery company where he worked and then drove his van into the chemical factory near Lyon. Salhi was an IS sympathiser; however, it has not yet been proved that his offence was a terrorist act motivated by IS, as opposed to a mentally unbalanced criminal act against an employer whom he despised.

⁸ As a result, the report excludes Mehdi Nemmouche, an IS supporter who, in May 2014, shot and killed four people at the Jewish Museum in Brussels.

⁹ This report uses the definition of terrorism as laid out in Title 22 of the United States Code of Federal Laws, Section 2656f(d): “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents”. See: ‘Legislative Requirements and Key Terms’, *US Department of State*, available at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/65464.pdf>, last visited: 27 August 2015.

¹⁰ The media commonly reports individuals pledging allegiance to IS as a group, as opposed to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the Caliph. While it is the Caliph, as opposed to the group, to whom these individuals pledge allegiance, this study reflects what is reported in the press.

¹¹ Syria: refugees and counter-terrorism – Prime Minister's statement’, *HM Government*, 7 September 2015, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/syria-refugees-and-counter-terrorism-prime-ministersstatement>, last visited: 8 September 2015.

With regard to the criteria for exclusion, there have been a significant number of individuals charged or convicted with offences pertaining to a desire to travel to Syria or Iraq to join IS. Yet, unless there was evidence that they intended to also carry out attacks in the West and were inspired to do so by Islamic State, these individuals have been excluded. This means that in a cell containing members who aspired to travel to Iraq or Syria, and others who were planning attacks in the West, for example, only the latter would be profiled.

Similarly, IS supporters who did not intend to join the group abroad; were not planning a specific attack; and yet, have still been charged (for example, for encouraging others to carry out attacks) are also omitted.

The following cases fall into the above categories:

- > Mufid Elfeegh, US, May 2014;
- > Brusthom Ziamani, UK, June 2014;
- > Alton Nolen, US, September 2014;
- > Dijon hit-and-run, France, December 2014;
- > Nantes Christmas market hit-and-run, France, December 2014;
- > Ceuta arrests, Spain, January 2015;
- > Moussa Coulibaly, France, February 2015;
- > Greenvale, Melbourne arrests, Australia, May 2015;
- > Yassin Salhi, France, June 2015; and
- > Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez, US, July 2015.

However, this report does include cases where the offences remain only alleged. These individuals should be considered innocent until proven guilty.

A note on the UK cases

There were three IS plots that led to arrests in the UK. However, discussing the details of these cases poses a substantial risk of serious prejudice under Section 2 of the Contempt Act. Therefore, these cases are excluded from the profiles but their details integrated into the statistical analysis.

PROFILES

SEPTEMBER 2014

Country targeted: Australia

Name: Omarjan Azari

Date of incident: 18 September 2014 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Australian

Age: 22

Type of attack: Knife

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Member of the public

Direct contact with IS: Yes

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: No

Omarjan Azari faces four charges, including conspiring to commit a terrorist attack or attacks and funding or attempting to fund a terrorist group. The alleged plot involved filming the beheading of a member of the public, with an IS flag on display in the background.¹² The video would then be broadcast by the group.

The instruction for the attack was alleged to have been given by Mohammad Ali Baryalei, a fellow Australian now thought to have been killed while fighting alongside IS.¹³ Azari is alleged to have planned the attacks from May 2014, up until his arrest.¹⁴

A transcript was read out in court, of an alleged telephone conversation between Azari and Baryalei, in which murdering a member of the public in central Sydney was discussed. Baryalei is alleged to have said that a tourist – ideally, American; French; or British – should be targeted, and that five a month could be killed. Specifically, Baryalei is alleged to have told Azari, “What you guys need to do is just pick any random unbeliever. When finished put the flag of the state in the background and film it, and send it off.”¹⁵ According to Baryalei, the orders had come from the “commander of the faithful”,¹⁶ thought to be a reference to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Azari is alleged to have replied, “If this is what the commander says, I’m happy with it”. A second phone call, which took place a day and a half before his arrest, heard Azari allegedly attempt to delay the attacks for two months, as he feared that he was under surveillance.¹⁷ He was arrested three days later.

¹² ‘Omarjan Azari told to “pick any random unbeliever”’, *The Australian Financial Review*, 24 February 2015, available at: <http://www.afr.com/business/legal/omarjan-azari-told-to-pick-any-random-unbeliever-20150224-13n5m9>, last visited: 24 August 2015.

¹³ ‘Australia raids foil reported ISIS beheading plots’, *Fox News*, 18 September 2014, available at: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/09/18/australia-terror-raid-prompted-by-isis-plans-for-public-killing-pm-says/>, last visited: 24 August 2015.

¹⁴ ‘Terror accused, Omarjan Azari, had “unusual level of fanaticism”’, *The Australian*, 19 September 2014, available at: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/terror/terror-accused-omarjan-azari-had-unusual-level-of-fanaticism/story-fnpdbcmu-1227063354530>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁵ ‘Omarjan Azari told to “pick any random unbeliever”’, *The Australian Financial Review*, 24 February 2015.

¹⁶ ‘Terrorism suspect Omarjan Azari told to kill “any random unbeliever”, court hears’, *The Guardian*, 24 February 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/feb/24/terrorism-suspect-omarjan-azari-told-to-pick-any-random-unbeliever-and-film-killing>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Country targeted: Australia
Name: Abdul Numan Haider
Date of incident: 23 September 2014 (attack)
Gender: Male
Nationality: Australian
Age: 18
Type of attack: Knife
Terrorist training: No
Combat experience: No
Target: Police
Direct contact with IS: No
Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes
Past criminal behaviour: No
Religious convert: No

Abdul Numan Haider was shot and killed in Melbourne, Australia, after stabbing two police officers outside their station. He was carrying out his attack when he was shot by law enforcement.¹⁸ In its English-language propaganda magazine, *Dabiq*, IS said that the attacks “were the direct result of [spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani’s recent] call to action”.¹⁹

Haider was a known terror suspect associated with Melbourne’s radical al-Furqan Islamic centre.²⁰ Australian intelligence agencies believed that he planned to travel to Syria, to join Islamic State, but is thought to have had his passport cancelled around a week before the attack.²¹ Haider had arrived at the police station voluntarily, to discuss the cancellation.²²

Haider was born in Afghanistan and arrived in Australia as a child, living in Adelaide before moving to Melbourne.²³ He was studying to be an electrician prior to his death.²⁴

¹⁸ ‘Abdul Numan Haider was “stabbing a police officer” when he was shot dead’, *The Guardian*, 3 October 2014, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/oct/03/abdul-numan-haider-stabbing-policeman-when-he-was-shot-dead-court-hears>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁹ ‘Islamic State death cult claims responsibility for Numan Haider’s knife attack on police’, *Herald Sun*, 24 November 2014, available at: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/islamic-state-death-cult-claims-responsibility-for-numan-haiders-knife-attack-on-police/story-fni0fee2-1227131763161>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²⁰ ‘Melbourne shooting: Man being investigated over terrorism shot dead after stabbing police officers outside Endeavour Hills police station’, *ABC News Online*, 24 September 2014, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-23/one-person-shot-dead-two-stabbed-endeavour-hills/5764408>, last visited: 25 August 2015; see also: ‘Terror at home: Numan Haider’s journey from suburban teen to jihad’, *Herald Sun*, 25 September 2014, available at: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/terror-at-home-numan-haiders-journey-from-suburban-teen-to-jihad/story-fni0fee2-1227069638644>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²¹ *Ibid.*; see also: ‘Man shot dead, two counter-terrorism officers stabbed outside Endeavour Hills police station’, *news.com.au*, 24 September 2014, available at: <http://www.news.com.au/national/victoria/man-shot-dead-two-counterterrorism-officers-stabbed-outside-endeavour-hills-police-station/story-fni0fee2-1227068293410>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²² ‘Melbourne teenager shot dead after stabbing two police officers’, *The Guardian*, 23 September 2014, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/24/melbourne-teenager-shot-dead-after-stabbing-two-police-officers>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²³ ‘Terror at home: Numan Haider’s journey from suburban teen to jihad’, *Herald Sun*, 25 September 2014; see also: ‘Numan Haider: from teenager to terror suspect’, *The Age*, 25 September 2014, available at: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/numan-haider-from-teenager-to-terror-suspect-20140925-10lt8m.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²⁴ ‘Piecing puzzle of how Numan Haider turned radical’, *The Australian*, 27 September 2014, available at: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/terror/piecing-puzzle-of-how-numan-haider-turned-radical/story-fnpdbcmu-1227072148444>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

OCTOBER 2014

One of the excluded UK cases occurred in October 2014.

Country targeted: Canada

Name: Martin Couture-Rouleau

Date of incident: 20 October 2014 (attack)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Canadian

Age: 25

Type of attack: Vehicular hit-and-run

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Military

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: Yes

Martin Couture-Rouleau used his car to carry out a hit-and-run attack against two Canadian soldiers in a mall car park, killing one. His attack took place in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec.

Couture-Rouleau was shot and killed after charging police officers – possibly while wielding a knife. This followed a car chase with the police, in which he eventually crashed his vehicle into a ditch. Prime Minister Stephen Harper described Couture-Rouleau as an “ISIL-inspired terrorist.”²⁵

Couture-Rouleau converted to Islam in 2013.²⁶ He had apparently become more religious and anti-Western after his cleaning business had failed, losing thousands of dollars and believing that he had been cheated by his business partner.

Couture-Rouleau began writing out the Qur’an repeatedly and looking at jihadist material online. His father reported him to the police in June 2014.²⁷ That same month, his Facebook postings praised IS and suggested he was going to leave the country.²⁸

In July 2014, he attempted to travel to Turkey and subsequently had his passport seized – after it was suspected that he was attempting to fight in Syria or Iraq.²⁹ He had previously told friends that he wanted to go there, as, if he died while fighting, he would go to heaven.³⁰

²⁵ ‘Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada in Ottawa’, *Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper*, 22 October 2014, available at: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2014/10/22/statement-prime-minister-canada-ottawa>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²⁶ ‘Man involved in hit-and-run car attack on two Canadian soldiers was “radicalised”, say police’, *The Telegraph*, 21 October 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/canada/11176135/Man-involved-in-hit-and-run-car-attack-on-two-Canadian-soldiers-was-radicalised-say-police.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²⁷ ‘Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada in Ottawa’, *Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper*, 22 October 2014, available at: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2014/10/22/statement-prime-minister-canada-ottawa>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²⁸ ‘Man involved in hit-and-run car attack on two Canadian soldiers was “radicalised”, say police’, *The Telegraph*, 21 October 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/canada/11176135/Man-involved-in-hit-and-run-car-attack-on-two-Canadian-soldiers-was-radicalised-say-police.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

²⁹ Rogin, J., ‘Canada Says Parliament Shooter Wasn’t a Lone Wolf’, *Bloomberg View*, 16 December 2014, available at: <http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-12-16/australia-canada-and-lone-wolf-terrorists>, last visited: 25 August 2015; see also: ‘Radical Muslim convert launched terror attack in Canada killing one soldier after his passport was confiscated as he tried to leave and join ISIS’, *Associated Press*, 22 October 2014, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2801374/Canadian-soldier-apparent-terror-attack-dies.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

³⁰ ‘From typical teen to jihadist: How Martin Couture-Rouleau became radicalized after converting to Islam’, *National Post*, 24 January 2015.

Couture-Rouleau had previously been arrested for drink-driving on two occasions and was thought to have been involved with drugs in the past.³¹

Country targeted: Canada
Name: Michael Zehaf-Bibeau
Date of incident: 22 October 2014 (attack)
Gender: Male
Nationality: Canadian
Age: 32
Type of attack: Gun
Terrorist training: No
Combat experience: No
Target: Military
Direct contact with IS: Unknown
Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes
Past criminal behaviour: Yes
Religious convert: No

Michael Zehaf-Bibeau shot and killed a soldier at the Canadian war memorial in Ottawa. He then stormed the nearby Parliament building, where he was killed in a shootout with security officers. Zehaf-Bibeau used a lever-action, .30-30 Winchester rifle to carry out his attack.³³

Prior to the shooting, Zehaf-Bibeau recorded a video in which he identified himself as being part of the “Mujahedin” and stated that his actions were in “retaliation for Afghanistan” and Canadian foreign policy related to Iraq.³⁴ He was also a member of extremist Internet forums.³⁵

According to Canadian Justice Minister Peter MacKay, the Canadian government believed that there was “no question” that Zehaf-Bibeau was “influenced by ISIS”.³⁶ He said that the content of Zehaf-Bibeau’s full video was “consistent with our belief that his motivations were very much as a result of being radicalized by the Islamic State.”³⁷ However, there is still uncertainty as to whether the gunman was in direct contact with IS.³⁸

³¹ Ibid.

³² There have been suggestions that Couture-Rouleau was a convert to Islam. In reality, he seems to have previously been a non-practicing Muslim who began to take his faith more seriously later in life. See: ‘Uncovering a killer: Addict, drifter, walking contradiction’, *Maclean’s*, 30 October 2014, available at: <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/michael-zehaf-bibeau-addict-drifter-walking-contradiction/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

³³ ‘Uncovering a killer: Addict, drifter, walking contradiction’, *Maclean’s*, 30 October 2014.

³⁴ ‘Full transcript of Michael Zehaf-Bibeau video released’, *The Star*, 29 May 2015, available at: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/05/29/full-transcript-of-michael-zehaf-bibeau-video-released.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

³⁵ ‘What propelled Michael Zehaf-Bibeau on path to radicalization’, *The Star*, 24 October 2014, available at: http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/10/24/what_propelled_michael_zehafbibeau_on_path_to_radicalization.html, last visited: 25 August 2015.

³⁶ Rogin, J., ‘Canada Says Parliament Shooter Wasn’t a Lone Wolf’, *Bloomberg View*, 16 December 2014.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Raised in Montreal, Zehaf-Bibeau had a track record of petty crime, being connected to multiple offences – including those related to drugs, fraud, theft, and violence.³⁹ He spent time in homeless shelters before the attack, and was in Ottawa for the purposes of trying to renew an expired Libyan passport (his father was Libyan).⁴⁰ However, his application was rejected,⁴¹ and he was suspected of intent to travel to Syria.⁴²

Country targeted: US

Name: Zale Thompson

Date of incident: 23 October 2014 (attack)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 32

Type of attack: Hatchet

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Police

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: Yes

Zale Thompson attacked a group of four police officers on the streets of New York, with a hatchet, fracturing the skull of one and further injuring another. He was then shot and killed by other officers, during the attack.

A significant part of Thompson’s radicalisation appears to have occurred online. He is thought to have spent a lot of his time on the Internet,⁴³ where he visited hundreds of websites related IS; al-Qaeda; al-Shabaab; and beheadings, as well as researched the IS-inspired attacks that had just taken place in Canada.⁴⁴ In fact, there are suggestions that he spent at least three days in a row on the computer, before the attack, looking at a variety of jihadist websites.⁴⁵

Thompson served in the US Navy, from February 2001, before being involuntarily discharged in August 2003.⁴⁶ He had previously been arrested on six occasions between 2002 and 2003, for reasons thought to be connected to domestic disputes.⁴⁷

³⁹ ‘Ottawa shooting: Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, the suspected gunman’, *BBC News*, 23 October 2014, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-29747349>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁴⁰ ‘Ottawa shooting: Michael Zehaf-Bibeau wanted Libyan passport’, *CBC News*, 24 October 2014, available at: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ottawa-shooting-michael-zehaf-bibeau-wanted-libyan-passport-1.2811768>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² ‘Canadian Gunman Was Hoping to Leave for Syria’, *ABC News*, 23 October 2014, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/canadian-gunman-hoping-leave-syria/story?id=26401683>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁴³ ‘NYPD: Hatchet attack an act of terror’, *CNN*, 5 November 2014, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/24/us/new-york-police-attacked/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; see also: ‘NYC police say hatchet attack by Islam convert was terrorism’, *Reuters*, 24 October 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/24/us-usa-newyork-hatchet-idUSKCN0IC2RG20141024>, last visited: 25 August 2015; see also: ‘NYC Ax Attacker Was Consumed by Desire to Strike U.S. Authority Figures, Police Say’, *ABC News*, 3 November 2014, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/nyc-ax-attacker-consumed-desire-strike-us-authority/story?id=26664787>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁴⁵ ‘NYC Ax Attacker Was Consumed by Desire to Strike U.S. Authority Figures, Police Say’, *ABC News*, 3 November 2014.

⁴⁶ ‘New York axe attacker: Navy veteran who converted to Islam’, *The Telegraph*, 24 October 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/11186983/New-York-axe-attacker-Navy-veteran-who-converted-to-Islam.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁴⁷ ‘NYC police say hatchet attack by Islam convert was terrorism’, *Reuters*, 24 October 2014.

Thompson had attended the College of New Rochelle in Harlem, New York, where, in 2008, he acquired a Bachelor’s degree in liberal arts. He then worked at the college for four years, as an administrator. He also enrolled for a Master’s degree at Teachers College, Columbia University, though left in 2010, without completing his course.⁴⁸ He converted to Islam in 2012 and was unemployed at the time of attack.⁴⁹

Country targeted: Austria

Name: Mertkan G.

Date of incident: 28 October 2014 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Austrian

Age: 14

Type of attack: Bomb

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: Yes

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: No

Mertkan G. planned to detonate bombs at public places in Vienna – including a busy train station – and dedicate the attack to IS. He then intended to travel to Syria, to join up with the group.⁵⁰ He was reportedly offered approximately £16,000 by IS, to carry out the attacks.⁵¹

Mertkan, who had enquired about buying chemicals and parts required to construct the bomb and had researched how to build it online, pleaded guilty to membership of a terrorist group and was sentenced to two years in jail, 16 months of which were suspended.⁵² IS propaganda was found on Mertkan’s mobile phone, computer, and PlayStation.⁵³ Downloaded instructions on how to build a bomb were also found on his PlayStation. However, as time served contributed to his sentence, he will be released from the juvenile detention centre in summer 2015.⁵⁴

There are conflicting reports as to how the authorities became aware of Mertkan’s activities: either after his teachers said that he was beginning to act threateningly, which led to authorities investigating his Internet activity,⁵⁵ or after being tipped off by his own family.⁵⁶

Mertkan arrived in Austria, from Turkey, in 2007.⁵⁷ He had been placed in a special school for troubled children.⁵⁸

⁴⁸ ‘New York axe attacker: Navy veteran who converted to Islam’, *The Telegraph*, 24 October 2014.

⁴⁹ ‘NYPD: Hatchet attack an act of terror’, *CNN*, 5 November 2014.

⁵⁰ ‘Austria convicts 14-year-old schoolboy on terror charges for planning to bomb Vienna train station’, *ABC News Online*, 26 May 2015, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-27/islamic-state-austria-convicts-14-year-old-on-terror-charges/6499584>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁵¹ ‘Isil jihadists “offered teenager \$25,000 to carry out bombings in Vienna”’, *The Telegraph*, 30 October 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11199628/Boy-14-who-planned-Vienna-bombings-was-recruited-on-internet-by-Isil.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁵² ‘Austria convicts 14-year-old on terror charges’, *The Telegraph*, 26 May 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/austria/11629948/Iraq-launches-operation-to-retake-western-Anbar-province-from-Isil-live.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015; see also: ‘Austria convicts 14-year-old schoolboy on terror charges for planning to bomb Vienna train station’, *ABC News Online*, 26 May 2015; see also: ‘Austrian teenager convicted of planning a bomb attack’, *Deutsche Welle*, 26 May 2015, available at: <http://www.dw.de/austrian-teenager-convicted-of-planning-a-bomb-attack/a-18477117>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁵³ ‘Austria convicts 14-year-old schoolboy on terror charges for planning to bomb Vienna train station’, *ABC News Online*, 26 May 2015.

⁵⁴ ‘Austrian teenager convicted of planning a bomb attack’, *Deutsche Welle*, 26 May 2015.

⁵⁵ ‘Isil jihadists “offered teenager \$25,000 to carry out bombings in Vienna”’, *The Telegraph*, 30 October 2014.

⁵⁶ ‘Austria convicts 14-year-old schoolboy on terror charges for planning to bomb Vienna train station’, *ABC News Online*, 26 May 2015.

⁵⁷ ‘Austria convicts 14-year-old on terror charges’, *The Telegraph*, 26 May 2015.

⁵⁸ ‘Austria convicts 14-year-old schoolboy on terror charges for planning to bomb Vienna train station’, *ABC News Online*, 26 May 2015.

NOVEMBER 2014

One of the excluded UK cases occurred in November 2014.

DECEMBER 2014

Country targeted: Australia

Name: Man Haron Monis

Date of incident: 15-16 December 2014 (attack)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Australian

Age: 50

Type of attack: Gun

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: No

Man Haron Monis took 18 people hostage in a café in Sydney, for over 16 hours.⁵⁹ Two of his captives died, as well as Monis himself, when authorities raided the premises.

Video footage from inside the café showed hostages explaining that Monis wanted the incident to be known as an “attack on Australia by the Islamic State.”⁶⁰ Monis apparently demanded an IS flag when speaking directly to Prime Minister Tony Abbott, and sought to have his pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi broadcast nationally.⁶¹ IS acknowledged and praised Monis in the sixth edition of *Dabiq*, its English-language publication.⁶²

In the days before the attack, Monis had stopped practicing Shia Islam and began to follow Sunni Islam. He also pledged allegiance to the “Khalifah of the Muslims”, via his website, seemingly a reference to al-Baghdadi.⁶³

Monis, who was of Iranian descent, received political asylum in Australia in 1996. At the time of the attack, he was on bail after being previously charged with a number of violent crimes – including involvement as an accessory to the murder of his ex-wife, in 2013. He was also facing dozens of sexual- and indecent-assault charges.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ ‘Sydney siege: How the hostage drama played out’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 2014, available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/sydney-siege-how-the-hostage-drama-played-out-20141219-12b1km>, last visited: 31 August 2015; see also: ‘Sydney siege: Who were the victims?’, *BBC News*, 29 January 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-30490838>, last visited: 31 August 2015.

⁶⁰ ‘Sydney on tenterhooks as gunman holds hostages’, *CBS News*, 15 December 2014, available at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/several-hostages-get-out-of-sydney-cafe/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² ‘Sydney siege gunman Man Haron Monis praised in Isis publication’, *The Guardian*, 30 December 2014, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/30/sydney-siege-gunman-man-haron-monis-praised-in-isis-publication>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ ‘Sydney siege: What we do and don’t know about hostage situation in Martin Place’, *ABC News Online*, 15 December 2014, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-15/sydney-siege-what-we-know/5967610>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

Country targeted: France
Name: Bertrand Nzohabonayo
Date of incident: 20 December 2014 (attack)
Gender: Male
Nationality: French
Age: 20
Type of attack: Knife
Terrorist training: No
Combat experience: No
Target: Police
Direct contact with IS: No
Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No
Past criminal behaviour: Yes
Religious convert: Yes

Bertrand Nzohabonayo was shot and killed in Joué-lès-Tours, France, after attacking three police officers with a knife at a police station while shouting “Allahu Akbar”.⁶⁵ A fourth officer pulled out his gun and opened fire, killing Nzohabonayo. Three policemen were injured during the attack, with one being slashed across his face.

Nzohabonayo was thought to have been radicalised online.⁶⁶ He had uploaded an IS flag to his Facebook account, shortly before the attack,⁶⁷ and had previously posted other messages that were supportive of terrorism.⁶⁸

Born in Burundi, and a former amateur footballer and referee,⁶⁹ Nzohabonayo had a history of involvement in petty crime and was believed to be suffering from depression.⁷⁰

JANUARY 2015

Country targeted: France
Name: Amedy Coulibaly
Date of incident: 7-9 January 2015 (attack)
Gender: Male
Nationality: French

⁶⁵ ‘France probes possible lone wolf “radical Islamic” attack’, *AFP*, 21 December 2014, available at: <http://news.yahoo.com/france-probes-possible-lone-wolf-radical-islamic-attack-133930883.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁶⁶ ‘French police suspect terror in knife attack by man shouting “Allahu Akbar”’, *RFI English*, 21 December 2014, available at: <http://www.english.rfi.fr/france/20141221-french-police-suspect-terror-knife-attack-by-man-shouting-Allahu-Akhbar>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁶⁷ ‘French knife attacker Bertrand Nzohabonayo was Islamic convert’, *The Telegraph*, 21 December 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11307094/French-knife-attacker-Bertrand-Nzohabonayo-was-Islamic-convert.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁶⁸ ‘France Probes Attack on Police by Knife-Wielding Man’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 December 2014, available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/frances-probes-attack-on-police-by-knife-wielding-man-1419170968>, last visited: 25 August 2015; see also: ‘Joué-lès-Tours: Que sait-on de Bertrand Nzohabonayo alias Bilal, l’agresseur presume?’, *20 Minutes*, 22 December 2014, available at: <http://www.20minutes.fr/societe/1505339-20141222-joue-tours-sait-bertrand-nzohabonayo-alias-bilal-agresseur-presume&prev=search>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁶⁹ ‘Man shot dead by police in jihadist attack in Tours’, *The Independent*, 21 December 2014, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/man-shot-dead-by-police-in-jihadist-attack-in-tours-9938912.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁷⁰ ‘French knife attacker Bertrand Nzohabonayo was Islamic convert’, *The Telegraph*, 21 December 2014.

Age: 32

Type of attack: Gun; bomb

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public/police

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: No

Amedy Coulibaly was shot dead, by French police, on 9 January 2015, having killed five individuals in Paris over the previous two days. He had pledged loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in a video he filmed with an IS flag in the background and which was subsequently uploaded and disseminated via *Twitter*. Coulibaly claimed that his attacks were taking place in co-ordination with Said and Cherif Kouachi,⁷¹ who, on 7 January, murdered 11 people in the Paris offices of *Charlie Hebdo* (an attack attributed to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula).⁷²

Coulibaly's spree began on the evening of 7 January, when he planted a car bomb in the Parisian suburb of Villejuif.⁷³ However, no one was injured in the explosion. Later that evening, he shot and severely injured a jogger in Fontenay-aux-Roses.

The next day, Coulibaly shot and killed a policewoman and injured a street cleaner in Montrouge. It is suspected that he was on his way to a nearby Jewish school and synagogue.⁷⁴ He then went to a kosher supermarket in Porte de Vincennes, where he held 21 people hostage, killing four. He used a Scorpion machine gun and Tokarev handgun during his attacks.⁷⁵

Coulibaly had recorded parts of his attacks in the supermarket on a GoPro camera he was wearing.⁷⁶ Police would also later discovered weapons; money; and Islamic State flags in an apartment in Gentilly, Val-de-Marne, on the outskirts of Paris, which Coulibaly had rented shortly before the attack. It was here that he made his video recording.⁷⁷

Coulibaly was involved with crime from an early age. He was caught committing robbery at 15 years old. By 1999, when he was convicted of assaulting a police officer, he had also been involved in drug dealing; armed robbery; the sale of stolen goods; and shoplifting.⁷⁸

⁷¹ 'Paris gunman Amedy Coulibaly declared allegiance to Isis', *The Guardian*, 12 January 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/11/paris-gunman-amedy-coulibaly-allegiance-isis>, last visited: 30 August 2015.

⁷² 'Al Qaeda branch claims Charlie Hebdo attack was years in the making', *CNN*, 21 January 2015, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/14/europe/charlie-hebdo-france-attacks/>, last visited: 30 August 2015.

⁷³ 'Explosion à Villejuif : la propriétaire de la voiture piégée raconte', *Metro News*, 12 January 2015, available at: <http://www.metronews.fr/paris/explosion-d-une-voiture-piegee-a-villejuif-nous-sommes-surs-que-c-est-coulibaly/moal!9EppJaqobIwWQ/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁷⁴ 'Paris shootings: Jewish school "likely target" of gunman Coulibaly', *The Guardian*, 12 January 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/12/paris-shootings-jewish-school-target-amedy-coulibaly>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁷⁵ 'Paris attack guns "bought by Amedy Coulibaly in Belgium"', *The Telegraph*, 14 January 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/belgium/11345264/Paris-attack-guns-bought-by-Amedy-Coulibaly-in-Belgium.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁷⁶ 'Paris attacks: Coulibaly siege video transcript emerges', *BBC News*, 26 February 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-31637717>, last visited: 3 September 2015.

⁷⁷ 'Deli jihadist admits link to Charlie Hebdo killers in ISIS martyrdom video - as French police discover his massive arms cache and link him to ANOTHER shooting two days earlier', *Daily Mail*, 11 January 2015, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2905302/Calm-stare-Jewish-deli-terrorist-jihadist-s-ISIS-suicide-video-emerges-confirms-link-Charlie-Hebdo-killers-calls-fellow-vigorous-Muslims-defend-prophet-Mohammed.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁷⁸ 'Paris Attacker Amedy Coulibaly's Path to Terror', *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 January 2015, available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/paris-attackers-path-to-terror-1421204761>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

In 2004, Coulibaly was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment, for armed bank robbery. While serving his sentence, he met Djamel Beghal (a recruiter for al-Qaeda) and Cherif Kouachi,⁷⁹ and began to follow a more radical version of Islam. Beghal was thought to be a key factor in radicalising him.⁸⁰

Coulibaly was released in 2007 and took a job working at a *Coca-Cola* plant, where he would meet his future wife, Hayat Boumeddiene.⁸¹

By 2009, Coulibaly – along with Cherif Kouachi and Boumeddiene – was beginning to make regular visits to Beghal, who was living in central France.⁸² Beghal sought Coulibaly’s help, given his experience in armed robbery, to free Smain Ait Ali Belkacem, who had been jailed for his role in the 1995 Paris subway bomb attacks. Beghal and Belkacem then planned to leave France together. However, French authorities were aware of the plot and, in May 2010, arrested Beghal; Coulibaly; and Cherif Kouachi. Weapon ammunition was found at Coulibaly’s home, and he was sentenced to five years in jail. He was released in March 2014.⁸³

Boumeddiene left France on 2 January 2015 – shortly before Coulibaly’s attacks – arriving in Syria on 8 January, where she is thought to have joined up with IS.⁸⁴

Country targeted: US

Name: Christopher Lee Cornell

Date of incident: 14 January 2015 (arrest); 21 January 2015 (charge)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 20

Type of attack: Bomb

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: Yes

Christopher Cornell was arrested on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack against employees working at the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC. He allegedly attempted to persuade another individual to join him in the attack, unaware that he was a Confidential Human Source (CHS) working for the FBI. Cornell was also charged with attempting to provide material support to IS.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.; see also: ‘Attack suspect was known to French authorities’, *The Washington Post*, 9 January 2015, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/attack-suspect-was-known-to-french-authorities/2015/01/09/573bfc8c-9829-11e4-927a-4fa2638cd1b0_story.html, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁸¹ ‘Paris Attacker Amedy Coulibaly’s Path to Terror’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 January 2015.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ ‘Paris shootings: France’s most wanted woman Hayat Boumeddiene has “escaped to Syria”’, *The Telegraph*, 10 January 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11337944/Paris-shootings-Frances-most-wanted-woman-Hayat-Boumeddiene-has-escaped-to-Syria.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁸⁵ ‘Cincinnati-Area Man Charged with Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIL’, *United States Department of Justice*, 7 May 2015, available at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/cincinnati-area-man-charged-attempting-provide-material-support-isil>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

Cornell allegedly used his *Twitter* account to post messages of support for IS and jihad. In August 2014, the CHS communicated with Cornell, via *Twitter* and another instant-messaging site. Cornell allegedly said that they should carry out attacks as a means of supporting IS, writing, “I believe we should meet up and make our own group in alliance with the Islamic State here and plan operations ourselves.”⁸⁶ He also claimed that his plotting had been approved by the deceased al-Qaeda cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki.⁸⁷

Cornell and the CHS met in October 2014, at which point Cornell allegedly said that they needed weapons and showed the CHS jihadist videos and information on building bombs, on his laptop. They met again the next month, during which time Cornell allegedly said that they would travel to Washington, DC, in order to carry out reconnaissance on government buildings. Cornell allegedly said that his plan was to construct pipe bombs which would be detonated near the Capitol Building, and that they would then shoot employees inside.⁸⁸

Cornell allegedly possessed two semi-automatic rifles and approximately 600 rounds of ammunition. He lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was a recent convert to Islam.⁸⁹

Country targeted: Belgium

Name: Marouane el-Bali; Sofiane Amghar; Khalid Ben Larbi

Date of incident: 15 January 2015 (Amghar & Ben Larbi killed and el-Bali’s arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Belgian

Age: 25 (el-Bali); 26 (Amghar); 23 (Ben Larbi)

Type of attack: Gun; grenade

Terrorist training: Yes

Combat experience: Yes (Syria)

Target: Police

Direct contact with IS: Yes

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Returning fighters

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: No

On 15 January, Belgian police stormed a building occupied by three IS fighters – Marouane el-Bali, Sofiane Amghar, and Khalid Ben Larbi – in the town of Verviers, eastern Belgium. The Islamic State members opened fire with Kalashnikovs and grenades, in response. During the firefight, Amghar and Ben Larbi were killed; el-Bali was taken into custody and charged with participation in a terrorist organisation, possession of explosives with intent to commit a criminal attack, and prohibited possession of weapons.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ ‘United States of America v. Christopher Lee Cornell – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio* (January 2015), available at: http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2599.pdf, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁸⁷ ‘FBI says plot to attack U.S. Capitol was ready to go’, *CNN*, 15 January 2015, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/15/us/capitol-attack-plot/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁸⁸ ‘United States of America v. Christopher Lee Cornell – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio* (January 2015).

⁸⁹ ‘FBI says plot to attack U.S. Capitol was ready to go’, *CNN*, 15 January 2015.

⁹⁰ ‘Inside the ISIS plot to attack the heart of Europe’, *CNN*, 13 February 2015, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/13/europe/europe-belgium-isis-plot/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

A Belgian federal prosecutor said that the cell was planning “imminent terrorist attacks on a grand scale”,⁹¹ part of which was thought to be directed against Belgian police and/or police stations.⁹² The attack was believed to have been directed by IS.⁹³

At the men’s apartment, the police discovered explosives; AK-47 assault rifles; fake documents; police uniforms; walkie-talkies;⁹⁴ chemicals required to make the highly volatile TATP; and a *GoPro* camera. It was possible that they intended to film their attack.⁹⁵

The cell had recently returned from fighting for Islamic State, in Syria.⁹⁶ Amghar and Ben Larbi had been under surveillance for two months, by Belgian authorities,⁹⁷ and it was the arrival of el-Bali – the cell’s supposed ‘quartermaster’, who provided logistical support and supplies – that prompted the raid.⁹⁸

All three individuals had been in close contact, by phone, with Belgian-Moroccan Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a suspected IS fighter and co-ordinator. He is believed to have been the link to IS leadership in Syria, communicating through a telephone traced back to Greece.⁹⁹

The three men were all originally from Brussels, with el-Bali formerly a security guard.¹⁰⁰

Other raids connected to the Verviers cell took place across Belgium. Mohamed Hamja Arshad Mamood Hajni (who signed for the lease at the Verviers apartment),¹⁰¹ brothers Souhaib and Ismael el-Abdi, and Omar Damasch (a 33-year-old Algerian) are now due to face trial for their alleged support roles.¹⁰²

FEBRUARY 2015

Country targeted: Australia

Name: Omar al-Kutobi; Mohammad Kiad

Date of incident: 10 February 2015 (arrest); 12 February 2015 (charge)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Australian (al-Kutobi); Kuwaiti (Kiad)

Age: 24 (al-Kutobi); 25 (Kiad)

Type of attack: Knife; machete (alleged)

Terrorist training: No

⁹¹ ‘Two dead in Belgium as police foil “grand scale” terrorist plot’, *The Guardian*, 16 January 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/15/three-killed-belgium-counter-terror-raids-reports-verviers>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁹² ‘Suspected Jihadists Killed In Belgium Raid’, *Sky News*, 16 January 2015, available at: <http://news.sky.com/story/1408633/suspected-jihadists-killed-in-belgium-raid>; see also: ‘Five people charged after Belgian terror raids’, *RTÉ News*, 16 January 2015, available at: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2015/0116/673005-belgium-alert/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

⁹³ ‘Inside the ISIS plot to attack the heart of Europe’, *CNN*, 13 February 2015.

⁹⁴ ‘Five people charged after Belgian terror raids’, *RTÉ News*, 16 January 2015.

⁹⁵ ‘Inside the ISIS plot to attack the heart of Europe’, *CNN*, 13 February 2015.

⁹⁶ ‘Two dead in Belgium as police foil “grand scale” terrorist plot’, *The Guardian*, 16 January 2015; see also: ‘Five people charged after Belgian terror raids’, *RTÉ News*, 16 January 2015.

⁹⁷ ‘Two dead in Belgium as police foil “grand scale” terrorist plot’, *The Guardian*, 16 January 2015.

⁹⁸ ‘Inside the ISIS plot to attack the heart of Europe’, *CNN*, 13 February 2015.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*; see also: ‘La Belgique sous tension en raison de menaces terroristes persistantes’, *Le Monde*, 23 January 2015, available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2015/01/23/la-belgique-sous-tension-en-raison-de-menaces-terroristes-persistantes_4562486_3214.html, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁰¹ ‘La Belgique sous tension en raison de menaces terroristes persistantes’, *Le Monde*, 23 January 2015.

¹⁰² ‘Opération anti-terroriste à Verviers: mandat d’arrêt prolongé pour cinq suspects’, *Le Vif*, 9 July 2015, available at: <http://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/operation-anti-terroriste-a-verviers-mandat-d-arret-prolonge-pour-cinq-suspects/article-normal-404895.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

Combat experience: No

Target: Member of the public/police (alleged)

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No¹⁰³

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: No

Omar al-Kutobi and Mohammad Kiad were allegedly plotting to carry out a terrorist attack using a machete or knife. The attack was considered to be imminent and averted after the police received a tip-off.¹⁰⁴

Upon arrest, police found a machete; a hunting knife; and a home-made IS flag. The knife was thought to have been bought just an hour before the men’s arrest. A video was also found, which was allegedly filmed by Kiad and showed al-Kutobi kneeling in front of the IS flag.¹⁰⁵ He then says:

I swear to almighty Allah we will carry out the first operation for the soldiers of the caliphate in Australia. I swear to almighty Allah, blond people, there is no room for blame between you and us. We only are you, stabbing the kidneys and striking the necks [...] We are going to retribute [sic] for our sisters, brothers, fathers, mothers in the name of the caliphate.¹⁰⁶

Kiad and al-Kutobi were suspected of being inspired by Man Haron Monis’s hostage-taking in Sydney, in December 2014; they began to dress more religiously soon afterwards. The police believe that the men had previously planned an assault on a prayer hall, which was unsuccessful, and on the police as well.¹⁰⁷

The two men lived together in west Sydney.¹⁰⁸ Both had left their jobs at the same removal company shortly before the planned, alleged attack.¹⁰⁹

Al-Kutobi moved to Australia, from Iraq (his country of origin), in 2009.¹¹⁰ He arrived using another individual’s passport, but was granted citizenship in 2013.¹¹¹ He had previously applied to serve in the Australian army, but was not yet eligible to do so.¹¹²

¹⁰³ While al-Kutobi had discussed returning to Iraq, his country of origin, there is no proof that this was with the intent of joining Islamic State. See: ‘Inside the mind of student terror suspect Omar Al-Kutobi’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 2015, available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/inside-the-mind-of-student-terror-suspect-omar-alkutobi-20150212-13d18k.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Omar Al-Kutobi and Mohammad Kiad to plead not guilty to Sydney terrorism charges’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 2015, available at: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/omar-al-kutobi-and-mohammad-kiad-to-plead-not-guilty-to-sydney-terrorism-charges/story-fni0cx12-1227264595036>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Inside the mind of student terror suspect Omar Al-Kutobi’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 2015; see also: ‘Terror suspects accused of plotting brutal public beheading in Sydney to plead not guilty to charges’, *Daily Mail*, 16 March 2015, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2996730/Terror-suspects-Omar-Al-Kutobi-Mohammad-Kiad-allegedly-planned-carry-brutal-public-beheading-Sydney-plead-not-guilty-charges.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Sydney terror plot: Suspect arrived in Australia illegally on false passport’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 February 2015, available at: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/sydney-terror-plot-suspect-arrived-in-australia-illegally-on-false-passport/story-fni0cx4q-1227216882858>, last visited: 25 August 2015; see also: ‘Soldiers of the Islamic State death cult: The plot to behead on our streets’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 February 2015, available at: <http://m.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/soldiers-of-the-islamic-state-death-cult-the-plot-to-behead-on-our-streets/story-fni05smt-1227216631882>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Inside the mind of student terror suspect Omar Al-Kutobi’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 2015.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Soldiers of the Islamic State death cult: The plot to behead on our streets’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 February 2015.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Terror suspect Omar Al-Kutobi tried to join Australian army’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2015, available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/terror-suspect-omar-alkutobi-tried-to-join-australian-army-20150212-13d0zb.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹¹⁰ ‘Father of Sydney terror suspect Omar Al-Kutobi says he was lonely in Australia’, *Brisbane Times*, 12 February 2015, available at: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/nsw/father-of-sydney-terror-suspect-omar-alkutobi-says-he-was-lonely-in-australia-20150211-13c5p2.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹¹¹ ‘Terror accused who plotted to behead police officer arrived in Australia ILLEGALLY – as pictures show one was a fashion-loving weightlifter and the other a quiet nursing student’, *Daily Mail*, 12 February 2015, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2948886/One-fashion-loving-weight-lifter-eye-expensive-jewellery-quiet-nursing-student-Meet-men-charged-hatching-terror-plot-targeting-police-flag-machete-home.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015; see also: ‘Sydney terror plot: Suspect arrived in Australia illegally on false passport’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 February 2015.

¹¹² ‘Terror suspect Omar Al-Kutobi tried to join Australian army’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2015.

Al-Kutobi began studying at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology,¹¹³ but, unable to find a job in IT, he switched to nursing and found work at a removal company.¹¹⁴

Prior to moving to Australia in 2012, Kiad had been living in Kuwait,¹¹⁵ where he had worked as a nurse. However, these qualifications could not be transferred between the two countries,¹¹⁶ and he was receiving state welfare payments at the time of his arrest.¹¹⁷ On his *Twitter* account, Kiad had ‘favourited’ tweets showing beheadings and had used an IS flag as his profile picture.¹¹⁸

Country targeted: Denmark

Name: Omar Abdel Hamid el-Hussein

Date of incident: 14 February 2015 (attack)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Danish

Age: 22

Type of attack: Gun

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: No

Omar Abdel Hamid el-Hussein opened fire, with an M95 assault rifle,¹¹⁹ on a cultural centre hosting an event entitled, ‘Art, Blasphemy and the Freedom of Expression’ in Copenhagen, killing film director Finn Nørgaard and injuring three police officers.¹²⁰ The Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks – who has, in the past, drawn pictures of Islam’s Prophet Mohammed – was speaking at the event and was thought to be a possible target.

Hours later, el-Hussein carried out a shooting at a synagogue, killing another individual before fleeing the scene; el-Hussein himself was shot and killed by the police the next day.¹²¹

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ ‘Father of Sydney terror suspect Omar Al-Kutobi says he was lonely in Australia’, *Brisbane Times*, 12 February 2015.

¹¹⁵ ‘Terror accused who plotted to behead police officer arrived in Australia ILLEGALLY – as pictures show one was a fashion-loving weightlifter and the other a quiet nursing student’, *Daily Mail*, 12 February 2015; see also: ‘Sydney terror plot: Suspect arrived in Australia illegally on false passport’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 February 2015.

¹¹⁶ ‘Father of Sydney terror suspect Omar Al-Kutobi says he was lonely in Australia’, *Brisbane Times*, 12 February 2015.

¹¹⁷ ‘Sydney terror plot: Suspect arrived in Australia illegally on false passport’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 February 2015.

¹¹⁸ ‘Lax border security an open house for terror’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 February 2015, available at: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/lax-border-security-an-open-house-for-terror/story-fni0cx12-1227217894463>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹¹⁹ ‘Copenhagen shootings: Weapon used in the café attack “identified”’, *The Telegraph*, 17 February 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/denmark/11418871/Copenhagen-shootings-Weapon-used-in-the-cafe-attack-identified.html>, last visited: 27 August 2015.

¹²⁰ ‘Copenhagen shooting during debate on Islam: live’, *The Telegraph*, 15 February 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/denmark/11413226/Copenhagen-shooting-during-debate-on-Islam.html>, last visited: 27 August 2015.

¹²¹ ‘Copenhagen suspect “was released from prison two weeks ago”’, *The Telegraph*, 15 February 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/denmark/11414604/Copenhagen-suspect-was-released-from-prison-two-weeks-ago.html>, last visited: 27 August 2015.

Shortly before carrying out his attack, he had pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, via a *Facebook* post.¹²²

El-Hussein was a Danish citizen of Palestinian descent and was involved in a street gang known as ‘Blood and Brothers’,¹²³ which was connected to a series of conflicts with other Copenhagen gangs. When a truce was called, gang members deemed especially hard to control were expelled from the ‘Brothers’ – including el-Hussein.¹²⁴ He had also been expelled from school and had previously been arrested for weapons offences, burglary, and violent crimes and had spent time in jail.¹²⁵

In November 2013, el-Hussein stabbed a passenger on a train and was sent to prison (although he was not convicted of the crime until December 2014).¹²⁶ During this time, he started to become more religious. In around September 2014, while he was still incarcerated, el-Hussein began to discuss travelling to Syria.¹²⁷ He committed his attack just two weeks after his release from prison.¹²⁸

MARCH 2015

Country targeted: US

Name: Hasan Edmonds; Jonas Edmonds

Date of incident: 25 March 2015 (arrest & charge)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 22 (Hasan); 29 (Jonas)

Type of attack: Gun; grenade (alleged)

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Military (alleged)

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: No (Hasan); Yes (Jonas)

Religious convert: Yes

Hasan and Jonas Edmonds both allegedly expressed an interest in carrying out attacks in the US on behalf of IS. It is alleged that Hasan – who was a Specialist in the Illinois Army National Guard – had booked a flight from Chicago, to Cairo, Egypt, in order to travel to join the group. Meanwhile, his cousin, Jonas, was to carry out a terrorist act in the US, after Hasan’s departure. Both were charged with conspiring to provide material support to IS.¹²⁹

¹²² ‘Who was Copenhagen gunman Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein?’, *CNN*, 27 February 2015, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/17/europe/denmark-copenhagen-gunman/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹²³ ‘Who is Copenhagen shootings suspect Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein?’, *Associated Press*, 17 February 2015, available at: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/who-is-copenhagen-shootings-suspect-omar-abdel-hamid-el-hussein-1.2239687>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹²⁴ ‘Who is Copenhagen shootings suspect Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein?’, *Associated Press*, 17 February 2015; see also: ‘Special Report: How Denmark’s unexpected killer slipped through the net’, *Reuters*, 22 April 2015, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/22/us-denmark-attacks-hussein-special-repor-idUSKBN0ND0EJ20150422>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹²⁵ ‘Who is Copenhagen shootings suspect Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein?’, *Associated Press*, 17 February 2015.

¹²⁶ ‘Who is Copenhagen shootings suspect Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein?’, *Associated Press*, 17 February 2015.

¹²⁷ ‘Special Report: How Denmark’s unexpected killer slipped through the net’, *Reuters*, 22 April 2015.

¹²⁸ ‘Copenhagen shooting suspect Omar el-Hussein – a past full of contradictions’, *The Guardian*, 16 February 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/16/copenhagen-shooting-suspect-omar-el-hussein-a-past-full-of-contradictions>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹²⁹ ‘US Army National Guard Soldier and his Cousin Arrested for Conspiring to Support Terrorism (ISIL)’, *United States Department of Justice*, 26 March 2015, available at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/us-army-national-guard-soldier-and-his-cousin-arrested-conspiring-support-terrorism-isil>, last visited: 27 August 2015.

The FBI became aware of the Edmonds in late 2014, as they suspected that Hasan and Jonas were conspiring to send the former abroad to join IS. From 19 January 2015, Hasan and an undercover FBI employee (UC-1) posing as an Islamic State fighter abroad were in electronic contact.

On 24 January, Hasan allegedly sent a message outlining how it was a “duty” to support IS, and that he planned to travel there or be martyred trying to do so.¹³⁰ If he could not make it to the ‘Caliphate’, he allegedly said that he was “content to fight and die here in the cause of Allah whenever the target is set and the order is given.”¹³¹

On 27 January, Hasan allegedly told UC-1 that he planned to try and travel to join IS in April or May 2015, along with Jonas, and that, if his cousin could not travel, then Jonas would instead “seek shahada [martyrdom] here in the heart of the kuffar state”.¹³² On the same day, he allegedly said that he and his cousin had sworn an oath of loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.¹³³ On 2 February, Hasan allegedly stated that “we would love to do something like the brother in Paris did,” and that “Shahada is blessing.”¹³⁴

Jonas was also in contact with UC-1. He allegedly said that if he was unable to travel to the ‘Caliphate’, then he could “unleash the lion”, and that he had “access to hardware” – which the FBI suspected to be a reference to firearms.¹³⁵ He allegedly made a similar reference during a meeting with another undercover agent (UC-2), on 3 March.

On 23 March, during a meeting between Hasan; Jonas Edmonds; and UC-2, it was allegedly confirmed that, after Hasan travelled to join the ‘Caliphate’ (he had tickets booked for a flight heading to Cairo on 25 March), Jonas would plan an assault on the military installation at which Hasan had trained. He would allegedly use his cousin’s inside knowledge to facilitate the attack; indeed, it is suggested that Hasan offered to provide his military uniform for the planned action.¹³⁶ It is further alleged that Jonas spoke of buying weapons from a third party in order to carry out the attack, and that he expected a body count of between 100 and 150.¹³⁷

On 24 March 2015, UC-2 again met with Jonas and Hasan. During the meeting, the three drove to the military installation where the alleged attack was planned to take place. The two men were arrested the next day; Hasan was at Chicago Midway Airport, attempting to take his flight.¹³⁸

Both cousins had attended West Aurora High School. In 2005, Jonas had pleaded guilty to an armed robbery in Atlanta, Georgia; he was sentenced to 15 years, but only served five.¹³⁹

APRIL 2015

Country targeted: US

Name: Asia Siddiqui; Noelle Velentzas

Date of incident: 2 April 2015 (charge)

Gender: Female

Nationality: American

¹³⁰ ‘United States of America v. Hasan R. Edmonds and Jonas M. Edmonds – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court Northern District of Illinois – Eastern Division* (March 2015), available at: http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2663.pdf, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Aurora cousins charged in terror plot: “If we can break their spirits we will win”, *Chicago Tribune*, 27 March 2015, available at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/aurora-beacon-news/news/ct-national-guard-terrorism-arrest-met-20150326-story.html#page=1>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

Age: 31 (Siddiqui); 28 (Velentzas)

Type of attack: Bomb (alleged)

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Undeveloped¹⁴⁰ (police were allegedly discussed)

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: No (Siddiqui); Yes (Velentzas)

Asia Siddiqui and Noelle Velentzas, residents of New York and formerly housemates, have been charged with conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction in the US. Siddiqui had allegedly acquired four propane gas tanks and was in possession of instructions on how to use them in a bomb.¹⁴¹ Their arrest took place following an undercover investigation, with a law-enforcement officer acting as a third member of the cell. Upon making the arrests, police also allegedly discovered machetes; daggers; and extremist literature.¹⁴²

From August 2014, Velentzas and Siddiqui had allegedly discussed the construction of bombs; chemicals; and ingredients used in explosives. *The Anarchist Cookbook* – a 1971 text on home-made explosives – and *Inspire*, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s English-language magazine, were where the alleged plotters primarily got their instructions. These were printouts handed to them by the undercover officer, with Velentzas expressing concern that downloading them from the Internet would draw the law enforcement’s attention to their activities.¹⁴³

In September 2014, Velentzas referred to attacks against IS as an attack on her own state and, a month later, said that people needed to refer to them as “citizens of the Islamic State”.¹⁴⁴ In October 2014, Velentzas used her mobile phone to watch *YouTube* videos allegedly useful in helping to construct a bomb. She would look at similar material on her phone the next month.

In November 2014, Velentzas also watched videos of IS terrorists beheading Syrian soldiers and a video of a French IS fighter imploring Muslims to travel to the ‘Caliphate’. Velentzas had also watched videos of IS suicide bombing and had familiarised herself with the ‘dark web’, allegedly in order to further her terrorist plotting.¹⁴⁵

In March 2015, Velentzas stated that there were more opportunities of “pleasing Allah” in the US than by travelling to Syria to fight jihad.¹⁴⁶ This followed the arrest of one of her *Facebook* ‘friends’, who had allegedly been attempting to travel to Syria.

Siddiqui and Velentzas also admired al-Qaeda and that group’s leaders. For example, Siddiqui had previously contributed a poem to *Inspire* and was in contact with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula terrorists – including Samir Khan, who was killed in a US drone strike in September 2011. Velentzas had allegedly expressed her admiration for Osama bin Laden and his mentor, Abdullah Azzam, and had discussed the virtues of martyrdom.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁰ ‘Undeveloped’ is defined as when the target for attack was either unclear or if there was not a focus on a specific target.

¹⁴¹ ‘United States of America - against - Noelle Velentzas and Asia Siddiqui – Complaint and Affidavit in Support of Arrest Warrants’, *United States District Court Eastern District of New York* (April 2015), available at: <https://cbsnewyork.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/velentzas-complaint.pdf>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁴² ‘Two Women in Queens Are Charged With a Bomb Plot’, *The New York Times*, 2 April 2015, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/03/nyregion/two-queens-women-charged-in-bomb-plot.html?_r=0, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁴³ ‘United States of America - against - Noelle Velentzas and Asia Siddiqui – Complaint and Affidavit in Support of Arrest Warrants’, *United States District Court Eastern District of New York* (April 2015).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ ‘Two Queens Residents Charged With Conspiracy To Use A Weapon Of Mass Destruction’, *United States Department of Justice*, 2 April 2015, available at: <http://www.justice.gov/usao/nye/pr/April15/2015-April-2.php>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁴⁷ ‘United States of America - against - Noelle Velentzas and Asia Siddiqui – Complaint and Affidavit in Support of Arrest Warrants’, *United States District Court Eastern District of New York* (April 2015).

Velentzas was born in Florida and was of Puerto Rican and Greek ancestry.¹⁴⁸ She worked as a health-care worker.¹⁴⁹ She used to be homeless and was given shelter by the Islamic Circle of North America, between 2008 and 2009.¹⁵⁰ Siddiqui, who was born in Saudi Arabia, was thought to be unemployed.¹⁵¹

Country targeted: Spain

Name: Antonio Sáez Martínez; Lahcen Zamzami; Rida Hazem; Said Touay; Gonzalo Cabezas Núñez; Jacob Orellana Casado

Date of incident: 8 April 2015 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Spanish (Sáez Martínez, Orellana Casado, Cabezas Núñez); Moroccan (Hazem, Touay); Unknown (Zamzami)

Age: 40 (Sáez Martínez); 27 (Orellana Casado); 33 (Hazem); Unknown (Zamzami, Cabezas Núñez, Touay)

Type of attack: Undeveloped

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Undeveloped (police, synagogues, government, members of public were all discussed)

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes (Touay, Sáez Martínez); No (Zamzami, Hazem, Orellana Casado, Cabezas Núñez)

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: Yes (Sáez Martínez, Orellana Casado, Cabezas Núñez); Unknown (Zamzami, Hazem, Touay)

Members of an alleged cell named the ‘Islamic Fraternity for the Preaching of Jihad’ were arrested in Barcelona and its surrounding areas, after being infiltrated by an undercover agent.

Antonio Sáez Martínez; Lahcen Zamzami; Hazem Rida; Said Touay; Gonzalo Cabezas Núñez; and Jacob Orellana Casado were kept in prison, on charges relating to terrorism and possession of arms and explosives.

The cell had talked about plans to broadcast the kidnapping and murder of a hostage, and contemplated ransoming the director of a bank. They also discussed a variety of locations for attacks, including synagogues.¹⁵² Other targets were mentioned, too. For example, on 3 November 2014, Orellana Casado – a Buddhist convert to Islam, who formerly worked at a local grocery store –¹⁵³ is alleged to have referred to a “big fish” (thought to be a reference to a possible attack on the Catalan Parliament, though the cell assessed it to be unfeasible).¹⁵⁴ In addition, on 19 March 2015, Sáez Martínez discussed carrying out a raid against a police station or security forces, and, on

¹⁴⁸ ‘Two Queens women accused in terror plot led ordinary lives until arrest, source says’, *Newsday*, 3 April 2015, available at: <http://www.newsday.com/news/new-york/noelle-velentzas-asia-siddiqui-led-ordinary-lives-until-arrest-on-terrorism-charges-source-says-1.10191682>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Queens woman suspected of plotting bomb strike worked at preschool’, *New York Daily News*, 4 April 2015, available at: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/queens-woman-accused-bomb-strike-plot-worked-preschool-article-1.2173163>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁵⁰ ‘2 New York women accused of ISIS-inspired bomb plot’, *CNN*, 3 April 2015, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/02/us/new-york-terror-arrests/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁵¹ ‘Queens woman suspected of plotting bomb strike worked at preschool’, *New York Daily News*, 4 April 2015.

¹⁵² ‘Spain jihadists suspected of planning kidnaps, execution: judge’, *AFP*, 10 April 2015, available at: <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/spain-jihadists-suspected-planning-kidnaps-execution-judge-201427642.html#ZDAvB9r>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁵³ ‘«Los atentados de París fueron un montaje de los gobiernos»’, *El Periódico*, 10 June 2015, available at: <http://www.elperiodico.com/es/noticias/politica/para-los-yihadistas-detenido-catalunya-los-atentados-paris-fueron-montaje-los-gobiernos-4260418&usg=ALkJrhi3HyTogedDIMu2yDXAKZPH26nKpw>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Diligencias Previas 68 /2014 -15’, *Administración de Justicia – Juzgado Central de Instrucción No 1* (April 2015), available at: http://estaticos.elmundo.es/documentos/2015/04/10/auto_audiencia.pdf, last visited: 25 August 2015.

21 March, Touay encouraged the undercover agent to obtain weapons and target the government.¹⁵⁵

Cabezas Núñez had also allegedly travelled to Barcelona, to photograph potential targets for attack, while Touay, who is thought to have previously tried to travel to the ‘Caliphate’, was in possession of photographs on his mobile phone. These pictures – of a police station, a hotel, and a shopping centre – are also suspected to be potential targets.

Diego José Frías Álvarez, a neo-Nazi who is currently in jail, was also allegedly working with the cell. During one of the group’s meetings, Sáez Martínez allegedly said that he had contacted Frías Álvarez because he was someone “with the ability to get weapons and explosive materials” and who “hates Jews”.¹⁵⁶ Sáez Martínez had also previously told his co-conspirators that he had contemplated bombing a Jewish bookstore in Barcelona with Frías Álvarez.¹⁵⁷ However, these alleged plans fell through.¹⁵⁸

Sáez Martínez, the alleged cell’s ringleader, previously worked as a barber and converted to Islam in approximately July 2012.¹⁵⁹ He is thought to have been attempting to overcome alcohol addiction.¹⁶⁰ He is also suspected of having said that he would have liked to travel to Syria were it not for family commitments.¹⁶¹

Allegedly, Zamzami’s main role in the group was recruitment,¹⁶² though he would also perform logistical tasks – such as securing financing for the organisation and helping with travel to Syria (the group is suspected of already having sent four recruits to join IS there and in Iraq).¹⁶³

Upon arrest, jihadist literature was allegedly found at Zamzami’s home. He and Rida Hazem were perceived to be the ideological and intellectual leaders of the group.¹⁶⁴ (Hazem had lived in Catalonia for the previous 11 years and ran a fruit store.¹⁶⁵) Touay was also allegedly a key member of the organisation.¹⁶⁶

Of the remaining cell members, police found extremist literature in Cabezas Núñez’s home,¹⁶⁷ while Orellana Casado was allegedly in contact with Taofiq Mouhouch –¹⁶⁸ who was arrested in Bulgaria, for attempting to travel to Syria.¹⁶⁹ Orellana Casado had allegedly told Mouhouch that “dying for Allah does not hurt”.¹⁷⁰

There were others who were also involved with the alleged cell, but have yet to be charged. Laila el-Hamdouni (whom Mouhouch was planning to marry),¹⁷¹ Youness el-Gharbi, and David Franco Portolés are all required to appear in court weekly; relinquish their passports; and provide the authorities with their addresses.

An 11th cell member was sent to a juvenile centre.¹⁷²

¹⁵⁵ ‘Diario de Joseph Traoré, un agente de los Mossos infiltrado en la Yihad’, *El País*, 8 June 2015, available at: http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2015/06/08/catalunya/1433787321_139716.html, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁵⁶ ‘El jefe de los “yihadistas” de Barcelona quiso atentar contra una librería judía de Barcelona’, *Europa Press*, 10 April 2015, available at: <http://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-jefe-yihadistas-barcelona-quiso-atentar-contra-libreria-judia-barcelona-20150410161223.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ ‘Diario de Joseph Traoré, un agente de los Mossos infiltrado en la Yihad’, *El País*, 8 June 2015.

¹⁵⁹ “‘He sido absorbido por la Yihad Mundial’”, *La Vanguardia*, 10 April 2015, available at: <http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20150410/54429819060/absorbido-yihad-mundial.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁶⁰ Brandon, J., ‘Spanish Islamic State Arrests Illustrate Continuing Recruitment’, *Terrorism Monitor* 13.8 (2015), available at: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43804&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=228&cHash=a7468b695b793d43df82e89898213b86#.VciM2vIvIkp, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁶¹ ‘Diario de Joseph Traoré, un agente de los Mossos infiltrado en la Yihad’, *El País*, 8 June 2015.

¹⁶² ‘Diligencias Previas 68 /2014 -15’, *Administracion de Justicia – Juzgado Central de Instruccion No 1* (April 2015).

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*; see also: ‘Spain jihadists suspected of planning kidnaps, execution: judge’, *AFP*, 10 April 2015.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Diligencias Previas 68 /2014 -15’, *Administracion de Justicia – Juzgado Central de Instruccion No 1* (April 2015).

¹⁶⁵ ‘Diario de Joseph Traoré, un agente de los Mossos infiltrado en la Yihad’, *El País*, 8 June 2015.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Diligencias Previas 68 /2014 -15’, *Administracion de Justicia – Juzgado Central de Instruccion No 1* (April 2015).

¹⁶⁷ ‘Gonzalo Cabezas, el yihadista que paseaba por Barcelona para fotografiar objetivos’, *Te Interesa*, 10 April 2015, available at: http://www.teinteresa.es/espana/Gonzalo-Cabezas-yihadista-Barcelona-fotografiar_0_1336667761.html, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Diligencias Previas 68 /2014 -15’, *Administracion de Justicia – Juzgado Central de Instruccion No 1* (April 2015).

¹⁶⁹ ‘Said Touay, dispuesto a alistarse al EI y atentar en España’, *Te Interesa*, 10 April 2015, available at: http://www.teinteresa.es/espana/Said-Touay-alistarse-EI-Espana_0_1336667841.html, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁷⁰ ‘La red yihadista desarticulada por los Mossos: “Morir en nombre de Alá no duele, es como un pellizquito”’, *El Mundo*, 9 June 2015, available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2015/06/08/5575e8cb22601dc8308b459c.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁷¹ ‘Diario de Joseph Traoré, un agente de los Mossos infiltrado en la Yihad’, *El País*, 8 June 2015.

¹⁷² ‘Spain jihadists suspected of planning kidnaps, execution: judge’, *AFP*, 10 April 2015.

Country targeted: US
Name: John T. Booker
Date of incident: 10 April 2015 (arrest)
Gender: Male
Nationality: American
Age: 20
Type of attack: Bomb
Terrorist training: No
Combat experience: No
Target: Military
Direct contact with IS: No
Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes
Past criminal behaviour: No
Religious convert: Yes

John T. Booker was charged with offences that included conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction in relation to a plan to attack the Fort Riley military base in Kansas. Booker has allegedly described carrying out a suicide bombing as “his number one aspiration”, and that Fort Riley was a desirable target “because the post is famous and there are a lot of soldiers stationed there.”¹⁷³ He allegedly assisted in the acquisition of parts for a bomb, produced propaganda material, and stored components for an explosive device in a rented storage locker.¹⁷⁴

Booker grew up in Tennessee and Kansas, then moved to Missouri after high school.¹⁷⁵ Prior to his arrest, he lived in Topeka, Kansas. He joined the US Army in February 2014, with training scheduled to begin in April of that year. However, in March 2014, he began posting messages on *Facebook*, in which he said that he planned to “soon [...] wage jihad” and hoped to die, and that “[g]etting ready to be killed in jihad” was an “adrenaline rush”.¹⁷⁶ Booker was then interviewed by the FBI, to whom he admitted that he had joined the army in order to commit an ‘insider’ attack against American soldiers. As a result, his military clearance was rescinded;¹⁷⁷ but he was not thought to be a danger to the public and was not arrested nor charged with any crime.¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, Booker became the subject of a covert FBI investigation, and, between 8 October 2014 and 10 April 2015, two Confidential Human Sources (CHSes) were deployed to engage with him. He is suspected of telling them that he wanted to join IS.

From October 2014, it is alleged that Booker frequently told CHS-1 of his wish to carry out violent jihad on IS’s behalf, and that he wanted to travel to join the group abroad. CHS-1 told Booker that his “cousin” – another FBI source, CHS-2 – could facilitate such travel arrangements.¹⁷⁹ In order to prove his worth, Booker allegedly said he would “kill any kuffar” and would carry out an attack on the White House alongside IS fighters.¹⁸⁰ He also allegedly proposed killing US soldiers at Fort Riley military base.

¹⁷³ ‘Topeka, Kansas, Man Charged in Plot to Explode Car Bomb at Military Base’, *United States Department of Justice* (April 2015), available at: http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2681.pdf, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ ‘What We Know About John Booker, the Man the FBI Thought Might Be a Jihadi’, *Vocativ*, 2 April 2014, available at: <http://www.vocativ.com/usa/military/know-john-booker-man-fbi-thought-might-jihadi/>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁷⁶ ‘United States of America v. John T. Booker, Jr. – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the District of Kansas* (April 2015), available at: http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2680.pdf, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ ‘2 Kansas Men Charged in Suicide Attack Plot at Fort Riley’, *The New York Times*, 10 April 2015, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/11/us/kansas-man-charged-with-plotting-suicide-attack-at-fort-riley.html>, last visited: 28 August 2015.

¹⁷⁹ ‘United States of America v. John T. Booker, Jr. – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the District of Kansas* (April 2015).

Booker was introduced to CHS-2 on 9 March 2015. Booker allegedly explained to CHS-2 how he had been inspired by IS propaganda videos and discussed the construction and detonation of a truck bomb. On 10 March, he allegedly created a video message in which he swore loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and threatened members of the US military. Later that month, he rented a storage unit and used it to store supplies needed for the construction of a bomb (the list of ingredients was given to him by CHS-1).

On 8 April, Booker allegedly filmed another suicide video, in which he said that “we are going to build this bomb with 1,000 pounds of Ammonium Nitrate [...] this will kill many kuffar. This message is to you America. You sit in your homes and you think that this war is just over in Iraq [...] we today we will bring the Islamic State straight to your doorstep.”¹⁸¹

On 10 April, Booker is said to have met with CHS-1 and CHS-2 in a van. They told him that they had constructed the bomb, and the three of them drove close to Fort Riley. As Booker allegedly attempted to arm the ‘bomb’, he was arrested.¹⁸²

In conjunction with this case, Alexander Blair was charged with failing to report a felony. Blair allegedly shared Booker’s jihadist outlook, was aware of his plans, and believed that Booker as acting on behalf of IS. He had allegedly lent Booker money to rent the storage unit where the equipment for the bombing was kept.¹⁸³

Country targeted: Australia

Name: Sevdet Besim; Harun Causevic; Mehran Azami; ‘B’

Date of incident: 18 April 2015 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Australian (Besim, Causevic, Azami); British (‘B’)

Age: 18 (Besim, Causevic); 19 (Azami); 14 (‘B’)

Type of attack: Vehicle; knife; gun

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Police

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes (‘B’, Besim, Causevic); No (Azami)

Past criminal behaviour: Unknown (Besim, Azami, ‘B’); No (Causevic)

Religious convert: No

Sevdet Besim and Harun Causevic were arrested, as part of counterterrorism raids across Melbourne, for their suspected role in planning what the police have described as Islamic State-inspired attacks. Another Melbourne resident, Mehran Azami, was detained on suspicion of supplying weapons, and was charged with terrorism-related offences.

Besim and Causevic are suspected of targeting police officers at an Anzac Day parade commemorating the first major military contribution from Australia and New Zealand during World War One. Besim’s and Causevic’s alleged plan was to run the officer over with a car, behead him, take his weapon, and kill others, before finally being killed themselves.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ ‘United States of America v. Alexander E. Blair – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the District of Kansas* (April 2015), available at: http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2683.pdf, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Melbourne teens planned to injure and behead police officer in terrorist plot, court told’, *The Guardian*, 5 May 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/may/05/melbourne-teens-planned-to-injure-and-behead-police-officer-in-terrorist-plot-court-told>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

They are suspected of planning to carry out the attack if they could not obtain passports and travel to the Islamic State itself (Causevic had applied for a passport on 2 March). Causevic, who is of Bosnian descent, is alleged to have performed reconnaissance in preparation and to have possessed knives; the shahada flag; and a pledge of allegiance to IS.¹⁸⁵

An anonymous fourteen-year-old British teenager (‘B’) from Blackburn, Lancashire, has pleaded guilty in the UK, to inciting terrorism by encouraging the murder of police officers.¹⁸⁶ ‘B’ apparently tried to portray himself as a veteran terrorist and encouraged Besim to film the attack and send it to Neil Prakash, an IS recruiter based in Syria but born in Melbourne.¹⁸⁷

During encrypted conversations, Besim – who was of Albanian descent and previously worked as a florist –¹⁸⁸ allegedly told ‘B’, “I’d love to take out some cops. Intelligence agents”, and that he possessed a “massive machete” and could not wait “for the op”.¹⁸⁹ Referring to the weapon, ‘B’ is said to have responded: “Sharpen that as hard as you can, then run police over and decapitate”, to which Besim allegedly replied: “That sounds like a plan.”¹⁹⁰ ‘B’ also sent Besim a message saying, “Suggest you break into someone’s house and get your first taste of beheading”, though Besim said that that was “a little risky”.¹⁹¹

On another occasion, ‘B’ told Besim to “start dressing like a Kuffar [non-believer]”; asked him if he was “willing for a bullet to go through [him]”; and outlined the “difficulty of beheading a person”, suggesting, “U gotta be a lion especially that ur doing it in public.”¹⁹² In preparation, ‘B’ recommended that Besim practice beheading a “proper lonely person”.¹⁹³ Besim said that, if he was arrested prior to the alleged plan, he would “stab the dogs and go on a rampage”.¹⁹⁴ He also told ‘B’ that he was “ready to go”, having acquired a firearm.¹⁹⁵

‘B’ had been reported to British authorities when he was just 13, following comments he had made to his teachers about Osama bin Laden and his wish to be martyred. He had been in contact with others across the UK, regarding his wish to join IS in Syria.¹⁹⁶

Besim and Causevic were associates of Abdul Numan Haider – who was shot and killed by police in September 2014, after stabbing officers in Melbourne (Besim was apparently with Haider on that day). The police began to monitor Haider’s associates following his attack.¹⁹⁷ Besim and Causevic regularly visited the al-Furqan bookshop

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Anzac Day terror plot: Blackburn teenager admits inciting attack’, *BBC News*, 23 July 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-33633915>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁸⁷ ‘Judge releases alleged communications between teenage terror suspect Sevdet Besim and 14-year-old UK boy over Anzac Day plot’, *The Age*, 3 June 2015, available at: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/judge-releases-alleged-communications-between-teenage-terror-suspect-sevdet-besim-and-14-year-old-uk-boy-over-anzac-day-plot-20150603-ghfqxj.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Keyboard warrior: Anzac terror plot accused Sevdet Besim allegedly guided online’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 2015, available at: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/key-board-warrior-anzac-terror-plot-accused-sevdet-besim-allegedly-guided-online-20150509-ggxlaz.html>, last visited: 25 August 2015; see also: ‘Bail refused for terror teen suspect accused of typing martyrdom note’, *Herald Sun*, 26 May 2015, available at: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/bail-refused-for-terror-teen-suspect-accused-of-typing-martyrdom-note/story-fni0fee2-1227369789414>, last visited: 25 August 2015.

¹⁸⁹ ‘Judge releases alleged communications between teenage terror suspect Sevdet Besim and 14-year-old UK boy over Anzac Day plot’, *The Age*, 3 June 2015.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Melbourne teens planned to injure and behead police officer in terrorist plot, court told’, *The Guardian*, 5 May 2015.

¹⁹¹ ‘Counter-extremism workers knew boy who plotted Australian Isis attack’, *The Guardian*, 23 July 2015, available at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/23/counter-extremism-workers-knew-boy-who-plotted-australian-isis-attack?CMP=share_btn_tw, last visited: 26 August 2015.

¹⁹² ‘Judge releases alleged communications between teenage terror suspect Sevdet Besim and 14-year-old UK boy over Anzac Day plot’, *The Age*, 3 June 2015.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Bail refused for terror teen suspect accused of typing martyrdom note’, *Herald Sun*, 26 May 2015.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Counter-extremism workers knew boy who plotted Australian Isis attack’, *The Guardian*, 23 July 2015.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Judge releases alleged communications between teenage terror suspect Sevdet Besim and 14-year-old UK boy over Anzac Day plot’, *The Age*, 3 June 2015.

and Islamic centre in Springvale South (also connected to Haider).¹⁹⁸ Besim’s Instagram account featured propaganda supportive of a Caliphate and critical of man-made law; while Facebook had disabled his account.¹⁹⁹

Azami was alleged to have ordered weapons, which included knuckledusters; knives; and stun guns, as part of the plot.²⁰⁰

Country targeted: France

Name: Sid Ahmed Ghlam

Date of incident: 19 April 2015 (arrest); 24 April 2015 (charge)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Algerian

Age: 24

Type of attack: Gun

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of public

Direct contact with IS: Yes

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: No

Sid Ahmed Ghlam was charged with murder, attempted murder in connection with a terrorist enterprise, and conspiracy. He is suspected of shooting and killing a female fitness instructor, whose body was discovered on 19 April, in Villejuif, south of Paris.²⁰¹ It is believed that Ghlam thought her to be an intelligence agent.²⁰²

Ghlam was arrested when he accidentally shot himself in the leg and called an ambulance. He was waiting for first-aid assistance when police arrived at the scene. Police searches of his home and car revealed electronic documents in Arabic, mentioning al-Qaeda and Islamic State, as well as video-recording materials; bulletproof vests; and weaponry.²⁰³

Ghlam is believed to have been directed to attack these targets by French IS fighters based in Turkey, whom he met during two trips to that country in the months before his arrest.²⁰⁴ He was specifically requested to carry out at least one attack on a Paris church.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ ‘Five arrested in counter-terrorism raids in Melbourne’s south-east’, *The Age*, 19 April 2015, available at:

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/five-arrested-in-counterterrorism-raids-in-melbournes-southeast-20150418-1mns9h.html>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Accused Anzac Day terrorist’s online rants against Barack Obama and the War on Terror revealed – as father of another teen arrested in pre-dawn raids tells how son’s behaviour “changed for the better” after son started praying at notorious Islamic centre’, *Daily Mail*, 28 July 2014, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3045433/Democracy-violates-rights-Allah-Inside-mind-terror-accused-Sevdet-Besim-revealed-online-rants-against-Barack-Obama-democracy-War-Terror.html>, last visited: 3 September 2015.

²⁰⁰ ‘Judge releases alleged communications between teenage terror suspect Sevdet Besim and 14-year-old UK boy over Anzac Day plot’, *The Age*, 3 June 2015.

²⁰¹ ‘Attentat déjoué à Paris : des documents liés à l’État islamique retrouvés’, *Le Point*, 22 April 2015, available at:

http://www.lepoint.fr/societe/attentat-dejoue-a-paris-des-documents-lies-a-l-etat-islamique-retrouves-22-04-2015-1923455_23.php, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁰² ‘Sid Ahmed Ghlam évoluait dans la même sphère que Mohamed Merah’, *Le Figaro*, 3 August 2015, available at:

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/08/03/01016-20150803ARTFIG00108-sid-ahmed-ghlam-evoluait-dans-la-meme-sphere-que-mohamed-merah.php>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁰³ ‘Attentat déjoué à Paris : des documents liés à l’État islamique retrouvés’, *Le Point*, 22 April 2015.

²⁰⁴ ‘Americans who thwarted train attack praised for “exceptional courage”’, *CNN*, 23 August 2015, available at:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/22/europe/france-train-shooting-americans-overpower/>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁰⁵ ‘Attentat déjoué à Paris : des documents liés à l’État islamique retrouvés’, *Le Point*, 22 April 2015.

Bernard Cazeneuve, the French interior minister, stated that police had found documents which “prove, without any ambiguity, that the individual was preparing an imminent attack, in all probability, against one or two churches.”²⁰⁶ Ghلام was already under official intelligence-service surveillance, due to fears that he may leave France for Syria in order to fight for IS.²⁰⁷

Ghلام had no past criminal record, although, in August 2013, he was accused of involvement in an alleged assault. However, the victim withdrew their complaint.²⁰⁸

MAY 2015

Country targeted: US

Names: Elton Simpson; Nadir Soofi

Date of incident: 3 May 2015 (attack)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 30 (Simpson); 34 (Soofi)

Type of attack: Gun

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: Yes (Simpson); No (Soofi)

Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi shot and wounded a security guard at an *American Freedom Defense Initiative* event in Garland, Texas, during which drawings of Islam’s Prophet Mohammed were on display. Simpson and Soofi had rifles and body armour, but were shot and killed by the police shortly after opening fire. Approximately 200 people were in attendance at the event.

Simpson posted a message on *Twitter*, under the hashtag ‘#texasattack’, saying: “May Allah accept us as mujahideen” and pledging loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.²⁰⁹ Islamic State later claimed responsibility for the attack.²¹⁰

Furthermore, in the hours before the shooting, a *Twitter* account controlled by Simpson recommended his followers connect to another account – that belonging to Abu Hussain al-Britani, an IS fighter from the UK who was recently killed in an air strike in Syria. In turn, al-Britani posted “2 of our brothers just opened fire at the Prophet

²⁰⁶ ‘Paris police arrest man planning attacks on church service after he shot himself’, *The Telegraph*, 22 April 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11554880/Paris-police-arrest-man-planning-attacks-on-church-service-after-he-shot-himself.html>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁰⁷ ‘Heavily armed jihadist “planning attacks on churches” is arrested by French police after accidentally shooting himself... and is linked to “random killing” of dancer’, *Daily Mail*, 22 April 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3050216/Heavily-armed-jihadist-planning-attacks-churches-shot-arrested-French-police-implicated-murder-dancer-gunned-car.html>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁰⁸ ‘Sid Ahmed Ghلام: scholarship student “drawn to jihad”’, *AFP*, 23 April 2015, available at: <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/sid-ahmed-ghlam-scholarship-student-drawn-jihad-083638026.html#OrwLsDS>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁰⁹ ‘ISIS claims responsibility for Texas shooting but offers no proof’, *CNN*, 6 May 2015, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/05/us/garland-texas-prophet-mohammed-contest-shooting/>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Muhammad (s.a.w.) art exhibition in Texas” just minutes after the attack in Garland took place. This has led to speculation that elements within IS were aware of the Garland plot prior to it actually taking place.²¹¹

Simpson was born in Illinois, before moving to Phoenix, Arizona. He used to work at a dentist’s office.²¹² Simpson had been under government surveillance since 2006, because of his ties to Hassan Abu-Jihaad –²¹³ who was convicted in the US, on terrorism charges, in March 2008. On 29 May 2009, Simpson told an FBI informant that they could “make it to the battlefield”.²¹⁴ In March 2011, he was convicted of making a false statement regarding his involvement in international terrorism, a reference to him telling FBI agents that he had not discussed going to Somalia to fight jihad. He was sentenced to three years’ probation.²¹⁵

Soofi, of Pakistani and American heritage, was born in Garland and used to live in Islamabad.²¹⁶ He ran a carpet-cleaning business and, beforehand, owned a pizza and hot-wings restaurant.²¹⁷ It is believed that Simpson was an employee of Soofi’s at the pizzeria.²¹⁸ For a time, Simpson and Soofi also lived together in Phoenix.²¹⁹

Soofi is thought to have had prior arrests for dangerous driving and drug possession. He dropped out of a medicine course at the University of Utah, in 2003.²²⁰

JUNE 2015

Country targeted: US

Name: Usaamah Rahim; David Wright; Nicholas Rovinski

Date of incident: 2 June 2015 (Rahim killed and Wright’s arrest); 3 June 2015 (Wright charged with obstructing justice); 12 June 2015 (Wright and Rovinski charged with material support)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 26 (Rahim); 25 (Wright); 24 (Rovinski)

Type of attack: Knife

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Member of the public; police

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: No (Rahim); Unknown (Wright); Yes (Rovinski)

²¹¹ ‘Revealed: The British jihadi fighting for ISIS in Syria who “helped” Texas Muhammed cartoon gunmen for terror group’s first attack on US soil’, *Daily Mail*, 5 May 2015, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3068723/The-British-jihadi-fighting-ISIS-Syria-groomed-Texas-Muhammed-cartoon-gunmen-terror-group-s-attack-soil.html#ixzz3kgXzJCb4>, last visited: 3 September 2015.

²¹² ‘Profile: Texas gunmen Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi’, *BBC News*, 5 May 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-32582704>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²¹³ ‘Texas shooting: FBI had monitored gunman Elton Simpson since 2006’, *The Guardian*, 5 May 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/may/05/elton-simpson-fbi-had-monitored-texas-gunman-since-2006>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ ‘ISIS claims responsibility for Texas shooting but offers no proof’, *CNN*, 6 May 2015.

²¹⁶ ‘Profile: Texas gunmen Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi’, *BBC News*, 5 May 2015.

²¹⁷ Ibid.; see also: ‘2 Garland shooters’ lives twined to tragic end’, *The Dallas Morning News*, 5 May 2015, available at: <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/crime/headlines/20150504-2-garland-shooters-lives-twined-to-tragic-end.ece>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²¹⁸ ‘Texas gunman’s mother: “He just had a normal American upbringing”’, *Los Angeles Times*, 5 May 2015, available at: <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-texas-gunman-20150505-story.html#page=1>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²¹⁹ ‘ISIS claims responsibility for Texas shooting but offers no proof’, *CNN*, 6 May 2015.

²²⁰ ‘Profile: Texas gunmen Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi’, *BBC News*, 5 May 2015.

Usaamah Rahim was shot and killed in Roslindale, Massachusetts, after apparently aggressively approaching police officers with a knife (although his intent to launch an assault has not yet been proved). He was suspected of planning to attack police officers as part of an IS-inspired plot.

Rahim and his nephew, David Wright, allegedly formulated a plan to behead Pamela Geller of the American Freedom Defense Initiative. The plan was thought to be inspired by IS.²²¹ Rahim allegedly ordered three knives online, between 25 and 27 May.²²² The pair also allegedly discussed the idea with Nicholas Rovinski, on 31 May; yet, Rahim apparently changed his mind on 2 June, and expressed an intention to attack police officers imminently.²²³ Wright and Rovinski were charged with conspiring to provide material support to IS by conspiring to murder Pamela Geller.²²⁴ Wright was also charged with allegedly telling Rahim to destroy his computer and phone, which had evidence of the latter’s alleged plotting.²²⁵

Rahim was raised in Brookline, Massachusetts, and attended college in Miami, where he lived between 2006 and 2013 and also worked as a security guard.²²⁶ From March 2015, he worked for *CVS*.²²⁷ In late 2008/early 2009, Rahim began to spend an increasing amount of time online and became much more religiously observant.²²⁸ Both Rahim and Wright displayed their interest in jihad via social media. On their *Facebook* profiles, they had ‘liked’ pages relating to Islamic State; radical preachers; and Sharia law.²²⁹ In a *Facebook* conversation in March 2015, Rahim outlined his support for chopping hands off thieves; stoning adulterers; and death for insulting Islam and its Prophet, Mohammed.²³⁰

Rahim had also allegedly said, in a wiretapped conversation, that he wanted to “leave this worldly life,” and that jihad “is a way out and it’s a way to meet Allah.” A handwritten will was discovered at his home after he was killed.²³¹

Wright, who was enrolled at a community college between 2010 and 2011,²³² allegedly told the FBI that he was the one who introduced Rahim to literature and religious scholars supportive of IS.²³³

Rovinski lived in Rhode Island. He converted to Islam in 2013 and was supportive of IS, posting their videos and statements online. He met Wright through *Facebook*. Rovinski allegedly said to FBI agents that he was “at war” with non-IS supporters and would even sanction the killing of his family if they resisted living under IS rule.²³⁴

²²¹ ‘Boston Knife Plot Was Hatched in Belief It Would Support ISIS, Documents Say’, *NBC News*, 12 June 2015, available at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/boston-knife-plot-was-hatched-belief-it-would-support-isis-n374361>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²²² ‘United States of America v. David Wright – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts* (June 2015), available at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/file/451956/download>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²²³ ‘Boston Knife Plot Was Hatched in Belief It Would Support ISIS, Documents Say’, *NBC News*, 12 June 2015.

²²⁴ ‘Two Men Charged with Conspiracy to Provide Material Support to Islamic State’, *United States Department of Justice*, 12 June 2015, available at: <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/two-men-charged-conspiracy-provide-material-support-islamic-state>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²²⁵ ‘Slain Boston man had planned to behead police officers: FBI’, *Reuters*, 3 June 2015, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/03/us-massachusetts-police-court-idUSKBN0OJ1PR20150603>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²²⁶ ‘Portrait of Suspect in Boston Is Disputed’, *The New York Times*, 4 June 2015, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/05/us/portrait-of-boston-suspect-usaamah-rahim-is-disputed.html>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²²⁷ ‘2 Men In Boston Terror Probe Allegedly Planned To Kill “Boys In Blue”’, *CBS Boston*, 3 June 2015, available at: <http://boston.cbslocal.com/2015/06/03/everett-man-due-in-federal-court-on-charges-linked-to-boston-terror-probe/>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²²⁸ ‘I Watched Boston Beheader Go Radical’, *The Daily Beast*, 6 June 2015, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/06/my-former-friend-the-boston-beheader.html>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²²⁹ ‘Portrait of Suspect in Boston Is Disputed’, *The New York Times*, 4 June 2015.

²³⁰ ‘I Watched Boston Beheader Go Radical’, *The Daily Beast*, 6 June 2015.

²³¹ ‘Boston Knife Plot Was Hatched in Belief It Would Support ISIS, Documents Say’, *NBC News*, 12 June 2015.

²³² ‘2 Men In Boston Terror Probe Allegedly Planned To Kill “Boys In Blue”’, *CBS Boston*, 3 June 2015.

²³³ ‘Suspected terrorist fostered his extremism online, FBI says’, *The Boston Globe*, 12 June 2015, available at: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2015/06/12/rhode-island-man-due-boston-court-connection-with-roslindale-terror-investigation/FEN33lk27mt8am1NI57CuM/story.html#>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

“WE WILL CONQUER YOUR ROME”

A Study of Islamic State Terror Plots in the West

US officials have stated that all three men were influenced by IS, and that one of the men was being encouraged to carry out an attack by someone with connections to IS based abroad. However, they do not believe that the plan was directed by the group itself.²³⁵

Country targeted: US

Name: Munther Omar Saleh; Fareed Mumuni; CC-1

Date of incident: 13 June 2015 (Saleh’s and CC-1’s arrest and alleged attack); 17 June 2015 (Mumuni’s arrest and alleged attack)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American (Saleh, Mumuni); Unknown (CC-1)

Age: 20 (Saleh); 21 (Mumuni); Unknown (CC-1)

Type of attack: Bomb; knife; vehicle; gun

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Police; members of the public

Direct contact with IS: Unknown (Saleh); No (Mumuni, CC-1)

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No (Saleh, CC-1); Yes (Mumuni)

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: Unknown

Munther Omar Saleh and Fareed Mumuni are suspected of planning an IS-inspired terrorist attack and, along with an unnamed co-conspirator (CC-1), of trying to construct a home-made pressure-cooker bomb.

On 7 May 2015, a Confidential Human Source (CHS) working with US authorities spoke to Saleh, who said he was “trying to do an Op”.²³⁶ (He eventually cut off contact with the informant, saying he was “ordered by dawlah [believed to be a reference to Islamic State] officials not to talk to anyone.”²³⁷)

Also on 7 May, Saleh e-mailed himself online instructions on how to build a pressure-cooker bomb. Between 7 May and 13 June, it is alleged that Saleh and CC-1 carried out online research for components that could be used in an explosive device. Between 28 May and 31 May, it is alleged that Saleh looked at New York City tourist attractions and landmarks online, searching for targets to attack.

On 2 June, Saleh and Mumuni allegedly discussed carrying out an attack on Islamic State’s behalf. Saleh allegedly encouraged Mumuni to carry out bomb attacks against law-enforcement officers and run them over with a car, then take their weapons and use them to shoot further victims.²³⁸

On 13 June, Saleh and CC-1 attempted to attack law-enforcement officers who were carrying out surveillance on them. They ran towards the surveillance vehicle with knives in their hands, yet were ultimately arrested. Following

²³⁵ ‘Usaamah Rahim is buried, while Boston terror attack questions loom’, *CNN*, 6 June 2015, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/05/us/boston-police-shooting/>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²³⁶ ‘United States of America - against - Fareed Mumuni – Complaint’, *United States District Court Eastern District of New York* (June 2015), available at: http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2753.pdf, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²³⁷ ‘College Student in Queens Is Charged With Conspiring to Support ISIS’, *The New York Times*, 16 June 2015, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/17/nyregion/college-student-in-queens-is-charged-with-conspiring-to-support-isis.html>, last visited: 28 August 2015.

²³⁸ ‘Feds nab Staten Island man, 21, in ISIS-inspired bomb plot after he tried to attack agents with knife: sources’, *New York Daily News*, 17 June 2015, available at: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/dad-defends-queens-college-student-accused-isis-plot-article-1.2260994>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

his arrest, Saleh waived his Miranda rights and said that he and Mumuni were “full-fledged” members of IS.²³⁹

Mumuni allegedly intended to travel to join Islamic State, or, if that plan was disrupted, attack law-enforcement officers.²⁴⁰ He also allegedly said that he had pledged allegiance to IS and admitted to discussing the construction of a pressure-cooker bomb with Saleh.²⁴¹ When authorities moved to arrest him, Mumuni attempted to stab an FBI agent with a kitchen knife, though he was eventually restrained.

Saleh was studying aeronautics at Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology, in Queens, New York.²⁴² Mumuni was a student at the College of Staten Island, where he lived,²⁴³ and was studying to be a social worker.²⁴⁴

There were two others also connected to the cell: Alaa Saadeh and Samuel Rahamin Topaz, both of whom are alleged to have intended to travel abroad to join Islamic State.

Country targeted: US

Name: Justin Nojan Sullivan

Date of incident: 19 June 2015 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 19

Type of attack: Gun

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: Yes

Justin Nojan Sullivan allegedly intended to buy a semi-automatic rifle and kill US citizens on behalf of IS.²⁴⁵

An undercover FBI employee contacted him on 6 June 2015. Sullivan allegedly said that he was a “mujahid” and asked the agent if he wished to join the ‘Islamic State of North America’.²⁴⁶ On 9 June, Sullivan allegedly asked the operative whether he would be able to make a home-made silencer. Sullivan allegedly said that he was planning

²³⁹ ‘United States of America - against - Fareed Mumuni – Complaint’, *United States District Court Eastern District of New York* (June 2015).

²⁴⁰ ‘Feds nab Staten Island man, 21, in ISIS-inspired bomb plot after he tried to attack agents with knife: sources’, *New York Daily News*, 17 June 2015.

²⁴¹ ‘Third Man Arrested In New York Pressure Cooker Bomb Plot’, *NPR*, 17 June 2015, available at: <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/06/17/415285162/third-man-arrested-in-new-york-pressure-cooker-bomb-plot>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁴² ‘New York Man Accused Of Plotting to Explode Pressure Cooker Bombs’, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 16 June 2015, available at: <http://chicago.suntimes.com/nationworld/7/71/696502/new-york-man-accused-of-plotting-to-explode-pressure-cooker-bombs>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁴³ ‘United States of America - against - Fareed Mumuni – Complaint’, *United States District Court Eastern District of New York* (June 2015).

²⁴⁴ ‘Feds nab Staten Island man, 21, in ISIS-inspired bomb plot after he tried to attack agents with knife: sources’, *New York Daily News*, 17 June 2015.

²⁴⁵ ‘United States of America v. Justin Nojan Sullivan – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina* (June 2015), available at: http://media.cmgdigital.com/shared/news/documents/2015/06/22/Sullivan_complaint.pdf, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁴⁶ ‘North Carolina Man Charged with Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIL and Weapon Offenses’, *United States Department of Justice*, 22 June 2015, available at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/north-carolina-man-charged-attempting-provide-material-support-isil-and-weapon-offenses>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

on carrying out “minor assassinations before the big attack”, and that he was “going to send a video to IS”.²⁴⁷ He was arrested after receiving the silencer – sent by the undercover FBI operative – in the mail.²⁴⁸

Sullivan is suspected of planning to first buy the rifle at a gun show in North Carolina and then shoot civilians “at a bar or concert”.²⁴⁹ He allegedly also discussed killing his own parents – it was his father who first alerted authorities to Sullivan’s increasingly radical behaviour – and other potential attacks that could kill up to 1,000 people. Sullivan allegedly said, “I’m thinking about using biological weapons ... coat our bullets with cyanide ... and then set off a gas bomb to finish the rest.”²⁵⁰

Islamic State social-media videos are thought to have contributed to Sullivan’s radicalisation.²⁵¹ During a conversation with the undercover officer, Sullivan said that he “liked IS from the beginning then [...] started thinking about death and stuff so [...] became Muslim”, and that “if it wasn’t for the airstrikes we would’ve already won the war in Iraq and Syria by now”.²⁵²

Following his arrest, Sullivan agreed to be interviewed by the FBI. At this time, he told them he had discussed carrying out attacks on Islamic State’s behalf, possibly between 21 and 23 June, when his parents were away. He also said that he had obtained the silencer so that his gun would make less noise during his potential attack, and that he had asked the undercover operative to kill his parents.²⁵³

Sullivan lived in Morganton, North Carolina.²⁵⁴

Country targeted: US

Name: Amir Said Abdul Rahman al-Ghazi

Date of incident: 19 June 2015 (arrest); 16 July 2015 (charge)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 38

Type of attack: Gun; bomb

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Undeveloped (police and members of the public were discussed)

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: No

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: Yes

Amir Said Abdul Rahman al-Ghazi allegedly told FBI undercover operatives of his wish to carry out an attack on US soil, with potential attacks on a police station or derailing a train being proposed. He had allegedly acquired a machete and was arrested after trying to buy an AK-47 from an undercover FBI employee. A subsequent search of his home led to the discovery of an IS flag, a sword, and a handgun.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ ‘North Carolina man charged in plot to kill Americans for Islamic State’, *Reuters*, 22 June 2015, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/22/us-usa-security-idUSKBN0P21P020150622>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁴⁹ ‘Father Tips Off Police to Son’s Alleged ISIS Sympathies, Authorities Say’, *ABC News*, 22 June 2015, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/father-tips-off-police-son-alleged-isis-sympathies/story?id=31944740>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² ‘United States of America v. Justin Nojan Sullivan – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina* (June 2015).

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ ‘North Carolina man charged in plot to kill Americans for Islamic State’, *Reuters*, 22 June 2015.

Between the period of July 2014 to June 2015, al-Ghazi allegedly made repeated statements expressing allegiance and affiliation with IS and a “desire” to act on its behalf.²⁵⁵ Al-Ghazi was interacting with multiple Confidential Human Sources (CHSes), whom he believed were either members or sympathisers of IS. He allegedly told one informant that he was inspired by the Boston Marathon attack and needed assistance in finding weapons and bomb-making materials, and that he was willing to die under “the name and blessing of ISIL”.²⁵⁶

Al-Ghazi is also accused of pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi electronically, as well as trying to recruit others to join the group. He reportedly said that the US could become the “land of jihad.”²⁵⁷

Al-Ghazi lived in Sheffield Lake, Ohio.²⁵⁸ He had a long track record of past criminality, pleading guilty to drug-related offences on nine occasions since 1996.²⁵⁹ He converted to Islam while in prison,²⁶⁰ and is also charged with distributing marijuana.²⁶¹

JULY 2015

One of the excluded UK cases occurred in July 2015.

Country targeted: US

Name: Alexander Ciccolo

Date of incident: 4 July 2015 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 23

Type of attack: Bomb

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: Yes

Alexander Ciccolo is alleged to have planned to detonate pressure-cooker bombs at college cafeterias and dormitories. He also allegedly intended to live broadcast executions of students and was carrying weapons at the time of his arrest.

²⁵⁵ ‘United States of America v. Amir Said Rahman Al-Ghzai – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio* (June 2015), available at: http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2762.pdf, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ ‘Mother of Sheffield Lake terrorism suspect says she had disagreement with him over his Islamic faith’, *Cleveland.com*, 19 June 2015, available at: http://www.cleveland.com/court-justice/index.ssf/2015/06/terrorism_suspects_mother_says.html, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁵⁹ ‘Sheffield Lake terrorist suspect said he’d behead his non-Muslim son, FBI reports’, *Cleveland.com*, 19 June 2015, available at: http://www.cleveland.com/court-justice/index.ssf/2015/06/sheffield_lake_terrorist_suspe.html, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁶⁰ ‘Mother of Sheffield Lake terrorism suspect says she had disagreement with him over his Islamic faith’, *Cleveland.com*, 19 June 2015.

²⁶¹ ‘U.S. Citizen Arrested for Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIL and Other Federal Offenses’, *United States Department of Justice*, 19 June 2015, available at: <https://www.fbi.gov/cleveland/press-releases/2015/u.s.-citizen-arrested-for-attempting-to-provide-material-support-to-isil-and-other-federal-offenses>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

The authorities were tipped off in September 2014 that Ciccolo was interested in travelling overseas to fight for IS. He was in contact with an undercover FBI agent during his alleged plotting. He is believed to have told this operative of his desire to attack a police station and bars, before changing his plan to a college cafeteria and buying a pressure cooker in preparation. On 3 July 2015, the undercover operative provided him with four guns, and Ciccolo was then arrested.²⁶² At Ciccolo’s apartment, machetes; a long knife; chemicals; jihadist literature; and partially built Molotov cocktails were discovered.²⁶³

Ciccolo lived in Adams, Massachusetts,²⁶⁴ and was the son of a Boston police captain²⁶⁵ and had previously been convicted of a crime which meant it was illegal for him to possess firearms. He reportedly has mental illness problems and had stabbed a nurse in the head with a pen, at a hospital where he was being treated.²⁶⁶

He was said to have been inspired by the Boston Marathon bombing of April 2013 and had posted a picture of a dead American soldier online, with the comment: “Thank you Islamic State. Now we won’t have to deal with these kafir back in America.”²⁶⁷ He also praised IS’s attack against the Sousse beach resort in Tunisia, which led to the deaths of 38 civilians.²⁶⁸

Country targeted: France

Name: Ismael K.; Djibril A.; Antoine F.

Date of incident: 13 July 2015 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Unknown

Age: 17 (Ismael); 23 (Djibril); 19 (Antoine)

Type of attack: Gun; knife

Terrorist training: Unknown

Combat experience: Unknown

Target: Military

Direct contact with IS: Yes

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: Unknown

Three suspects were arrested for their roles in an alleged plot to kill officers, using handguns, at a military base in Port-Vendres, near Perpignan in southern France, and then behead the commander.²⁶⁹

²⁶² ‘Alexander Ciccolo, Boston Cop’s Son, Busted for Alleged Terror Plot’, *NBC News*, 14 July 2015, available at:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/boston-cops-son-alexander-ciccolo-busted-alleged-terror-plot-n391246>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁶³ ‘Son of Boston Police Captain Arrested as Possible Terrorist’, *ABC News*, 13 July 2015, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/officials-son-boston-police-captain-arrested-terrorist/story?id=32414150>, last visited: 26 August 2015; see also: ‘Alexander Ciccolo, Boston Cop’s Son, Busted for Alleged Terror Plot’, *NBC News*, 14 July 2015.

²⁶⁴ ‘Son of Boston Police Captain Arrested as Possible Terrorist’, *ABC News*, 13 July 2015.

²⁶⁵ ‘Alexander Ciccolo, Boston Cop’s Son, Busted for Alleged Terror Plot’, *NBC News*, 14 July 2015.

²⁶⁶ ‘Massachusetts Man Charged in Connection with Plot to Engage in Terrorism Plot’, *United States Department of Justice*, 23 July 2015.

²⁶⁷ ‘Son of Boston Police Captain Arrested as Possible Terrorist’, *ABC News*, 13 July 2015.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ ‘France terror suspects plotted to behead military staffer, prosecutor’s office says’, *CNN*, 16 July 2015, available at:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/16/europe/france-foiled-terrorist-plot/>, last visited: 26 August 2015; see also: ‘French Muslim teenager arrested on terror charges “was told to ‘hit France’ by ISIS recruiter after his mother reported him to authorities and blocked him going to Syria”’, *Daily Mail*, 17 July 2015, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3165468/French-Muslim-teenager-arrested-terror-charges-told-hit-France-ISIS-recruiter-mother-reported-authorities-blocked-travelling-Syria.html#ixzz3gWqBIeR>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

It was alleged that they were intending to film this attack with a *GoPro* camera and were planning the operation for late 2015/early 2016.²⁷⁰ They then intended to flee to Syria. It is thought that the cell, whose members had come into contact via social media, had originally wanted to travel there to fight, but had to change their plans after Ismael’s mother contacted the authorities about her son’s views.

As a result, the Islamic State member with whom Ismael, thought to be the head of the cell, was communicating electronically told Ismael to “hit on the ground in France”.²⁷¹ The state prosecutor stated that the men “were strongly radicalised, in particular because they watched IS videos.”²⁷² Ismael was also in contact with imprisoned jihadists in France.²⁷³

Djebril was a former signalman in the French military and had once worked at the base allegedly being targeted.²⁷⁴ He had suffered health problems and was discharged in January 2015.

A fourth suspect, aged 16, was arrested but released.

Country targeted: Italy

Name: Lassaad Briki; Muhammad Waqas

Date of incident: 22 July 2015 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Tunisian (Briki); Pakistani (Waqas)

Age: 35 (Briki); 26 (Waqas)

Type of attack: Undeveloped

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Undeveloped (military was discussed)

Direct contact with IS: Yes (Briki); No (Waqas)

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: No

Lassaad Briki and Muhammad Waqas were arrested for their suspected roles in an Islamic State-inspired plan to attack Ghedi Air Base (a military site housing US soldiers, near Brescia, northern Italy). However, a Milanese prosecutor said that there was not “a real danger with the transition from words to action”, in the case.²⁷⁵

Briki is thought to have been in contact with IS fighters in Syria – where he and Waqas are initially suspected of intending to travel, to receive training from Islamic State.²⁷⁶ However, by 21 June 2015, Briki had allegedly resolved to instead plan an attack in Italy, against Ghedi. He tried to anonymously search the Internet for images of Ghedi and techniques for shooting down a plane.²⁷⁷ Waqas is alleged to have said that he wanted to kill “two or three

²⁷⁰ ‘France terror suspects plotted to behead military staffer, prosecutor’s office says’, *CNN*, 16 July 2015.

²⁷¹ ‘Islamic State ordered failed attack on France – prosecutor’, *Reuters*, 17 July 2015, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/07/17/uk-france-security-idUKKCN0PR0WT20150717>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁷² ‘French Muslim teenager arrested on terror charges “was told to ‘hit France’ by ISIS recruiter after his mother reported him to authorities and blocked him going to Syria”’, *Daily Mail*, 17 July 2015.

²⁷³ ‘France terror suspects plotted to behead military staffer, prosecutor’s office says’, *CNN*, 16 July 2015.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ ‘Two ISIS terrorists arrested in Brescia’, *Ansa*, 22 July 2015, available at: http://www.ansa.it/english/news/politics/2015/07/22/two-isis-terrorists-arrested-in-brescia_211e255d-dc94-4ef9-82ef-b50d07dfe308.html, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁷⁶ ‘ISIS Supporters Plotted Attack on U.S.-Linked Base in Italy: Prosecutors’, *NBC News*, 22 July 2015, available at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/italy-isis-supporters-plotted-attack-ghedi-air-base-u-s-n396386>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁷⁷ ‘Lassaad Briki e Muhammad Waqas arrestati a Brescia. I 2 jihadisti sognavano di abbattere un aereo militare americano’, *L’Huffington Post*, 22 July 2015, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/07/22/brescia-arrestati-due-jihadisti_n_7850766.html, last visited: 26 August 2015.

Carabinieri [Italian military police]” during the attack, and they agreed that they should try and kill Americans as well.²⁷⁸

During a wiretapped conversation between the two, Waqas and Briki discussed planting bombs.²⁷⁹ They also talked about attacking the food-packing company where one of them was employed, and had downloaded ‘How to Survive in the West’, the IS manual which contains the likes of bomb-making instructions and advice on avoiding detection.²⁸⁰

In addition, the pair created a *Twitter* account, ‘Islamic_State in Roma’, where messages were posted of Italian landmarks (such as the Duomo cathedral in Milan, the Colosseum in Rome, and a busy train station), with comments such as: “We are in your streets. We are everywhere. We are locating targets, waiting for time X”.²⁸¹ Briki wrote further messages on Twitter, stating: “We’re already in Rome” and “Our knives are sharpened and ready for slaughter”.²⁸²

Waqas was born in Gujrat, Pakistan, and Briki in Kairouan, Tunisia.²⁸³ The men lived in Manerbio, a town near Brescia, in northern Italy. Waqas worked as a labourer, and Briki as a cleaner.²⁸⁴

Country targeted: US

Name: Harlem Suarez

Date of incident: 27 July 2015 (arrest)

Gender: Male

Nationality: American

Age: 23

Type of attack: Bomb

Terrorist training: No

Combat experience: No

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: No

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: No

Religious convert: Yes

Harlem Suarez has been accused of planning to build a bomb and bury it at a beach in Key West, Florida.²⁸⁵

Suarez caught the FBI’s attention in April 2015, after the agency was tipped off about his use of social-media platforms to express support for Islamic State. For instance, in one of his Facebook posts, Suarez wrote: “Be a warrior, learn how to cut your enemies head and then burn down the body learn how to be the new future of the

²⁷⁸ ‘Two ISIS terrorists arrested in Brescia’, *Ansa*, 22 July 2015.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ ‘ISIS Supporters Plotted Attack on U.S.-Linked Base in Italy: Prosecutors’, *NBC News*, 22 July 2015.

²⁸¹ ‘Two ISIS terrorists arrested in Brescia’, *Ansa*, 22 July 2015.

²⁸² “‘Our knives are sharpened’ tweets Briki”, *Ansa*, 22 July 2015, available at: http://www.ansa.it/english/news/general_news/2015/07/22/our-knives-are-sharpened-tweets-briki_0a17630c-4401-4c1e-ba19-70c2ed8c8fed.html, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁸³ ‘ISIS Supporters Plotted Attack on U.S.-Linked Base in Italy: Prosecutors’, *NBC News*, 22 July 2015.

²⁸⁴ ‘Two ISIS terrorists arrested in Brescia’, *Ansa*, 22 July 2015.

²⁸⁵ ‘Harlem Suarez Planned to Blow Up Key West Beach in Isis-Inspired Attack’, *Miami New Times*, 28 July 2015, available at: <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/harlem-suarez-planned-to-blow-up-key-west-beach-in-isis-inspired-attack-7783341>, last visited: 28 August 2015.

world Caliphate”,²⁸⁶ while another said: “we are the islamic state. We are isis muslims”.²⁸⁷ There were also posts, on his *Facebook* page, of IS carrying out beheadings and statements in support of the group.

The FBI then had an informant come into contact with Suarez. In a recorded phone call, he allegedly told the informant of his plans: “I can go to the beach at night time...put the thing in the sand...cover it up...so the next day I just call and the thing is [...] gonna make...a real hard noise from nowhere”.²⁸⁸

As well planning to carry out a bomb attack, Suarez had also allegedly sought to recruit members for IS via social media. He met with an informant at a motel and had a script prepared for a video. According to an FBI affidavit, Suarez, wearing a black tactical vest and mask, said:

I call to other brothers worldwide to creat[e] [a] Caliphate in the middle East [...] American soil is the past, we will destroy america and divide it in two, we will rais[e] our black flag on top of your white house and any president on duty [...] they will never destroy the islamic state and Abu Bakr al Baghdady.²⁸⁹

In July 2015, the informant and Suarez came to an agreement that if the latter provided the supplies, the former would deliver the bomb Suarez wanted. After providing the materials, Suarez received an inert bomb which had been prepared by the FBI, and he was arrested shortly afterwards.²⁹⁰

Suarez has said that he had considered travelling to the Middle East and had been trying to contact someone in Syria.²⁹¹

AUGUST 2015

Country targeted: France

Name: Ayoub el-Khazzani

Date of incident: 21 August 2015 (attack)

Gender: Male

Nationality: Moroccan

Age: 25

Type of attack: Gun

Terrorist training: Unknown

Combat experience: Unknown

Target: Members of the public

Direct contact with IS: Yes

Interest expressed in travel to Syria/Iraq: Yes

Past criminal behaviour: Yes

Religious convert: No

Ayoub el-Khazzani is suspected of planning to kill passengers on a train travelling from Amsterdam to Paris. He is believed to have boarded it in Belgium, armed with an AK-47; a Luger pistol; petrol; and a box-cutter, and emerged from a toilet cubicle as the train passed into northern France. El-Khazzani opened fired; but four

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ ‘United States of America v. Harlem Suarez – Criminal Complaint’, *United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida* (July 2015), available at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/file/641111/download>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

passengers – including two members of the US military – restrained him. Three people were injured during the attack; there were 554 passengers on board at the time. El-Khazzani was on Spanish, Belgian, and French security agencies’ radar.²⁹²

El-Khazzani was from Tetouan, northern Morocco, but emigrated to Spain in 2007.²⁹³ He lived in Madrid until 2009, and then moved south, to Algeciras, where he attended a radical mosque.²⁹⁴ While in the country, he was convicted for drug dealing and is thought to have become more radical while in jail.²⁹⁵

In early 2014, he moved to France, on a short-term contract to work for *Lycamobile*, a British telephone company, in Seine-Saint-Denis.²⁹⁶

On 10 May 2015, German authorities identified him travelling from Berlin to Turkey.²⁹⁷ Here, he is believed, by French investigators, to have met a cell of French IS fighters (the same cell also believed to have been linked to Sid Ahmed Ghlam’s planned attacks against churches in France in April 2015).²⁹⁸ At time of publication, reports conflict over whether he then returned straight away to France, or headed into Syria to receive training and fight alongside IS.²⁹⁹

After his time in Turkey, his precise movements remain ambiguous. There is a suspicion that he spent time in Belgium,³⁰⁰ and also that he eventually returned to France – where he is thought to have had online conversations with French IS contacts based in Turkey, about a possible attack on a train.³⁰¹

Soon after the attack, Facebook shut down el-Khazzani’s account, for hosting “terrorist content” and “content promoting terrorism”.³⁰² He is also thought to have watched online jihadist content on YouTube, while aboard the train.³⁰³

El-Khazzani says that he has travelled to Andorra; Austria; Belgium; France; Germany; and Spain since February 2015, but has not gone to Turkey or Syria.³⁰⁴ He also claimed that he had found the weapons in a park in Belgium and was trying to rob the passengers, not carry out a terrorist attack.³⁰⁵

²⁹² ‘Profile Emerges of Suspect in Attack on Train to Paris’, *The New York Times*, 22 August 2015, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/23/world/europe/thalys-train-attack-france-moroccan-suspect.html?_r=0, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁹³ ‘France train shooting suspect profile: Ayoub El-Khazzani’, *BBC News*, 25 August 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34032218>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁹⁴ ‘Attaque dans le Thalys : Ayoub El-Khazzani, itinéraire d’un routard de l’islam radical’, *Le Monde*, 24 August 2015, available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2015/08/24/ayoub-el-khazzani-itineraire-d-un-routard-de-l-islam-radical_4734995_1653578.html, last visited: 26 August 2015; see also: ‘Thalys : Ayoub El Khazzani, petit délinquant “paumé” attiré par l’islam radical’, *France 24*, 25 August 2015, available at: <http://www.france24.com/fr/20150824-thalys-ayoub-el-khazzani-portrait-delinquant-espagne-islam-france-belgique-terrorisme>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁹⁵ ‘France train attack: investigators focus on extremist motive’, *The Guardian*, 23 August 2015, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/23/france-train-attack-investigators-focus-on-extremist-motive>, last visited: 26 August 2015; see also: ‘Ayoub El Khazzani, braqueur fauché et salafiste fiché’, *Libération*, 23 August 2015, available at: http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2015/08/23/ayoub-el-khazzani-braqueur-fauche-et-salafiste-fiche_1368325, last visited: 26 August 2015.

²⁹⁶ ‘Attaque dans le Thalys : Ayoub El-Khazzani, itinéraire d’un routard de l’islam radical’, *Le Monde*, 24 August 2015.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ ‘Americans who thwarted train attack praised for “exceptional courage”’, *CNN*, 23 August 2015.

²⁹⁹ ‘Profile Emerges of Suspect in Attack on Train to Paris’, *The New York Times*, 22 August 2015; see also: ‘Train Gunman Watched Jihadist Video Before Attack, French Prosecutor Says’, *The Wall Street Journal*, 25 August 2015, available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/train-gunman-watched-jihadist-video-before-attack-french-prosecutor-says-1440519918>, last visited: 26 August 2015; see also: ‘Paris train gunman’s links to Syria’, *The Telegraph*, 22 August 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11818772/Paris-train-gunmans-links-to-Syria.html>, last visited: 26 August 2015; see also: ‘Who is Ayoub el-Khazzani? The French Train Attacker Who Fought for Isis in Syria Returned to Wage Jihad in Europe’, *International Business Times*, 23 August 2015, available at: <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/who-ayoub>

³⁰⁰ ‘France train attack: investigators focus on extremist motive’, *The Guardian*, 23 August 2015; see also: ‘Ayoub El Khazzani, braqueur fauché et salafiste fiché’, *Libération*, 23 August 2015.

³⁰¹ ‘Americans who thwarted train attack praised for “exceptional courage”’, *CNN*, 23 August 2015.

³⁰² ‘Train Attack Gunman’s Facebook Featured “Terrorist Content”’, *NBC News*, 25 August 2015, available at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/french-train-attack/french-train-attack-gun-suspects-facebook-had-terrorist-content-n415426>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

³⁰³ ‘France train shooting: Attack “was well prepared”’, *BBC News*, 26 August 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34055713>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

³⁰⁴ ‘France train shooting: What we know’, *BBC News*, 25 August 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34027051>, last visited: 28 August 2015.

³⁰⁵ ‘France train shooting suspect profile: Ayoub El-Khazzani’, *BBC News*, 25 August 2015.

STATISTICS

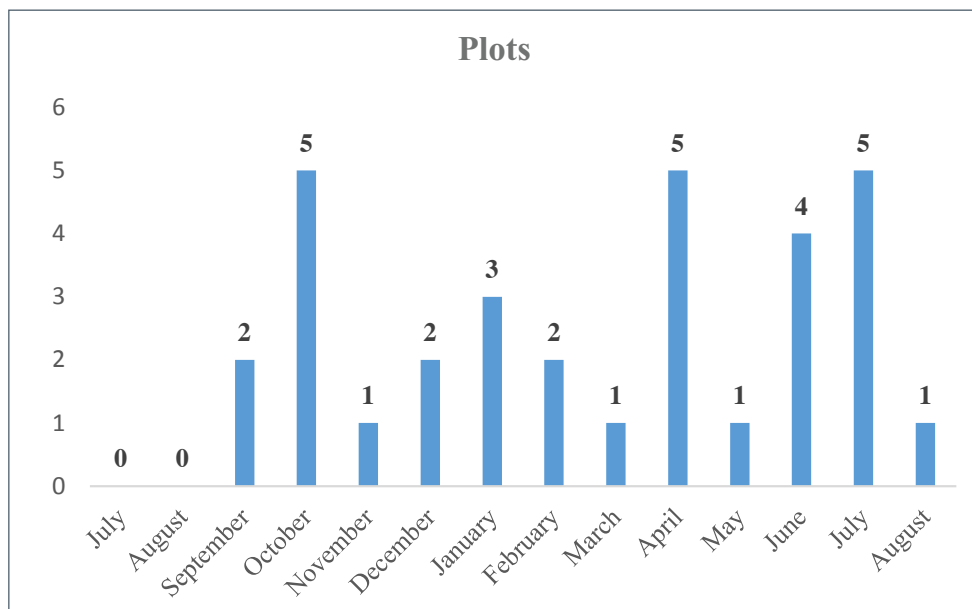
For brevity, ‘plots’ in this section refers to attacks; thwarted attacks; and alleged attacks. Furthermore, suspects in many of the cases have pleaded not guilty and must be presumed innocent until proved otherwise.

1. FREQUENCY

There were 32 IS plots in the West, between July 2014 and August 2015 (an average of 2.3 a month). These took in 10 separate countries and involved 58 individuals of 14 separate nationalities.

Abu Mohammed al-Adnani’s *fatwa* encouraging followers to “kill [...] in any manner or way however it may be” was released in September 2014. There has either been an attack taking place or a cell disrupted every month since (there were also two plots in September, one of which predated the release of Abu Mohammed’s *fatwa*).

It is noticeable that in October, the month after the *fatwa*’s release, there was the joint-highest number of IS plots: five. Two attacks occurred in Canada and one in the US, with two additional schemes foiled (one in Austria and one in the UK). The other months featuring five IS-associated plots were April 2015 (two in the US, one in Australia, one in Spain, and one in France) and July (two in the US, one in France, one in Italy and one in the UK). Following June 2015, this means that there were at least four plots foiled in three of the last five months studied (the exceptions being May and August).



1.1 IS INVOLVEMENT

The 32 plots or alleged plots connected to Islamic State have been categorised as: IS-directed, IS-approved, IS-linked and IS-inspired (placed in descending order, depending on the level of involvement from IS itself).

1.1.1 IS-directed

There was one IS-directed plot (3% of the total). This took place in Belgium, January 2015, and involved fighters who had previously travelled to Iraq/Syria and had since returned to their home country to carry out an attack in the West.

1.1.2 IS-approved

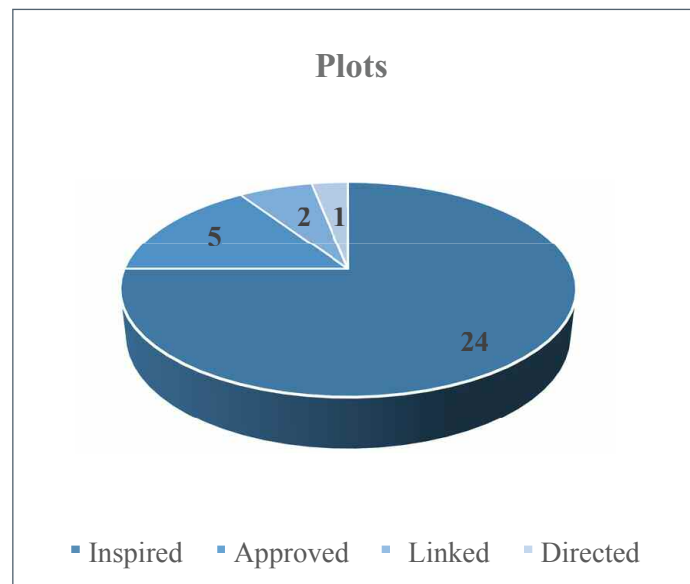
IS fighters encouraged, on five occasions (16% of the total number of schemes), individuals with whom they were in contact in the West to carry out attacks in their home countries, though without providing operational guidance.³⁰⁶

1.1.3 IS-linked

There were two cases (6%) where individuals had known connections to IS and contact with the group; but it has not been proved, at time of publication, that the group actually encouraged them to carry out an attack.³⁰⁷

1.1.4 IS-inspired

In the majority of plots (a total of 24 cases, or 75%), there was no proof of contact with IS fighters or leaders; but the group’s ideology or propaganda was integral to each schemes’ inspiration.



³⁰⁶ Also Omarjan Azari, Australia, September 2014; Mertkan G., Austria, October 2014; Sid Ahmed Ghlam, France, April 2015; Ismael K., France, July 2015; Ayoub el-Khazzani, France, August 2015.

³⁰⁷ Lassaad Briki, Italy, July 2015.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 GENDER & AGE

Of the 58 individuals involved in these 32 plots, 97% (n=55) were men.

The perpetrators were also largely young, with almost three quarters (74%, or 43 out of 58) aged under 25 years old. There were 10 teenagers (18% of the total number).

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Teenager	10	17.24%
20-24	21	36.21%
25-29	12	20.68%
30-34	7	12.06%
35-39	2	3.45%
40+	2	3.45%
Unknown	4	6.90%
Total	58	100%

The mean, median, mode, and range of ages are as follows:

Mean	25
Median	24
Mode	20, 24, 25
Range	36

2.2 NATIONALITY

In terms of nationality, the perpetrators have usually been home-grown; 38 of the 58 individuals (66%) were known to be citizens of the country they were targeting, while eight (14%) were known to be foreign nationals. On only one occasion did a Westerner target a separate Western country.³⁰⁸

The nationality of 12 individuals has not been publicly disclosed.

2.3 RELIGIOUS CONVERTS

Over a quarter (29%, n =17) of individuals involved in IS plots were converts to Islam. Twelve of them were American (out of a total of 18 Americans), while the remaining five were from Canada and France (one apiece) and Spain (three).

This means that converts accounted for 67% of American Muslims involved in committing or planning an attack. This is a significantly disproportionate percentage, considering that they comprise only 20% of Muslims throughout the entire United States.³⁰⁹

Overall, converts were involved in 44% of the 32 separate plots (n =14).

³⁰⁸ B', who was based in the UK and encouraged attacks in Australia.

³⁰⁹ 'Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism', *Pew Research Centre* (August 2011), available at: <http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/Muslim%20American%20Report%202010-02-12%20fix.pdf>, last visited: 26 August 2015.

2.4 PAST CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

There were 12 plots, involving 13 individuals (22% of the total number of perpetrators) who were known to have had past criminal records or were in contact with law enforcement.

The most common felonies related to drugs (with six individuals), violent crime (with four), or robbery (also with four). Six individuals were involved in multiple, different types of offence.

Of the 13, six were American citizens; two were Canadian; two were French; one was Australian; and there was one Dane and one Moroccan.

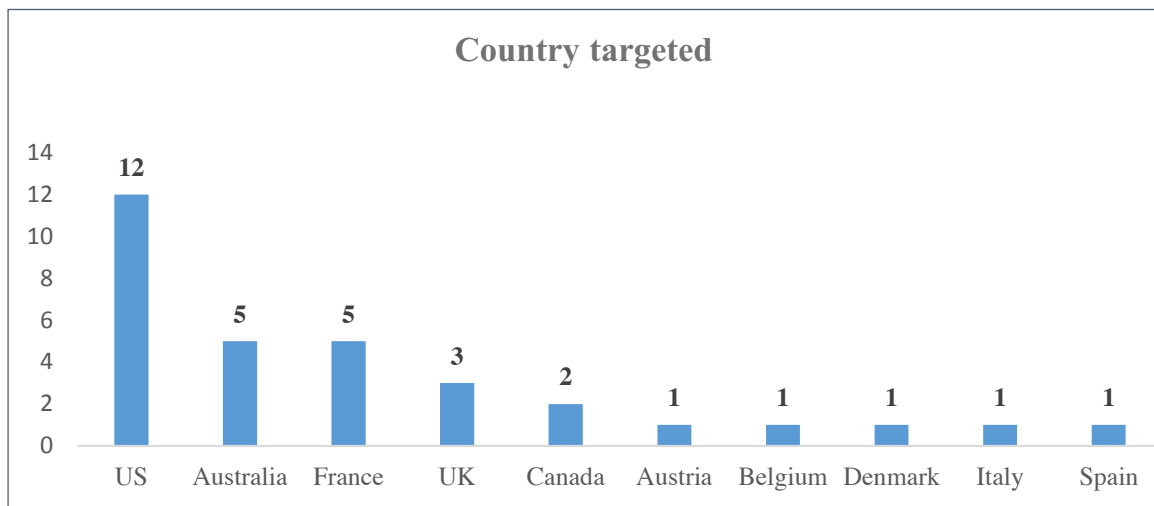
3. TARGETS

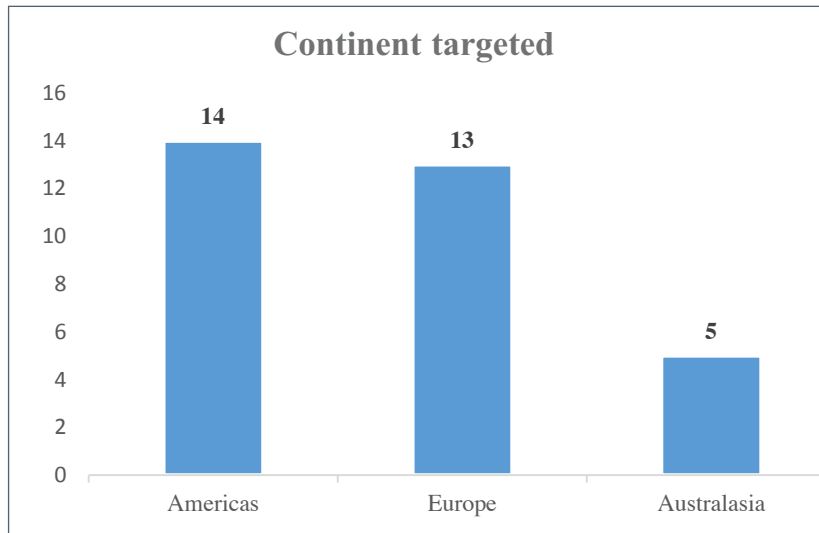
3.1 COUNTRIES TARGETED

There were 10 countries that either were attacked by IS supporters or thwarted such attempts.

The US has suffered the highest number of plots (12), over double the next two nearest: Australia and France. In 9 of the 12 in the US, there was an undercover agent or confidential human source embedded within the cell. In Europe, there have been 13 IS-related plots. Five of these were directed towards France, the European country that has faced the most threats.

Despite the equal number of schemes faced in the US and in Europe as a whole, the former has witnessed no fatalities and no operatives actually in contact with fighters in Iraq and Syria. In contrast, the latter has suffered from a total of eight fatalities. Furthermore, a high number of European cells were in contact with IS fighters abroad: 7 out of the 13 plots.





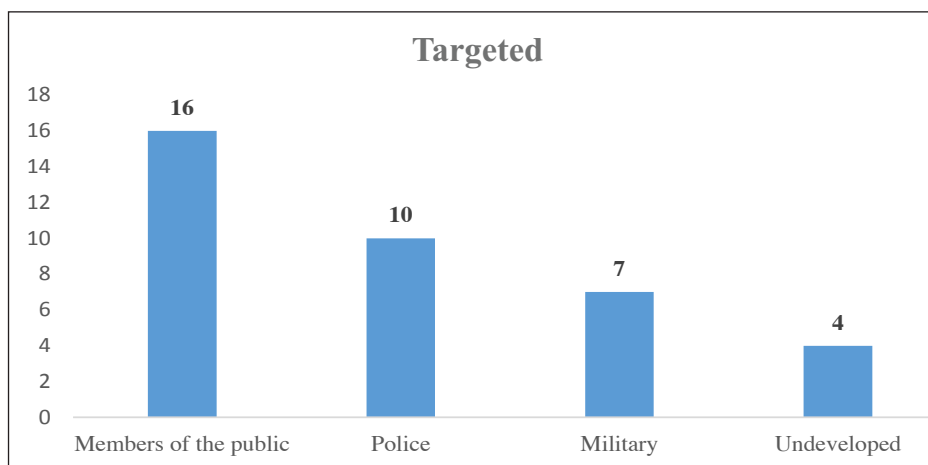
3.2 SECTOR TARGETING

There are three main groups on which IS and their supporters have focused: members of the public, the police, and the military. Of the 32 plots, there were multiple targets (confirmed or alleged) on five occasions.

Most common targets were members of the public, who featured 16 times. Between September 2014 and August 2015, there was only one month when they were not targeted as part of a plot (confirmed or alleged) connected with Islamic State.

There have been five IS-connected beheading plots in the West,³¹⁰ relating to individuals who were arrested in September and November in 2014, and April; June; and July 2015. On three occasions, it was a member of the public who was to be targeted; on one occasion, a police officer; and, on another, a soldier. Two of the beheading plans related to Australia (with an individual in the UK encouraging this type of attack).

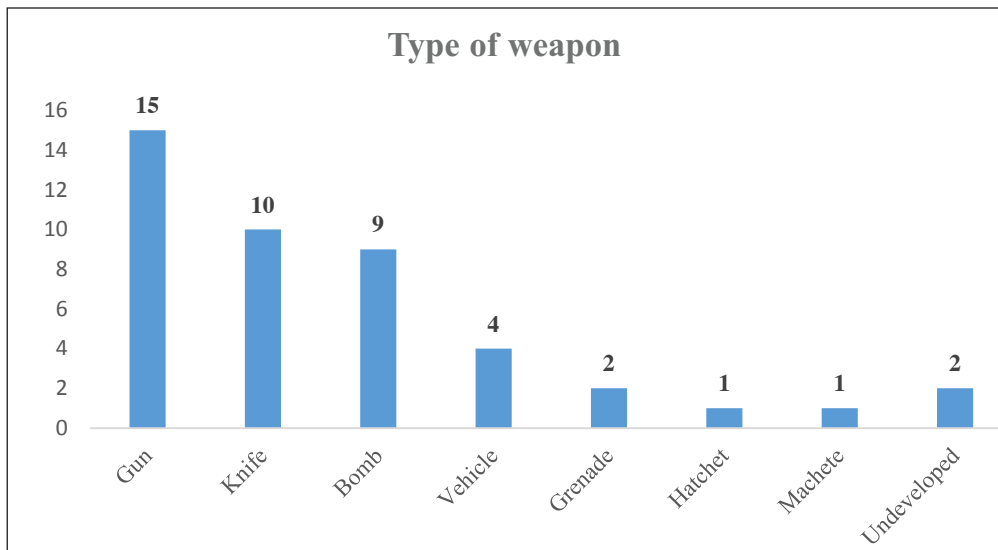
In addition, four plots were not developed enough to be able to assess the kinds of weapons that were planned on being used (two in the US, one in Italy and one in Spain). All arrests in those undeveloped alleged schemes took place between April and July 2015. This could suggest that law-enforcement and intelligence officials are discovering plots at an earlier stage, or that more recent conspirators have been more unfocused and disorganised.



³¹⁰ There have been suggestions that the alleged plot concerning al-Kutobi and Kiad involved beheading; however, this component cannot be confirmed at time of publication.

3.3 WEAPONRY USED

Across the 32 plots, a variety of weapons were either used or intended for use, with some plots featuring more than one mode of attack.³¹¹



The use of guns was either suggested or utilised in 15 plots. In ten plans, four of which were in Australia, the weapon of choice seemed to be knives. The use of bombs was also suggested or utilised in nine cases – on one occasion, successfully (albeit, causing no fatalities). Vehicles featured in three cases (leading to one fatality), while grenades cropped up twice.

Seven of the bomb plots were in the US, all of which involved undercover operatives or informants. Therefore, the danger that these cells or individuals might actually use the explosives was mitigated. The two non-US cases involved a 14-year-old in Austria and Amedy Coulibaly’s car bomb in Paris (only the latter of which was successfully detonated, but resulted in no fatalities).

4. ACTS OF TERRORIST VIOLENCE OCCURRING³¹²

Of the 32 plots or alleged plots, a total of 13 attacks took place.³¹³

Nine (28% of all cases) took place as the plotters roughly intended, with three of these occurring in October 2014 (two in Canada, one in the US).

The four additional attacks were either:

- > A component of a larger plot that was ultimately thwarted (Ghلام, France, April 2015; el-Khazzani, France, August 2015); or
- > Spontaneous attacks launched by individuals, in response to becoming aware that they were on the radar of law-enforcement agencies (IS fighters in Verviers, January 2015; Saleh and his accomplices, US, June 2015).

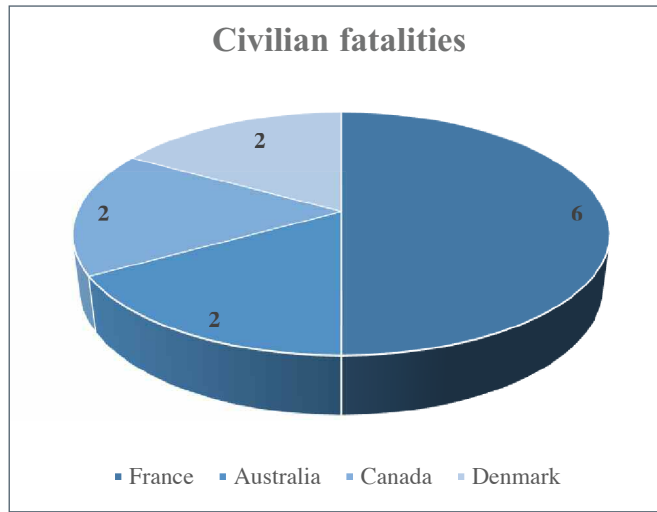
³¹¹ There were four other cases where machetes were mentioned (al-Ghazi, Siddiqui and Velentzas, Anzac Day plot, Ciccolo). However, they are excluded here because they either were not a central part of the plot (Siddiqui, al-Ghazi, Ciccolo) or actually found during raids (Anzac Day plot).

³¹² This includes the use of terrorist violence to resist arrest or questioning (i.e. the Verviers cell as well as the actions of Saleh et al.)

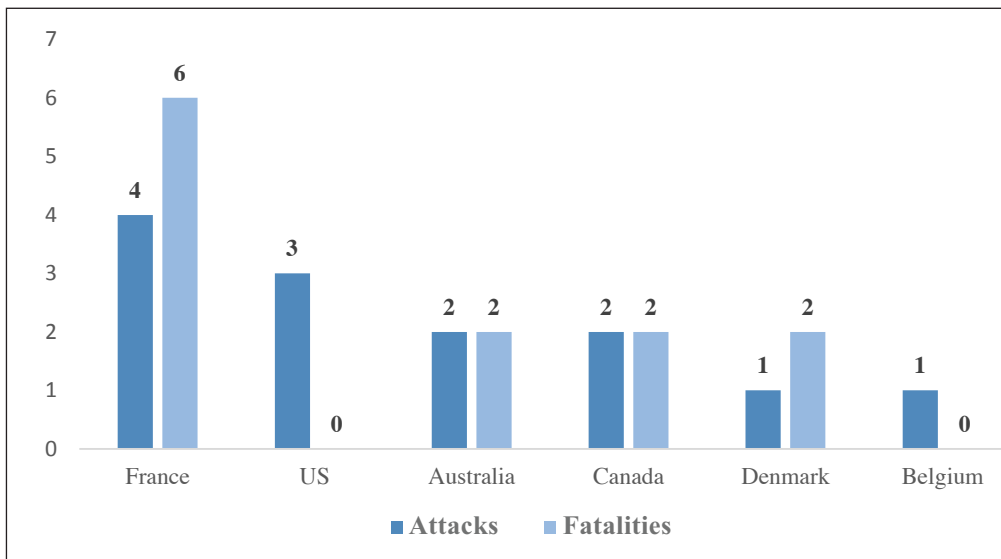
³¹³ The attacks carried out by Coulibaly; Saleh et al.; and el-Hussein are considered as one unit or attack, despite there being multiple components. Rahim has not been included, as it has not yet been proved he attacked the police officers involved in his attempted arrest.

4.1 FATALITIES

There have been 12 fatalities due to IS-connected attacks. Eleven of these deaths were as a result of gun attacks, and one was due to a vehicular hit-and-run (Martin Couture-Rouleau, Canada).



Five of the fatalities that occurred in France came as a result of Amedy Coulibaly’s attacks. France and Canada have both suffered from multiple attacks leading to civilian fatalities.



4.2 WEAPONRY USED AND TARGETS

The most common weapons used in these 13 attacks were guns and knives. Shootings took place on eight occasions,³¹⁴ while knives were used in three attacks.³¹⁵

Members of the public were targeted seven times and the police six (both figures include Saleh et al.’s and Coulibaly’s plot, which were directed at both groups). Military personnel were attacked on two occasions.

³¹⁴ Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, Canada, October 2014; Man Haron Monis, Australia, December 2014; Amedy Coulibaly, France, January 2015; Verviers, Belgium, January 2015; Omar Abdel Hamid el-Hussein, Denmark, February 2015; Sid Ahmed Ghlam, France, April 2015; Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi, US, May 2015; Ayoub el-Khazzani, France, August 2015.

³¹⁵ Abdul Numan Haider, Australia, September 2014; Bertrand Nzohabonayo, France, December 2014; and Munther Omar Saleh and his accomplices, US, June 2015.

5. TRAVEL AND TRAINING

5.1 TERRORIST TRAINING & COMBAT EXPERIENCE

The three-man Belgian cell in Verviers is unique in that, among the 58 individuals, they were the only ones known to have received any terrorist training or to have fought in a combat zone – thought to have been Syria. This equates to only 1 of the 32 plots. To date, therefore, IS-associated jihadists in the West have been self-starters with little or no terrorist experience or expertise.

5.2 TRAVEL TO SYRIA/IRAQ

Among the 58 individuals, 45% (n=26), relating to 17 of the 32 plots (53%), had previously expressed an interest in joining up with IS in Iraq and Syria. Despite this intent, only one scheme contained individuals known to have done so (Verviers cell, Belgium, January 2015).³¹⁶

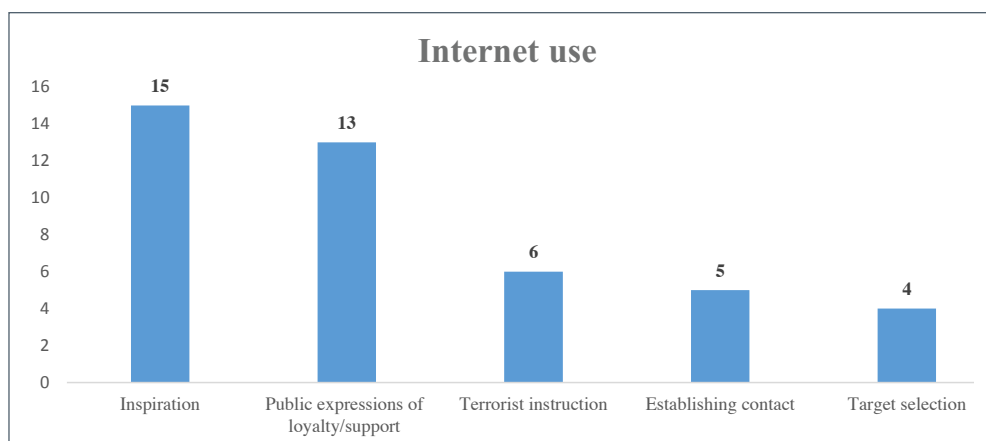
However, three are known to have been prevented from going due to passport difficulties – their documents being seized, cancelled, or rejected. All of them successfully carried out an attack: Abdul Numan Haider (Australia) carried out his approximately a week after running into these issues; Martin Couture-Rouleau (Canada) around six months after; and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau (Canada) within a day. This demonstrates that, in these cases, the time between being prevented from travelling and then carrying out an attack significantly varied.

6. USE OF THE INTERNET

Measuring the relevance of the Internet in terrorism-related activity is an imperfect science. However, on the basis of open-source information, the way the Internet has been used in IS plots can be categorised as follows:

- > Inspiration
- > Public expressions of loyalty to IS
- > Terrorist instruction
- > Establishing contact
- > Target selection

The Internet was known to be of relevance in 27 of the 32 plots (84%) – though, in some of these schemes, it was used for multiple reasons (for example, Mertkan G. possessed IS propaganda and had instructions on assembling a bomb). In the other five cases, the individuals involved almost certainly had access to the Internet; yet, there is no open-source information to suggest that they used it in the ways listed above.



³¹⁶ At time of publication, it has not been proved that Ayoub el-Khazzani (France, August 2015) has actually spent time in Syria.

Material accessed online was an inspiration or played a role in the radicalisation of an individual in 15 of the 32 plots (47%). On eight occasions, it was IS-specific material known to be being accessed, as opposed to more general jihadist or extremist material.

Public expressions of loyalty made online occurred in 13 plots out of 32 (41%). On occasion, these declarations of support for IS have also been effectively utilised as potential sources of intelligence. Christopher Cornell’s activity on *Twitter* resulted in his first contact with US law enforcement; John T. Booker’s and Harlem Suarez’s Facebook posts alerted authorities to their extremist views; and Hasan Edmonds was first contacted by an undercover FBI employee online.

In six plots (19%), the Internet was used to access instructions that would be useful in a terrorist attack. On five occasions (16%) as well, it enabled apparently like-minded extremist individuals to connect (although, in Hasan Edmonds’ and Christopher Cornell’s cases, these individuals were actually undercover agents). In a further four plots (13%), the Internet helped to identify targets for potential attack.

6.1 INSPIRATION³¹⁷

- Martin Couture-Rouleau accessed jihadist material online (Canada, October 2014).
- Michael Zehaf-Bibeau was a member of extremist Internet forums (Canada, October 2014).
- Zale Thompson spent a significant amount of time on the Internet, visiting hundreds of websites related IS; al-Qaeda; al-Shabaab; and beheadings. Shortly before his attack in New York in October 2014, he is thought to have spent at least three days in a row looking at a variety of jihadist websites (US, October 2014).
- Mertkan G. possessed IS propaganda (Austria, October 2014).
- Bertrand Nzohabonayo is believed to have been radicalised online (France, December 2014).
- Christopher Lee Cornell showed an FBI source jihadist videos on his laptop (US, January 2015).
- Noelle Velentzas allegedly watched videos of IS terrorists beheading Syrian soldiers and carrying out suicide bombings, as well as a clip of a French IS fighter imploring Muslims to travel to the ‘Caliphate’ (US, April 2015).
- John T. Booker allegedly said that he was inspired by IS propaganda videos. He also posted messages on Facebook, in which he said that he planned to “soon [...] wage jihad” and that “[g]etting ready to be killed in jihad” would be an “adrenaline rush” (US, April 2015).
- Besim’s Instagram account featured propaganda supportive of a Caliphate and critical of man-made law.
- Usaamah Rahim became more religiously observant after he began to spend increasing amounts of time online (US, June 2015).
- IS social-media propaganda is thought to have contributed to Justin Sullivan’s radicalisation (US, June 2015).
- Three individuals alleged to be planning an attack on a military base in southern France were known to have watched IS videos (France, July 2015).
- Ayoub el-Khazzani is thought to have watched online jihadist content shortly before his attack on a train heading to Paris. His Facebook page also contained “content promoting terrorism” (France, August 2015).

³¹⁷ Two examples related to UK cases, the details of which have been excluded from this report.

6.2 EXPRESSIONS OF LOYALTY / SUPPORT TO IS

- Martin Couture-Rouleau praised IS, via his *Facebook* account (Canada, October 2014).
- Man Haron Monis used his website, to pledge allegiance to the “Khalifah of the Muslims”, seemingly a reference to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Australia, December 2014).
- Bertrand Nzohabonayo uploaded an IS flag to his *Facebook* profile, shortly before his attack, and had previously posted messages in support of terrorism (France, December 2014).
- Amedy Coulibaly pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in a video uploaded to the Internet and disseminated via *Twitter* (France, January 2015).
- Christopher Cornell used his *Twitter* account to post messages of support for IS and jihad (US, January 2015).
- On his Twitter account, Mohammad Kiad ‘favourited’ tweets showing beheadings and used an IS flag as his profile picture (Australia, February 2015).
- Omar Abdel Hamid el-Hussein pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, via a *Facebook* post (Denmark, February 2015).
- Elton Simpson posted a message on *Twitter*, pledging loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and saying: “May Allah accept us as mujahideen”, shortly before he and Nadir Soofi launched their attack in Garland, Texas. Furthermore, in the hours before the shooting, a *Twitter* account controlled by Simpson recommended his followers connect to another account – that belonging to Abu Hussain al-Britani, an IS fighter from the UK who was recently killed in an air strike in Syria. (US, May 2015).
- Usaamah Rahim and David Wright displayed their interest in jihad, via social media. On their *Facebook* profiles, they had ‘liked’ pages relating to Islamic State; radical preachers; and Sharia law, while, in a *Facebook* conversation, Rahim outlined his support for chopping hands off thieves; stoning adulterers; and death for insulting Islam and its Prophet, Mohammed (US, June 2015).
- Amir Said Abdul Rahman al-Ghazi is accused of pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi electronically (US, June 2015).
- Alexander Ciccolo posted a picture of a dead American soldier online, with the comment: “Thank you Islamic State. Now we won’t have to deal with these kafir back in America” (US, July 2015).
- Muhammad Waqas and Lassaad Briki were thought to be operating the ‘Islamic_State in Roma’ *Twitter* account (Italy, July 2015).
- Harlem Suarez used social-media platforms to outline his support for Islamic State (US, July 2015).

6.3 TERRORIST INSTRUCTION³¹⁸

- Mertkan G. possessed instructions on how to build a bomb; these were found on his games console (Austria, October 2014).
- Christopher Cornell had information on building bombs, on his laptop (US, January 2015).
- Noelle Velentzas used her mobile phone to watch YouTube videos allegedly useful in helping to construct a bomb (US, April 2015).

³¹⁸ One example related to a UK case, the details of which have been excluded from this report.

- Munther Omar Saleh e-mailed himself online instructions on how to build a pressure-cooker bomb and, along with an accomplice, carried out online research for components that could be used in an explosive device (US, June 2015).
- Lassaad Briki searched the Internet for techniques for shooting down a plane. He and his alleged co-conspirator, Muhammad Waqas, also had access to a downloaded version of ‘How to Survive in the West’, the IS manual which contains the likes of bomb-making instructions and advice on avoiding detection (Italy, July 2015).

6.4 ESTABLISHING CONTACT

- Christopher Lee Cornell first communicated with an undercover via *Twitter* and another instant-messaging site (US, January 2015).
- Hasan Edmonds allegedly first came into contact with someone he believed to be a co-conspirator – in reality, an undercover FBI employee – electronically (US, March 2015).
- ‘B’ and Sevdet Besim met and communicated online (Australia, April 2015).
- Nicholas Rovinski and David Wright met through *Facebook* (US, June 2015).
- Three individuals alleged to be planning an attack on a military base in southern France came into contact via social media. One member of the group was in electronic contact with an IS member (France, July 2015).

6.5 TARGET SELECTION³¹⁹

- Munther Omar Saleh looked at New York City tourist attractions and landmarks online, allegedly searching for targets to attack (US, June 2015).
- Lassaad Briki tried to anonymously search the Internet for images of Ghedi military base (Italy, July 2015).
- Ayoub el-Khazzani is suspected of speaking to IS contacts online, about potentially targeting a train (France, August 2015).

³¹⁹ One example related to a UK case, the details of which have been excluded from this report.

CONCLUSION

While the sample size of cases and individuals connected to IS plots in the West is small, prohibiting extensive conclusions, there are noticeable trends that should be monitored.

Since the declaration of IS’s ‘Caliphate’, there have been, on average, over two plots related to IS that either are foiled or take place in the West every month. Of the 32 documented here, nine unfolded roughly as the plotters intended. Therefore, over a quarter (28%) of IS plots were not thwarted ahead of their execution (even if – as was the case with Haider; Thompson; and Nzohabonayo, for example – these attacks did not lead to fatalities).

The perpetrators tended to be very young, and almost always male. With over one in five of them, there was some history of past criminal behaviour, and over a quarter were known religious converts. On both fronts, this was especially common in US perpetrators.

The plotters rarely had terrorist training or any combat experience. The IS-affiliated jihadists in the West were almost exclusively self-starters, with no terrorist expertise; this is reflected in the use of knives, vehicles, and guns. Complex bomb-making schemes with multiple cell members – a former hallmark of al-Qaeda-inspired plots in the West – are non-existent. The bomb plots that have occurred – mainly in the US – tended to have informants or undercover agents embedded in the cell, allowing the conspiracy to be disrupted before it was put into action. The three main targets for attack have been members of the public; the military; and the police, with beheadings an occasional component to these attacks.

The US was the country most commonly threatened by IS-connected plots, with Australia and France both second most. While North America has been predominantly targeted, there have been a higher number of fatalities in Europe. Furthermore, European cells were more likely to be in contact with IS abroad than their North American or Australasian counterparts were. Outside of Europe, there was only one plot in which an individual was known to be in contact with IS: that involving Omarjan Azari in Australia.

Over 40% of individuals involved in these conspiracies had previously expressed an interest in joining up with IS in Iraq and Syria. The three who were prevented from doing so because their passports were seized, cancelled, or rejected all carried out an attack.

The Internet is relevant in a variety of ways to these IS-affiliated plots. Most commonly, it provides access to material which contributes to radicalisation and the inspiration to plan attacks. Yet, it has also provided a means for IS sympathisers to make public declarations of support, via social media. Conversely, such activity has alerted law enforcement to these individuals. The Internet also remains a source of instruction on how to carry out attacks.

IS will continue to act as an inspiration to a small, but significant, number of people in the West. As this study shows, such persons do not need to make contact with the group in order to pose a threat to homeland security. Law enforcement and intelligence agencies must therefore effectively track trends that exist among those in the West being drawn to the organisation, in order to truly understand the nature of the threat being presented.

The Islamic State poses an enormous security threat, regularly launching attacks across the Middle East while inspiring them in the West.

“We Will Conquer Your Rome”: A Study of Islamic State Terror Plots in the West studies over a year’s worth of Islamic State plots. It examines which countries were most commonly targeted; the age; nationality; background; terrorist training and combat experience of the perpetrators; relevance of the Internet; which sectors are most commonly targeted for attack; and assesses the extent to which the Islamic State directed, assisted or simply just inspired these plots.

The report then attempts to draw conclusions about trends that may be developing as we enter an era where the West increasingly comes under attack from the Islamic State and its supporters.

‘If you believe in the cause of freedom, then proclaim it, live it and protect it, for humanity’s future depends on it.’

Henry M ‘Scoop’ Jackson
(May 31, 1912 – September 1, 1983)
US Congressman and Senator for
Washington State from 1941 – 1983



First published in 2015 by
The Henry Jackson Society
Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank,
London, SW1P 4QP
Tel: +44 (0)20 7340 4520
www.henryjacksonsociety.org
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ISBN 978-1-909035-22-5
£10.00 where sold