



ICT
International Institute
for Counter-Terrorism
With the Support of Keren Daniel

ICT Incident and Activists Database

PERIODIC REVIEW

Summary of Terrorist Incidents and Counter-Terrorist Operations Worldwide December 2014

Highlights

- On December 1, it was reported in the international media that US authorities foiled an alleged al-Qaeda plot to bomb that was intended to target five commercial airliners over Europe during the Christmas holiday period.
- On December 2, Lebanese security officials announced that they had arrested Saja al-Dulaimi, the ex-wife and son of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of IS, at a border crossing with Syria on November 23.
- On December 4, a group of militants fired on a traffic police checkpoint in Grozny at approximately 0100, before attacking Grozny's Press House (a ten story Media Publishing offices) and an abandoned school. Three traffic policemen were killed as they tried to stop the gunmen's cars and 13 other people died and 21 were injured during the fighting, Imarat Kavkaz group claimed responsibility for the attack.
- On December 6, Adnan Shukrijumah, 39, al-Qaeda's chief of global operations was killed in a counter-terrorism raid in by the Pakistani military on a compound in South Waziristan, Pakistan.
- On December 7, according to media reports, Israeli Air Force (IAF) jets bombed 10 targets near Damascus International Airport and in the town of Dimas, north of Damascus, Syria and near the border with Lebanon. The target of the attack was allegedly Hizballah weapons storage sites weapons in particular air-defense missiles that were about to be transferred to Hizballah in Lebanon.
- On December 11, French forces in Gao killed Ahmed al- Tilemsi, the co-founder of the Movement for Tawhid [Unity] and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Authorities said six other militants were killed and three others were detained during the Operation.
- On December 12, Shahid Usman, the suspected leader of Al-Qaeda in South Asia, was arrested together with four other militants, in Karachi, Pakistan, after police received intelligence that he was actively planning attacks in the city. They also seized weapons and 10 kg of explosives

- On December 13, Mehdi Masroor Biswas, 24, was arrested in Bangalore, India and charged with being behind an influential pro-Islamic State (IS) Twitter account followed by many jihadist militants. He admitted to authorities that he managed a Twitter account titled '@ShamiWitness' that had 17,700 followers.
- On December 15, Man Haron Monis, an Iranian self-proclaimed sheikh and IS supporter took 17 people hostage inside the Lindt Chocolat Café at Martin Place, Sydney, in a standoff that lasted 16 hours. The gunman was killed by police. Two hostages were killed in the early stages of the attack and four others, including a police officer, were injured.
- On December 16, 145 people, mostly children were killed and approximately 100 others injured, when a team of seven Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) gunmen attacked the Army Public School in Peshawar.
- On December 20, French police fatally shot Bertrand Nzohabonayo, after he attacked a police station in Joue-les-Tours, France. He was a supporter of the IS. The following day, a lone wolf shouting "Allah Akbah-G-d is Great" ploughed his car into pedestrians in Dijon, France injuring 11 people, two people seriously. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks.
- On December 24, a Jordanian F16 fighter aircraft crashed near Raqqa, Syria during a joint US and Jordanian military intervention against IS militants in Syria. The pilot, who was identified as First Lieutenant Muath al-Kasaesbeh, 26, was captured by IS militants shortly after the plane crashed. (He was later burned alive by IS militants. This case will be reviewed in the ICT February Database report.)
- On December 29, a joint Somali and US airstrike killed Abdishakur (Tahlil), a senior al-Shabaab Al-Mujahedeen commander in Somalia. Two other Al-Shabaab al-Mujahedeen militants were also killed during the airstrike.

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Europe

Austria

On December 10, Mirsad Omerovic alias Ebu Tejma, a Bosnian national living in Vienna, was charged with recruiting 166 operatives in Austria to join the Islamic State (IS).¹ Amongst those he recruited two teenage girls, identified as Samra Kesinovic, 16, and Sabina Selimovic, 15 and was also involved in sending them to fight in Syria in April 2014. He allegedly provided them with financial support. On December 18, it was reported that one of the girls had been killed. At the time of his arrest, police seized jewellery, cash and savings books.² Austrian authorities said Omerovic was part of several militants based in Vienna who provided logistical and financial support centers for jihadi activity in Europe.³

Denmark

On December 5, Sam Mansour, 54, a Danish-Moroccan bookseller was sentenced to four years in prison for supporting and inciting terrorism. Mansour was known locally as the 'Bookseller from Brønshøj' for his work in publishing terrorist tracts. ⁴He was convicted of posting comments and images on Facebook page, such as: "*We are terrorists, we are proud*" and "*Jihad is a duty*". He also posted photo-shopped images of the severed head of Kurt

¹ Daily news "UN terror expert: one Austrian 'jihad poster girl' is dead after moving to Syria to join ISIS", December 18, 2014.

² Express, "One of two Austrian teens who fled to Syria to fight with IS 'killed' while other 'missing'", December 18, 2014

³ Mail Online, "Hate preacher terror 'mastermind' who recruited Austrian 'ISIS poster girls' sent 'another 160 to join jihad in Syria and Iraq'", December 10, 2014

⁴ RT, "We are terrorists, we are proud': Facebook post gets Dane 4 yrs in prison", December 4, 2014

Westergaard⁵ with his head in a toilet, surrounded by flames and blood. Mansour claimed his posts were viable under the act of Freedom of speech but the court rejected his claims. In addition to the threats, Mansour posted messages that praise Osama bin Laden and called on his readers to join the Jabat al-Nusra group. He has also posted videos of soldiers being executed in Syria and Iraq. ⁶ In 2007, Mansour was jailed for three and a half years on the same charge.⁷ It was also reported in 1995, he was arrested on suspicion of planning a terror attack at the UN summit in Copenhagen, but all charges were later dropped.⁸⁹ Copenhagen Police began investigating Mansour in May 2013, after a tip from London police. Authorities described Mansour as the ideologue behind a European terrorist network with connections to a wide range of Islamic militants.¹⁰

France

On December 5, Yasmine Znaidi, 34, the president of a Paris-based pro-Palestinian Islamic charity called Pearl of Hope (Perle d'espoir) and her partner, Nabil Ouerfelli, 22, were indicted with financing terrorism in Syria and Iraq. Authorities claimed the charity raised \$125,000. Ouerfelli was also accused of fighting with militant groups in Syria and Iraq, including Jabat al-Nusra. French police closed down the charity in November 2014, after they became suspicious that the charity used legitimate charity work, such as transporting food and medical supplies, as but they also used the deliveries to funnel money to jihadist groups.¹¹ Authorities became

⁵ Westergaard created a controversial caricature of the prophet later published in 2005 by Jyllands-Posten newspaper. For further details see:

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/muhammad-caricature-fallout-a-danish-illustrator-s-life-in-hiding-a-538553.html>

⁶ The local, "'Al-Qaeda's PR man' convicted of terror again", December 4, 2014

⁷ Copenhagen Post, 'Bookseller from Brønshøj' charged with terrorism", February 12, 2014

⁸ Reuters, "Danish bookseller sentenced to 4 years for inciting terrorism", December 5, 2014

⁹ RT. "We are terrorists, we are proud': Facebook post gets Dane 4 yrs in prison", December 5, 2014

¹⁰ Copenhagen Post, 'Bookseller from Brønshøj' charged with terrorism", February 12, 2014

¹¹ NYTimes, "Charity in France Is Accused of Being a Front for Financing Terrorism in Syria", December 4, 2014

suspicious of Ouerfelli's motives, when he published a message on his Facebook page saying, "If the Islamic Front attacks Al Nusra, we will be with Al Nusra." He also posted images on his Facebook page of weapons in Syria. French authorities said he used the alias Piroo Chicha and the Facebook URL piroo.martyr and he wrote that he "studied device explosions" at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. Police say Znaidi and Ouerfelli, 22, are the first French citizens to be charged with financing terrorism since the war in Syria began in 2011. French authorities said they are currently monitoring more than 10 other Islamic charities and associations.¹²

On December 15, French authorities arrested 10 people in a series of counter-terrorism raids aimed at dismantling a recruitment and transportation network for would-be jihadists planning to fight in Syria. The arrests were mainly carried out in the cities of Toulouse and Le Havre as well as Paris. Authorities said the investigation also targeted four people in prison linked to the network.

On December 17, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve announced that French authorities have foiled five terror attacks and dismantled 13 jihadist networks since August 2013. Cazeneuve said the plots involved "individuals who had returned to France or who had never left the country." Although specific details of the plots were not made public, he said one suspect had been arrested two months after returning from Syria. He warned that jihadists returning from Syria continue to pose the biggest threat.¹³

On December 20, French police fatally shot Bertrand Nzohabonayo, alias Bilal, 20, a French national originally from Burundi, after he attacked a police station in Joue-les-Tours, a suburb of the city of Tours.¹⁴ Authorities said Nzohabonayo arrived at the police station banging on the door. When an officer opened it, he took a knife to the officer's face, and then stabbed a second officer who had drawn his gun. A policewoman then fatally shot Nzohabonayo in the chest. Throughout the incident, the he shouted "Allah Akbah-G-d is Great" in Arabic. The man

¹² France24, "French Islamic charity accused of funding terrorists", December 12, 2014

¹³ Reuters, "French police arrest 10 people in suspected jihadist network", December 15, 2014

¹⁴ Reuters, "French police shoot dead knife-wielding man in police station", December 20, 2014

was known to police for petty crimes but was not on any watch list of the French intelligence services.¹⁵ No group claimed responsibility but authorities believe the attacker was inspired by the IS. Authorities said several days prior to the attack Nzohabonayo had posted an IS flag on his Facebook page.¹⁶

On December 21, a lone wolf shouting “Allah Akbah-G-d is Great” ploughed his car into pedestrians in Dijon, injuring 11 people, two people seriously. The attack, that lasted approximately 30 minutes, targeted five different locations in the city. The identity of the perpetrator was not made public but authorities said he had a history of petty crimes and mental illness. Police arrested him at the scene of the attack.¹⁷ No group claimed responsibility for the attack and the French Interior Ministry believed that the man was a lone wolf.¹⁸

Germany

On December 5, Kreshnik Berisha, 20, a German of Kosovar origin, was convicted of membership of a foreign terrorist organization and sentenced to prison for three years and nine months by a court in Frankfurt for joining IS militants.¹⁹ This was the first trial of its kind in Germany. Berisha avoided the heaviest sentence of 10 years after admitting he spent six months with IS militants in Syria in 2013.²⁰ Berisha, who was radicalized in 2011, admitted

¹⁵ Telegraph, “French knife attacker Bertrand Nzohabonayo was Islamic convert”, December 21, 2014

¹⁶ AFP, “French police kill 'Allahu Akbar' attacker”, December 20, 2014

¹⁷ BBC, “France Dijon: Driver targets city pedestrians”, December 21, 2014

¹⁸ AFP, “Man drives into crowd in French city of Dijon, injuring 11”, December 21, 2014

¹⁹ AP, “Prison sentence for German who joined IS”, December 5, 2014

²⁰ For further details about the trial see:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/11096425/Islamic-State-terror-suspect-on-trial-in-Germany.html> and

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/09/15/ISIS-fighter-goes-on-trial-in-Germany.html>

that he travelled to Syria via Turkey in July 2013. He and six others were met by IS recruiters in Istanbul and taken to Syria. Authorities said when in Syria, Berisha received militant training and fought for the group near the Syrian city of Hama. After approximately six months in Syria, he returned home and was arrested at Frankfurt airport in December 2013. German authorities believe more than 500 German citizens have travelled to fight for the IS in Iraq and Syria.²¹

Kosovo

On December 26, police in Kosovo arrested a Serbian national suspected of planning a terrorist attack.²² Authorities said the suspect, whose identity was not made public, is from Belgrade, and at the time of arrest had in his possession 12.2 kilos of explosives in his car in a street in Pristina where many Western embassies are located. No further details about this case were made public.²³

Russia

On December 4, a group of militants traveling in three cars fired on a traffic police checkpoint in Grozny at approximately 0100 before attacking Grozny's Press House (a ten story Media Publishing offices) and an abandoned school.²⁴ Three traffic policemen were killed as they tried to stop the gunmen's cars. The Media building was completely destroyed in the attack and one civilian was killed.²⁵ Authorities said 13 other people died and 21 were injured during the fighting, this included ten police officers.²⁶ Authorities said firearms, grenades and 24

²¹ BBC, "Germany jails Islamic State jihadist Kreshnik Berisha", December 5, 2014

²² DW, "Kosovo police arrest man suspected of planning terrorist attack", December 26, 2014

²³ Reuters, Kosovo police arrest Serb suspected of planning attack - minister", December 26, 2014

²⁴ New York Times, "Fierce Attack by Islamist Militants in Chechen Capital Kills at Least 20", December 4, 2014

²⁵ Guardian, "Gun battles erupt in Chechnya's capital after militants launch attack", December 4, 2014

²⁶ LA Times, "Russian security forces battle gunmen in Chechnya; 18 dead", December 4, 2014

homemade explosive devices were seized from the buildings. The attack came several hours before President Putin was to deliver the annual state-of-the-nation speech in Moscow.²⁷ A militant Islamist group called Imarat Kavkaz, which is outlawed in Russia, claimed responsibility for the attack by posting a video on You Tube. The man in the video said he was operating on orders from Emir Khamzat, reportedly a nom de guerre of Chechen warlord Aslan Byutukayev. He said their motivation was to avenge Muslim women harassed by the security forces.²⁸

Spain

On December 11, Lahcen Ikassrien, a Moroccan national and former Guantanamo Bay was indicted, along with 14 other suspected militants, on charges of recruiting and sending militants to join IS militants in Iraq and Syria. Ikassrien, who is in his late 40s, was arrested in June 2013 in Madrid. According to authorities he is the suspected leader of cell and he provided recruits with cover and international contacts in Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, France and Belgium. No trial date was set.²⁹

On December 16, Spanish and Moroccan police arrested seven members of a group suspected to be involved in recruiting young women to join the IS. The group managed to recruit 12 women, mainly from Ceuta and Melilla, targeting young women with poor job prospects via social networking sites. The arrests took place in Barcelona, the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa; and, in the nearby Moroccan town of Fnideq. Moroccan authorities said, in a statement, that the group had planned to use the women as suicide bombers or marry them off to jihadi fighters.³⁰ The operation was carried out in cooperation

²⁷ Washington Post, "Chechen militants attack Grozny, shattering peace as Putin gives speech", December 4, 2014

²⁸ Epoch Times, "Islamic Militants Attack Chechen Capital; 20 Dead", December 4, 2014

²⁹ CNN, "Guantanamo ex-detainee indicted in Spain on charges of aiding ISIS", December 11, 2014

³⁰ IBT, "Terrorism-Related Arrests In Spain, Morocco: 7 Held On Suspicion Of Recruiting Women For ISIS", December 16, 2014

with Moroccan security forces.³¹

Sweden

On December 20, police said two car bombs exploded in a multiethnic district of Malmo, but there were no reported casualties. One car bomb exploded at the foot of a building, the other in a parking lot nearby. It was unclear if the two explosions were connected and what the motivation behind the attacks were. No group claimed responsibility. No arrests were immediately made.³²

United Kingdom

On December 4, five men were arrested in Cardiff and the nearby town of Barry in Wales on suspicion of terror offences in connection to the support of banned organizations. The arrests were carried out by the north-east counter-terrorism unit assisted by the Wales extremism and counter-terrorism unit.³³ Searches were carried out at six residential addresses. The suspects are aged between 19 and 32. Two of the men were identified as Rofi Islam and Sajid Idris but the other suspects' identities were not made public.³⁴ In addition, two men were arrested in south London. Police said they carried out raids in London and arrested a man, 33 under the Terrorism Act 2000. They also arrested a man, 40, on suspicion of conspiracy to possess and supply fraudulent documents. The pair were detained in a central London police station.³⁵

On December 5, Mashudur Choudhury, a Portsmouth man who was the first person in the UK to be convicted of a terrorist offence related to jihadist terrorism in Syria, was sentenced to prison for four years. Choudhury also faced 10 years of monitoring under terrorism legislation.

³¹ Alakhbar English, "Spain, Morocco arrest seven for recruiting women jihadists for ISIS", December 16, 2014

³² AP, "Two Car Bombs Rock Southern Sweden's Muslim 'Headquarters' of Malmo in Terrorism Concern", December 21, 2014

³³ <http://www.south-wales.police.uk/news/counter-terrorism-officers-arrest-five-males-cardiff-barry/>

³⁴ Walesnews. "Counter-terrorism police raid Cardiff house", December 5, 2014

³⁵ Guardian, "Counter-terrorism police arrest five men in south Wales", December 5, 2014

Choudhury returned to the UK after spending just 17 days in Syria. He was found guilty of engaging in conduct in preparation for an act of terrorism following a trial at Kingston in May 2014.³⁶ He was one of six men who called themselves the "al-Britaini Brigade Bangladeshi Bad Boys" who traveled from Portsmouth to Syria in 2013. Four of the men were killed in fighting there.³⁷

On December 15, a man, 20, was arrested on suspicion of terrorism offences. Counter-terror police detained the man in Thamesmead, south-east London, on suspicion of planning a terrorist act. No further details were made public.³⁸ Following this, on December 16, two men, aged 37 and 61, were arrested in Luton by counter-terrorist police on suspicion of supporting a banned organization. Both men were detained at Bedfordshire police station. The arrests were made under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and are in relation to suspicion of supporting a proscribed organization.³⁹

On December 24, Muhammad Aftab Suleman, 24, was charged with terrorism offences after being arrested at Manchester Airport trying to board a flight to Pakistan. He appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court, where he faced five charges under Section 58 of the Terrorism Act. Section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000 relates to the collection of information which is likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. He was remanded in custody to appear at the Old Bailey on January 9, 2015.⁴⁰

³⁶ For more details of this case see ICT database report May
http://www.ict.org.il/Article/1194/Summary_of_Terrorist_Incidents_and_CT_Operations-May_2014

and <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-27491066>

³⁷ IBT, "Portsmouth jihadist Mashudur Choudhury: First Britain charged with wanting to fight for Isis is jailed", December 5, 2014

³⁸ AP, "Police arrest man, 20, in London on suspicion of terrorism", December 15, 2014

³⁹ AP, "Counter-terror police arrest two men in Luton", December 16, 2014

⁴⁰ BBC, "Muhammad Aftab Suleman in court charged with terrorism offences", December 24, 2014

Africa

Cameroon

On December 22, a Boko Haram training camp in Guirvidig was dismantled by the Cameroon military and 45 militant trainers were arrested. The soldiers managed to rescue 84 children who were being trained there. Authorities also said that they killed 116 militants.⁴¹ The army said it would continue searching for other hideouts in the area.⁴²

Kenya

On December 2, al-Shabaab Al-Mujahedeen militants killed 36 quarry workers, many of whom were non-Muslims, in Kormey, near Mandera Town.⁴³ Witnesses said approximately 50 armed militants entered the quarry and singled out all the non-Muslims and then shot them at close range. Witnesses said the victims were caught after midnight, while sleeping in their tents. Four of the victims were beheaded inside their tents.⁴⁴ A witness, who managed to hide during the attack, said the militants forced the victims to recite the Shahada, an Islamic creed declaring oneness with God' before they were shot.⁴⁵ Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen spokesman Ali Mohamud Rage claimed responsibility for the attack.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Reuters, "Cameroon army says dismantles Boko Haram training camp", December 22, 2014

⁴² AP, "Boko Haram camp dismantled in Cameroon, army says", December 22, 2014

⁴³ CNN, "Al-Shabaab separates non-Muslims from Muslims, kills 36 in quarry attack ", December 2, 2014

⁴⁴ DW, "Kenya shocked by al-Shabab terror", December 2, 2014

BBC, "Al-Shabab massacres non-Muslims at Kenya quarry", December 2, 2014

Independent, "Kenya bus attack: Al-Shabaab gunmen behead and shoot 36 non-Muslim labourers at Mandera quarry", December 2, 2014

Following the incidents three Al-shabab al-Mujahedeen militants were arrested in February 2014 in connection with the attack. See: SM, "Three terror suspects linked to Mandera massacres remanded", February 6, 2015

⁴⁵ Sky news, "Kenya Quarry Workers Massacred By Militants", December 2, 2014

⁴⁶http://www.laprensasa.com/309_america-in-english/2822835_al-shabab-claims-responsibility-for-killing-36-quarry-workers-in-kenya.html

Libya

On December 6, the Libyan Army began a ground assault on the city of Derba which was seized by IS militants. The military retook control of villages and roads leading to the city. It was reported that US authorities are concerned IS militants in Libya are modelling itself on the situation Iraq and Syria, thus Libya's chaos may prove the greatest asset for IS to gain strength there.⁴⁷

On December 26, militants belonging to the Fajr Libya, (Libya Dawn), attempted but failed to seize one of Libya's main oil terminals. Authorities said the militants approached the al-Sidra port overnight travelling in speedboats and fired several rockets at the terminals of Ras Lanuf and al-Sidra. Authorities said one of the rockets of them hit a tank south of al-Sidra port which then caught fire. Clashes were also reported from Sirte, a city west of al-Sidra.⁴⁸ Authorities said four soldiers were killed in al-Sidra and 18 soldiers and a Fajr Libya militant were killed in the clashes in Sirte.⁴⁹

Mali

On December 11, French forces carrying out a counter-terrorism operation in Gao killed Ahmed al- Tilemsi⁵⁰ the co-founder of the al-Qaeda-linked group, the Movement for Tawhid [Unity] and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Authorities said six other militants were killed and three others were detained.⁵¹ The US State Department described el Tilemsi, as MUJWA's military chief, adding that he directly took part in the October 2011 kidnappings in western Algeria. Before that, as a member of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, he took part in the abduction of two French nationals in the Niger city of Niamey .The French nationals were later

⁴⁷ Guardian, "US expresses fears as Isis takes control of northern Libyan town", December 6, 2014

⁴⁸ AP, "Libya militants kill at least 22 soldiers in failed attempt to seize oil terminal", December 26, 2014

⁴⁹ Al-Jazeera, "Soldiers die in attack on Libya oil terminals ", December 26,2014

⁵⁰ AFP, "French army kills 'big fish' jihadist in northern Mali", December 11, 2014

⁵¹CNN, " Military: French troops kill jihadist leader in northern Mali", December 11, 2014

found dead after a failed rescue attempt by the French military.⁵² The US offered a US\$5 million reward for information leading to the capture of Ahmed Al-Tilemsi.⁵³

Morocco

On December 5, a Moroccan counter-terrorism court in Sale charged four suspects with belonging to terrorist groups and for attempts to recruit young Moroccans to fights in Syria and Iraq. Two of the suspects were sentenced to six years in prison for “forming a gang to prepare and commit terrorist attacks within the framework of a collective plot to seriously undermine public order, possession and use of arms and belonging to a banned religious group.” One of the suspects, who was not identified received a three-year sentence convicted of “forming a gang to prepare and commit terrorist attacks within the framework of a collective plot to seriously undermine public order and belonging to a banned religious group.” Finally, the fourth sentence was given a one year suspended sentence for forming a gang in order to commit terrorist acts and organizing unauthorized meetings.⁵⁴

On December 12, Moroccan authorities announced that it had joined in the US Led coalition forces against IS militants in Iraq and Syria. The Royal Moroccan Air Force operated three F-16s in the campaign against IS. Morocco has been the first North African ally to join the coalition.⁵⁵

Nigeria

On December 10, 10 people were killed and seven others injured⁵⁶ in a coordinated bombing by female suicide bombers near a market in Kano. Authorities said the first suicide bomber detonated at about 14:30 local time. Then a second car bomb exploded shortly afterwards in

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ The National, “French forces in Mali kill Islamist on US wanted list”, December 11, 2014

⁵⁴ Morocco World News, “Morocco Sentences 4 Individuals to 6 Year in Prison on Terrorism”, December 5, 2014

⁵⁵ World Tribune, “Morocco and its F-16s join U.S. anti-ISIL coalition”, December 12, 2014

⁵⁶ It should be noted that different sources varied in the casualty figure ranging from four dead to ten dead see: <http://news.yahoo.com/13-old-girl-father-gave-boko-haram-095332454.html>

a vehicle loading area at the Kantin Kwari textile market. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed Boko Haram.⁵⁷ Following the attack, on December 12, police in Kano arrested a girl identified as Zahra'u Babangida, 14, with a suicide belt strapped to her body hidden under her hijab. Authorities suspected her of being part of a group of teenage girls forced by Boko Haram to carry out suicide bombing attacks. The girl and a male accomplice walked into a medical clinic seeking treatment. Hospital staff alerted police after becoming suspicious of the pairs behavior.⁵⁸ The girl said her parents both Boko Haram sympathizers volunteered her to take part in a suicide attack and took her to an insurgent hideout in a forest near the town of Gidan Zana in Kano state.⁵⁹ The girl was presented to journalists and instructed to tell her story to help raise public awareness about those responsible for the December 10 attack. ⁶⁰Zahra'u said she agreed to take part in the attack but "never had any intention of doing it." Several days later, Zahra'u said, she and three other girls, all wearing explosives, were brought to the Kantin Kwari market by unidentified men. Zahra'u said she was injured when one of the girls detonated her bomb and then she fled the scene, ending up at a hospital on the outskirts of Kano that led to her arrest. ⁶¹

On December 11, 32 people were killed and dozens injured in a twin suicide bombing in Jos. The first explosion took place at an outdoor food stand and then a second suicide bomber detonated explosives at the nearby entrance to the Terminus bus station in the city center. The explosions occurred as store owners were shutting their shops and Muslims were preparing for evening prayers. ⁶²No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed Boko Haram.⁶³

⁵⁷ BBC, "Nigeria violence: Two suicide attacks near busy Kano market", December 10, 2014

⁵⁸ BBC, "Nigeria: Dozens killed in double bombing in Jos", December 11, 2014

Vanhuard, "Double bombing rocks Jos, 13-year-old with suicide vest held ", December 12, 2014

⁵⁹ Mailonline, "Teenage girl arrested with suicide bomb strapped to her says she was handed over to Boko Haram extremists by her parents", December 25,2014

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ AFP, "Nigerian girl, 14, recounts would-be suicide bombing", December 12, 2014

⁶² Al-Jazeera, "Twin blasts hit market in Nigeria's Jos", December 12, 2014

⁶³ UPI, "Double bombings in Jos, Nigeria kill more than 30", December 12, 2014

On December 22, 27 people were killed and 60 others were injured after a bomb exploded in a bus station in Gombe.⁶⁴ Hours later, a second bomb exploded at a market in the north Nigerian city of Bauchi, killing at least seven people and injuring 19 others. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed Boko Haram.⁶⁵ Also on December 22, Boko Haram militants released a video showing militants killing civilians in a school dormitory in Gwoza.⁶⁶

Somalia

On December 3, four people were killed in a car-bombing close to the heavily fortified gates of the airport in Mogadishu. Authorities said the target of the attack was a UN convoy consisting of four armored vehicles escorted by private security personnel driving in pickups. The bomber drove in between UN armored vehicles and its security escort and detonated the car into one of the escort vehicles. Al-Shabab al-Mujahedeen claimed responsibility for the attack.⁶⁷

On December 5, seven people were killed and 20 others wounded in a suicide bombing attack in Baidoa. A second suicide car bomber then exploded targeting people who came to help the victims of the first attack. The target of the attack was a restaurant frequented by residents and local journalists. Two journalists were amongst the casualties.⁶⁸ No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen.⁶⁹

On December 27, police stormed a house close to the border with Kenya in the Geddo region and arrested Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen leader Zakariya Ahmed Ismail Hersi. It was reported that he was a leading figure in the militant group's intelligence wing.⁷⁰ Hersi was one of eight

⁶⁴ Al-Jazeera, "Deadly blast at Nigeria bus station", December 22, 2014

⁶⁵ BBC, "Nigeria's Gombe and Bauchi cities hit by blasts", December 22, 2014

⁶⁶ CNN, "Boko Haram releases chilling video", December 22, 2014 and Breibart, "Boko Haram Bomb Assault Follows Release of Bloody Execution Video", December 22, 2014

⁶⁷ Al-Jazeera, "Al-Shabab claims deadly Mogadishu bombing", December 3, 2014

⁶⁸ BBC, "Somalia suicide bombs kill seven in Baidoa", December 5, 2014

⁶⁹ Al-Jazeera, "Deadly suicide attack hits Somali town", December 5, 2014

⁷⁰ Al-Jazeera, "Al-Shabab leader wanted by US surrenders", December 27, 2014

senior al-Shabab Al-Mujihdeen leaders whom the US administration offered a total \$33m in rewards for information leading to their capture in 2012. He was arrested and transported to Mogadishu for police interrogation.⁷¹

On December 29, a joint Somali and US airstrike killed Abdishakur (Tahlil), a senior al-Shabaab Al-Mujahedeen commander in the southern town of Saakow. Two other Al-Shabaab al-Mujahedeen militants were also killed during the airstrike.⁷² US authorities confirmed they had carried out an unmanned drone attack, which unleashed Hellfire missiles at a vehicle travelling in the Saakow area. In a statement, the Pentagon said that Abdishakur was responsible for the group's external operations and "his death will significantly impact al Shabaab's ability to conduct attacks against the government of the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Somali people and U.S. allies and interests." Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency also said that Abdishakur was head of Al-Shabaab's Al-Mujahedeen's Amniyat unit, which was believed to be responsible for several suicide attacks in Mogadishu.⁷³

Tunisia

On December 1, an off-duty Tunisian policeman was beheaded by Islamist militants in an attack near the Algerian border.⁷⁴ An interior ministry spokesman said the officer and his brother had been seized by 10 militants who attacked the car they were travelling in, from their car in the Kef area of north-west Tunisia. The brother was later released but the officer was killed by his abductors.⁷⁵ No group claimed responsibility for the attack.⁷⁶

⁷¹ BBC, "Al-Shabab militant Zakariya Ahmed Ismail Hersi 'surrenders'", December 27, 2014

⁷² AFP, "Al Shabaab intelligence chief Abdishakur dies in US air strike, Somalia says", December 30, 2014

⁷³ Reuters, "U.S. confirms drone strike killed al Shabaab leader in Somalia", December 31, 2014

⁷⁴ Vanguard, "'Terrorists' behead off-duty Tunisia policeman – reports", December 1, 2014

⁷⁵ AFP, "Tunisian policeman beheaded by 'terrorists'", December 1, 2014

⁷⁶ BBC, "Tunisian policeman beheaded by militants in Kef", December 1, 2014

Middle East

Egypt

On December 1, State of Sinai (Ansar Beit al-Maqdis) claimed responsibility for killing William Henderson, 58, a production expert working for Texas-based Apache Energy Company in the Western Desert in August 2013. The group published photos of Henderson's US passport and two ID cards issued by Apache and Qarun Petroleum, a joint venture between Egypt and a group of foreign oil companies including Apache. This is the first time State of Sinai (Ansar Beit al-Maqdis) has claimed responsibility for abducting and killing a foreigner in Egypt.⁷⁷

Between December 3-10, Egyptian security forces carried out a large counter-terrorist Operation in northern Sinai. During the incident, 12 armed militants were killed and 70 others were arrested. Egyptian security forces said they destroyed eight vehicles, 29 motorbikes, and a car maintenance workshop. Security forces also uncovered 25 Russian-made bullets and two bombs, while five other bombs, planted along the routes used by army and police forces, were dismantled.⁷⁸

On December 21, police in the Nile Delta dismantled a State of Sinai (Ansar Beit al-Maqdis) cell killing five militants. Authorities said the cell was responsible for the majority of attacks against Egyptian security forces in the country in 2013.⁷⁹

On December 26, Egyptian security forces arrested seven members of a terrorist cell led by a 50-year-old deputy headmaster of a secondary school in the Minya governorate, who is accused of plotting violent acts targeting Coptic Christmas celebrations. The suspects were arrested whilst in possession of Molotov cocktails, pictures of the ousted Egyptian president,

⁷⁷ Egypt's Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis claims killing of US citizen in Western Desert

⁷⁸ Egypt: 12 'Terrorists' Killed, 70 Others Arrested in Security Raids in North Sinai - Spokesman", December 11, 2014

⁷⁹ Al-Ahram, "Members of 'terrorist cell' in Sharqiya killed: Egyptian police", December 21, 2014

and a motherboard connected to mobile phones which authorities claimed was intended to be used to remotely detonate bombs.⁸⁰

Iraq

During December 2014, US led coalition airstrikes had a significant impact on repelling IS operations in Iraq. Ground operations also took place with the support of air strikes. Significant cases are discussed below.

- On December 2, three ongoing fronts of engagements between the IS) and forces countering it. Iraqi security forces repelled attacks by IS militants in western Ramadi. The attacks began when militants attempted to storm the city from three fronts. The clashes killed 10 IS militants and two Iraqi soldiers. The following day, clashes took place in Tikrit, close to the university
- On December 3, it was reported that Iran carried out air strikes targeting IS militants in Iraq's Diyala province. US authorities and Iranian authorities denied any coordination but these airstrikes were the first since IS captured the Iraqi city of Mosul in June 2014.⁸¹
- Between December 3 and December 9, the exact date is not known Abu Musallam al Turkumani, and Abd al Basit, described as the head of IS military operations in Iraq, and were killed as a result of coalition air strikes.⁸²
- Between December 8-11, the Iraqi military claimed that they killed 300 IS militants in Ramadi. Advances were reportedly made in the Huz and Sajariyah districts. Authorities said the coalition airstrikes destroyed many vehicles captured by IS militants. US coalition forces also carried out air strikes near Sinjar, Qaim, Ramadi, Mosul and Samarra targeting IS fighting positions, buildings, vehicles and fighting units.⁸³ On

⁸⁰ Jihadwatch, "Egyptian security forces foil jihad terrorist attack on Coptic Christmas celebrations", December 26, 2014

⁸¹ New York Times, "U.S. and Iran Both Attack ISIS, but Try Not to Look Like Allies", December 3, 2014

See June ICT database report

<http://www.ict.org.il/Article/1227/Summary-of-Terrorist-Incidents-and-CT-Operations-June-2014>

⁸² ABC, "3 Senior ISIS Leaders Killed in US Airstrikes in Iraq", December 19, 2014

⁸³ Reuters, "U.S. launches 20 airstrikes against Islamic State in Syria, Iraq", December 10, 2014

December 11, clashes took place again around Ramadi. IS militants attempted to take over the Hawz district, but security forces engaged them in an attempt to halt their advance. They partially repelled the attack, but IS captured some parts of the district.⁸⁴

- On December 12, in Anbar province, 19 policemen were killed when IS militants stormed the town of al-Wafa. Police forces tried to prevent the militants from crossing the sand barrier surrounding the town, but militants opened fire on them.⁸⁵ It was also reported that IS militants executed at least 21 Sunni tribal fighters after capturing them in al-Baghdadi town.⁸⁶ IS militants also attacked a Kurdish government building in a town in the northern part of the province of Al-Diyala. Also on December 12, IS militants shot down an Iraqi helicopter in a village near the city of Samarra.⁸⁷ In addition on December 12, US-led warplanes launched 27 airstrikes against IS militants in Iraq and Syria. The Syria section of this report will discuss this incident. In Iraq, the airstrikes destroyed armoured vehicles as well as bulldozers and an excavator in Ramadi and Rutba to the west; Samarra and Mosul to the north.⁸⁸
- On December 13, IS advanced within 32 km of the city of Ramadi in the Al Anbar Governorate, west of Baghdad.⁸⁹
- On December 14, it was reported that US ground forces clashed with militants alongside the Iraqi Army and Tribal Forces near the Ain al-Assad Airbase, in Heet, in an attempt to repel IS militants from taking over the base.
- On December 16, Kurdish Peshmerga forces, joined by Yazidi operatives and supported by coalition forces air strikes, commenced a campaign to regain control of the area of Sinjar, west of Mosul. Approximately 20 attacks targeted the area of Sinjar, Ramadi, Rutba, Mosul and Samarra. The attacks destroyed vehicles, including heavy machinery, battle positions, warehouses, watchtowers and buildings controlled by IS. On December 21, the Sinjar offensive ended in a decisive Kurdish victory,⁹⁰ and the

⁸⁴<http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/2014-12-11-12%20Situation%20Report.pdf>

⁸⁵ Reuters, “ISIS storms town in western Iraq, kills 19 police”, December 13, 2014

⁸⁶ <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/shiites-defy-isil-threat-to-make-pilgrimage>

⁸⁷ UPI, “Islamic State militants shoot down Iraqi helicopter”, December 12, 2014

⁸⁸ LaTimes, “U.S.-led warplanes hit militants in Syria and Iraq 27 times this week”, December 12, 2014

⁸⁹ New York Times, “Islamic State Imposes Strict New Order in Mosul, and Deprivation Is a Result”, December 13, 2014

⁹⁰ Reuters, “Iraqi Kurds, Yazidis fight Islamic State for strategic town of Sinjar”, December 21, 2014

city of Sinjar was momentarily liberated. IS militants retreated to Tell Afar and Mosul.⁹¹

- On December 27, 23 air strikes were conducted against IS targets in Iraq and Syria.⁹² In Iraq, targets including buildings, vehicles and an IS refinery were hit in six strikes near Al Asad, Mosul, Falluja, Al Qaim and Baiji.⁹³
- On December 30, Iraqi government forces recaptured the town of Dhuluiya, north of Baghdad, from IS militants. IS militants seized the northern half of Dhuluiya in June 2014 and surrounded the southern half after a local Sunni tribe refused to swear allegiance. It was reported that 300 IS militants were killed in the clashes.⁹⁴

During December 2014, there were also a number of suicide bombings carried out by suspected IS militants who targeted both civilians and government forces throughout cities and towns in Iraq. Some of the more significant attacks are illustrated below:

- On December 4, a series of explosions killed 37 people in Baghdad and Kirkuk.⁹⁵ Three of the attacks targeted Shiite districts in Baghdad, while the fourth targeted a Kurdish neighborhood in Kirkuk. The first attack targeted a line of small restaurants in the Shiite district of Sadr City, killing 11 people and wounding 25 others. Minutes later, a second car bombing near an outdoor market in the same district killed seven people and wounded 21 others. A bomb exploded shortly after, near a restaurant in Baghdad's Shiite northern neighborhood of Shaab, killing three people and wounding 12 others. In Kirkuk, a car bomb attack near a cafe killed 16 people. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed IS.⁹⁶
- On December 10, nine people, including two soldiers, were killed when a suicide bomber targeted Iraqi security forces targeting a checkpoint of security forces in

⁹¹ Reuters

⁹² See Syria section

⁹³ Reuters, "U.S., allies conduct 12 air strikes against Islamic State: Task Force", December 27, 2014

⁹⁴ BBC, "Iraqi forces 'recapture Dhuluiya from Islamic State'", December 30, 2014

⁹⁵ AL Jazeera, "Deadly blasts rock Baghdad and Kirkuk", December 4, 2014

⁹⁶ AP, "Iraq bomb attack: String of Shiite car bomb attacks in Kirkuk, Baghdad kill 37, injure 21", December 5, 2014

Mikeshifa area north of Samarra. After detonating the car bomb, the IS militants used rockets and heavy weapons against the Iraqi forces.⁹⁷

- On December 24, a suicide bomber killed 33 people and wounded 55 others in Madain, south of Baghdad. Police said the attacker was wearing an Iraqi army uniform, and an explosive vest packed with ball bearings.⁹⁸The bomber attacked the fighters, known as Sahwa, while they were gathering near a military base in Madain to receive their salaries.⁹⁹ On December 26, the IS claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁰⁰
- On December 29, a suicide bomber detonated in a tent serving refreshments to pilgrims in Taji killing 17 pilgrims and wounding 35 others. Witness said the bomber carried a Shiite flag as a disguise and yelled "Allahu akbar" (God is greatest) before detonating the explosives. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but authorities blamed the IS.¹⁰¹

Israel and the West Bank

On December 3, a militant was shot by off-duty guard after he stabbed two Israelis in Mishor Adumim supermarket. The off-duty security guard fired at the terrorist and arrested him. The attacker, from al-Azariya, was reported to be in light-to-moderate condition. Two other Palestinians were also arrested on suspicion of aiding the terrorist.¹⁰²

On December 12, seven people, including a family of five with young children, were wounded in the West Bank, when a Palestinian man threw acid into their car at the Al-Hader Junction in the West Bank. The attacker who was standing adjacent to a hitchhiker post, saw the car approach to pick up a hitchhiker. It was at that stage he threw acid both the passengers and

⁹⁷ UPI, "Islamic State targeted Iraqi military in multi-faceted attack north of Samarra", December 10, 2014

⁹⁸ Reuters, "Suicide bomber kills 33 people south of Baghdad", December 24, 2014

⁹⁹ AFP, "Suicide bomber kills 26 in attack on anti-IS fighters in Iraq", December 24, 2014

¹⁰⁰ AFP, "ISIS claims Iraq suicide bombing that killed 38", December 26, 2014

¹⁰¹ AFP, "Suicide bomber hits Shiites in Iraq, killing 17: officials", December 29, 2014

¹⁰² Ynet, "Shin Bet: Attack on Teddy Stadium thwarted", November 27, 2014

the hitchhiker. The attack occurred near a checkpoint between the Gush Etzion settlement of Beitar Illit, where the family is from, and the Palestinian village of Husan, southwest of Jerusalem. The attacker was identified the attacker as Jamal Abd al-Majid Ghayatha, 45, from the West Bank village of Nahalin. He has alleged ties to Hamas.¹⁰³ According to the IDF, the attacker also tried to stab one of the men with a screwdriver following the acid attack. Israeli Border Police said the IDF soldiers saw a man holding a screwdriver and chasing someone, and by the time they caught up to the attacker, an Israeli civilian had shot and wounded the militant.¹⁰⁴

On December 15, security forces arrested eight Palestinian residents, some who were tied to Hamas and Fatah of East Jerusalem for online incitement. The suspects were accused of posting threatening pictures on social media. The eight men were suspected of circulating pictures and videos on Facebook praising terrorists and calling for terror attacks against Jews and security forces. Some of the images the suspects shared showed them holding pistols and M-16 rifles. Police said the images garnered thousands of “likes” and supportive comments. Police said they confiscated personal computers, mobile phones, storage devices, and an improvised grenade. The operation came after an intensive investigation by Jerusalem Police’s Central Unit, the Shin Bet security service, and the Attorney General’s Office.¹⁰⁵ Also on December 15 in a separate incident, the Shin Bet said they foiled a Palestinian terror cell planning a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. Five suspects hailing from Jenin and the village Attil in the Tulkarem area of the West Bank planned to infiltrate into Israel by acquiring a permit for the female member of their group to receive medical care in Israel. She was then to dress as a pregnant Jewish woman and detonate an explosive belt in Tel Aviv. The cell members admitted under Shin Bet interrogation to planning to carry out shooting attacks, detonate a mine next to a bus carrying soldiers, and kidnap a soldier as well. The five were arrested

¹⁰³ TOI, “Palestinian attacks family of 6, including young children, with acid”, December 12, 2014

¹⁰⁴ Haaretz, “Palestinian pours acid on group of Israelis in suspected attack”, December 12, 2014

¹⁰⁵ TOI, “Police arrest 8 East Jerusalemites for online incitement”, December 15, 2014

between October and November by IDF forces working with the Shin Bet and police, but the information was only cleared for release in December. The names of the suspects were listed as Yasmin Shaban, 31, from Jenin; Munadil Takaz, 22, from Attil; his brother Muatez Takaz, 20, from Attil; Abd al-Haleq Masimi, 22, from Attil; and Marwan Tzadki, 20, from Attil. The Shin Bet said that the suspects planned to use a safe house inside of Israel to dress Yasmin and prepare her for the attack. They admitted to being in touch with a terror operative in the Gaza Strip, who told the cell that both Hamas and Islamic Jihad would take credit for the attack. Security forces found during the arrests an improvised M-16, hunting rifle, ammunition, and explosive material.¹⁰⁶

On December 19, a rocket from Gaza was fired into Israel, exploding in open territory near the Eshkol Regional Council. No injuries or damage were reported.¹⁰⁷ In response, the following day IDF struck a site belonging to Hamas in southern Gaza near Khan Yunis. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon reported that the target was a factory making cement that would be used to build tunnels.¹⁰⁸

On December 25, two Palestinians threw a Molotov cocktail at a passing Israeli vehicle, setting it on fire which caused severe burns to Ayala Shapira, 11, who suffered third-degree burns over much of her body and face in the attack and lightly injuring her father.¹⁰⁹ No group claimed responsibility for the attack.¹¹⁰ On December 27, as a result of a joint IDF and ISA operation, two suspects were arrested for their involvement in the attack. Both suspects came from the village of Azzoun. One of them a minor (16 years old) confessed to leaving the village and approaching the road with intent to hurl Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles. The two waited beside the road and hurled the Molotov cocktail at a passing Israeli vehicle, setting

¹⁰⁶ Time of Israel, "Shin Bet, police foil 'pregnant' suicide bomber plot in Tel Aviv", December 15, 2014 and IDF Blog: see: <http://www.idfblog.com/blog/2014/12/15/joint-operation-foils-suicide-bombing-attempt/>

¹⁰⁷ Jpost, "PM after Hamas attack: I won't tolerate even 1 rocket", December 19, 2014

¹⁰⁸ Jpost, "IDF aircraft strike Gaza following earlier rocket fire", December 20, 2014

¹⁰⁹ Jpost, "Ayala Shapira named as girl seriously wounded in West Bank firebomb attack", December 25, 2014

¹¹⁰ TOI, "Israeli girl, 11, seriously hurt in West Bank firebombing", December 25, 2014

it on fire. The suspects then fled back to their village where they were later arrested.¹¹¹

Lebanon

On December 2, Lebanese security officials announced that they had arrested Saja al-Dulaimi, the ex-wife and son of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of IS, at a border crossing with Syria on November 23.¹¹² Army Intelligence, in coordination with Western intelligence agencies, claimed they made the arrests at one of the border crossings while traveling with a fake passport and her son. She was taken to the Lebanese Defense Ministry where she was interrogated.¹¹³ Lebanese authorities confirmed the suspect's links to al-Baghdadi, although it is unclear how the authorities have his DNA.¹¹⁴ It was reported that Al-Dulaimi's father was Ibrahim Dulaimi, an IS leader in Syria who was reportedly killed in September 2013 during an operation against the Syrian army.¹¹⁵

Syria

During December 2014, US led coalition airstrikes had a significant impact on repelling IS operations in Syria. Ground operations also took place with the support of air strikes. Significant cases are discussed below.

- On December 1 to December 3, the US carried out 14 airstrikes in and around Kobani destroying an IS vehicle, 17 fighting positions, and an IS staging area, and suppressed eight other fighting positions and striking a large ISIL unit.¹¹⁶ Following this, between December 4-8, US forces carried out another 15 airstrikes in and around Kobani and near Ar-Raqqah. The airstrikes near Kobani destroyed four IS fighting positions, three IS-occupied buildings, two IS staging areas, two IS tanks, an ISIL motorcycle, a mortar, and struck eight tactical IS units along with two ISIL fighting positions. One airstrike

¹¹¹ <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Suspects-in-Molotov-cocktail-attack-arrested-27-Dec-2014.aspx>

¹¹² Daily Star, "Lebanese Army arrests ISIS leader Baghdadi's wife", December 2, 2014

¹¹³ NBC, "Wife, Child Detained in Lebanon", December 2, 2014

¹¹⁴ BBC, "Lebanon 'holding IS leader's daughter and ex-wife'", December 4, 2014

¹¹⁵ CNN, "Source: Wife of ISIS leader al-Baghdadi arrested in Lebanon", December 3, 2014

¹¹⁶ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

near Ar-Raqqah struck an IS electronic warfare garrison.¹¹⁷

- On the week of December 12, US coalition forces carried out a three-day air strike attack targeting militants in Iraq (see above Iraq section) and in Aleppo and Kobani. US officials claimed to have destroyed IS bunkers and fortified structures. The target of the strikes were directed at battle positions, fortifications and buildings controlled by IS.¹¹⁸
- On December 15, US airstrike targeted IS militants in Kobani. Eight airstrikes near Kobani destroyed nine IS fighting positions, two IS buildings, two IS staging positions and also struck another IS fighting position. Near abu-Kamal, an airstrike destroyed an IS vehicle.¹¹⁹
- On December 27, 23 air strikes were conducted against IS targets in Iraq¹²⁰ and Syria. Amongst the strikes, six were carried out in Syria, near the Syrian town of Kobani on the Turkish border. Authorities said the strikes destroyed IS buildings, fighting positions and vehicles.¹²¹
- On December 31, US and partner-nation military forces continued to attack IS militants in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Fighter and bomber aircraft conducted seven strikes in Syria: two near Hasakah, which destroyed four oil derricks and five airstrikes Near Kobani, destroying five IS buildings and six IS fighting positions.¹²²

During December 2014 significant violent clashes between al-Qaeda linked militants and the Syrian army included:

- On December 6, IS militants attacked the Deir ez-Zor air base, a major military air base

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ LaTimes, “U.S.-led warplanes hit militants in Syria and Iraq 27 times this week”, December 12, 2014

¹¹⁹ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

¹²⁰ See Iraq section

¹²¹ Reuters, “U.S., allies conduct 12 air strikes against Islamic State: Task Force”, December 27, 2014

¹²² <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123898>

in eastern Syria.¹²³ The base in Deir al-Zor province is one of the last remaining outposts the government controls in a region where the IS has gained control.¹²⁴ Authorities said the militants began the attack with a car bombing, and that 19 Syrian soldiers and seven militants were killed in the fighting.¹²⁵ On December 10, IS distributed a video on Islamic forums claiming responsibility for taking control of several villages in the area towards Deir al-Zor's military airfield. Syrian forces continued to repel the IS attack on the airfield and attacked an armored vehicle belonging to IS which was intended for use as a car bomb.¹²⁶

- On December 14, 34 Jabat Al-Nusra militants were killed in violent clashes in and around the village of Handerat, in southern Aleppo province. During the fighting, the militants damaged a military vehicle and took three soldiers hostage. Also on the same day, US led coalition forces carried out three airstrikes against IS positions south of Kobani. It was reported that the militants fired seven mortar rounds at their Kurdish opponents.¹²⁷
- On December 16, Jabat al-Nusra militants seized the Wadi al-Deif and al-Hamidiya air base next to the country's main north-south highway in Idlib province.¹²⁸ It was also reported that approximately 100 hundred Syrian soldiers were killed and 80 militants were killed during a two-day battle for Wadi Deif. It was also reported that the militants captured 120 soldiers.¹²⁹ During the fighting in Wadi al-Deif, a large quantity of fuel that was at the base (about 35 tanks) fell into the hands of the Al-Nusra Front,

¹²³ DW, "'IS' militants attack Syrian government air base: activists", December 4, 2014

¹²⁴ Reuters, "Syrian government forces repel ISIS attack on air base", December 6, 2014

¹²⁵ VOA, "Activists: Islamic State Militants Attack Syrian Air Base", December 4, 2014

¹²⁶ <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syria%20SITREP%20MAP%202014-12-09.pdf>

¹²⁷ Fox, "34 Islamist rebels die in combat with Syrian army in Aleppo", December 14, 2014

¹²⁸ Jpost, "Monitor: Around 100 Syrian soldiers, 80 jihadists killed in battle for Wadi al-Deif base base", December 16, 2014

¹²⁹ Reuters, "Around 180 Syrian soldiers, jihadists reported killed in battle for base", December 16, 2014

along with 20 armored vehicles equipped with ammunition and 1,500 tank shells, Authorities said that the capturing of these bases was significant as it established the status of the Jabat Al-Nusra and other rebel groups in the rural area of the province of Idlib, from where they can threaten the cities of Idlib in the west and Hama in the south.¹³⁰

Other significant incidents in Syria in December included:

- On December 7, according to media reports, Israeli Air Force (IAF) jets bombed 10 targets near Damascus International Airport and in the town of Dimas, north of Damascus and near the border with Lebanon.¹³¹ According to media reports eight Israeli fighter jets were involved in the attacks. Initially it was reported that there were no reports of casualties in the reports, but a day after the incident, authorities claimed two Hezbollah militants were killed.¹³² The general command of the Syrian army said in a statement that several facilities had been hit, both at the Damascus International Airport and in the area of Dimas. It was also reported that the target of the attacks were Hezbollah weapons in particular air-defense missiles that were about to be transferred to Hezbollah in Lebanon.¹³³ The German news agency DPA reported that the Damascus airport warehouses reportedly targeted by the Israeli air strikes held Iranian missile systems destined for Hezbollah.¹³⁴ Israeli authorities made no comment.
- On December 12, a suicide bomber detonated a tank at a Syrian air base in the province of Deir al-Zor. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack and said it was carried out

¹³⁰ Reuters, "Around 180 Syrian soldiers, jihadists reported killed in battle for base", December 16, 2014

¹³¹ Ynet, "Syrian military: IAF struck targets near Damascus", December 7, 2014

¹³² Times of Israel, "Two Hezbollah members said killed in airstrikes on Syria", December 8, 2014

¹³³ Haaretz, "Syria: Israeli jets bomb army facilities near Damascus airport", December 7, 2014

¹³⁴ Haaretz, "Report: Two Hezbollah members killed in airstrike", December 8, 2014

by a man named Abu al-Farouq al-Libi.¹³⁵

- On December 18, 18 civilians were killed when the bus they were travelling on from Raqqa enroute to Damascus was attacked by gunmen in Haresta region. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed the IS.¹³⁶
- On December 24, a Jordanian F16 fighter aircraft crashed near Raqqa, during a joint US and Jordanian military intervention against IS militants in Syria. The crash was the first incident of its kind since the beginning of the air campaign against IS. US and Jordanian authorities said they suspected the crash was caused by mechanical problems, but the IS claimed that the plane was hit by a heat-seeking missile.¹³⁷ The pilot, who was identified as First Lieutenant Muath al-Kasasbeh, 26, was captured by IS militants shortly after the plane crashed.¹³⁸ Al- Kasasbeh was paraded by militants and filmed on camera within hours of his capture.¹³⁹ On December 30, al-Kasasbeh appeared in a detailed interview with IS's Dabiq magazine showing he had been taken hostage.¹⁴⁰ The video featured an image of the pilot in an orange jumpsuit and quotes about the US-led coalition's efforts.¹⁴¹ His family applied pressure on the Jordanian government to arrange for his release. Unsuccessful negotiations took place for his release, including a prisoner swap involving failed suicide bomber Sajida al-Rishawi,

¹³⁵ Reuters, "Islamic State suicide bomber detonates tank in eastern Syria:", December 12, 2014

¹³⁶ Aa.com, "18 civilians killed in bus attack in Syria's Damascus", December 18, 2014

¹³⁷ Independent, "Isis 'did not shoot down Jordan war plane'", December 24, 2014

¹³⁸ It should be noted that on January 3, 2015. IS militants killed him by setting him on fire, while trapped inside a cage, in what was the latest cruel method for IS killings. This incident will be covered in depth in the January 2015 ICT database report.

¹³⁹ BBC, "Profile: IS-held Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh", February 3, 2014

¹⁴⁰ Reuters, "ISIS Releases Apparent Interview With Captured Jordanian Pilot", December 30, 2014

¹⁴¹ AP, "Nightmare scenario for Jordan after one of its pilots captured by ISIS, plane shot down over Syria", January 24, 2014

who Jordan had held captive.¹⁴² Also it was reported in January 2014, that Jordanian special forces personnel had attempted to rescue Al-Kasasbeh and other hostages being held by IS around Raqqa.¹⁴³ Sadly, Al-Kasasbeh was burned alive whilst trapped by the IS in a cage on January 3, 2015.¹⁴⁴

Yemen

On December 3, a suicide car bomb exploded near the Iranian ambassador's house in Sanaa. AQAP claimed responsibility. The explosion severely damaged several nearby buildings and caused a massive hole in residence.¹⁴⁵ Authorities said a Yemeni civilian and two soldiers were killed, and 17 people, mostly employees at a nearby oil ministry building, were wounded. The ambassador was unhurt, having left his residence for the embassy 10 minutes earlier.¹⁴⁶

On December 4, AQAP threatened to execute US hostage Luke Somers within three days if the US government failed to meet unspecified demands. On December 6, 40 US special operations forces were involved in the attempt to rescue Luke Somers and Pierre Korkie, a South African teacher also held by AQAP, which followed US drone strikes in the area. The rescuers, backed by Yemeni ground forces, advanced within 100 meters of the compound in Shabwah Governorate when they were spotted by the militants. A firefight ensued. When the American soldiers finally entered the building where Somers and Korkie were kept, they found both men alive, but gravely wounded. The US forces pulled Somers and Korkie onto V-22 Ospreys, and medical teams began performing surgery in midair. Korkie died during the flight and Somers died after the Ospreys landed on the USS Makin Island.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² It should be noted that following the death of the Jordanian Pilot, Jordan has executed two convicts, including Sajida al-Rishawi. Details of this incident will be covered in the February 2014 ICT Database report.

¹⁴³ BBC Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ AFP, "Jordan pilot ejected over Syria after 'technical failure'", December 26, 2014

¹⁴⁵ AP, "Massive Car Bomb Explodes Near Home Of Iranian Ambassador In Sanaa, Yemen", December 3, 2014

¹⁴⁶ Reuters, "Car bomb kills three outside Iran envoy's residence in Yemen", December 3, 2014

¹⁴⁷ BBC, "US hostage Luke Somers and SA Pierre Korkie killed during Yemen rescue bid", December 6, 2014

On December 16, two suicide car bombers attacked a checkpoint and a house south of the Yemeni capital as a school bus was traveling nearby, killing at least 26 people including at least 16 primary school students. Witnesses said that the first car was loaded with potatoes apparently disguising explosives underneath. When the car bomber arrived at the checkpoint manned by rebels, he detonated the vehicle as the students' bus was passing. After the first explosion, a second car targeted the home of a Shiite rebel leader, Abdullah Idris. No group claimed responsibility.¹⁴⁸

On December 31, a suicide bomber killed 26 people and wounded 48 others, in Ibb, central Yemen at a cultural center where students were celebrating the Prophet Mohammad's birthday. Witnesses said the bomber mingled with guests as they arrived at the cultural center and detonated his suicide belt at the back of the hall. No group claimed responsibility but authorities blamed AQAP.¹⁴⁹

North America

On December 1, it was reported in the international media that US authorities foiled an alleged al-Qaeda plot to bomb that was intended to target five commercial airliners over Europe during the Christmas holiday period.¹⁵⁰ The attackers were allegedly planning to use explosive materials that would be hidden in electronic devices and cannot be detected by airport security technology.¹⁵¹ However, US officials and European authorities did not confirm or deny the reports. Scotland Yard, did however say that it foiled between four and five terrorist plots during 2014, and security officials feared an attack by British IS members who

¹⁴⁸ Ap, "2 bombers kill 26 including 16 students in Yemen", December 16, 2014

¹⁴⁹ Reuters, "At least 26 killed in Yemen suicide bombing: security official", December 31, 2014

¹⁵⁰ Fox News, "Terrorists reportedly plot passenger jet attacks over Europe", December 1, 2014

¹⁵¹ It should be noted that in November 2014 a US airstrike killed David Drugeon, a French jihadi whom intelligence officials say was helping the Khorasan Group to build the sophisticated weapons. See ICT Database report for further details. <http://www.ict.org.il/Article/1352/Summary-of-Terrorist-Incidents-and-CT-Operations-November-2014>

have trained in Syria to launch attacks inside the UK.¹⁵²

On December 17, Gufran Ahmed Kauser Mohammed, 31, was sentenced in Miami to 15 years in prison, after being convicted of providing thousands of dollars in support of three Al-Qaeda affiliates: Al-Shabab- Al-Mujahedeen, Jabat al-Nusra and Al-Qaeda.¹⁵³ Mohammed was arrested in 2013 in a Miami-based terrorism investigation led by an FBI employee, who engaged him and a co-defendant, Mohamed Hussein Said, 26, in an online, undercover financial scheme.¹⁵⁴ On July 11, 2014, Mohammed pled guilty to an Indictment charging him with conspiracy to provide money and recruits to al-Qa'eda, al-Nusra Front in Syria, and al-Shabaab in Somalia. Mohammed and Said were charged with conspiring to provide a combined total of about \$25,000 to the al-Qaeda affiliated groups.¹⁵⁵ Said denied the charges. According to the indictment, Mohammed and Said met in Saudi Arabia in May 2011 and agreed to provide financial and other resources to Al-Shabab Al-Mujahedeen militants in Somalia. Mohammed allegedly wired Said more than \$11,000 via Western Union to back al-Shabaab Al-Mujahedeen. In April 2012, the FBI undercover employee established online contact with Mohammed. He then arranged to send a series of Western Union wire transfers totaling more than \$9,000 to the FBI employee. The funds were intended for Jabat al- Nusra in Syria. In December 2013, Mohammed also met a purported associate of the FBI undercover employee and gave him 14,400 Saudi Arabian riyals, worth about \$3,800, which was intended to support the Jabat al- Nusra group.¹⁵⁶ Mohammed allocated certain of his financial contributions for the purpose of buying weapons and funding attacks on United States citizens or the United Nations.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Daily Beast, "U.S. Clams Up on Xmas Airline Bomb 'Plot'", December 1, 2014

¹⁵³ AFP, "American pleads guilty in Al-Qaeda sting operation", December 17, 2014

¹⁵⁴ Miami Herald, "Man sentenced to 15 years in Miami case linked to al-Qaida", December 17, 2014

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.fbi.gov/miami/press-releases/2014/defendant-sentenced-for-conspiring-to-provide-material-support-to-foreign-terrorist-organizations>

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Miami Herald.

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.fbi.gov/miami/press-releases/2014/defendant-sentenced-for-conspiring-to-provide-material-support-to-foreign-terrorist-organizations>

Canada

On December 4, a teenager, 15, whose identity was not made public, was charged was indicted for committing a robbery on behalf of a terrorist organization. Authorities did not specify which organization the money was intended but said the teenager was planning to join IS militants in Syria.¹⁵⁸ If found guilty, he faced life in prison. No further details about this case were made public.¹⁵⁹

Asia

Afghanistan

On December 11, a suicide bomber on foot killed six soldiers on the outside of Kabul. The suicide bomber targeted the bus they were traveling in. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁶⁰

Also on the December 11, a teenage suicide bomber, 17, targeted a school near the French cultural center in Kabul, killing a German national and wounding approximately 20 others.¹⁶¹ The attacker entered the Esteqlal High School which was hosting a music performance at the time, and then proceeded to detonate his explosive vest. ¹⁶²The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁶³

China

On December 8, Chinese authorities sentenced eight people to death on charges of membership in a terrorist cell and carrying out an explosion at the Urumqi train station on

¹⁵⁸ Reuters, “Canada charges 15-year-old with terrorism-related offences”, December 4, 2014

¹⁵⁹ WSJ, “Canada Charges 15-Year-Old With Two Terror Related Offenses”, December 4, 2014

¹⁶⁰ BBC, “Six Afghan soldiers killed in Kabul suicide bombing”, December 11, 2014

¹⁶¹ New York Times, “In 2 Attacks, Suicide Bombers Kill at Least 6 in Kabul “, December 11, 2014

¹⁶² DW, “Several killed in suicide bombing at Kabul school”, December 11, 2014

¹⁶³ DW, “Several killed by Taliban suicide bomber at Kabul school”, December 11, 2014

April 30, 2014 and an incident on May 22, 2014¹⁶⁴. The Urumqi Intermediate People's Court in the capital of Xinjiang also handed out suspended death sentences to five others, without mentioning when the trials were held. In a separate case, the same court jailed seven minority students of a prominent Uighur scholar for three to eight years after convicting them of separatism.¹⁶⁵

India

On December 1, Maoist rebels killed 14 paramilitary policemen and injured 11 others in an ambush in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh state. The officers were reportedly surrounded and attacked while raiding a rebel hideout in a forested area.¹⁶⁶ Authorities said the troops were carrying out an operation deep in a forest when the gunmen attacked.¹⁶⁷

On December 12, Mehdi Masroor Biswas, 24, was arrested in Bangalore and charged with being behind an influential pro-IS Twitter account followed by many jihadist militants. Police in Bangalore seized Biswas's mobile phone, laptop and other documents.¹⁶⁸ He admitted to authorities that he managed a Twitter account titled '@ShamiWitness' that had 17,700 followers. The site was shut down following a report by Indian television. Tweets from the account contained footage of executions as well as information for would-be recruits and messages praising fallen fighters as martyrs.¹⁶⁹ Authorities said that Biswas had ties to British jihadists and had become a source of "incitement and information" for young people trying

¹⁶⁴See ICT database report May 2014
report http://www.ict.org.il/Article/1194/Summary_of_Terrorist_Incidents_and_CT_Operations-May_2014

¹⁶⁵ AP, "China sentences 8 to death for attacks in Xinjiang", December 8, 2014

¹⁶⁶ AP, "13 paramilitary troops dead in India Maoist attack", December 1, 2014

¹⁶⁷ Al-Jazeera, "Indian police killed by Maoist rebels", December 1, 2014

¹⁶⁸ Times of India, "I'm a soldier, I have no regrets, says ISIS Twitter handler Mehdi Masroor Biswas", December 19, 2014

¹⁶⁹ Dna, "Islamic State twitter account handler Mehdi Masroor Biswas arrested; confesses to operating Twitter handle", December 14, 2014

to join IS in Syria and Iraq.¹⁷⁰

Pakistan

On December 6, Adnan Shukrijumah¹⁷¹, 39, al-Qaeda's chief of global operations was killed in a counter-terrorism raid in by the Pakistani military on a compound in South Waziristan. Authorities also said two other militants were killed and the military arrested Shukrijumah's wife and four children.¹⁷² US authorities had placed Shukrijumah on their most wanted list since 2010, while the justice department had charged him with ordering an attack on the New York subway. The US State Department had offered up to a \$5 million reward for his capture.¹⁷³ The same indictment links him to a plot to attack shopping centers in Manchester, while he has also been implicated in attacks on the London Underground and to trains in Norway. Muhammad Khurasani, the spokesman for the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan, released a statement confirming Shukrijumah's death on December 8.¹⁷⁴

On December 12, Shahid Usman, the suspected leader of Al-Qaeda in South Asia, was arrested together with four other militants, in Karachi after police received intelligence that he was actively planning attacks in the city. They also seized weapons and 10 kg of explosives.¹⁷⁵ Authorities said at the time of his arrest Usman was found with plans for an attack on the

¹⁷⁰ Guardian, "Indian police arrest owner of pro-Islamic State Twitter account", December 13, 2014 and see: BBC, "Islamic State's social media resilience", December 12, 2014

¹⁷¹ For a full profile of Adnan el Shukrijumah see: http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/wanted_terrorists/adnan-g.-el-shukrijumah and <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-30358259>

¹⁷² Long War Journal, "Pakistani Taliban confirms death of al Qaeda leader Adnan Shukrijumah", December 8, 2014

¹⁷³ BBC, "Al-Qaeda chief Adnan el Shukrijumah 'killed in Pakistan'", December 6, 2014

¹⁷⁴ Telegraph, "Al-Qaeda's Tube plotter killed in shoot-out", December 2014, December 6, 2014

Independent, "Al-Qaeda chief Adnan Shukrijumah killed in raid in Pakistan", December 6, 2014

¹⁷⁵ Reuters, "Pakistan arrests suspected South Asian al Qaeda commander", December 12, 2014

IBT, "Pakistan: Police arrest key 'South Asian al-Qaeda commander' in Karachi", December 12, 2014

Karachi naval dockyard.¹⁷⁶

On December 15, police killed four militants and sized heavy weapons and explosives - including four suicide jackets, 12 rockets, 40 hand grenades, 328 kilograms of gun-powder, in central Punjab Province. Authorities suspect that the militants are linked to the Punjabi Taliban faction of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).¹⁷⁷

On December 16, 145 people, mostly children were killed and approximately 100 others injured, when a team of seven TTP gunmen attacked the Army Public School in Peshawar. Authorities said the attack began with an explosion outside the school, which was intended to divert attention from the school security guards. At this point, the militants, all of whom were foreign nationals (one Chechen, three Arabs and two Afghans) entered the school and opened fire indiscriminately on staff and students. The majority of attackers were wearing suicide vests. Witnesses said the militants shouted “Allah Akbar” throughout the attack. A rescue operation was launched by the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG) Special Forces, who killed all seven terrorists and rescued 960 people.¹⁷⁸ The military engaged in firefights with the militants eventually neutralizing them all.¹⁷⁹ The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack describing it as revenge for Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the Pakistani military's offensive in North Waziristan that started in summer 2014.¹⁸⁰ On December 26, the Pakistani military said they killed the mastermind of the attack, who they identified only as Saddam, in a shootout in Baca region. Six other militants were injured and detained for questioning. Authorities said Saddam helped plan the Peshawar school attack and was also involved in

¹⁷⁶ The diplomat, “Pakistan Captures Leader of Al Qaeda's South Asia Wing”, December 12, 2014

¹⁷⁷ AFP, “Pakistan police foil terror attack, kill 4 militants: officials”, December 15, 2014

¹⁷⁸ BBC, “Pakistan Taliban: Peshawar school attack leaves 141 dead”, December 16, 2014

¹⁷⁹ CNN, “In Pakistan school attack, Taliban terrorists kill 145, mostly children”, December 17, 2014

¹⁸⁰ Pakistan Today, “TTP militants storm Peshawar school; 131 killed, more than 100 injured”, December 16, 2014

attacks on health workers giving polio vaccinations in the Peshawar valley.¹⁸¹

Philippines

On December 10, 10 people, mostly students were killed and 42 others injured when a 81mm mortar bomb, that was remotely detonated, hit a bus just in front of the main entrance of Central Mindanao University along Sayre Highway in Sitio Musuan, Barangay Dologon, Maramag, Bukidnon. No group claimed responsibility for the attack but authorities suspected militants from the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters were involved in the attack.¹⁸²

On December 31, a bomb exploded at the entrance of a town market killing four people and wounding 30 others. Police chief Joan Resurreccion in North Cotabato's Mlang township said the majority of victims were shoppers buying fruit and horns used for noise-making to greet the new year. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁸³

Oceania

On December 15, Man Haron Monis, an Iranian self-proclaimed sheikh and IS supporter took 17 people hostage inside the Lindt Chocolat Café at Martin Place, Sydney for 16 hours. Downtown Sydney was placed on lockdown. During the first few hours of the incident, hostages were seen holding an Islamic black flag up against the window of the cafe, with the Shahadah creed written on it in Arabic, which looked similar to an IS flag or Jabat Al-Nusra flag. It represents a general expression of faith in Islam.¹⁸⁴ A video emerged in the media that showed a standoff showing people being held inside the shop with their hands held in the air. After approximately six hours, three people managed to escape.¹⁸⁵ At this stage, the media said

¹⁸¹ Telegraph, “Peshawar school massacre: Key 'mastermind' behind Taliban attack 'killed in shoot-out'”, December 26, 2014

¹⁸² ABS-CBN, “CCTV footage of Bukidnon bus bombing”, December 10, 2014

¹⁸³ AP, “Bomb blast in Philippines kills 4, wounds 30”, December 31, 2014

¹⁸⁴ Mailonline, “Flag used in Sydney cafe siege used by Syrian extremist group Jabhat al-Nusra and linked to terror group Al Qaeda has message 'There is no God but Allah'”, December 15, 2014

¹⁸⁵ ABC News, “Gunman and Two Others Dead in Sydney Hostage Crisis”, December 15, 2014

they received calls from hostages during the standoff, in which the gunman demanded an IS flag and to speak to the Australian Prime Minister.¹⁸⁶ Two other hostages then managed to escape. At this stage, after what was a 16-hour standoff, police officers from the Tactical Operations Unit stormed the café, tossing flash grenades at the café, upon hearing gunshots from inside the café.¹⁸⁷ At least one hostage was shot by Monis, who himself was shot dead after police entered in response. Hostages Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson, who was the manager of the store, died in the initial stages of the attack, while three other hostages and a police officer were injured during the police raid.¹⁸⁸ Authorities said the gunman was known to authorities, who had a "long history of violent crime, infatuation with extremism and mental instability." He had pledged alliance to IS on his website.¹⁸⁹

On December 24, two men were arrested during an overnight by a terrorism task force and police in Sydney. One of the men was identified as Sulayman Khalid, 20, alias Abu Bakr. The other suspect was not named. Both were charged with possessing documents connected to a planned terrorist attack on government targets in Sydney.¹⁹⁰ Authorities said the arrests were connected to the raids in September 2014 during which 800 police were involved in counter-terrorism raids across Sydney's west and northwest. A total of 15 people were detained in that operation.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ ABC, "Sydney Crisis: Hostages Share Gunman's Demands in Chilling Phone Calls", December 15, 2014

¹⁸⁷ Telegraph, "Gunman and two hostages killed in Sydney siege: as it happened", December 15, 2014

Sydney Herald Tribune, "Lindt Cafe hostage drama in Martin Place, Sydney: day two", December 15, 2014

¹⁸⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, "Lindt Chocolat Cafe hostage drama in Martin Place, Sydney", December 16, 2014

¹⁸⁹ BBC, "Sydney siege: Hostages held in Lindt café", December 15, 2014

¹⁹⁰ Daily Telegraph. au, "Terror raids: Sulayman Khalid to spend Christmas behind bars", December 25, 2015

¹⁹¹ AFP, "Australian charged over terrorist plot targeting govt", December 24, 2014

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