

The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism

Monthly Summary of Events

May 2017

Israel

During the month of May, the hunger strike by security prisoners in Israeli prisons reached its end. The hunger strike, which began in April and continued for 40 days, revolved around the demands of the security prisoners to ease their conditions and was led by a senior Fatah leader, Marwan Barghouti, who was sentenced to five life terms for his involvement in terrorist attacks. As part of the agreement to end the strike, it was decided that the number of family visits would increase to twice a month while the rest of the prisoners' demands would be discussed at a later date.

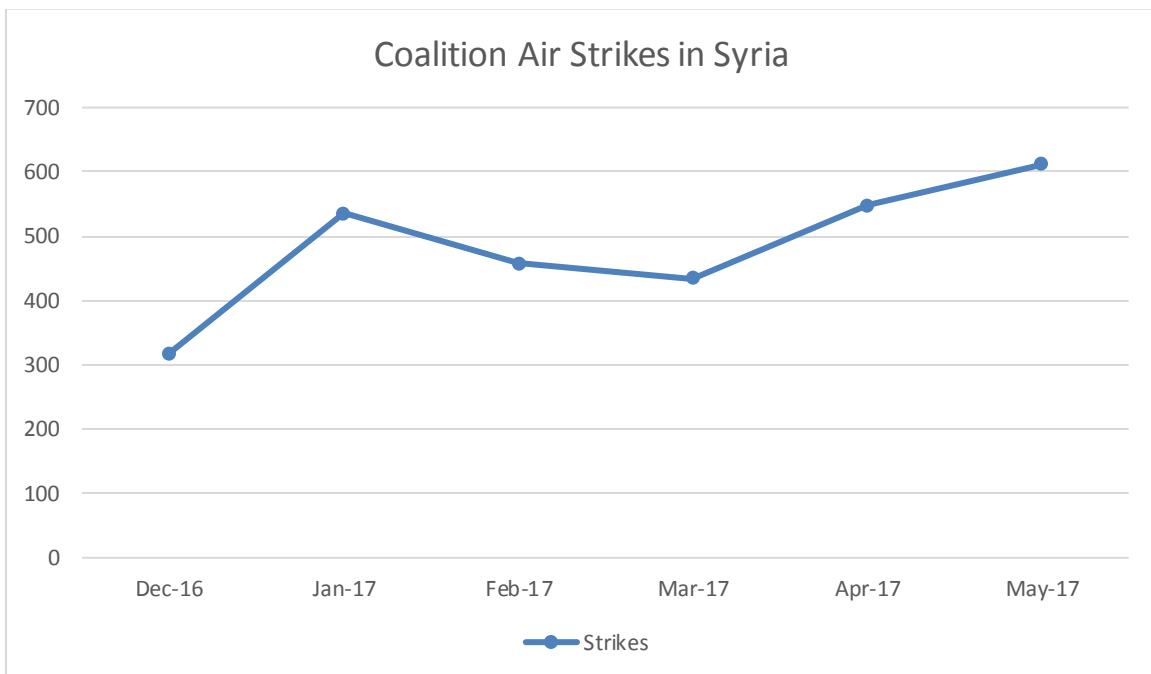
During the month, terrorist attacks and attempted attacks continued throughout the country, with emphasis on Jerusalem and the West Bank. Data from the Shin Bet reflects an increase in the number of terrorist attacks - 144 in May in contrast to 118 in April, with most of the attacks taking the form of Molotov cocktails.

In Netanya, a Border Police officer was injured in a stabbing attack, while another police officer was stabbed in an attack by a Jordanian citizen in the Old City.

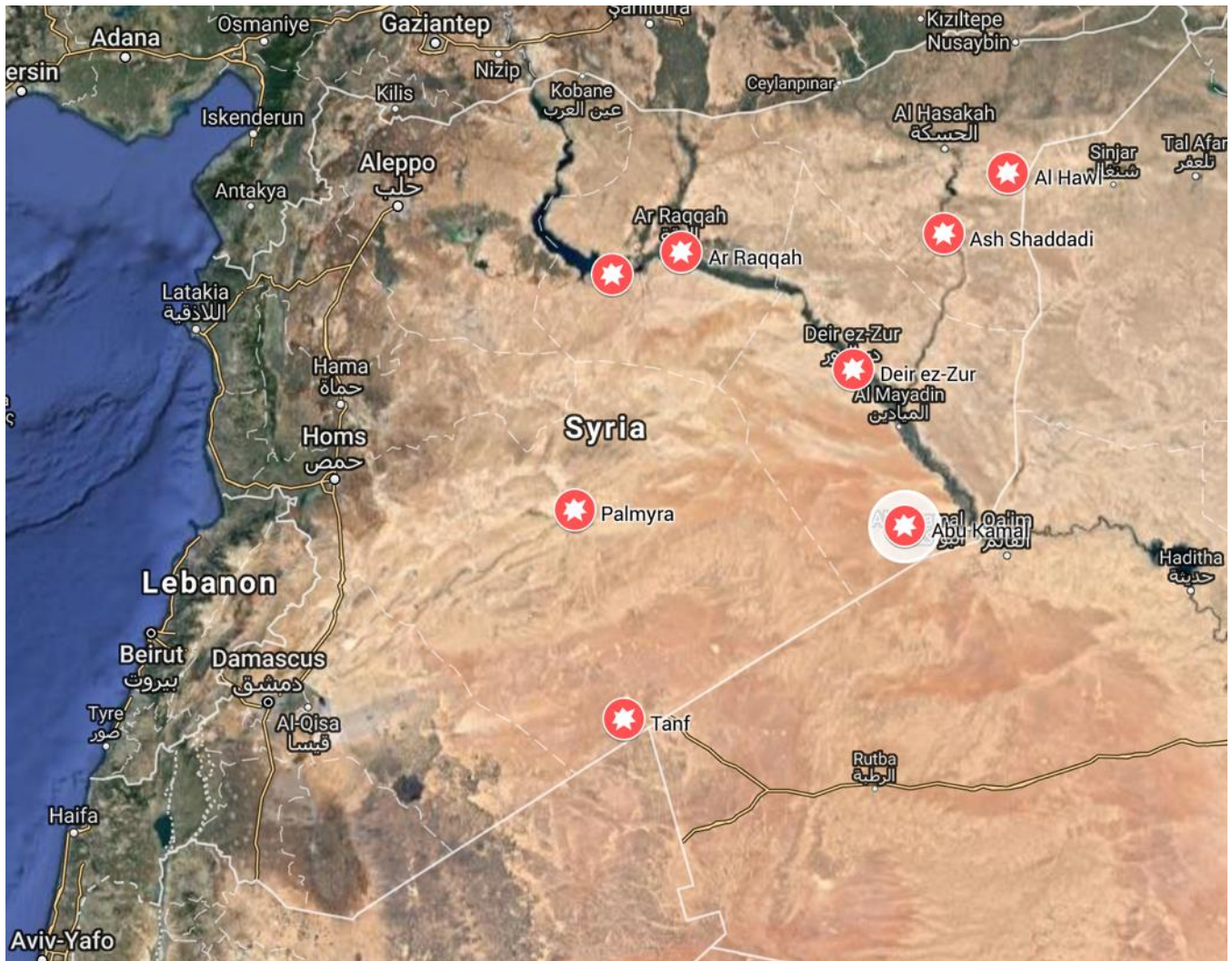
In addition, elections were held for local authorities in the Palestinian Authority but were boycotted by Hamas, the Popular Front and the Islamic Jihad. Meanwhile, Hamas elected Ismail Haniya to head the organization's political bureau in place of Khaled Meshaal. In addition, Hamas continued to test fire rockets towards the sea. One rocket that was fired into Israel from the Gaza Strip landed in the Strip.

Syria

During the month of May, coalition war planes continued to attack Islamic State (IS) and Tahrir al-Sham targets throughout the country, with emphasis on Raqqah, Palmyra, Shaddadi, Al-Hawl, Deir Ezzor, Tanf, Tabqa and Abu Kamal. In total, coalition planes carried out 611 attacks throughout the country, which is 60 more than were carried out during the month of April. As a result of coalition attacks in Raqqah Province, the IS announced the death of a prominent religious figure and leader of the organization, Turki al-Binali. In addition, reports were received according to which Hezbollah forces and Shi'ite militias had deployed towards the triangular area bordering Syria, Iraq and Jordan, in the area of Al-Tanf, with the purpose of establishing their hold on the territory. Meanwhile, air coalition forces began to attack near the triangle border area, including several convoys of forces supporting the Syrian regime in order to defend the rebel forces under their protection.



The data is based on official US Department of Defense publications



Coalition air strikes in Syria during the month of May

Alongside operations by coalition forces and their allies, Syrian army forces – aided by the Russian army and Shi’ite militias – continued to operate in several parts of the country. In this framework, Russian naval forces launched several cruise missiles at IS targets next to the city of Palmyra.

In addition, the ‘safe zones’ agreement between Russia, Iran and Turkey went into effect. As part of the agreement, it was decided that air strikes will be reduced until they cease altogether in Homs, Hama and Dara’a. In addition, reconciliation talks were renewed between representatives of the Syrian regime and rebels in Switzerland.

Lebanon

During the month of May, exchanges of fire continued along the northeast border of the country. Despite ongoing incidents between Hezbollah fighters and the Lebanese army, to Tahrir al-Sham fighters, Hezbollah reported that it cleared its positions on the Lebanon-Syria border and transferred them to the Lebanese army after completing the evacuation of the area from the presence of Sunni jihadists.

In addition, during the month of May, several Palestinians were injured in gun battles between rival factions in Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp despite the understanding that were reached between them at the end of April. Also this month, consultations and negotiations continued between various parties in Lebanon regarding the new election law. Despite reports about the formulation of a possible outline to redistribute the electoral areas in the country, a compromise has yet to be reached. It should be noted that the last elections to the Lebanese Parliament were held in June 2009.

Egypt

During the month of May, the Egyptian army continued to operate against IS targets in the northern and central Sinai Peninsula. In addition, security forces operated against terrorists north of the capital, Cairo, and against weapons smugglers operating on the Egypt-Libya border. In this framework, the Egyptian Air Force destroyed several SUV's that were in the service of the smugglers. In contrast, IS fighters continued to act against Egyptian security forces in the form of shooting ambushes and roadside bombs, in which an officer with the rank of colonel and over ten soldiers were killed, among others. Meanwhile, clashes continued between IS fighters and members of the Tarabin tribe in the area of Egyptian Rafah.

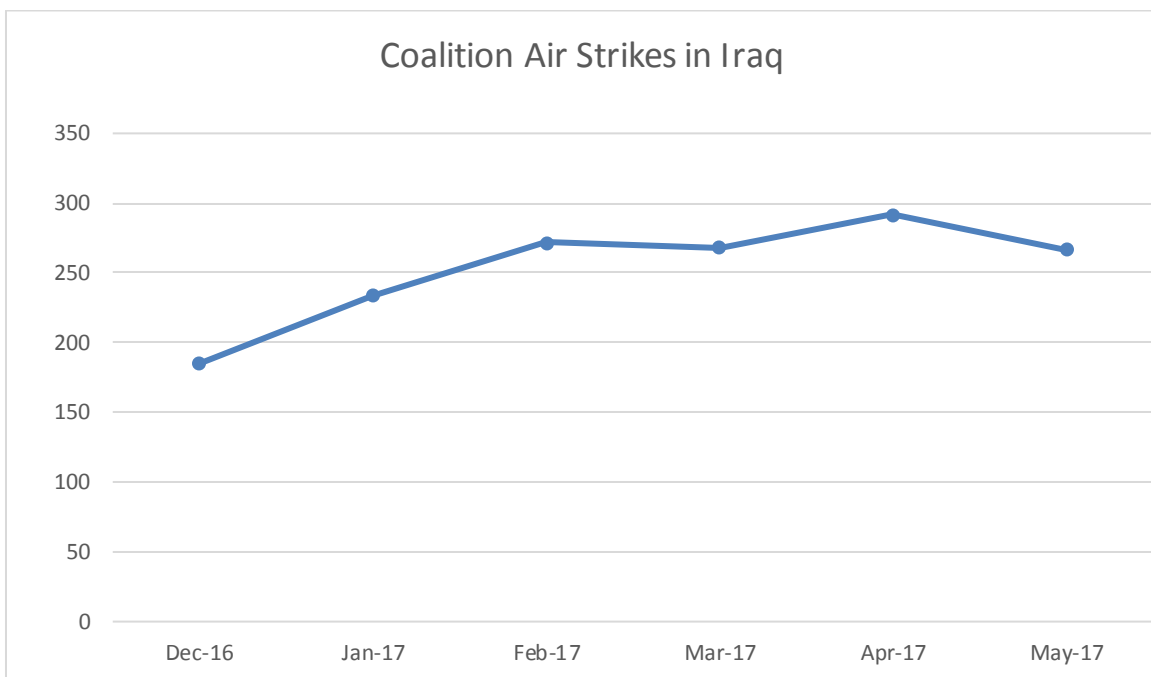
During the month, the IS continued to act against Coptic Christians. In a shooting attack in Al-Arish, a member of the community was killed, while in Minya Province, south of Cairo, approximately 30 community members were killed and dozens more were injured when IS fighters opened fire on the bus in which they were traveling. In response, The Egyptian Air Force attacked terror targets in the city of Derna in eastern Libya, where the terrorists were suspected of coming from.

Jordan

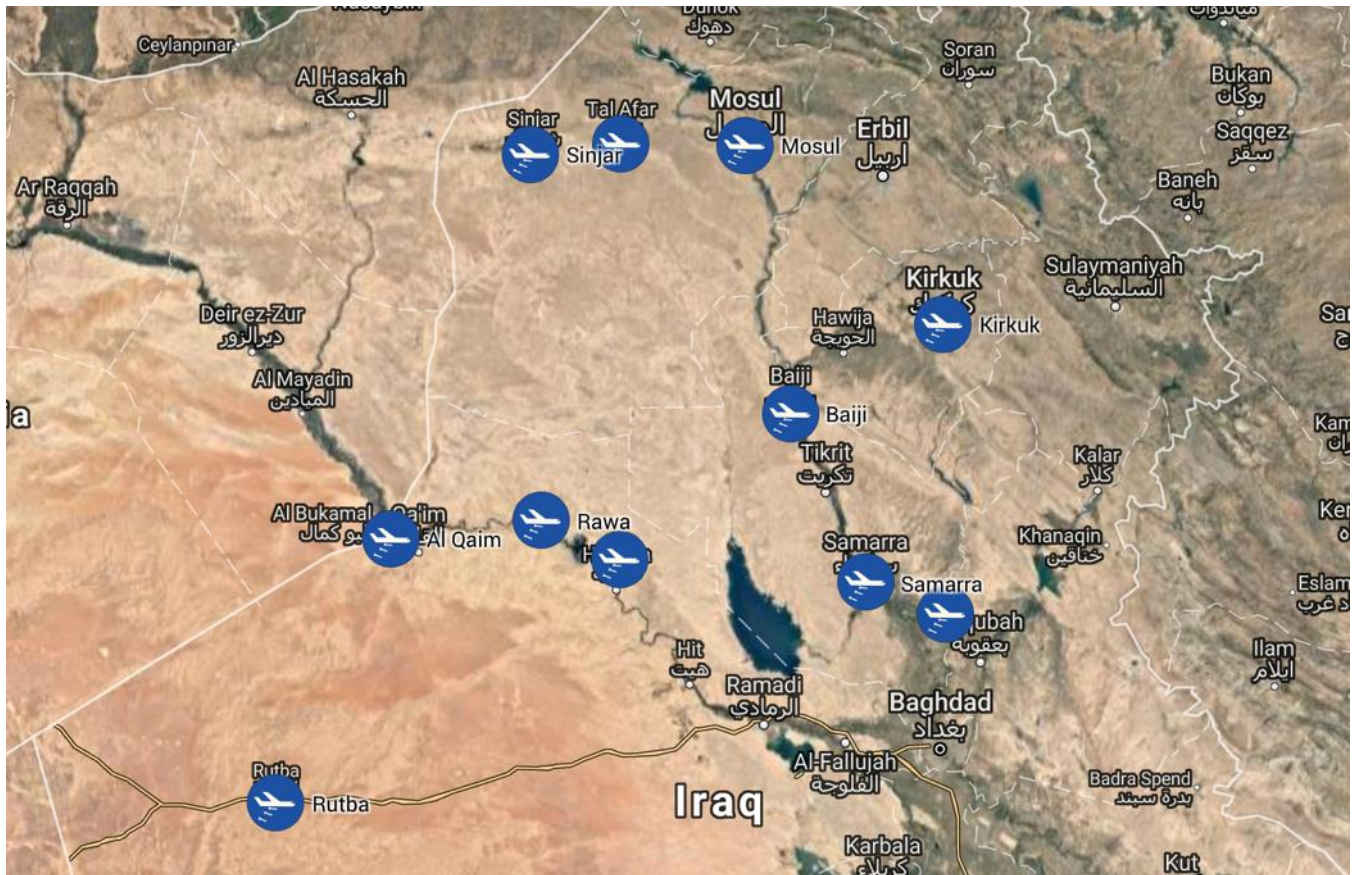
During the month, close to 20 people were killed in two separate terrorist attacks at the Rukban refugee camp on the Jordan-Syria border. A car bomb was used in the first attack and, in the second attack, explosive devices were detonated at a market located inside the camp. In addition, Jordanian fighter jets downed a drone that penetrated the Kingdom's territory from Syria.

Iraq

During the month of May, the operation led by Iraq to capture the city of Mosul from the IS continued. The Iraqi army, with help from Shi'ite militias, continued to operate in the city's western neighborhoods as well as in Anbar Province in western Iraq against IS targets. Alongside ground operations, coalition air strikes led by the US continued throughout the country against IS targets, with emphasis on the areas of Mosul, Kirkuk, Rutbah, Baiji, Samarr, al-Huwayjah, Haditha, Sinjar, Tal Afar, al-Qaim, and Rawah. In total, coalition planes carried out 267 attacks throughout the country, a decrease of 25 attacks from the month of April.



The data is based on official US Department of Defense publications



Coalition air strikes in Iraq

In contrast, IS fighters continued to operate throughout the country, with emphasis on the capital of Baghdad but also in other areas. In several attacks using suicide bombers and car bombs, close to 40 people were killed and dozens more were injured. In similar attacks in Diyala Province near the city of Basra in southern Iraq, over ten people were killed and dozens more were injured. In addition, the organization carried out a suicide attack against Peshmerga fighters in the city of Kirkuk.

It should also be noted that during the month of May, the Turkish Air Force attacked Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq.

Libya

During the month of May, Libyan National Army forces captured central Benghazi. Meanwhile, members of the “Third Force” militia associated with the Libyan Unity Government captured the Brak al-Shati Military Airport in southern Libya from the LNA, but militiamen retreated after about a week. According to the reports, over 140 soldiers in Haftar’s forces were killed during the battle at the airport and, in response, LNA fighter jets

attacked militia posts in Hun and Jufra. At the same time as these events, at least 47 people were killed in the capital of Tripoli in gun battles between various militias.

In the political arena, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army met with General Khalifa Haftar in Benghazi. In addition, the Libyan Ansar al-Shari'a announced its dissolution as a result of the organization's weakening over recent years.

Iran

On May 19, a few weeks after the start of the Iranian presidential campaign, President Hassan Rouhani was elected to another term.

Saudi Arabia

During the month, ground-to-ground missile fire directed at Saudi Arabia continued, including in the direction of the capital, Riyadh, on the eve of the US President's state visit to the country. It should be noted that most, if not all, of the missiles were intercepted by the Saudi air defense system. In addition, several officers were injured in a bomb explosion in the Shi'ite Qatif Province.

Yemen

During the month, battles continued between Yemeni army forces, aided by the Sunni coalition, and Houthi rebel forces throughout the country, including Al-Jawf, Jizan, Marib, Lahij, Sana'a and Taiz Provinces. In addition, gun battles renewed near the port city of Mokha. In contrast, Houthi rebel forces shot down a Saudi F-15 using an anti-aircraft missile.

In addition, reports were received according to which Sudanese forces fighting alongside coalition forces in the country suffered a large number of losses during the battle.

In the framework of the battle against AQAP, US Special Forces raided an AQAP compound in Ma'rib, during which seven militants were killed.

North and West Africa

During the month, Tunisian security forces thwarted a terrorist attack when they killed a wanted member of the IS on the Tunisia-Algeria border.

Somalia

During the month, Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen continued to operate throughout the country. For instance, during a raid by the organization on a military camp near the town of Goofgaduud, northeast of the capital, dozens of Somali soldiers were killed. In another incident, Ethiopian army forces, as part of the African Union

Force operating in the country, repelled an attack by Al-Shabab fighters against a military camp near the city of Galan in central Somalia. In addition, Somali army activities continued this month against Al-Shabab, with the help of US Special Forces. It should be noted that an American soldier was killed in one of the raids that were carried out at an Al-Shabab camp west of Mogadishu.

For the first time in the country, the IS claimed responsibility for a suicide attack at a military blockade in the area of Puntland, in which several soldiers were killed.

Kenya

During the month of May, Al-Shabab militants operated in Kenyan territory. In one incident, several quarry workers were killed in a shooting attack in Mandera Province in northern Kenya on the border with Somalia, and five police officers were killed in a roadside bomb explosion near their vehicle in the area of the Liboi border crossing.

Nigeria

During the month of May, Boko Haram continued to attack military and civilian targets throughout northeast Nigeria, with emphasis on the city of Mogadishu where militants attacked the local university. In addition, dozens were killed in several other attacks that included suicide bombings and raids on area villages. In addition, several Chad army soldiers and dozens of Boko Haram fighters were killed in battles near Lake Chad, and several civilians were killed in Cameroon in at least one suicide attack.

Meanwhile, Nigerian and Cameroon security forces continued to act against Boko Haram fighters in northeast Nigeria and northern Cameroon. At the same time as the battle, in the framework of a prisoner exchange deal between Boko Haram and the Nigerian army, over 80 of the kidnapped Chibok girls were released after being held captive by the organization since 2014.

Afghanistan

During the month of May, the Taliban continued to operate throughout the country in the framework of the "spring offensive". For instance, the organization captured a sieve from local security forces near the city of Kunduz, and dozens of police officers were killed and others were injured in an ambush carried out by the organization in Zabul Province.

In addition, Taliban fighters attacked targets belonging to security forces in Kandahar and Ghazii Provinces while a bank was robbed in Paktika Province. Other provinces in which the organization operated were Herat Province, in which over ten civilians were killed in a roadside bomb explosion, Khost Province in which dozens

were killed in a car bomb explosion near a military convoy, and in Logar Province in which several civilians were killed in a roadside bomb explosion.

During the month, IS fighters also operated in the country, with emphasis on Jalalabad where an Afghan television and radio station was attacked in a combined attack involving shooting and suicide bombers, in addition to the organization's ongoing activities in Nangarhar Province. In contrast, dozens of Taliban and IS fighters were killed in air strikes throughout the country, including in Helmand and Nangarhar Provinces. During the month of May, over 90 passerby were killed and more than 350 were injured in one of the biggest terrorist attacks to befall the capital of Kabul in the last two years, in the framework of which a car bomb was detonated near the German Embassy in the area of foreign embassies in the city.

As a result of the crisis surrounding the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, over ten soldiers and civilians were killed in a gun battle between the Pakistan army and the Afghanistan police. The exchange of fire began after the Pakistani force entered with the census reviewers in the controversial areas between the two countries.

Pakistan

During the month of May, several terrorist attacks took place throughout the country while security forces continued their activities against various terrorist targets. For instance, a roadside bomb was detonated outside of a girls' schools in the Khyber area. In another incident, several people were injured in a grenade attack against four houses and a school in northwest Pakistan. In addition, in the cities of Karachi and Peshawar, several police officers were killed in an armed attack against a police station, and several others were killed in a roadside bomb explosion in the tribal area of the country.

In Balochistan Province, at least 25 people were killed in a roadside bomb explosion near the convoy of the Deputy Chairman of the Pakistani Parliament during his visit in the province. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack. In another attack by perpetrators whose identities have not yet been ascertained, ten construction workers were killed in a shooting attack while they worked on the Chinese-Pakistani "Silk Road" project near the city of Gwadar in the province. In addition, two Chinese teachers were kidnapped by IS militants in Quetta, the capital of the province.

Turkey

During the month of May, security forces continued to arrest opponents of the regime on suspicion of their involvement in, and support for, the failed coup attempt that took place in July 2016. Meanwhile, security forces continued to operate against Kurdish rebel targets in southeast Turkey.

The Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia

During the month of May, several terrorist attacks took place in the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia. In south Thailand, on the border with Malaysia, over 50 people were killed in a car bomb explosion at the entrance to a local mall. The attack was apparently carried out by Islamic separatists operating in the area. In Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, a police officer was killed and several others were injured in two suicide blasts at a bus station, seemingly by IS fighters.

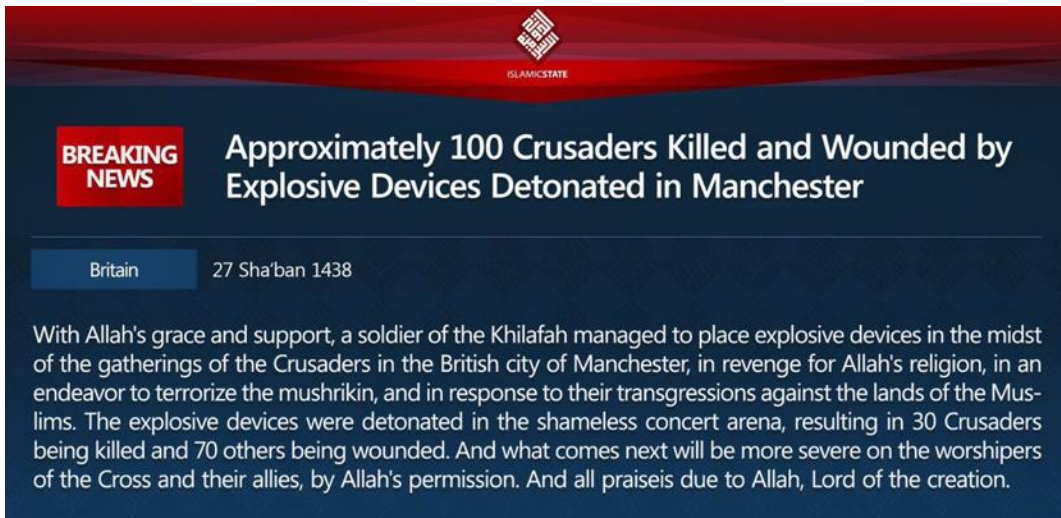
In the Kashmir region in India, terrorist organizations continued their efforts to operate in the area. For example, Lashkar e-Taiba tried to attack Indian security forces, mainly with shooting ambushes.

In addition, IS fighters captured the city of Marawi, in the area of Mindanao, in southern Philippines, and took several nuns and priests hostage.

Also during the month, security forces in Bangladesh continued to operate against Islamic terrorists in western Bangladesh. It should be noted that in the framework of operational activities, ten suspects were killed but several security forces were also injured.

Europe and the United States

During the month of May, a suicide attack was carried out in England for the first time in over a decade. In the attack, which took place in Manchester, 22 people were killed, most of them under age 18, and approximately 60 others were injured in a suicide blast at the end of a pop concert. The terrorist, an English native of Libyan descent, detonated a bag that contained TATP explosive material among a crowd of people as they left the concert hall in the city. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack. Following the attack, a number of suspects tied to the attack, and who were apparently part of an active IS terrorist cell in the city of Manchester, were arrested. The brother of the terrorist was arrested in Libya by LNA forces, and the investigation revealed that he was responsible for preparing another attack. As a result of the attack, the alert level was raised throughout the country to 'critical' due to fear of another attack in the imminent future, but after only a few days the alert was lowered to one level below. It should be noted that several days before the attack, the London Police had arrested four suspects for planning terrorist attacks throughout the country.



IS claim of responsibility for the terrorist attack

Other Countries

During the month of May, over 200,000 computers around the world were attacked with the 'WannaCry' ransomware, which attacked a security breach on computers running the Microsoft Windows operating system. It should be noted that no organization has claimed responsibility for the incident.