March 2016

#TERROR GONE VIRAL

OVERVIEW OF THE 75 ISIS-LINKED PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST

2014 - 2016

HOMELAND SECURITY
COMMITTEE

“If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way, however it may be.

ABU MOHAMMED AL ADNANI
SEPTEMBER 2014
Quoted in ISIS Propaganda Video

“ISIL has used ubiquitous social media to break the model and push into the United States, into the pockets, onto the mobile devices of troubled souls throughout our country in all 50 states a twin message: Come or kill, come or kill. Come to the so-called caliphate, live a life of glory, participate in the final battle between good and evil on God’s side. Come to the caliphate, and if you can’t come, kill where you are.

FBI DIRECTOR JAMES COMEY
OCTOBER 2015
Testimony before House Homeland Security Committee

“ISIL’s leaders are determined to strike the US homeland beyond inspiring homegrown violent extremist attacks.”

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR CLAPPER
FEBRUARY 2016
Testimony before Senate Armed Services Committee

Background

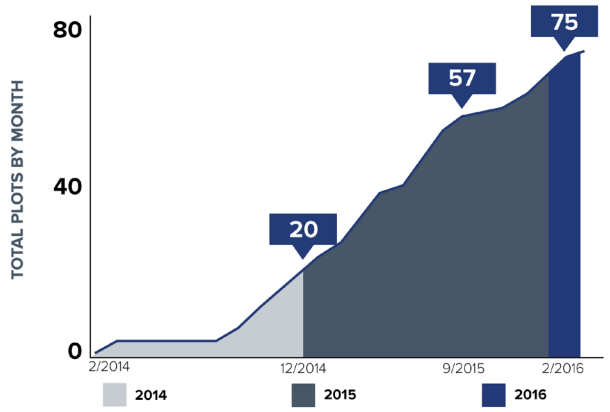
The House Homeland Security has been tracking terrorist activity linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) since the group's formation. This report was produced by the Committee's Majority Staff and is intended to capture the scope of ISIS external operations against Western countries, including the United States, as well as terrorist incidents inspired by the group. It provides high-level analysis of ISIS-linked plots and attacks that have targeted such countries, along with a summary of each incident. At the time of publication, ISIS has been tied to at least 75 terrorist plots or attacks against the West since early 2014. The Committee plans to update this report periodically. Additionally, the Committee's monthly *Terror Threat Snapshot* provides updated statistics and analysis on terrorism trends at ***homeland.house.gov***.

Note on Methodology

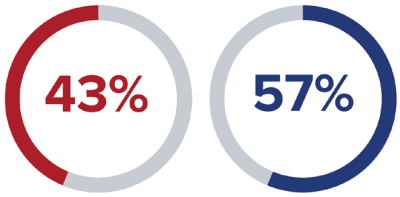
This report is based on open-source data, including information from press articles, publicly available government documents, reports from non-governmental organization, and related materials. For the purposes of this analysis, key terms are used as follows: ISIS-linked refers to incidents involving a suspect or suspects who were members of or connected to ISIS, for instance, through direct communication, pledges of allegiance, or ideological inspiration; plots refers to schemes, either executed or disrupted, by an individual or group to commit violent terrorist acts; and the West is used at the time of this writing in reference to countries located in Europe and North America, as well as Australia, or targets affiliated with the same outside of the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq.

75 ISIS-LINKED TERRORISM PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST

TOTAL PLOTS



EXECUTED vs. DISRUPTED



ISIS plots have an alarmingly high success rate.

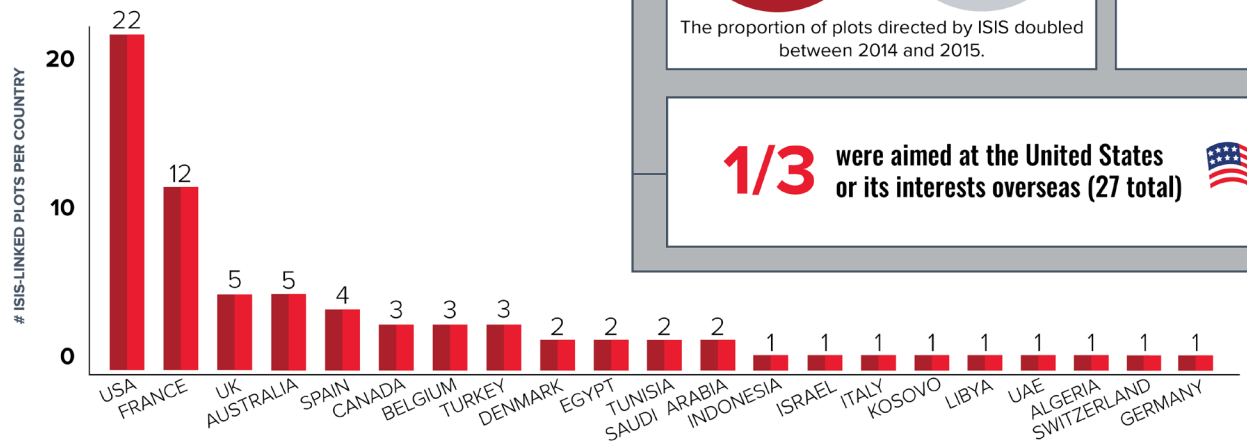
1/3 INVOLVED A FOREIGN FIGHTER

INSPIRED vs. DIRECTED

The proportion of plots directed by ISIS doubled between 2014 and 2015.

1/2 WERE CARRIED OUT BY A LONE WOLF

THE UNITED STATES IS THE TOP TARGET



1/3 were aimed at the United States or its interests overseas (27 total)

ISIS-LINKED PLOTS ARE GETTING DEADLIER, ON AVGERAGE

1 person killed per attack (July - December 2014)

11 people killed per attack (January - June 2015)

30 people killed per attack (July - December 2015)

ISIS TERRORISTS PREFER "DO-IT-YOURSELF" JIHAD OVER COMPLEX PLOTS

2/3 of attacks involved small arms or edged weapons

1/3 of attacks involved explosives

MOST SUSPECTS ARE MILITARY-AGE MALES

GENDER

90% MEN **10% WOMAN**

AGE OF SUSPECTS

94% were under the age 34

Average age: 26

Key Findings

ISIS has been tied to at least 75 terrorism plots against Western countries. The group's focus on external operations has risen significantly. In 2014 there were 19 ISIS-linked plots against the West; in 2015, the figure more than doubled to 48. More than 40 percent of the total plots (32) have been executed, while the rest were disrupted. This represents a relatively high success ratio that will likely continue to influence the group's emphasis on frequent attempts rather than fewer, long-term plots. The year-over-year growth rate in the number of ISIS plots has surpassed any previous period of al-Qaeda linked terror targeting Western countries.

The United States continues to be the number-one target. More than one-third of ISIS-linked terror plots (27) were aimed at the United States or its interests overseas. Those plots have included the San Bernadino terrorist attack, which killed 14 civilians; an attempted attack in Garland, Texas; a plot to detonate explosives at New York City landmarks; a plot to shoot tourists on Florida beaches; a plot to live-stream a shooting rampage at a college campus; and a plot to detonate pipe bombs on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., among others. The rise in ISIS-related incidents made 2015 the most active year for homegrown jihadist terrorism ever tracked in the United States.

ISIS' anti-Western attacks are getting deadlier. A total of 270 people have died in ISIS-linked terror plots against the West, and more than 550 have been wounded. The average number of fatalities in each attack has gone up significantly since 2014. In the second half of that year, an average of one person died in each successful attack, but in the first half of 2015, the average death toll rose to 11. By the end of 2015, anti-Western ISIS attacks averaged a death toll of 30 people per incident.

The group has successfully "crowd-sourced" its terrorism agenda by inspiring independent followers to conduct most of its attacks. Two-thirds of ISIS plots against the West appear to have been "inspired" by the terror outfit, rather than directed by it or carried out by trained jihadists. This ability to franchise terror has lowered the cost of the group's operations and increased the impact of the its violence. The majority of cases (54 percent) involved only a single suspect, demonstrating the group's continuing ability to motivate individual extremists to act on its behalf—even though most have never set foot in its so-called caliphate. The majority of cases also involved some element of online radicalization or engagement with ISIS' digital propaganda.

But ISIS appears to be exerting greater control over plotting. The percentage of plots involving some kind of ISIS direction or including operatives from its safe havens has grown from 17 percent of anti-Western plots in 2014 to 36 percent in 2015. This may reflect a more concerted effort on the part of the organization to advance its goal of leading the global jihadist movement. These

figures also do not fully reflect the growing role ISIS foreign fighters in Syria have played in inciting attacks, as noted below; a growing number of incidents involve exhortation by foreign fighters or remote assistance from them. Moreover, it remains difficult to determine whether plots are masterminded by ISIS leadership or simply by members in Syria and the group's other provinces, acting independently.

Overall, the line between inspired and directed plots is getting blurrier. Many cases involve individuals who appeared to be self-radicalized but were later found to have been in touch with ISIS operatives overseas. In other words, "lone wolves" may not always be acting alone. For instance, in August 2015 passengers subdued a man attempting to conduct a shooting rampage on a train from Amsterdam. The suspect was thought to have acted independently, but investigators now believe he was in touch with a leading ISIS plotter, Abdelhamid Abaaoud. The extent of their collaboration is unclear, making it difficult to determine whether the plot was directed, aided, encouraged, or simply inspired by ISIS. As a result of the group's distributed approach to attack plotting—rather than a clear command-and-control structure—a growing number of cases fit this mold.

This focus on lower-level violence over "spectacular" attacks has allowed ISIS to spread its terror more widely and with greater frequency.

ISIS followers prefer "do-it-yourself jihad" over complex plots. In the cases reviewed, terrorists overwhelmingly opted to use easily accessible weapons, such as knives or guns, over more technically complicated attacks featuring explosives, hijackings, or cyber tools. Two-thirds of executed ISIS-linked attacks against the West (22) involved small arms, edged weapons, or both. Only 16 percent of attacks (5) involved explosives, and usually only in places very close to terrorist safe havens where ISIS has a presence. Plots involving explosives were more likely to be disrupted by authorities before being executed. This focus on lower-level violence over "spectacular" attacks has allowed ISIS to spread its terror more widely and with greater frequency.

Foreign fighters are helping to drive the terror surge. At least one-third of ISIS-linked plots against the West involved a foreign fighter—an individual who has gone abroad to train or fight in a terrorist safe haven. However, this figure is probably low, as extremists are increasingly taking steps to hide their communications, and in recent cases the involvement of a foreign fighter was often not clear until weeks or months into an investigation. These experienced jihadists were suspects, accomplices, or instigators in two-dozen identified cases. Roughly half of these cases involved "returnees," foreign fighters who came home from ISIS safe havens to launch the attacks themselves. This includes the Paris attackers, the assailants responsible for killing Western tourists at a Tunisian museum and beach resort, the suspect behind the shooting at a Jewish museum in Brussels in 2014, and more.

Terrorists are "going dark," making it harder in some cases to prevent attacks. ISIS followers have widely distributed guidance on securing their communications, which appears to be having an effect. A number of prominent cases have involved ISIS-linked attackers encrypting their communications or making their data inaccessible to authorities, including in Garland and Paris. In the former case, the suspect reportedly exchanged 109 encrypted messages with a known terrorist overseas before his attack, and in the latter case, the attackers allegedly used encrypted communications in advance of their operation. In both instances authorities were apparently unable to intercept the messages ahead of time, and the inability to decrypt them after-the-fact has hindered investigations.

The overwhelming majority of suspects are young and male. While ISIS has tailored its propaganda toward many demographics, its primary assailants still fit a consistent profile: men in their 20s and early 30s. In cases where suspects were identified, 90 percent were male, and the average age was 26 years old. In fact, 94 percent were under the age of 34, suggesting that the overwhelming majority of ISIS operatives are indeed "military-aged males," as is commonly assumed.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper recently noted that ISIS is "taking advantage of the torrent of migrants to insert operatives into that flow" to target Western countries and that the group is "pretty skilled at phony passports so they can travel ostensibly as legitimate travelers."

Syrian refugee flows and fake passports are being exploited by ISIS to deploy terrorists. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper recently noted that ISIS is "taking advantage of the torrent of migrants to insert operatives into that flow" to target Western countries and that the group is "pretty skilled at phony passports so they can travel ostensibly as legitimate travelers." Several notable plots and successful attacks have validated this assessment. Operatives have traveled out of the conflict zone undetected posing as Syrian refugees or using fake passports in a plot to launch "severely violent attacks" in Berlin, to conduct a suicide attack against German tourists in Istanbul, in a plot to bomb the U.S. consulate in Turkey, to carry out attacks in France, to evade authorities after a terrorist attack in Tunisia, and in other cases. Lax counterterrorism screening throughout Europe will undoubtedly continue to make these tactics attractive to ISIS plotters and will severely increase the terror risk to European countries in the near-term.

Summary: ISIS- Linked Terrorism Plots against the West

Feb-16	USA	A Missouri woman was arrested by the FBI for making pro-ISIS threats of violence against government and military personnel through online postings which included personal and location information for some of the individuals.
Feb-16	USA	A Michigan man was arrested by the FBI for planning to conduct a mass shooting at a nearby church, where he hoped to kill thousands of worshippers in the name of ISIS.
Feb-16	Germany	German police detained several suspects believed to be involved in an ISIS plot to conduct "severely violent attacks" in Berlin, possibly against two popular tourist locations. At least one of the suspects is believed to have trained with ISIS in Syria and two are thought to have entered Europe posing as refugees.
Jan-16	Indonesia	A group of terrorists launched a complex attack in downtown Jakarta, targeting a Starbucks in a shopping district and surrounding areas with explosives and small arms. One Westerner, a Canadian, was reportedly killed. ISIS took credit for the attack, which they said was targeted at foreigners and the "crusader alliance" fighting ISIS.
Jan-16	Turkey	An ISIS suicide bomber struck a popular Istanbul tourist area, killing 10, including nine German nationals, and wounding 15.
Jan-16	France	A teenage ISIS supporter was arrested and charged with a terrorism offense for attacking a Jewish teacher with a machete in Marseille.
Jan-16	USA	A local man who pledged allegiance to ISIS was arrested after shooting a police officer in a patrol car and attempting to flee the scene.
Jan-16	France	On the one year anniversary of the Paris Charlie Hebdo attacks, a knife-wielding man outside a Paris police station was shot dead by police while in possession of an ISIS flag reproduction and claim of responsibility for the attack.
Dec-15	USA	A New York man was arrested for plotting to attack civilians at a restaurant in Rochester, New York on New Year's Eve. The suspect claimed he received direction from an ISIS operative overseas and wanted to join the group in Syria.

Dec-15	Belgium	Belgian authorities arrested two people on suspicion of being involved in a plot to attack “emblematic sites” in Belgium’s capital during New Year’s celebrations.
Dec-15	Turkey	Turkey detained nearly a dozen suspected ISIS operatives for planning to conduct a suicide bomb attack on the U.S. consulate in Istanbul. A number of the suspects arrived in Turkey from Syria using fake passports.
Dec-15	UK	A knife-wielding man attacked passengers in a London tube station, reportedly yelling, “This is for Syria,” and attempted to behead one individual. ISIS propaganda was found on his phone.
Dec-15	USA	An ISIS-inspired married couple, Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, opened fire at a holiday party at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, killing 14. The suspects fled the scene but were later killed by police in a shootout.
Nov-15	France	ISIS operatives conducted a series of coordinated terrorist attacks in the French capital targeting a concert hall, restaurants, and cafes, killing 130 people and injuring more than 350. At least two operatives are believed to have entered Europe posing as refugees, and ISIS later released videos purportedly showing each of the attackers as having previously been in Syria.
Nov-15	Spain	Three ISIS-linked Moroccans living in Spain were arrested in raids in Madrid and Rivas-Vacimadrid for planning a jihadist attack in the country’s capital.
Nov-15	Europe	In a coordinated police sweep across Europe (Britain, Norway, Finland, and Italy), authorities detained 16 ISIS-linked suspects who were planning to attack and kidnap Western diplomats in the Middle East in a bid to free a jailed jihadist leader. Police were unable to detain some of the suspects, as they had already traveled to Syria to join groups like ISIS.
Sep-15	USA	A Florida man who sympathized with ISIS was arrested for providing bomb-making advice to an informant for an intended terrorist attack on a 9/11 Anniversary ceremony in Kansas City, Missouri.
Aug-15	France	A French citizen believed to have fought with ISIS was arrested by police for allegedly having returned from the group’s stronghold in Syria with instructions to attack a concert.
Aug-15	USA	A teenage boy was arrested outside Philadelphia for threatening to launch an ISIS-inspired assault on Pope Francis during his visit to the United States, including using firearms and explosives.

Aug-15	France	A Moroccan man was subdued by passengers and later arrested after attempting to launch a mass shooting attack on a train traveling from Amsterdam to Paris. Several individuals were wounded by the suspect, who is believed to have been inspired by jihadist groups like ISIS and may have traveled to Syria.
Aug-15	USA	
Jul-15	USA	An ISIS hacker group posted the personal information of hundreds of U.S. military and government personnel while urging followers to conduct attacks against such targets.
Jul-15	Italy	An ISIS-inspired Florida man was arrested for allegedly plotting to kill beach-goers using explosives hidden under the sand, a plot possibly timed around the Fourth of July.
Jul-15	UK	Two ISIS sympathizers were arrested after threatening to carry out a terrorist attack on a military base in Italy with a U.S. presence.
Jul-15	France	A British man was arrested and charged with plotting to attack U.S. troops in the United Kingdom as part of an ISIS-inspired plot.
Jul-15	Egypt	French authorities arrested four terror suspects who were plotting a shooting rampage at a French military base and planned to behead the base commander. Three of the suspects were believed to be in touch with ISIS operatives in Syria, including one who indicated he had been directed to strike France.
Jul-15	Kosovo	ISIS took credit for a car bomb attack against the Italian consulate in Cairo, killing one.
Jul-15	USA	Authorities in Kosovo arrested five ISIS-linked individuals for plotting to poison the water supply to Pristina, the country's 200,000-person capital. Two of the suspects are believed to have returned from Syria.
Jun-15	France	A Massachusetts man was arrested for plotting to live-stream an ISIS-inspired terrorist rampage on a college campus, potentially timed around the Fourth of July.
Jun-15	UK	A French individual believed to be inspired by ISIS beheaded his employer, planted jihadist banners near his victim, and rammed his car into the gas factory at which he had been employed, injuring two in the subsequent explosion.
Jun-15	Tunisia	Authorities disrupted an ISIS-linked bomb plot against an Armed

		Forces Day parade in London after a tip-off from a journalist who had been in touch with an ISIS operative in Syria who directed the attack.
Jun-15	USA	ISIS claimed responsibility for a shooting rampage at a Tunisian beach resort popular with Westerners, an attack that killed 38 individuals, all of which were European tourists. The suspect visited an ISIS training camp in Libya.
Jun-15	USA	A 19-year-old North Carolina man was arrested and charged with “planning assassinations” and plotting to “kill a large number of U.S. citizens” in the name of ISIS.
Jun-15	USA	Two ISIS supporters were arrested and charged for assaulting law enforcement officers and were believed to be hatching a terrorist plot to set off explosives at New York City landmarks.
May-15	USA	Police shot and killed a terror suspect in Boston after he charged at authorities with a knife. The individual was inspired by ISIS, in touch with overseas operatives, and believed to be moving forward with an imminent plot to behead law enforcement officers.
Apr-15	Saudi Arabia	Two Arizona men were killed while attempting to carry out a terrorist attack against a Prophet Mohammad “cartoon drawing” event in Garland, Texas. At least one of the attackers was in contact with a prominent ISIS operative overseas.
Apr-15	France	Saudi authorities arrested three individuals planning a car bomb attack against the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh. The individuals were part of a larger ISIS cell disrupted by authorities.
Apr-15	Australia	An Algerian man living in France was arrested after accidentally shooting himself in the leg, leading police to discover his plans to conduct a jihadist shooting attack against French churches. The suspect was in touch with at least one ISIS operative in Syria.
Apr-15	USA	Five Australian teens were arrested while planning a terrorist attack at a veteran’s day event in Melbourne. At least one of the suspects received instructions from an ISIS operative in Syria.
Apr-15	Spain	An Ohio resident with ties to ISIS--and who returned from fighting with jihadist groups in Syria--was arrested for plotting a terrorist attack against a U.S. military base.

Apr-15	USA	Authorities detained 10 individuals from an ISIS-linked group planning possible terrorist acts, including kidnappings, executions, attacks on Jewish shops, and attacks on public buildings.
Apr-15	USA	A Kansas man was arrested for plotting a suicide car bomb attack against Fort Riley military base in the name of ISIS.
Mar-15	USA	Two ISIS-inspired women in New York were arrested after allegedly planning to build and detonate a homemade bomb in the United States. The suspects were reportedly in touch with terrorists overseas.
Mar-15	USA	A former U.S. National Guardsman and his cousin were arrested for an ISIS-inspired plot to conduct a terrorist attack against a military base in Illinois.
Mar-15	Tunisia	A group claiming to be ISIS' hacking division released a hit list that included the names of over 100 U.S. military service members. Terrorists shot and killed 21 people, primarily European tourists, at the National Bardo Museum in Tunisia. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.
Mar-15	Spain	Authorities arrested four individuals linked to ISIS militants for plotting a possible terrorist attack on Spanish soil.
Mar-15	Spain	Authorities arrested multiple individuals who were part of an ISIS-linked terrorist cell believed to be preparing for attacks in Spain and beyond. The group's activities were reportedly coordinated by an ISIS operative in Syria.
Mar-15	Canada	An ISIS-inspired Pakistani man was arrested for plotting to launch a terrorist attack against the U.S. consulate and other buildings in the financial district in Toronto using remote-controlled explosives.
Feb-15	Denmark	A gunman who pledged allegiance to ISIS opened fire at an event at a Copenhagen cultural center, killing one civilian and wounding three police officers. Authorities suspect the gunman was targeting Lars Vilks, a cartoonist who had caricatured the Prophet Muhammad; the suspect also shot and killed a security guard outside a synagogue later that evening.
Feb-15	Australia	Australian police arrested two men for planning a public beheading in Sydney after discovering ISIS propaganda in their possession and a video detailing their plot.

Feb-15	France	Two French soldiers were wounded in a knife attack outside a Jewish community center in Nice, France by a suspect recently expelled from Turkey under suspicion of heading to join ISIS.
Jan-15	Libya	ISIS operatives detonated a car bomb at the Corinthia Hotel, a known residence of Westerners in Tripoli, and gunmen stormed the facility killing nine, including an American security contractor and a French national. The group said the attack was in retaliation against the U.S. capture of a Libyan jihadist.
Jan-15	Turkey	Turkish authorities uncovered a plot by ISIS to attack U.S., French, and Belgian consulates in Istanbul.
Jan-15	Belgium	Police killed two suspected ISIS operatives, who had recently returned from Syria and were believed to be plotting a major terrorist attack. A third suspect escaped.
Jan-15	USA	The FBI arrested an Ohio man inspired by ISIS for plotting a pipe bomb and shooting attack against the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.
Jan-15	France	An associate of the Charlie Hebdo attackers in Paris held 15 hostages in a kosher market, killing four. The suspect pledged allegiance to ISIS and is also suspected of having killed a French police officer.
Dec-14	UK	UK authorities removed Royal guards from their public positions guarding the Queen's palace and place them in more secure positions after uncovering a potential ISIS-linked plot targeting the guards.
Dec-14	France	French police shot and killed a knife-wielding suspect who attacked and wounded three officers. The suspect had recently made ISIS-linked posts on social media.
Dec-14	Australia	An Australian ISIS supporter took 17 people hostage in a downtown Sydney cafe. Three people died when police stormed the facility, including the suspect.
Dec-14	Abu Dhabi, UAE	Police arrested a woman allegedly inspired by ISIS and other jihadist groups for stabbing and killing an American teacher in a shopping mall bathroom.

Nov-14	Saudi Arabia	ISIS-linked militants reportedly shot and wounded a Danish citizen in Riyadh. A video claiming credit was later released by the group's supporters.
Nov-14	Egypt	ISIS' Egyptian branch took credit for the murder of a U.S. oil worker in Egypt.
Nov-14	UK	UK police arrested four ISIS-linked individuals on suspicions of planning a terrorist attack involving public beheadings timed during Britain's Remembrance Day events. One suspect was later released.
Oct-14	Denmark	A Danish teenager radicalized by online ISIS propaganda was arrested after stabbing her mother to death, along with a 29-year-old Iraqi accomplice.
Oct-14	USA	A hatchet-wielding man attacked four police officers in New York City, wounding two. Police killed the attacker, who was believed to have been inspired by ISIS and other jihadist groups.
Oct-14	Canada	Canadian police killed a terrorist who shot a soldier at Canada's National War Memorial and then proceeded to attack the Canadian Parliament. The suspect was suspected to have been influenced by ISIS and other jihadist propaganda and reportedly sought to travel to Libya and Syria.
Oct-14	Canada	An ISIS-inspired extremist struck two Canadian soldiers with his car in Quebec, killing one and wounding the other. The suspect was killed by police in pursuit.
Sep-14	Algeria	A French citizen hiking in Algeria was kidnapped and beheaded by an ISIS affiliate, which later released a video claiming credit.
Sep-14	Australia	An ISIS-inspired teen stabbed two police officers in Australia after reportedly having his passport revoked over concerns he would try to join the group.
Sep-14	Australia	Australian police arrested more than a dozen individuals in counterterrorism raids, including one who was reportedly in touch with an operative in Syria about planning a public beheading in Sydney.
May-14	USA	The FBI arrested an upstate New York man who sought to support ISIS and plotted to shoot and kill members of the U.S. military who returned from Iraq.

May-14	Belgium	Four civilians were killed in a terrorist attack at a Jewish museum in Brussels. The shooting was perpetrated by an ISIS supporter who had returned from Syria in 2013.
Mar-14	Switzerland	Swiss authorities arrested four Iraqis suspected of planning a terrorist attack in Europe in the name of ISIS. The suspects had sought to purchase toxic gas and explosives for their attack.
Feb-14		Police in the French Riviera arrested a French-Algerian extremist who fought with ISIS in Syria and was believed to be planning a terrorist attack in the country using explosives.