

Spotlight on the Global Jihad (February 26 – March 4, 2015)



Main events of the week¹

- In early March 2015, the Iraqi Army launched an offensive to recapture the important city of Tikrit (in the past, Saddam Hussein's stronghold), north of Baghdad. Battles are still raging.
- According to US Army sources, the attack on the city of Mosul, scheduled for the spring of 2015, has been postponed for several months (to the autumn). In the meantime, in light of the media reports, ISIS has begun to prepare for the expected attack on Mosul (by blowing up the runway at Mosul Airport and booby-trapping bridges in the city).
- In the province of Al-Hasakah, northeastern Syria, Kurdish forces (YPG) attacked ISIS forces in the area of Qamishli. In the clashes in the province, ISIS took control of a few Assyrian Christian villages, abducted about 90 people, burned down a church and damaged Assyrian cultural assets. The UN Security Council and the United States strongly condemned the attacks on the Assyrians.
- ISIS supporters recently threatened the lives of the Twitter network operators. The threats were made in response to the closure of Twitter accounts directly affiliated with ISIS. Blocking ISIS on Twitter and other social networks harms its media capabilities and hence ISIS's threat and attempted intimidation of Twitter's operators.

¹ The weekly publication Spotlight on Global Jihad monitors developments among ISIS and global jihad organizations in Syria and Iraq and in the Middle East as a whole. The publication also monitors terrorist activities around the world, directed, supported or inspired by the global jihad organizations in the Middle East.

The international campaign against ISIS

US and coalition airstrikes

■ During the week, US and coalition forces continued their airstrikes against ISIS targets. Several dozen airstrikes were carried out in Syria and Iraq. Following are the locations of the airstrikes (CENTCOM website):

- **In Syria**, airstrikes were carried out in the areas of Al-Hasakah, Kobani (Ayn al-Arab) and Deir al-Zor. The airstrikes were carried out against ISIS operatives, vehicles, oil production facilities, tanks and more.
- **In Iraq**, airstrikes were carried out in the areas of Al-Assad, Fallujah, Mosul, Sinjar, Hit, Ramadi and Al-Qaim. The airstrikes were carried out against ISIS operatives, buildings, weapons, warehouses, storage sites and more.

■ According to US Army sources, **the attack on the city of Mosul, scheduled for the spring of 2015, has been postponed for several months.** This is because the Iraqi military forces have not yet reached a level of competence that will enable them to successfully carry out the attack. According to the sources, the attack will probably take place in the **autumn of 2015.** Until then, US airstrikes will continue, in order to isolate Mosul and weaken the ISIS operatives' hold of the city (Fox News, March 1, 2015).



**Airstrike against an ISIS target in the area of Mosul
(Iraq's Defense Ministry website, February 28, 2015)**

Presentation of the threat posed by ISIS at a US Senate hearing

■ At a hearing before the US Senate Select Armed Services Committee, James Clapper, Director of National Intelligence (DNI), presented his perception of the assessment of the threats posed to the United States at the international level (Washington Times, Wall Street Journal, February 26, 2015). Following are the main points that he made with regard to ISIS and the global jihad:

- ISIS recently had a financial problem that forced it to cut the salaries of its operatives. He estimates the number of ISIS operatives at 20,000-32,000.
- ISIS regularly makes sophisticated use of social networks to persuade operatives to carry out terrorist activities around the world.
- Some 180 Americans have attempted to reach Syria in recent years to fight in the ranks of global jihad organizations. Many of them were unable to reach Syria, and some of those who did manage have since returned home. To date, none of those who returned has been found to be involved in terrorist activity [in the US].
- **Libya** is the most worrisome country in the war on terrorism. ISIS has recently begun to see Libya as fertile ground for establishing a presence and recruiting operatives. The United States must collaborate with European countries in monitoring the Islamic and jihadi groups that are establishing a presence there.

Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (GOOGLE EARTH)

Deir al-Zor

- US-led coalition forces continue their airstrikes on ISIS targets in the province of Deir al-Zor. Concurrently, fighting continues between soldiers of the Assad regime and ISIS operatives in the area surrounding the Deir al-Zor military airfield (Al-Durar al-Shamiya, March 2, 2015).
- ISIS operatives continued to carry out attacks against the Al-Shueitat tribe in the province of Deir al-Zor and to take over their homes (All4Syria, February 26, 2015). There are ongoing violent conflicts between ISIS and the Al-Shueitat tribe, in light of the tribe's opposition to ISIS and its cooperation with the Syrian regime.

Homs province

- During the week, it was reported that ISIS operatives had had a number of tactical successes in the province:
 - ISIS operatives managed to take over three checkpoints of the Syrian security forces in the **area of Palmyra**. Thirty members of the security forces were killed, including officers. In addition, large quantities of weapons and ammunition fell into the hands of ISIS operatives (Siraj Press, February 27, 2015).

- **In Jabal al-Shumariya (in the southern part of the Homs province)**, ISIS operatives took over a number of outposts of the Syrian security forces. Several dozen members of the security forces were killed, and the operatives also took control of weapons (including artillery and anti-tank missiles) and a large quantity of rockets and ammunition (All4Syria, February 27, 2015).
- After three days of battles against the Syrian security forces, ISIS operatives managed to break into and take control of **the headquarters of the Arak gas company in the eastern part of the Homs province** (Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, February 28, 2015).

The area of Kobani (Ayn al-Arab)

- It was recently reported that several thousands of displaced persons had returned to the city after spending a few months in Turkey, due to the fighting in the city between Kurdish forces and ISIS (Al-Durar al-Shamiya, February 28, 2015). However, most of the city is still devoid of its residents, who fled when fighting began (most of them to Turkey).

The area of Al-Qalamoun (the Syrian-Lebanese border)

- **There are internal disputes among ISIS operatives in the area of Al-Qalamoun**, which were manifested in the murder of **Abu Aisha al-Baniasi**, the emir of ISIS's Al-Qalamoun area. According to Lebanese media reports, following the assassination of the emir, **Abu Muwaffaq Abdallah** was appointed as ISIS's new emir in Al-Qalamoun. Abu Muwaffaq Abdallah is of Syrian descent. He formerly served as a commander in a Syrian rebel militia by the name of the Al-Farouq Battalions (an Islamic military framework that operated in cooperation with the Al-Nusra Front). He joined ISIS in the Lebanese Sunni town of Aرسال (Al-Nashra, Al-Akhbar, February 25, 2015).
- **The Lebanese Army carried out a preemptive military operation east of Ras Baalbek** (northern Bekaa Valley, north of the Sunni town of Aرسال). This was a preventive measure against attacks by global jihad organizations in the region. In the operation, a number of positions were captured and five Lebanese soldiers were wounded (News.antiwar.com, February 26, 2015).

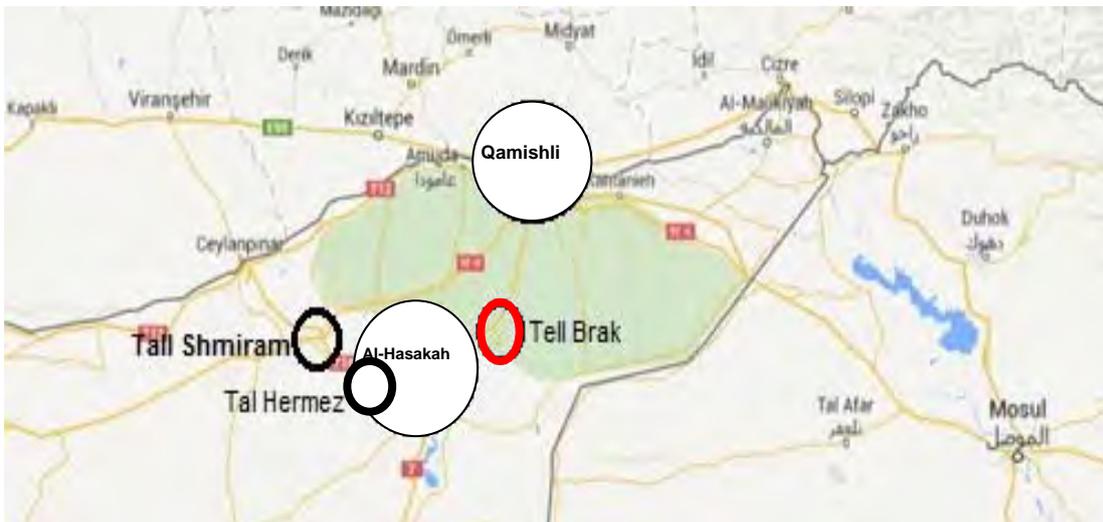


ISIS operatives fighting the Lebanese Army in Ras Baalbek, in the northern Bekaa Valley (ISIS-affiliated website, February 28, 2015)

Al-Hasakah province

- The city of Al-Hasakah, in northeastern Syria, is controlled by forces of the Assad regime and by Kurdish forces (YPG), while the southern part of the province of Al-Hasakah is controlled by ISIS (Al-Arabiya TV, February 25, 2015). During the past week, Kurdish YPG forces began an extensive attack on the town of **Tell Brak** (ISIS's last stronghold south of Qamishli, see map). The attack was carried out on three routes, and heavy fighting took place in the area (Al-Mayadeen, February 28, 2015). Dozens of ISIS operatives were reportedly killed in the fighting (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), February 28, 2015) .
- The local commanders of the Kurdish forces claimed that with the aid of local tribespeople, together with the air power of the coalition forces, they managed to regain control of more than thirty villages between Al-Hasakah and Qamishli (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, March 3, 2015).
- In the battles that took place between ISIS and the Kurdish YPG forces in the Al-Hasakah province, **ISIS** reportedly **took control of several Assyrian villages near Al-Hasakah** (Tal Shmiram and Tal Hermez). ISIS abducted 90 Assyrian Christians and burned down an Assyrian church. It is not yet known what happened to the hostages. **International bodies have condemned the attacks on the Assyrians:** The UN Security Council issued a statement condemning ISIS's acts of terrorism, particularly harming civilians and damaging antiques and ancient manuscripts of the Assyrian community (UN website, February 26, 2015). **The US** announced that it condemns ISIS's attacks on Christian villages in northeastern Syria and the burning

of houses and churches, the eviction of thousands of residents from their homes and the abduction of Christian civilians (White House website, February 25, 2015).



Al-Hasakah province, where fighting took place between ISIS and the Kurdish forces (YPG). The black circles are Assyrian Christian villages that have fallen into the hands of ISIS. The red circle is the town of Tell Brak, where the Kurdish forces attacked ISIS.

Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (GOOGLE EARTH)

The city of Mosul

■ ISIS is concerned about the expected attack to recapture of the city of Mosul, which US officials publicly announced would take place in the spring of 2015 (according to another version, the attack has been postponed until the autumn). ISIS operatives in Mosul have recently begun to prepare for such an attack:

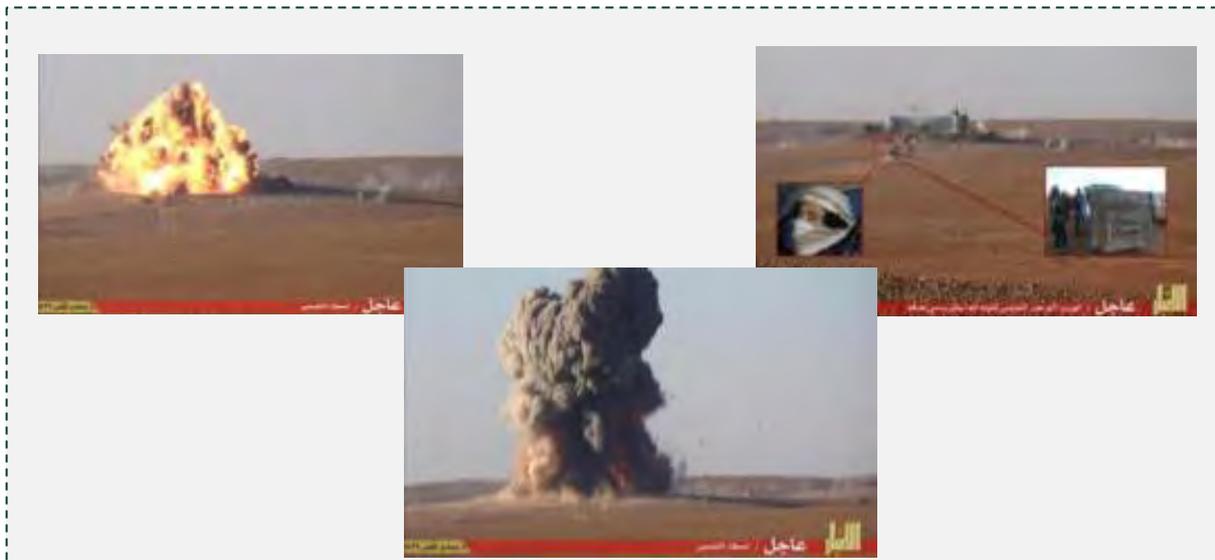
- **On February 27, 2015**, ISIS blew up the runway at the airport of the city of Mosul. **In addition**, ISIS operatives **used explosives** to booby-trap bridges in the city (Ilaf, February 27, 2015).
- **ISIS is trying to buy the loyalty of local residents**: reportedly, ISIS distributes grants worth USD 400 to USD 800 to poor residents in Mosul. In addition, ISIS operatives distribute food and help those in need of medical care (Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, February 27, 2015).

Nineveh province

■ A source in the city of Mosul said that over the past few days, ISIS operatives transferred the hostages from Al-Ahdath Prison, in the city of Nineveh, to Syria. The transfer was carried out in civilian cars. According to reports, 39 of the hostages are **Indian nationals**, who worked in Mosul at a company providing engineering and electronics services, and the other 20 hostages are Asian, African and European (Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, February 27, 2015).

Al-Anbar province

■ On February 27, 2015, a car bomb was detonated in an **Iraqi Army outpost near the border with Saudi Arabia**. The front of the car had been bulletproofed with metal plates to prevent damage from small-arms fire. The car bomb attack was carried out by a suicide bomber codenamed **Abu Omar al-Tunisi** (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, February 27, 2015).



Car bomb attack against an Iraqi Army position (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, February 27, 2015)

Al-Furat province (north of Al-Anbar province)

■ On March 1, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated website posted a number of photos from the Al-Furat province, with the caption, “The solidarity of the tribes of Iraq and Syria with the Islamic Caliphate.” The photos show ISIS operatives distributing gifts to the heads of the tribes in the area (independent ISIS-affiliated website, March 1, 2015). **The**

distribution of gifts was part of ISIS's efforts to increase the tribespeople's loyalty and to recruit additional tribespeople into its ranks in western Iraq.



Left: Notables in the Al-Furat province whose support ISIS is seeking. Right: The gifts distributed to the heads of the tribes (ISIS-affiliated website, March 1, 2015)

Salah al-Din province

- On March 2, 2015, the Iraqi Army began an offensive to recapture the city of Tikrit, north of Baghdad. The fighting took place around the city and, according to reports, ISIS suffered a major defeat (Al-Arabiya TV, March 1, 2015; France 24, March 2, 2015). Battles in the area are still ongoing.
- An Iraqi Twitter account holder posted a photo of **Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards**, claiming that it was taken in the area of Tikrit. He claims that Soleimani came to the region to manage the defense of the city of Tikrit against the attack by ISIS (Iraqi Twitter account, February 28, 2015).



Left: Photo of Qassem Soleimani allegedly taken near Tikrit. The man next to him is probably a commander in one of the local militias (Iraqi Twitter account, February 28, 2015). Right: Iraqi military forces in the area of Tikrit (Al-Arabiya TV, March 1, 2015).

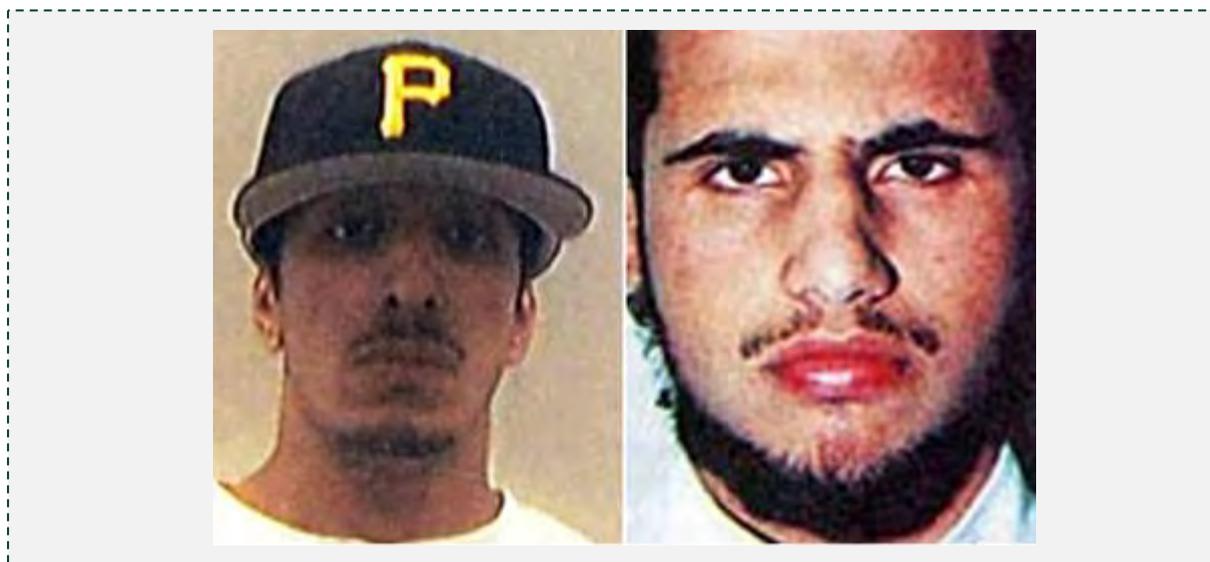
- On February 28, 2015, it was reported that 11 members of one of the Shiite militias in the city of Samarra were killed and dozens were wounded. The deaths and injuries were result of **three suicide bombings** carried out by means of truck bombs (Russia al-Youm, February 28, 2015). The city is defended by the Iraqi Army and Shiite militias.

The conduct of the Islamic State

The identity of Jihadi John, the British executioner, was revealed

- The British executioner codenamed Jihadi John has been identified as **Mohammed Emwazi**, the son of a middle-class family in London originally from Kuwait. Emwazi has appeared in ISIS videos beheading a number of hostages, mainly Western journalists.
- Mohammed Emwazi, 26, was born in Kuwait and came to Britain in 1994. In 2009, he graduated from the University of Westminster (BBC, February 26, 2015). He was a member of a close-knit group of jihadists that was formed during his high school studies. Some of the members of the group were trained in Somalia. According to information disclosed about him, Mohammed Emwazi was an operative in a network headed by two men suspected of involvement in the terrorist attacks on the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. In 2013, Emwazi tried to reach Kuwait but the Kuwaitis

denied him entry. Shortly afterward, he went to Turkey. Four months later, police informed his family that he had crossed the border into Syria and joined ISIS (Telegraph, March 1, 2015).



Jihadi John (photos from his student days at the University of Westminster)

Destruction of historical relics by ISIS

■ The Islamic State recently began an **unprecedented campaign to destroy ancient historical relics in the areas under its control in northern Iraq and northeastern Syria**. As part of its campaign, ISIS published a video showing its operatives **entering the a museum in the city of Mosul and using hammers to smash statues from the time of the Assyrian Empire found in archaeological excavations**. Sennacherib's Palace was among the historical relics that were destroyed. ISIS operatives also burned down Mosul's library, where there were **thousands of history books and manuscripts** (www.taraf.com.tr, February 25, 2015). In Syria, ISIS operatives destroyed churches and stole ancient manuscripts belonging to the Assyrian community.

In the past two decades, following the rise of Al-Qaeda and additional Salafist-jihadi organizations, graves have been destroyed and Moslem and non-Moslem statues have been smashed in various places around the world. Thus, for example, a huge statue of Buddha was destroyed by the Taliban in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, in 2001 (the tomb was restored only a decade later); in 2012, Muslim cultural institutions were destroyed by Ansar Dine in Timbuktu, in the West African nation of Mali; and holy graves (mainly of Sufis) were destroyed by Islamist extremists in Libya in 2012 (not far from the capital Tripoli and in Misrata). ISIS is continuing this tradition of destroying graves and smashing statues. This was clearly evident in its conquests in Iraq in the summer of 2014. In this context, ISIS destroyed the Tomb of Jonah and the Tomb of Daniel, both in the area of Mosul, and the grave of the Sufi Sheikh Ibrahim in the Nineveh province. In addition, ancient statues and cultural treasures in Iraq dating from the beginnings of human civilization were smashed. ISIS is now continuing to do so even more intensely. This phenomenon is not new. It has historical Islamic roots attributed to a statement by the Prophet Muhammad.

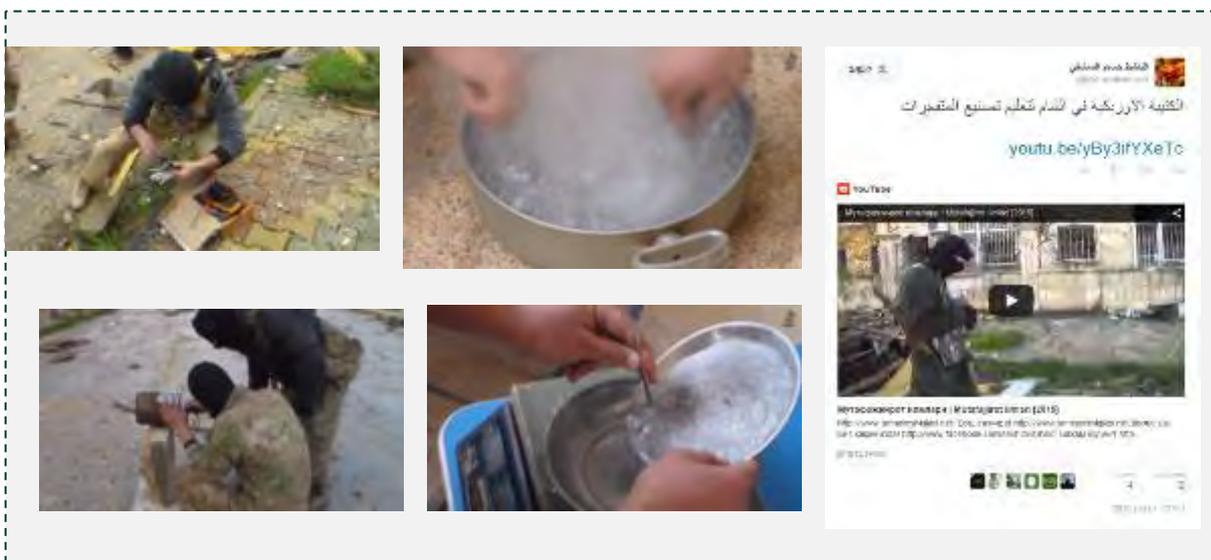
ISIS's funding sources

- According to the Iraqi agriculture minister, Islamic State operatives have stolen billions of dollars from the agricultural banks in the provinces that they have captured: Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Al-Anbar, Diyala, and Kirkuk. ISIS has also reportedly stolen agricultural vehicles and the contents of agricultural warehouses in these provinces (Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, February 26, 2015).
- Commenting on the financial condition of ISIS at a hearing before the US Senate Select Armed Services Committee, James Clapper, Director of National Intelligence (DNI), said that **ISIS has recently had financial problems. He said that of late, ISIS has been forced to cut the salaries of its operatives** (Wall Street Journal, February 26, 2015).

ISIS is considered a wealthy organization, having taken control of government infrastructures in Iraq and Syria, including oil fields, in the areas that it has occupied. In addition, ISIS has other sources of income, such as various forms of crime (extortion, collecting ransom money in return for the release of hostages, trading in antiques), receiving donations and collecting taxes from the population under its control. ISIS's profits were recently estimated at several million dollars per day. The airstrikes by US and coalition forces on oil infrastructures has compromised ISIS's ability to refine and market petroleum products, **significantly reducing its main source of revenues from the exportation of fuel**. However, ISIS is still a wealthy terrorist organization (compared to other terrorist organizations), with the ability to allocate resources for various purposes, including combat, military buildup, maintaining an administration in the areas of the Islamic State and assisting the terrorist organizations that pledge allegiance to it.

Instructions for making homemade IEDs

■ On March 1, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account shared a video on YouTube entitled “**The Uzbek Battalion in Al-Sham (Syria) - for learning how to manufacture explosives.**” The video is a step-by-step demonstration on how to make IEDs at home, designed to injure forces and damage vehicles (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account; YouTube, March 1, 2015).



Left: Step-by-step instructions for making IEDs. Right: The video that was distributed (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account; YouTube, March 1, 2015)

Call for fighters and professionals to join the ranks of ISIS

■ On February 28, 2015, a Twitter account holder posted a want ad on behalf of ISIS. According to the ad, the Islamic State is in **need of fighters and experts in all fields of engineering, medicine and other professions**. Successful applicants **were promised a monthly salary and respectable living quarters**. The writer of the want ad asked Twitter account holders to share it (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, February 28, 2015).



Islamic State want ad (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, February 28, 2015)

Brutal application of Sharia law

■ ISIS continues with the brutal imposition of Sharia law in the areas under its control:

- **On February 27, 2015**, photos were published showing a man accused of sodomy being thrown off the roof of a building. His body was then stoned by the crowd (ISIS-affiliated website, February 27 and 28, 2015).
- **On February 28, 2015**, photos were published showing two men accused of theft having their right hand cut off in the province of Nineveh, in northwestern Iraq. Their hands were cut off by ISIS operatives before a large crowd (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account; ISIS-affiliated website, February 28, 2015).

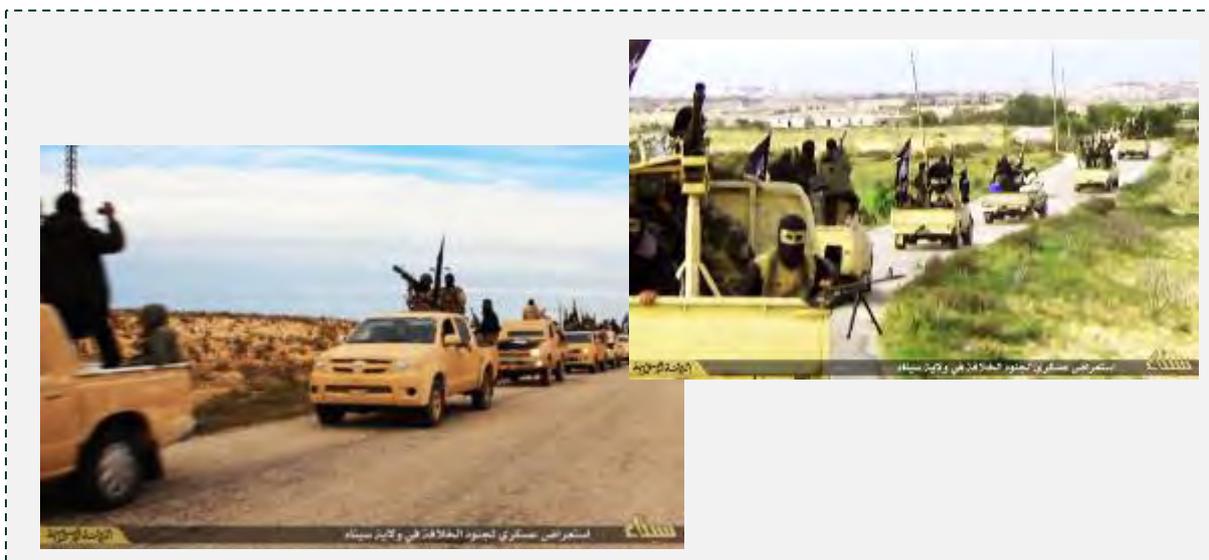


Left: Man accused of theft having his hand cut off (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account; ISIS-affiliated website, February 28, 2015) Right: Man accused of sodomy being thrown off the roof of a building (ISIS-affiliated website, February 27, 2015)

Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

Counterterrorist activity by the Egyptian security forces

- Egyptian security forces carried out a series of counterterrorist activities in the Sinai Peninsula, including helicopter airstrikes against ISIS targets in the north of the peninsula (Sky News, March 1, 2015). Security sources reported that during the activities, **several dozen jihadi operatives were killed**, a few operatives were arrested, equipment was destroyed and weapons belonging to ISIS were found (Al-Youm al-Sabea, February 26, 2015).
- The body of water department head **Ibrahim Awad Abu Riyash**, who was shot in the head, was found in Sheikh Zuweid. The investigation revealed that Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (i.e., the ISIS branch in the Sinai Peninsula) was behind the murder and that Abu Riyash was murdered four days after being abducted (Al-Youm al-Sabea, March 1, 2015). Terrorist operatives in jeeps drove to various villages in the Sheikh Zuweid region and started shooting in the air. Eyewitnesses said that the operatives were waving ISIS flags (Al-Youm al-Sabea, February 27, 2015).



ISIS operatives making their presence felt in the Sinai Peninsula (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account; ISIS-affiliated website, March 1, 2015)

Counterterrorism and preventive activity

The establishment of a task force to combat terrorism

■ **Michael McCaul**, Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, announced the establishment of a committee called the “**Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel**”. The Task Force will comprise five Republican and three Democratic representatives. The purpose of the Task Force is to monitor the government’s efforts to prevent “violent extremism” (i.e., radical Islam) from entering the United States and to prevent travel by foreign fighters between countries. The Task Force will meet with government agencies, top officials and outside experts in order to reach solutions and formulate legislative recommendations to eradicate the threat (US Department of State website, February 25, 2015).

Statement about foreign fighters by the international coalition coordinator

■ **John Allen**, the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, said that foreign fighters who went to Syria and Iraq should be seen as a threat to national security. This is because they are liable to carry out terrorist attacks like those carried out in Paris, Sydney, Brussels, Ottawa and Copenhagen. He said that abilities must be developed to reach all those thousands of young men and women who may try to carry out attacks on their return to their home countries.

■ John Allen noted that the members of the coalition had recently begun to prepare for the more coordinated and planned actions that are necessary in order to address the threat of the foreign fighters. According to Allen, to date, more than 12 countries have changed their legislation and penalties to make it harder for the fighters to travel to fight in Syria and Iraq. However, despite the restrictions imposed on foreign fighters, they continue to travel to Syria and Iraq. Therefore, countries should continue to cooperate with each other at borders and with regard to customs proceedings, and should promote greater international cooperation (US Department of State website, March 2, 2015).

A new law in Austria regarding the funding of Islamic institutions

■ **Austria's parliament has passed legislation banning foreign funding of Islamic organizations, in an attempt to limit the spread of radical Islam.** The law bans the foreign funding of imams and mosques, including from Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The law also requires 450 Islamic organizations in Austria to display a "positive attitude towards society and the state" in order to continue to obtain official approval for their activities. According to the initiators of the legislation, the law is designed to prohibit countries and organizations from influencing Muslims in Austria through their funding (Newsweek, March 1, 2015).

Young British woman accused of funding terrorism

■ In Britain, **Hana Khan**, a 23-year-old British woman, was convicted of "funding terrorism". The young woman sent GBP 1,000 to her boyfriend, who is fighting alongside global jihad organizations in Syria. According to the prosecution, she supported her boyfriend financially even though she knew that he had joined a jihadi organization (Evening Standard, February 23, 2015).

Arrest of three young men in Brooklyn

■ FBI agents arrested three residents of Brooklyn on suspicion of attempting to transfer material aid to ISIS. Two of them, one 24 and the other 19, planned to go to Syria to join ISIS. The third, a US citizen from Uzbekistan, 30, was arrested on suspicion of running a network of local supporters to aid in financing the travel of the other two. The two men bought tickets to Turkey in February and were arrested in March, before making the trip (Time.com, February 26, 2015).

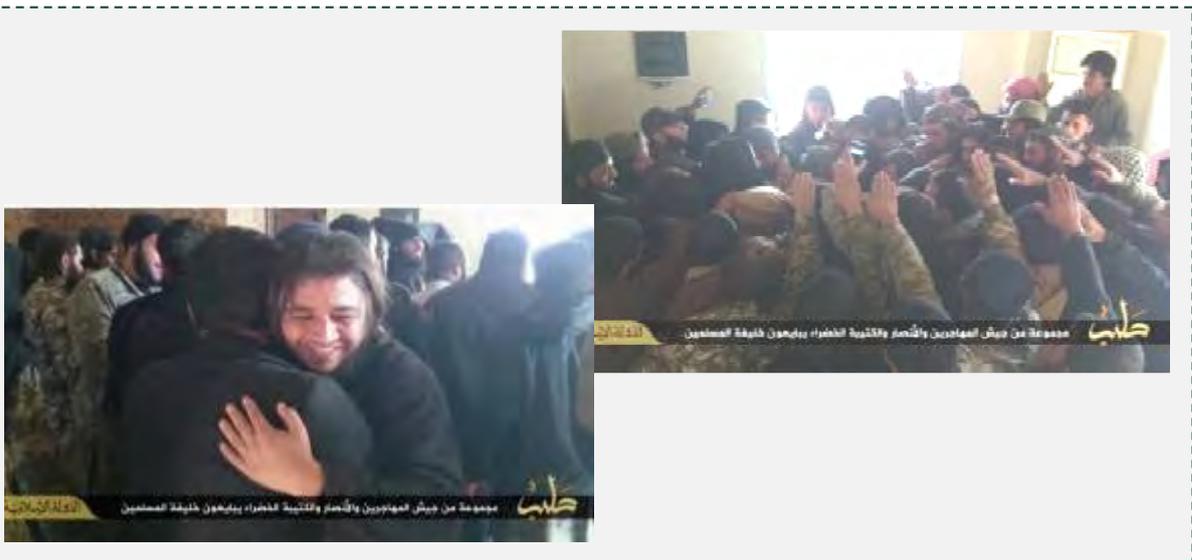
The battle for hearts and minds conducted by ISIS

Tape justifying the burning of the Jordanian pilot

■ ISIS's Al-I'tisam Media Foundation recently published a tape which provides explanations about the burning of the Jordanian pilot (apparently in response to criticism leveled at ISIS). According to the speaker on the tape, this was “a legitimate retribution for a crime”. According to the speaker on the tape, the first caliphs in Islam used to burn their enemies and therefore, it is legitimate. The speaker stressed that the burning was based on the principle of blood revenge, since the pilot came to them and flew in the skies of their country in order to kill them (Al-Minbar al-I'lami al-Jihadi forum, February 25, 2015).

Publication of the pledge of allegiance by Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar operatives

■ ISIS posted photos which they claim document the pledge of allegiance to ISIS by a few dozen operatives of a military framework by the name of Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar in the Aleppo province; some of these operatives are from the **Caucasus region** (<http://justpaste.it> file sharing website, March 2, 2015).



Pledge of allegiance to ISIS by Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar operatives from the Aleppo province (<http://justpaste.it> file sharing website, March 2, 2015)

Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar is a jihadi Islamic military framework whose hard core consists of fighters from Chechnya and the Caucasus. This framework is currently affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front, the Al-Qaeda branch in Syria. The Chechen operatives include highly motivated fighters with combat experience who participated in the uprising against Russia in the 1990s. Several Chechen operatives who joined Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar attained senior command ranks and some senior commanders were killed in battle. The head of this military framework in its various incarnations (since its establishment in March 2012) was a senior operative from Chechnya codenamed **Omar the Chechen**, until he defected from the unit and joined the ranks of ISIS in early 2014. **This reflects the continuation of the phenomenon of operatives defecting from this framework to join the ranks of ISIS.**

Threats against the operators of Twitter

■ **ISIS supporters have threatened the lives of Twitter employees, including co-founder Jack Dorsey specifically.** They claim that the reason for the threats is the network's practice of blocking accounts of people involved with ISIS. A post in Arabic uploaded to a file sharing website says **that the virtual war waged by Twitter against ISIS will lead to a real war against it.** They threatened that the **Twitter operators "have become a target for the soldiers of the Caliphate and their supporters"**. Twitter's terms of service forbid users from uploading posts containing direct threats of violence. Therefore, the company has followed YouTube in proactively shutting down ISIS-related Twitter accounts, with the aid of the UK's Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (The Guardian, March 2, 2015).



The threat against the operators of Twitter (<http://justpaste.it/jot6>, March 2, 2015)

ISIS makes sophisticated use of the Internet, especially social networks, to convey messages targeted to specific audiences. From ISIS's perspective, Western countries and Muslim communities in the West are important target audiences. Extensive media materials distributed by ISIS to this target audience are designed to deter the West from attacking ISIS; increase its strength; arouse fear and terror among the Western public opinion; spread the jihadi ideology of ISIS among Muslim communities in the West; and encourage Moslems in the West to join the ranks of ISIS and carry out terrorist attacks in their native countries. To date, ISIS's media strategy has been highly successful. **Blocking ISIS on Twitter and additional social networks may harm its media capabilities and hence ISIS's threat and attempted intimidation of Twitter's operators.**

ISIS's new official website

■ On February 28, 2015, a jihadi forum reported that **ISIS's new website has gone live**. The website address is <http://www.is-tube.cf>. Many ISIS videos have been uploaded to the website, which is divided into sections according to the media foundation that produced them. The website includes live footage from ISIS's various provinces (at present, there is no content from some of the provinces, and the website is apparently still under construction). In addition, the website includes audio clips from ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, radio bulletins and newsflashes (jihadi forum; official ISIS website, February 28, 2015).



The new website of ISIS, a terrorist organization which is investing considerable effort and resources in developing its propaganda machine