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NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY
CENTRAL SECURITY SERVICE
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755-6000

FOIA Case: 84687A
25 April 2017

JOHN GREENEWALD
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Greenewald:

This is an interim response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request of 14 June 2016 for Intellipedia pages on Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and/or ISIL and/or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and/or ISIS, as well as search results pages. A copy of your request is enclosed. In our initial response to you, dated 15 June 2016, we informed you that this request was assigned case number 84687. For purposes of this request and based on the information you provided in your letter, you are considered an "all other" requester. As such, you are allowed 2 hours of search and 100 pages of duplication at no cost to you. There are no assessable fees for this request.

For your information, NSA provides a service of common concern for the Intelligence Community (IC) by serving as the executive agent for Intelink. As such, NSA provides technical services that enable users to access and share information with peers and stakeholders across the IC and DoD. Intellipedia pages are living documents that may be originated by any user organization, and any user organization may contribute to or edit pages after their origination. Intellipedia pages should not be considered the final, coordinated position of the IC on any particular subject. The views and opinions of authors do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Government.

Your request has been processed under the FOIA. We conducted a search of all three levels of Intellipedia, and located documents that are responsive to your request. One of the documents had been reviewed for a previous case and is enclosed. Two additional documents that are responsive to your request are also enclosed, for a total of 12 pages. Certain information, however, has been deleted from the documents.

This Agency is authorized by statute to protect certain information concerning its activities (in this case, internal URLs), as well as the names of its employees. Such information is exempt from disclosure pursuant to the third exemption of the FOIA, which provides for the withholding of information specifically protected from disclosure by statute. The specific statute applicable in this case is Section 6, Public Law 86-36 (50 U.S. Code 3605). We have determined that such information exists in this material, and we have excised it accordingly.

In addition, personal information regarding individuals has been deleted from the enclosure in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552 (b)(6). This exemption protects from disclosure information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. In balancing the public interest for the information you request against the privacy interests involved, we have determined that the privacy interests sufficiently satisfy the requirements for the application of the (b)(6) exemption.

Since these deletions may be construed as a partial denial of your request, you are hereby advised of this Agency's appeal procedures. If you decide to appeal, you should do so in the manner outlined below.

- The appeal must be in writing and addressed to:

NSA/CSS FOIA/PA Appeal Authority (P132),
National Security Agency
9800 Savage Road STE 6932
Fort George G. Meade, MD 20755-6932

- It must be postmarked no later than 90 calendar days of the date of this letter. Appeals received after 90 days will not be addressed
- Please include the case number provided above.
- Please describe with sufficient detail why you believe the denial of requested information was unwarranted.
- NSA will endeavor to respond within 20 working days of receiving your appeal, absent any unusual circumstances.

For further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request, you may contact our FOIA Public Liaison at foialo@nsa.gov. You may also contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. OGIS contact information is: Office of Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, MD 20740-6001; e-mail: ogis@nara.gov; main: 202-741-5770; toll free: 1-877-684-6448; or fax: 202-741-5769.

Please be advised that we continue to work on your request and the review of additional documents responsive to your request continues; they will be provided to you as they are completed.

Finally, regarding your request for a copy of the search results pages, please be advised that the FOIA only requires that this Agency search for records that already exist at the time the search is conducted. Since no search results page existed for this case when it was received, we are not obligated to fulfill this portion of your request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul H. Chapman". Below the main signature, the word "for" is written in a smaller, simpler cursive script.

JOHN R. CHAPMAN
Chief, FOIA/PA Office
NSA Initial Denial Authority

Encls:
a/s

From: donotreply@nsa.gov
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2016 5:18 AM
To: donotreply@nsa.gov
Subject: FOIA Request (Web form submission)

Title: Mr.

Full Name: John Greenewald

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Country: United States of America

Home Phone: [REDACTED]

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Records Requested: To whom it may concern,

This is a non-commercial request made under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 5 U.S.C. S 552. My FOIA requester status as a "representative of the news media" however due to your agency's denial of this status, I hereby submit this request as an "All other" requester.

I prefer electronic delivery of the requested material either via email to john@greenewald.com or via CD-ROM or DVD via postal mail. Please contact me should this FOIA request should incur a charge.

I respectfully request a copy of the Intellipedia entry (from all three Wikis that make up the Intellipedia) for the following entry(s) (Or whatever similar topic may pertain if it is slightly worded differently):

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

and/or

ISIL

and/or

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

and/or

ISIS

I also ask that you include a copy of the search results page, when inserting the above words / phrases into the Intellipedia search engine.

Thank you so much for your time, and I am very much looking forward to your response.

Sincerely,

John Greenewald, Jr.

[REDACTED]

(U) Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant

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From Intellipedia



This article was transferred from Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_in_the_Levant#) (Discuss)

Intellipedians are asked to help link this page into Intellipedia in an intelligent way: categorize, fix transfer errors, review for accuracy and add FOUO information as appropriate.

Please remove this banner when it is felt the assimilation is complete.

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History

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As Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (1999–2004)

Main article: Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (abbreviated JTJ or shortened to Tawhid and Jihad, Tawhid wal-Jihad, sometimes Tawhid al-Jihad, Al Tawhid or Tawhid) was started in 1999 by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and a combination of foreigners and local Islamist sympathizers.[70] Al-Zarqawi was a Jordanian Salafi Jihadist who had traveled to Afghanistan to fight in the Soviet-Afghan War, but he arrived after the departure of the Soviet troops and soon returned to his homeland. He eventually returned to Afghanistan, running an Islamic militant training camp near Herat.

Following the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, JTJ developed into an expanding militant network for the purpose of resisting the coalition occupation forces and their Iraqi allies. It included some remnants of Ansar al-Islam and a growing number of foreign fighters. Many foreign fighters arriving in Iraq were initially not associated with the group, but once they were in the country they became dependent on al-Zarqawi's local contacts.[196]

As Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (2004–2006)

Involvement in Iraqi Insurgency

The group officially pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network in a letter in October 2004 and changed its official name to Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (تنظيم قاعدة الجهاد في بلاد الرافدين, "Organization of Jihad's Base in Mesopotamia").[20][197][198] That same month, the group, now popularly referred to as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), kidnapped and killed Japanese citizen Shosei Koda. In November, al-Zarqawi's network was the main target of the US Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah, but its leadership managed to escape the American siege and subsequent storming of the city. In December, in two of its many sectarian attacks, AQI bombed a Shia funeral procession in Najaf and the main bus station in nearby Karbala, killing at least 60 people in those two holy cities of Shia Islam. The group also reportedly took responsibility for the 30 September 2004 Baghdad bombing which killed 41 people, mostly children.[199]

In 2005, AQI largely focused on executing high-profile and coordinated suicide attacks, claiming responsibility for numerous attacks which were primarily aimed at Iraqi administrators. The group launched attacks on voters during the Iraqi legislative election in January, a combined suicide and conventional attack on the Abu Ghraib prison in April, and coordinated suicide attacks outside the Sheraton Ishtar and Palestine Hotel in Baghdad in October.[200] In July, AQI claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and execution of Ihab Al-Sherif, Egypt's envoy to Iraq.[201][202] Also in July, a three-day series of suicide attacks, including the Musayyib marketplace bombing, left at least 150 people dead.[203] Al-Zarqawi claimed responsibility for a single-day series of more than a dozen bombings in Baghdad in September, including a bomb attack on 14 September which killed about 160 people, most of whom were unemployed Shia workers.[204] They claimed responsibility for a series of mosque bombings in the same month in the city of Khanaqin, which killed at least 74 people.[205]

The attacks blamed on or claimed by AQI continued to increase in 2006 (see also the list of major resistance attacks in Iraq).[206] In one of the incidents, two US soldiers—Thomas Lowell Tucker and Kristian Menchaca—were captured, tortured and beheaded by the ISI. In another, four Russian embassy officials were abducted and subsequently killed. Iraq's al-Qaeda and its umbrella groups were blamed for multiple attacks targeting the country's Shia population, some of which AQI claimed responsibility for. The US claimed without verification that the group was at least one of the forces behind the wave of chlorine bombings in Iraq, which affected hundreds of people, albeit with few fatalities, after a series of crude chemical warfare attacks between late 2006 and mid-2007.[207] During 2006, several key members of AQI were killed or captured by American and allied forces. This included al-Zarqawi himself, killed on 7 June 2006, his spiritual adviser Sheik Abd-Al-Rahman, and the alleged "number two" deputy leader, Hamid Juma Faris Jouri al-Saeedi. The group's leadership was then assumed by a man called Abu Hamza al-Muhajir,[208] who in reality was the Egyptian militant Abu Ayyub al-Masri.[209]

Inciting sectarian violence

Attacks against militiamen often targeted the Iraqi Shia majority in an attempt to incite sectarian violence.[210] Al-Zarqawi purportedly declared an all-out war on Shias[204] while claiming responsibility for the Shia mosque bombings.[205] The same month, a letter allegedly written by al-Zawahiri—later rejected as a "fake" by the AQI—appeared to question the insurgents' tactic of indiscriminately attacking Shias in Iraq.[211] In a video that

appeared in December 2007, al-Zawahiri defended the AQI, but distanced himself from the crimes against civilians committed by "hypocrites and traitors" that he said existed among its ranks.[212]

US and Iraqi officials accused the AQI of trying to slide Iraq into a full-scale civil war between Iraq's majority Shia and minority Sunni Arabs via an orchestrated campaign of militiamen massacres and a number of provocative attacks against high-profile religious targets.[213] With attacks purportedly mounted by the AQI such as the Imam Ali Mosque bombing in 2003, the Day of Ashura bombings and Karbala and Najaf bombings in 2004, the first al-Askari Mosque bombing in Samarra in 2006, the deadly single-day series of bombings in November 2006 in which at least 215 people were killed in Baghdad's Shia district of Sadr City, and the second al-Askari bombing in 2007, the AQI provoked Shia militias to unleash a wave of retaliatory attacks. The result was a plague of death squad-style killings and a spiral into further sectarian violence, which escalated in 2006 and brought Iraq to the brink of violent anarchy in 2007.[214] In 2008, sectarian bombings blamed on al-Qaeda killed at least 42 people at the Imam Husayn Shrine in Karbala in March and at least 51 people at a bus stop in Baghdad in June.

Operations outside Iraq and other activities

On 3 December 2004, AQI attempted to blow up an Iraqi-Jordanian border crossing, but failed to do so. In 2006, a Jordanian court sentenced to death al-Zarqawi in absentia and two of his associates for their involvement in the plot.[215] AQI increased its presence outside Iraq by claiming credit for three attacks in 2005. In the most deadly of these attacks, suicide bombs killed 60 people in Amman, Jordan on 9 November 2005.[216] They claimed responsibility for the rocket attacks that narrowly missed the USS Kearsarge and USS Ashland in Jordan, which also targeted the city of Eilat in Israel, and for the firing of several rockets into Israel from Lebanon in December 2005.[200]

The Lebanese-Palestinian militant group Fatah al-Islam, which was defeated by Lebanese government forces during the 2007 Lebanon conflict, was linked to AQI and led by al-Zarqawi's former companion who had fought alongside him in Iraq.[217] The group may have been linked to the little-known group called "Tawhid and Jihad in Syria", [218] and may have influenced the Palestinian resistance group in Gaza called "Tawhid and Jihad Brigades", better known as the Army of Islam.[219]

American officials believed that Al-Qaeda in Iraq had conducted bomb attacks against Syrian government forces. [220][221][222] Al-Nusra Front, another al-Qaeda-inspired group, claimed responsibility for attacks inside Syria, and Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said that Al-Qaeda in Iraq members were going to Syria, where the militants had previously received support and weapons.[223]

Goals and umbrella organizations

See also: Mujahideen Shura Council (Iraq) In a letter to Ayman al-Zawahiri in July 2005, al-Zarqawi outlined a four-stage plan to expand the Iraq War, which included expelling US forces from Iraq, establishing an Islamic authority—a caliphate—spreading the conflict to Iraq's secular neighbors, and engaging in the Arab-Israeli conflict.[200] The affiliated groups were linked to regional attacks outside Iraq which were consistent with their stated plan, one example being the 2005 Sharm al-Sheikh bombings in Egypt, which killed 88 people, many of them foreign tourists.

In January 2006, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)—the name by which Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn was more commonly known—created an umbrella organization called the Mujahideen Shura Council (MSC), in an attempt to unify Sunni insurgents in Iraq. Its efforts to recruit Iraqi Sunni nationalists and secular groups were undermined by the violent tactics it used against civilians and its extreme Islamic fundamentalist doctrine.[224] Because of these impediments, the attempt was largely unsuccessful.[214]

On 13 October 2006, the MSC declared the establishment of an Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), comprising Iraq's six mostly Sunni Arab governorates, with Abu Omar al-Baghdadi being announced as the self-proclaimed state's Emir.[87] [206] Abu Ayyub al-Masri, who had been the leader of the MSC, was given the title of Minister of War within the ISI's ten-member cabinet.[225] Following the announcement, scores of gunmen took part in military parades in Ramadi and other Anbar towns to celebrate.[226][227]

According to a study compiled by US intelligence agencies in early 2007, the ISI planned to seize power in the central and western areas of the country and turn it into a Sunni Islamic state.[228]

As Islamic State of Iraq (2006–2013)

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Strength and activity

US Marines in Ramadi, May 2006. The Islamic State of Iraq had declared the city to be its capital. In 2006, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research estimated that Al-Qaeda in Iraq's core membership was "more than 1,000".[229] These figures do not include the other six[230][irrelevant citation] AQI-led Salafi groups in the Islamic State of Iraq. In 2007 estimates of the group's strength ranged from just 850 to several thousand full-time fighters. [229][231] The group was said to be suffering high manpower losses, including those from its many "martyrdom" operations, but for a long time this appeared to have little effect on its strength and capabilities, implying a constant flow of volunteers from Iraq and abroad. However, Al-Qaeda in Iraq more than doubled in strength, from 1,000 to 2,500 fighters, after the US withdrawal from Iraq in late 2011.[232]

In 2007, some observers and scholars suggested that the threat posed by AQI was being exaggerated and that a "heavy focus on al-Qaeda obscures a much more complicated situation on the ground".[233][234] According to the July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate and the Defense Intelligence Agency reports, AQI accounted for 15% percent of attacks in Iraq. However, the Congressional Research Service noted in its September 2007 report that attacks from al-Qaeda were less than 2% of the violence in Iraq. It criticized the Bush administration's statistics, noting that its false reporting of insurgency attacks as AQI attacks had increased since the surge operations began in 2007.[229][235] In March 2007, the US-sponsored Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty analyzed AQI attacks for that month and concluded that the group had taken credit for 43 out of 439 attacks on Iraqi security forces and Shia militias, and 17 out of 357 attacks on US troops.[229]

According to the 2006 US Government report, this group was most clearly associated with foreign jihadist cells operating in Iraq and had specifically targeted international forces and Iraqi citizens; most of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)'s operatives were not Iraqi, but were coming through a series of safe houses, the largest of which was on the Iraq–Syria border. AQI's operations were predominately Iraq-based, but the United States Department of State alleged that the group maintained an extensive logistical network throughout the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Europe.[236] In a June 2008 CNN special report, Al-Qaeda in Iraq was called "a well-oiled ... organization ... almost as pedantically bureaucratic as was Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party", collecting new execution videos long after they stopped publicising them, and having a network of spies even in the US military bases. According to the report, Iraqis—many of them former members of Hussein's secret services—were now effectively running Al-Qaeda in Iraq, with "foreign fighters' roles" seeming to be "mostly relegated to the cannon fodder of suicide attacks", although the organization's top leadership was still dominated by non-Iraqis.[237]

Decline

The high-profile attacks linked to the group continued through early 2007, as AQI claimed responsibility for attacks such as the March assassination attempt on Sunni Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq Salam al-Zaubai, the April Iraqi Parliament bombing, and the May capture and subsequent execution of three American soldiers. Also in May, ISI leader al-Baghdadi was declared to have been killed in Baghdad, but his death was later denied by the insurgents; later, al-Baghdadi was even declared by the US to be non-existent. There were conflicting reports regarding the fate of al-Masri. From March to August, coalition forces fought the Battle of Baqubah as part of the largely successful attempts to wrest the Diyala Governorate from AQI-aligned forces. Through 2007, the majority of suicide bombings targeting civilians in Iraq were routinely identified by military and government sources as being the responsibility of al-Qaeda and its associated groups, even when there was no claim of responsibility, as was the case in the 2007 Yazidi communities bombings, which killed some 800 people in the deadliest terrorist attack in Iraq to date.

By late 2007, violent and indiscriminate attacks directed by rogue AQI elements against Iraqi civilians had severely damaged their image and caused loss of support among the population, thus isolating the group. In a major blow to AQI, many former Sunni militants who had previously fought alongside the group started to work with the American forces (see also below). The US troops surge supplied the military with more manpower for operations targeting the group, resulting in dozens of high-level AQI members being captured or killed.[238] Al-Qaeda seemed to have lost its foothold in Iraq and appeared to be severely crippled.[239] Accordingly, the bounty issued for al-Masri was eventually cut from \$5 million to \$100,000 in April 2008.[240]

As of 2008, a series of US and Iraqi offensives managed to drive out the AQI-aligned insurgents from their former safe

havens, such as the Diyala and Al Anbar governorates and the embattled capital of Baghdad, to the area of the northern city of Mosul, the latest of the Iraq War's major battlegrounds.[240] The struggle for control of Ninawa Governorate—the Ninawa campaign—was launched in January 2008 by US and Iraqi forces as part of the large-scale Operation Phantom Phoenix, which was aimed at combating al-Qaeda activity in and around Mosul, and finishing off the network's remnants in central Iraq that had escaped Operation Phantom Thunder in 2007. In Baghdad a pet market was bombed in February 2008 and a shopping centre was bombed in March 2008, killing at least 98 and 68 people respectively; AQI were the suspected perpetrators.

US soldiers and Sunni Arab tribesmen scan for enemy activity in a farm field in southern Arab Jibor, January 2008 AQI has long raised money, running into tens of millions of dollars, from kidnappings for ransom, car theft—sometimes killing drivers in the process—hijacking fuel trucks and other activities.[240] According to an April 2007 statement by their Islamic Army in Iraq rivals, AQI was demanding jizya tax and killing members of wealthy families when it was not paid.[241] According to both US and Iraqi sources, in May 2008 AQI was stepping up its fundraising campaigns as its strictly militant capabilities were on the wane, with especially lucrative activity said to be oil operations centered on the industrial city of Baiji. According to US military intelligence sources, in 2008 the group resembled a "Mafia-esque criminal gang".[240]

Conflicts with other groups

See also: Awakening movements in Iraq and Islamic Army-al-Qaeda conflict The first reports of a split and even armed clashes between Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni groups date back to 2005.[242][243] In the summer of 2006, local Sunni tribes and insurgent groups, including the prominent Islamist-nationalist group Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI), began to speak of their dissatisfaction with al-Qaeda and its tactics,[244] openly criticizing the foreign fighters for their deliberate targeting of Iraqi civilians. In September 2006, 30 Anbar tribes formed their own local alliance called the Anbar Salvation Council (ASC), which was directed specifically at countering al-Qaeda-allied terrorist forces in the province,[245][246] and they openly sided with the government and the US troops.[247]

By the beginning of 2007, Sunni tribes and nationalist insurgents had begun battling with their former allies in AQI in order to retake control of their communities.[248] In early 2007, forces allied to Al-Qaeda in Iraq committed a series of attacks on Sunnis critical of the group, including the February 2007 attack in which scores of people were killed when a truck bomb exploded near a Sunni mosque in Fallujah.[249] Al-Qaeda supposedly played a role in the assassination of the leader of the Anbar-based insurgent group 1920 Revolution Brigade, the military wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement.[250] In April 2007, the IAI spokesman accused the ISI of killing at least 30 members of the IAI, as well as members of the Jamaat Ansar al-Sunna and Mujahideen Army insurgent groups, and called on Osama bin Laden to intervene personally to rein in Al-Qaeda in Iraq.[241][251] The following month, the government announced that AQI leader al-Masri had been killed by ASC fighters.[209][213] Four days later, AQI released an audio tape in which a man claiming to be al-Masri warned Sunnis not to take part in the political process; he also said that reports of internal fighting between Sunni militia groups were "lies and fabrications".[252] Later in May, the US forces announced the release of dozens of Iraqis who were tortured by AQI as a part of the group's intimidation campaign.[253]

By June 2007, the growing hostility between foreign-influenced jihadists and Sunni nationalists had led to open gun battles between the groups in Baghdad.[254][255] The Islamic Army soon reached a ceasefire agreement with AQI, but refused to sign on to the ISI.[256] There were reports that Hamas of Iraq insurgents were involved in assisting US troops in their Diyala Governorate operations against Al-Qaeda in August 2007. In September 2007, AQI claimed responsibility for the assassination of three people including the prominent Sunni sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, leader of the Anbar "Awakening council". That same month, a suicide attack on a mosque in the city of Baqubah killed 28 people, including members of Hamas of Iraq and the 1920 Revolution Brigade, during a meeting at the mosque between tribal and guerilla leaders and the police.[257] Meanwhile, the US military began arming moderate insurgent factions when they promised to fight Al-Qaeda in Iraq instead of the Americans.[258]

By December 2007, the strength of the "Awakening" movement irregulars—also called "Concerned Local Citizens" and "Sons of Iraq"—was estimated at 65,000–80,000 fighters.[259] Many of them were former insurgents, including alienated former AQI supporters, and they were now being armed and paid by the Americans specifically to combat al-Qaeda's presence in Iraq. As of July 2007, this highly controversial strategy proved to be effective in helping to secure the Sunni districts of Baghdad and the other hotspots of central Iraq, and to root out the al-Qaeda-aligned

militants.

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By 2008, the ISI was describing itself as being in a state of "extraordinary crisis", [260] which was attributable to a number of factors, [261] notably the Anbar Awakening.

Transformation and resurgence

In early 2009, US forces began pulling out of cities across the country, turning over the task of maintaining security to the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Police Service and their paramilitary allies. Experts and many Iraqis were worried that in the absence of US soldiers the ISI might resurface and attempt mass-casualty attacks to destabilize the country. [262] There was indeed a spike in the number of suicide attacks, [263] and through mid- and late 2009, the ISI rebounded in strength and appeared to be launching a concerted effort to cripple the Iraqi government. [264] During August and October 2009, the ISI claimed responsibility for four bombings targeting five government buildings in Baghdad, including attacks that killed 101 at the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance in August and 155 at the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works in September; these were the deadliest attacks directed at the new government in more than six years of war. These attacks represented a shift away from the group's previous efforts to incite sectarian violence, although a series of suicide attacks in April targeted mainly Iranian Shia pilgrims, killing 76, and in June, a mosque bombing in Taza killed at least 73 Shias from the Turkmen ethnic minority.

In late 2009, the commander of the US forces in Iraq, General Ray Odierno, stated that the ISI "has transformed significantly in the last two years. What once was dominated by foreign individuals has now become more and more dominated by Iraqi citizens". Odierno's comments reinforced accusations by the government of Nouri al-Maliki that al-Qaeda and ex-Ba'athists were working together to undermine improved security and sabotage the planned Iraqi parliamentary elections in 2010. [265] On 18 April 2010, the ISI's two top leaders, Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, were killed in a joint US-Iraqi raid near Tikrit. [266] In a press conference in June 2010, General Odierno reported that 80% of the ISI's top 42 leaders, including recruiters and financiers, had been killed or captured, with only eight remaining at large. He said that they had been cut off from Al Qaeda's leadership in Pakistan, and that improved intelligence had enabled the successful mission in April that led to the killing of al-Masri and al-Baghdadi; in addition, the number of attacks and casualty figures in Iraq for the first five months of 2010 were the lowest since 2003. [267] [268] [269] In May 2011, the Islamic State of Iraq's "emir of Baghdad" Huthaifa al-Batawi, captured during the crackdown after the 2010 Baghdad church attack in which 68 people died, was killed during an attempted prison break, during which an Iraqi general and several others were also killed. [270] [271]

On 16 May 2010, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was appointed the new leader of the Islamic State of Iraq; [272] he had previously been the general supervisor of the group's provincial sharia committees and a member of its senior consultative council. [273] Al-Baghdadi replenished the group's leadership, many of whom had been killed or captured, by appointing former Ba'athist military and intelligence officers who had served during the Saddam Hussein regime. These men, nearly all of whom had spent time imprisoned by American forces, came to make up about one-third of Baghdadi's top 25 commanders. One of them was a former Colonel, Samir al-Khlifawi, also known as Haji Bakr, who became the overall military commander in charge of overseeing the group's operations. [274] [275]

In July 2012, al-Baghdadi's first audio statement was released online. In this he announced that the group was returning to the former strongholds that US troops and their Sunni allies had driven them from prior to the withdrawal of US troops. [276] He also declared the start of a new offensive in Iraq called Breaking the Walls which would focus on freeing members of the group held in Iraqi prisons. [276] Violence in Iraq began to escalate that month, and in the following year the group carried out 24 waves of VBIED attacks and eight prison breaks. By July 2013, monthly fatalities had exceeded 1,000 for the first time since April 2008. [277] The Breaking the Walls campaign culminated in July 2013, with the group carrying out simultaneous raids on Taji and Abu Ghraib prison, freeing more than 500 prisoners, many of them veterans of the Iraqi insurgency. [277] [278]

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was declared a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on 4 October 2011 by the US State Department, with an announced reward of US\$10 million for information leading to his capture or death. [279]

As Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (2013–2014)

Declaration and dispute with al-Nusra Front

In March 2011, protests began in Syria against the government of Bashar al-Assad. In the following month violence

between demonstrators and security forces led to a gradual militarisation of the conflict.[280] In August 2011, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi began sending Syrian and Iraqi ISI members, experienced in guerilla warfare, across the border into Syria to establish an organization inside the country. Led by a Syrian known as Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, the group began to recruit fighters and establish cells throughout the country.[281][282] On 23 January 2012, the group announced its formation as Jabhat al-Nusra l'Ahl as-Sham—Jabhat al-Nusra—more commonly known as al-Nusra Front. Al-Nusra rapidly expanded into a capable fighting force with a level of popular support among opposition supporters in Syria.[281]

In April 2013, al-Baghdadi released an audio statement in which he announced that al-Nusra Front had been established, financed and supported by the Islamic State of Iraq[283] and that the two groups were merging under the name "Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham".[90] Al-Jawlani issued a statement denying the merger and complaining that neither he nor anyone else in al-Nusra's leadership had been consulted about it.[284] In June 2013, Al Jazeera reported that it had obtained a letter written by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, addressed to both leaders, in which he ruled against the merger and appointed an emissary to oversee relations between them and put an end to tensions.[285] In the same month, al-Baghdadi released an audio message rejecting al-Zawahiri's ruling and declaring that the merger was going ahead.[286] In October 2013, al-Zawahiri ordered the disbanding of ISIS, putting al-Nusra Front in charge of jihadist efforts in Syria,[287] but al-Baghdadi contested al-Zawahiri's ruling on the basis of Islamic jurisprudence[286] and the group continued to operate in Syria. In February 2014, after an eight-month power struggle, al-Qaeda disavowed any relations with ISIS.[80]

According to journalist Sarah Birke, there are "significant differences" between al-Nusra Front and ISIS. While al-Nusra actively calls for the overthrow of the Assad government, ISIS "tends to be more focused on establishing its own rule on conquered territory". ISIS is "far more ruthless" in building an Islamic state, "carrying out sectarian attacks and imposing sharia law immediately", she said. While al-Nusra has a "large contingent of foreign fighters", it is seen as a home-grown group by many Syrians; by contrast, ISIS fighters have been described as "foreign 'occupiers'" by many Syrian refugees.[288] It has a strong presence in mid- and northern Syria, where it has instituted sharia in a number of towns.[288] The group reportedly controlled the four border towns of Atmeh, al-Bab, Azaz and Jarablus, allowing it to control the exit and entrance from Syria into Turkey.[288] Foreign fighters in Syria include Russian-speaking jihadists who were part of Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar (JMA).[289] In November 2013, the JMA's ethnic Chechen leader Abu Omar al-Shishani swore an oath of allegiance to al-Baghdadi;[290] the group then split between those who followed al-Shishani in joining ISIS and those who continued to operate independently in the JMA under a new leadership.[14]

In May 2014, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri ordered al-Nusra Front to stop attacks on its rival ISIS.[30] In June 2014, after continued fighting between the two groups, al-Nusra's branch in the Syrian town of al-Bukamal pledged allegiance to ISIS.[291][292]

Conflicts with other groups

See also: Inter-rebel conflict during the Syrian Civil War In Syria, rebels affiliated with the Islamic Front and the Free Syrian Army launched an offensive against ISIS militants in and around Aleppo in January 2014.[293][294]

Relations with the Syrian government

In January 2014, The Daily Telegraph said that Western "intelligence sources" believed that the Syrian government made secret oil deals with ISIS and al-Nusra Front, alleging that the militants were funding their campaign by selling crude oil to the regime from the fields they have captured.[295]

As Islamic State (2014–present)

On 29 June 2014, ISIS removed "Iraq and the Levant" from its name and began to refer to itself as the Islamic State, declaring the territory under its control a new caliphate and naming Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its caliph.[5]

On the first night of Ramadan, Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami, spokesperson for ISIS, described the establishment of the caliphate as "a dream that lives in the depths of every Muslim believer" and "the abandoned obligation of the era". He said that the group's ruling Shura Council had decided to establish the caliphate formally and that Muslims around the world should now pledge their allegiance to the new caliph.[296][297]

The declaration of a caliphate has been criticized and ridiculed by Muslim scholars and rival Islamists inside and outside the occupied territory.[298][299][300][301][302][303]

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Analysts observed that dropping the reference to region reflected a widening of the group's scope, and Laith Alkhouri, a terrorism analyst, thought that after capturing many areas in Syria and Iraq, ISIS felt this was a suitable opportunity to take control of the global jihadist movement.[304] A week before its change of name to the Islamic State, ISIS had captured the Tabil crossing on the Jordan-Iraq border,[305] the only border crossing between the two countries.[306]

ISIS has received some public support in Jordan, albeit limited, partly owing to state repression there.[307] Raghad Hussein, the daughter of Saddam Hussein now living in opulent asylum in Jordan, has publicly expressed support for the advance of ISIS in Iraq, reflecting the Ba'athist alliance of convenience with ISIS with the goal of return to power in Baghdad.[308] ISIS undertook a recruitment drive in Saudi Arabia,[173] where tribes in the north are linked to those in western Iraq and eastern Syria.[309]

In June and July 2014, Jordan and Saudi Arabia moved troops to their borders with Iraq after Iraq lost control of, or withdrew from, strategic crossing points, which were thence under ISIS's command.[60][306] There was speculation that al-Maliki had ordered a withdrawal of troops from the Iraq-Saudi crossings in order "to increase pressure on Saudi Arabia and bring the threat of Isis over-running its borders as well".[309]

After the group captured Kurdish-controlled territory[310] and massacred Yazidis,[311] the US launched a humanitarian mission and aerial bombing campaign against ISIS.[312][313]

In July 2014, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau declared support for the new Caliphate and Caliph Ibrahim.[22] In August, Abubakar Shekau announced that Boko Haram had captured the Nigerian town of Gwoza in the name of the Caliphate. Shekau announced: "Thanks be to Allah who gave victory to our brothers in Gwoza and made it part of the Islamic caliphate".[314]

The moderate rebels of the Free Syrian Army had been backed by the United States with weapons and training, [315][316] but in August 2014, a high-level commander in the Islamic State stated: "In the East of Syria, there is no Free Syrian Army any longer. All Free Syrian Army people [there] have joined the Islamic State".[317] The Islamic State recruited more than 6,300 fighters in July 2014 alone, many of them coming from the Free Syrian Army.[318]

In July 2014, ISIS beheaded approximately 50 soldiers of Syria's 17 division after assaulting their base in Ar-Raqqah, placing their heads atop poles and spikes in public places in that city.[319][320]

Ideology

The ideology of ISIL is takfiri meaning they believe that they have the right to decide who is a muslim and who is not, and in turn kill those they believe to have committed kufr. Their extremist ideology most closely mirrors that of the classical group the Kharijites. The opinion of associating them with this historical movement is held by most Islamic Scholars.

Leadership

Structure

Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi Field Commander Tarkhan Batirashvili Spokesperson Abu Mohammad al-Adnani al-Shami

Regional

Iraq

Syria

Lebanon

Public Relations

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Recruiting

Social Media

Preaching (Dawah) Trucks

Aniti-ISIL PR

The ISIL Flag Burning Challenge

Scholars YouTube Videos

Government Structure

Education System

Sharia Camp

Military Camp

Law Enforcement and Judicial Structure

Hizba

Female Hizba Units

Sharia Court

Christian Court

ID and Passport Office

Finance

See Also

- Iraq
- Syria

External Links

- ISIL research guide_17092014.pdf

References

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ISIS may stand for:

- Institute for Science and International Security
- Integrated Sensor is Structure
- Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant

External links

- AcronymFinder.com page on ISIS
- ISIS 

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ISIS may refer to:

- Islamic State of Iraq and Sham - (also known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)
- Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia
- ISIS-2 - a Canadian satellite designed to study the ionosphere
- Integrated Sensor is Structure - a DARPA design concept for airships

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