



National Security Program

Homeland Security Project

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Terrorist Groups 101

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Since 9/11, the al-Qaeda threat has become more diffuse. Today, al-Qaeda and its allied groups maintain a presence in some 16 different countries – compared with around half that number a decade ago. Additionally, there are a wide range of active terrorist groups with no clear organizational or operational links to the al-Qaeda core. This document is a resource meant to provide basic information on a variety of terrorist groups currently operating around the world, including information on their capabilities, recent activities, leadership and areas of influence.

Part One: Al-Qaeda Affiliated Groups

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

Background

- **What is AQIM?**

- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is an al-Qaeda affiliate operating in Africa's Maghreb region.

- **Where is it operating?**

- AQIM is thought to be operating in Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, and has also launched attacks in Algeria.

- As military action has displaced AQIM from Mali and Algeria, it has regrouped in Libya.

- **Where did it come from?**

- Originally formed in 1998 as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), a faction of the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria.

- Salafism (from "salaf," meaning "predecessors") is an ultraconservative Sunni Muslim movement which looks to the earliest Muslims as the epitome of religious practice.

- Joined al-Qaeda in September 2006, announced its name change to AQIM in January 2007.



- **AQIM Leadership**
 - Led by Algerian-born Abdelmalek Droukdel since 2004, also known as Abou Mossab Abdelwadoud.
 - Founding member Mokhtar Belmokhtar broke with AQIM in 2012, creating a splinter group known as "Those Who Sign in Blood," the group behind the hostage crisis at the In Amenas gas facility in eastern Algeria in 2013.
- **What are its capabilities?**
 - AQIM has amassed vast financial capabilities through kidnappings and ransoms, an estimated \$90 million in funds. AQIM has used its resources to support a number of al-Qaeda fighters and militant groups in the region, including Nigeria's Boko Haram.
 - Its size is difficult to ascertain, but estimates of AQIM-associated fighters in the Sahel (a geographic region between the Sahara and the savannahs to the south) place its membership at around 3,000, including members of splinter groups.
 - At its height (as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat), its membership was estimated at 30,000.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**
 - AQIM and its offshoots appear more interested in acquiring territory and instituting sharia law than attacking the United States or other Western targets, although this could change.
 - In 2013, concerns were raised that AQIM may be in possession of portable SA-7 surface-to-air missiles, which could be used to target civilian aircraft.
 - Has carried out attacks on Western targets in the Maghreb, such as:
 - December 2007: attacked United Nations officers in Algiers;
 - February 2008: attacked the Israeli Embassy in Mauritania.
 - On several occasions, AQIM has taken and executed Western hostages.
- **AQIM Tactics**
 - AQIM employs traditional insurgency tactics such as ambushes and mortar, rocket and IED attacks in its areas of operation.
- **AQIM in Mali**
 - In 2012, AQIM worked with the secular Azawad National Liberation Movement to secure an independent northern stronghold for ethnic Tuaregs (a nomadic Berber group in North Africa).
 - In 2013, AQIM and its splinter groups were able to take over half of Mali, before being repelled by French military intervention.
- **AQIM in Algeria**
 - In January 2013, an AQIM splinter group led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar attacked the In Amenas gas facility in Algeria, killing 40 foreign workers and attracting international media attention.

- **Western Recruitment**

- Individuals linked to AQIM have been arrested in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

- Two Canadian recruits, Xristos Katsiroubas and Ali Medlej, died in the attack on the In Amenas gas facility in Algeria.

U.S. and International Response

- **UN Peacekeeping Mission**

- In December 2012, the UN Security Council authorized a military peacekeeping mission in Mali, known as MINUSMA. The Economic Community of West African States pledged thousands of troops to this effort.

- **French Intervention**

- After AQIM launched an offensive against the Malian government alongside separatist Tuareg rebels in early 2012, French intervention in early 2013 pushed AQIM and its splinter groups out of major Malian cities.

- **U.S. Support**

- The United States designated the GSPC as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in March 2002 and amended the designation to reflect the organization's name change to AQIM in February 2008.

Jabhat Al-Nusra

Background

- **What is Jabhat al-Nusra?**
 - Jabhat al-Nusra (which means the “Victory Front”) is a splinter group of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).
- **Where is it operating?**
 - Jabhat al-Nusra is based in Syria.
- **Where did it come from?**
 - Formed in late 2011, when AQI sent Abu Muhammad al-Julani to Syria to organize jihadist cells in the region.
 - Rose to prominence in Syria on its reputation of being the most effective fighting force against the Assad regime.
- **Jabhat al-Nusra Leadership**
 - Abu Muhammed al-Julani, a Syrian native.
- **What are its capabilities?**
 - Estimated fighters: between 5,000 and 10,000.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**
 - Attacks are focused in the region, but the presence of foreign fighters in Syria presents a risk for future attacks in the West, particularly in Europe. If they are nationals of countries that are in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, they can enter the United States with only perfunctory scrutiny.
 - In July 2014, former NCTC Director Matt Olsen said that there were 12,000 foreign fighters in Syria, and that around 100 Americans have fought in Syria or attempted to do so.
 - Former U.S. Army Trooper Eric Harroun was arrested in March 2013 for fighting alongside Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, sentenced to six months in federal prison. Harroun died of an apparent overdose in April 2014.
 - DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson: Syrian jihadists “are actively trying to recruit Westerners, indoctrinate them and see them return to their home countries with an extremist mission.”
- **Al-Nusra Tactics**
 - In November 2012, al-Nusra claimed responsibility for 45 suicide bombings in Syria, making it the first insurgent organization in Syria to claim responsibility for attacks that caused civilian casualties.
 - Learning from AQI’s experiences in Iraq, al-Nusra has sought to win hearts and minds in Syria, providing humanitarian assistance and basic civil services and avoiding imposing Taliban-style rule.

- **Al-Nusra Affiliates**

- The United States has received intelligence that bomb-makers from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) were sharing expertise with al-Nusra, specifically in making bombs capable of evading airport security.
- In April 2013, AQI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the official merger of AQI and al-Nusra into the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Al-Nusra rejected the merger and pledged its allegiance to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

U.S. and International Response

- Al-Nusra was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department in December 2012, as an alias for AQI. Due to its reputation and effectiveness among the Syrian rebels, the Free Syrian Army and others protested this designation.
- From the State Department Designation: "Since November 2011, al-Nusrah Front has claimed nearly 600 attacks – ranging from more than 40 suicide attacks to small arms and improvised explosive device operations – in major city centers including Damascus, Aleppo, Hamah, Dara, Homs, Idlib and Dayr al-Zawr. During these attacks numerous innocent Syrians have been killed. Through these attacks, al-Nusrah has sought to portray itself as part of the legitimate Syrian opposition while it is, in fact, an attempt by AQI to hijack the struggles of the Syrian people for its own malign purposes."

Al-Shabaab

Background

- **What is al-Shabaab?**

- Full name, the Harakat Shabaab al-Mujahidin, al-Shabaab is al-Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia.
- Though active since 2006, the group only formally merged al-Qaeda in 2012.

- **Where is it operating?**

- Al-Shabaab is based in Somalia, and is active in neighboring states.

- **Where did it come from?**

- Al-Shabaab's origins are traced back to al-Ittihad al-Islami, a Salafist organization active in Somalia in the 1990s. After a 2003 rift between its old guard and its radical youth (al-Shabaab means "the youth"), al-Shabaab allied itself instead with a group of sharia courts, the Islamic Courts Union.
- Together, al-Shabaab and the ICU gained control of Mogadishu in 2006. When Ethiopian forces invaded Somalia in December 2006, the ICU were removed from power, further radicalizing al-Shabaab.

- **Al-Shabaab Leadership**

- Made up of disparate clans, the organization is subject to infighting among leadership. Characterized by the National Counterterrorism Center as "not centralized or monolithic in its agenda or goals," members are more supportive of a nationalistic battle against the Somali Federal Government than of global jihad.
- Leader: Ahmed Omar Abu Ubaidah, appointed in September after its previous leader was killed in a U.S. airstrike.

- **What are its capabilities?**

- Its size is unclear, but a United Nations estimate in September 2013 had its fighting force at around 5,000 fighters.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**

- Al-Shabaab has never successfully carried out an attack in the West.
- Al-Shabaab's Western recruitment has focused on English-speaking Muslims and members of the Somali diaspora.
 - In 2007, an unnamed British Somali was one of the first Western-based jihadists to kill himself in the name of al-Shabaab, detonating a suicide vest at an Ethiopian army checkpoint and killing at least 20 soldiers.
 - Western recruits featured heavily in al-Shabaab propaganda operations, which released three videos featuring "Abu Mansoor al-Smriki" (the father of Mansoor, the American), who is actually Omar Hammami, an Islamic convert from Alabama.
- Though more than 40 Americans went to Somalia to fight with al-Shabaab following the 2006 invasion of Somalia, those Americans that returned from Somalia did not attempt or carry out any kind of terrorist attack in the United States.

- **Al-Shabaab in Africa**

- Though weakened, al-Shabaab was able to carry out an attack on the upscale Westgate mall in Nairobi, Kenya. Sixty-seven people were killed during the attack, which went on for 80 hours.
- Al-Shabaab live-tweeted the assault on Westgate, saying: "All Muslims inside #Westgate were escorted out by the Mujahideen before beginning the attack."
- Since efforts combating the group have eroded its capabilities and control over territory, it has resorted to guerilla tactics.
 - According to the National Counterterrorism Center: "al-Shabaab is responsible for the assassination of Somali peace activists, international aid workers, numerous civil society figures and journalists."

U.S. and International Response

- **African Efforts**

- While al-Shabaab controlled most of southern Somalia's autonomously governed Puntland in 2010, operations by African Union and Kenyan forces ended its domination of the region.
- In 2011, the United Nations sanctioned African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) partnered with Somali troops to fight al-Shabaab, and in August 2011, forced al-Shabaab forces out of the Somali capital of Mogadishu, which had been under al-Shabaab control since 2009.

- **U.S. Support**

- The United States designated al-Shabaab a terrorist organization in February 2008.
- U.S. strategy in Somalia has been to provide funding, training and logistical support to UN-backed African forces, and to escalate counterterrorism operations, including the use of Special Forces and armed drones.
- In September 2014, the U.S. military confirmed that it killed al-Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane, also known as Abu Zubayr, in a targeted airstrike on an al-Shabaab encampment in Somalia.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

Background

- **What is AQAP?**
 - Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is an al-Qaeda affiliated extremist group.
 - Also known as Ansar al-Sharia (“Group of Helpers of the Sharia”).
- **Where is it operating?**
 - AQAP is based in Yemen.
- **Where did it come from?**
 - The group emerged in January 2009, following an announcement that terrorists in Yemen and Saudi Arabia were uniting under a common banner.
 - Preceded by al-Qaeda in Yemen (AQY), established in February 2006 after 23 al-Qaeda members escaped from prison in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa.
- **Who are its leaders?**
 - Ibrahim al-Asiri, its chief bomb-maker;
 - Nasser al-Wuhayshi, its leader and founder;
 - Ibrahim al-Rubaish, a former Guantanamo detainee.
- **What are its capabilities?**
 - Approximately 300 members in 2010. Membership expanded to around 1,000 members by 2012 and has remained steady since then.

The Threat

- **AQAP’s threat to the homeland**
 - Has not attempted to carry out an attack against the West since 2010.
 - 2014 U.S. Intelligence Community’s World Threat Assessment: “Operating from its safe haven in Yemen, [AQAP] has attempted several times to attack the U.S. Homeland. We judge that the group poses a significant threat and remains intent on targeting the United States and U.S. interests overseas.”
- **AQAP Tactics**
 - Targets aviation: responsible for the 2009 Christmas Day attempt to bring down a U.S. airliner over Detroit (the first attack inside the United States by any al-Qaeda affiliate since 9/11) and the 2010 attempt to plant bombs on U.S. cargo planes – the group’s last attempt to attack the West.
 - AQAP’s chief bomb-maker Ibrahim al-Asiri remains at large and has trained other bomb-makers in miniaturizing and concealing bombs and using non-metallic materials, rendering them difficult to detect by airport security systems.
- **AQAP in Yemen**
 - Desertions from the Yemeni army in the wake Arab Spring-related violence in Yemen left parts of southern Yemen open to AQAP – though it soon lost this territory, AQAP has shown itself willing and capable of exploiting power vacuums within Yemen.

- **AQAP in Yemen (continued)**

- Desertions from the Yemeni army in the wake Arab Spring-related violence in Yemen left parts of southern Yemen open to AQAP – though it soon lost this territory, AQAP has shown itself willing and capable of exploiting power vacuums within Yemen.

- In a country where nearly half the population lives on less than \$2 dollars a day, AQAP has been able to gain influence in Yemen through economic, rather than religious, means. AQAP has also provided security and social services such as wells, water and a semblance of law and order through sharia courts.

- Christopher Swift, Georgetown University: “In doing so, the movement exhibits a pragmatic approach that has more in common with the Taliban’s operations in Afghanistan than it does with Osama bin Laden’s globalized, decentralized jihad.”

- **AQAP Affiliates**

- AQAP has integrated itself with other al-Qaeda affiliates, particularly al-Shabaab in Somalia. The United States has also received intelligence that AQAP was sharing bomb-making expertise with Syrian al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra.

- **AQAP and Online Radicalization**

- Spreads its message through Inspire magazine, launched in July 2010, and its Arabic-language al-Madad News Agency, established in 2011.

- AQAP’s al-Malahem Media Foundation advocates a “lone wolf” strategy, inciting Western youth to join the cause of jihad and carry out attacks in their own communities.

- From the Spring 2013 issue of *Inspire*: “Lone-Jihad is impossible to counter and stop, except when basic cooking ingredients and building material become illegal!”

U.S. and International Response

- After the failed 2009 Christmas Day plot, Obama announced a three-fold strategy in Yemen consisting of combating AQAP in the short term, increasing development assistance in the long term and organizing international support for stabilization efforts.

- The United States designated AQAP a foreign terrorist organization in January 2010, amended in October 2012 to include Ansar al-Sharia as an alias.

- The United Nations has maintained sanctions on AQAP leadership since January 2010.

- Drone Strikes:

- Since 2010, U.S. drone strikes in Yemen have killed 46 high-level al-Qaeda operatives, including radical Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, the driving force behind Inspire magazine. On July 17, 2013, AQAP confirmed the death of its deputy commander Said al-Shihri, from wounds obtained in a drone strike in late 2012.

- After Abd Rabu Mansur Hadi took over as president from Ali Abdullah Saleh, he gave the U.S. drone program unfettered access to targets in Yemen.

- The United States has worked to train and equip the Yemeni military, enabling it to gain back territory previously lost to AQAP.

Jemaah Islamiya

Background

- **What is Jemaah Islamiya?**

- Jemaah Islamiya (JI) is an Indonesia-based al-Qaeda aligned group.

- **Where is it operating?**

- JI is active in Southeast Asia.

- **Where did it come from?**

- Formed in the early 1990s, Jemaah Islamiya aims to establish an Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia.

- Discovered in late 2001 after Singaporean authorities disrupted a cell that was planning to attack targets associated with the U.S. Navy, JI has since been responsible for a series of lethal bombings from 2000 to 2005, targeting Western interests.

- **Jemaah Islamiya Leadership**

- Many of JI's leaders and influential members have been killed over the years, including:
 - Ustadz Sanusi, a senior JI leader, was killed in November 2012 by Philippine security services;
 - Umar Patek, another JI leader, was arrested in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in 2011;
 - Former military and operational leader of JI, Riduan Isamuddin (also known as Hambali), was arrested in 2003, and is being held in extrajudicial detention in Guantanamo Bay.

- Abu Bakar Bashir, an Indonesia of Yemeni descent, is thought to be the group's spiritual leader and is believed by some to be its operational leader as well.

- **What are its capabilities?**

- Counterterrorism operations in 2009 and 2010 have decimated JI, and the cells that have attempted to replace the crippled JI have found themselves constrained by continued counterterrorism operations and a lack of leadership.
 - Since 2002, Southeast Asian governments have arrested more than 300 suspected terrorists, significantly weakening JI.
 - According to the National Counterterrorism Center: "Since 2009, JI has been overshadowed by the activities of its splinter groups and other Indonesia-based terrorists."

The Threat

- **Jemaah Islamiya Tactics**

- With its capacity reduced by government crackdowns, Jemaah Islamiya has evolved into a more media-focused organization, distributing propaganda through books, magazines and social networks to radicalize new members and boost its dwindling ranks.

- **Jemaah Islamiya in Southeast Asia**

- JI's most notorious attack occurred in 2002, when it detonated three bombs in the tourist district of the Indonesian island of Bali, killing 202 people.
- In recent years, Jemaah Islamiya has been involved in just a few small-scale attacks that have primarily targeted moderate Muslim figures promoting religious tolerance and Indonesia's National Narcotics Agency, which combats terrorism.

- **Jemaah Islamiya Affiliates**

- JI's weakened network and decimated leadership have caused the group to fracture, with JI members leaving to form their own networks – blurring the lines between JI and other organizations.
- JI is reportedly linked to other Southeast Asian Islamist groups, such as Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the southern Philippines.
- Due to its debilitated leadership and fractured network, JI has been largely cut off from al-Qaeda's core. There are no longer any operational or organizational links between the two groups.

- **The Islamic State and Jemaah Islamiya**

- About 100 Southeast Asians have reportedly traveled to fight with the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria, which could reinvigorate Southeast Asian extremist networks such as JI upon their return.

U.S. and International Response

- **Southeast Asian Response**

- Singapore foiled a JI plot to attack U.S., British and Israeli Embassies in Singapore in 2001.
- Counterterrorism efforts have severely decimated JI's capabilities, arresting 300 members since 2002.

- **U.S. Efforts**

- After the 2002 Bali bombings, the United States designated Jamaah Islamiya a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

Part Two: Jihadist Groups Not Affiliated with Al-Qaeda

Boko Haram

Background

- **What is Boko Haram?**
 - Though it refers to itself as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad* meaning "Group of the Sunni People for the Calling and Jihad," Nigerian and Western media call the group Boko Haram, which means "Western education is forbidden."
- **Where is it operating?**
 - Boko Haram is based and active in Nigeria.
- **Where did it come from?**
 - Created in 2002, Boko Haram aims to overthrow the Nigerian government and replace it with a regime based on Islamic law.
- **Boko Haram Leadership**
 - Former leader Muhammad Yusuf was killed in July 2009 in clashes with the Nigerian government.
 - In July 2010, Boko Haram's former second-in-command Abubakar Shekau released a video claiming leadership of Boko Haram.
- **Al-Qaeda Connections**
 - Letters seized from Osama bin Laden's Abbottabad complex revealed that bin Laden had taken an interest in expanding al-Qaeda's operations to West Africa as far back as 2003, and was in direct contact with leaders of Boko Haram.
 - Believed to have connections with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
- **What are its capabilities?**
 - In 2011, Dr. Peter Lewis, the director of African Studies at John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, estimated that Boko Haram had several thousand supporters and at least 300 armed men.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**
 - Boko Haram has only attacked Western interests once, when it bombed the UN office in Abuja, Nigeria, in August 2011.
- **Boko Haram Tactics**
 - Boko Haram has shown little inclination for attacking Western targets and is principally interested in putting Nigeria under its version of sharia law.
 - Boko Haram has conducted attacks against schools, such as kidnapping 200 girls in April 2014 from a boarding school in Chibok, sparking international outrage and the #BringBackOurGirls social media campaign.
 - Boko Haram has recently stepped up its cross-border violence in Cameroon, kidnapping a number of high profile people, including the wife of Cameroon's vice prime minister in July 2014.

- **Boko Haram Tactics (continued)**

- The organization is predominantly focused on creating a state within a state, with its own cabinet and religious police. Like other militant groups, it provides social services: welfare handouts, food and shelter, and uses its stolen money to pay the widows of its slain members.

- **Boko Haram Attacks**

- Christmas Eve 2010: at least six bombs were detonated near crowded churches in markets in Nigeria, killing dozens.

- New Year's Eve 2010: Ten more people were killed when a bomb exploded in a popular open-air market.

- June 2011: Boko Haram detonated its first car bomb outside the national police headquarters.

- January 2012: Boko Haram launched coordinated attacks on police headquarters and the offices of the Nigeria Immigration Service and the State Security Service in Kano, killing more than 200.

- March 2012: The group burned down 12 public schools in Maiduguri, forcing 10,000 students out of school.

- September 2013: Boko Haram murdered sixty-five students at the agricultural college in Yobe state.

- April 2014: Boko Haram was responsible for the bombing of a bus station in Abuja that killed nearly one hundred people.

- According to the Congressional Research Service, more than 5,000 people are estimated to have been killed in Boko Haram-related violence.

- **Boko Haram Affiliates**

- Boko Haram splinter group Ansaru kidnapped and executed seven international construction workers in 2013.

U.S. and International Response

- **Nigerian Government Efforts**

- The Nigerian Government assembled a joint task force of military and police units to battle Boko Haram in May 2013.

- **U.S. Support**

- The United States designated Boko Haram and its splinter group Ansaru as Foreign Terrorist Organizations in November 2013.

- In May 2014, the United States deployed a small group of military advisers to help find the girls kidnapped by Boko Haram.

Pakistani Taliban

Background

- **What is the Pakistani Taliban?**

- Also referred to as Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani Taliban is an alliance of militant groups formed in 2007.

- **Where is it operating?**

- The Pakistani Taliban is based in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

- **Where did it come from?**

- The 2007 merger united groups fighting the Pakistani military in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan.

- **Pakistani Taliban Leadership**

- Baitullah Mahsud, the Pakistani Taliban's first leader, was killed in August 2009 in a drone attack.

- Now led by Mullah Maulana Fazlullah, who is believed to be in Afghanistan.

- **Al-Qaeda Connections**

- According to the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), the Pakistani Taliban maintains close ties to senior al-Qaeda leaders.

- Documents found in Osama bin Laden's Abbottabad compound show that order have passed from al-Qaeda leaders to the TTP.

- **What are its capabilities?**

- National Defense University Professor Hassan Abbas estimates that the Pakistani Taliban has anywhere from 17,000 to 22,000 foot soldiers, as well as 70 to 80 central Shura council members and operational commanders, and around 5,000 hardcore militants operating in the field.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**

- Though predominantly focused on fighting in Pakistan, the group has repeatedly threatened the United States.

- The Pakistan Taliban was responsible for Faisal Shahzad's failed car-bomb attack in Times Square in 2010.

- **TTP Tactics**

- TTP has been responsible for frequent attacks within Pakistan, including suicide bombings that have killed hundreds.

- Though many of its attacks have been aimed at police or military installations, the indiscriminate and potent nature of its attacks have caused high numbers of civilian casualties.

- In response to the killing of Osama bin Laden by U.S. Navy SEALs, TTP carried out several attacks on Pakistan government installations: a massive suicide bombing at a paramilitary police academy that killed at least 80 people, as well as bombings in Karachi and Peshawar.

- **TPP Tactics (continued)**

- Ahead of the May 2013 Pakistani elections, the Pakistan Taliban made an effort to diffuse its operation across the country's urban centers in hope of influencing the national vote.
 - TTP militants assassinated secular candidate Sadiq Zaman Khattak and detonated a bomb on Election Day in an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate another politician.

- **Western Recruitment**

- Though the Pakistan Taliban primarily recruits from the local Pashtun population along the Af-Pak border, it has recruited Westerners: most notably, Pakistani American Faisal Shahzad, the would-be Times Square bomber.
 - In December 2009, five men from northern Virginia were detained in Pakistan when they attempted to join local militant groups.

U.S. and International Response

- **Pakistani Efforts**

- The Pakistan military launched operations in Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal region on June 15, 2014. Pakistan officials have claimed that the operation has killed more than 500 Taliban fighters – though this is only a small dent in the group's capabilities.

- **U.S. Support**

- The CIA drone program has killed many of the groups' leaders: including its founder Baithullah Mehsud; "mentor of suicide bombers," Qari Hussain and deputy commander, Wali-ur Rehman.

Haqqani Network

Background

- **What is the Haqqani Network?**

- The Haqqani Network (HQN) is an insurgency group in Afghanistan.

- **Where is it operating?**

- Based out of North Waziristan, Pakistan, the group conducts cross-border operations into Afghanistan and is considered the most lethal insurgent group in Afghanistan.

- **Where did it come from?**

- HQN has its roots in an offensive formed in the late 1970s, related to the former Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan.

- The group's founder, Jalaluddin Haqqani, established a relationship with Osama bin Laden in the mid-1980s, joining the Taliban in 1995. The group retreated to Pakistan following the Taliban's fall in Afghanistan, joining the insurgency there and becoming known as the Haqqani Network.

- **HQN Leadership**

- Sirajuddin Haqqani, son of founder Jalaluddin Haqqani, leads the network's day-to-day activities.

- A July 2014 drone strike reportedly killed two senior Haqqani leaders.

- **Al-Qaeda Connections**

- The Haqqani Network collaborates with al-Qaeda and the Taliban's Quetta Shura.

- HQN is also presumed responsible for many attacks for which the Afghan Taliban claims credit.

- Expert Vahid Brown has explained that the group "has some utility in using the Taliban brand. The Taliban brand kind of represents opposition to foreign intervention in Afghanistan....They try to appear as a unified front."

- **What are its capabilities?**

- According to the State Department, HQN is believed to have several hundred core members, but it also draws strength and fighters through its cooperation with other terrorist organizations operating in the Af-Pak region.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**

- The Haqqani Network has never conducted an attack outside of the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, though it has targeted Western interests and taken Western captives.

- The group held U.S. Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl captive for nearly five years in territory it controlled in Pakistan.

- **HQN Tactics**

- On September 13, 2011, the Haqqani Network carried out a complex assault on the U.S. Embassy and NATO headquarter in Kabul, killing seven Afghans.

- HWN is also presumed responsible for another September 2011 attack, on a NATO military base in Wardak province that killed four Afghans and injured 77 American troops.

- Former NCTC director Matthew Olsen said in 2013: "The Haqqani network is one of the most capable and lethal insurgent groups in Afghanistan and poses a serious threat to the stability of the Afghan state as we approach 2014 and beyond. The Haqqani network's continued ability to launch major attacks in Kabul and the east suggests the Haqqanis will remain a viable challenge to Afghan government control in the eastern and central provinces post 2014."

U.S. and International Response

- **Pakistani Efforts**

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- **U.S. Support**

- The United States designated the Haqqani Network a Foreign Terrorist Organization in September 2012.

- The Obama administration has carried out approximately 35 drone strikes against HQN targets since 2009, killing the group's operational commander Badruddin Haqqani in August 2012.

Afghan Taliban

Background

- **What is the Afghan Taliban?**

- The Afghan Taliban is a Sunni Islamist nationalist and pro-Pashtun movement that ruled most of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001.
- The word "Taliban" is Pashto for "students."

- **Where is it operating?**

- The Afghan Taliban is based and active in Afghanistan.

- **Where did it come from?**

- Founded in the early 1990s, mainly by peasant farmers and men studying Islam in Afghan and Pakistani religious schools, the Taliban expanded its control over Afghanistan in a civil war after the Soviet-backed Afghan government fell in 1992.

- **Afghan Taliban Leadership**

- Led by Mullah Mohammad Omar, who was president of Afghanistan during the Taliban's rule.

- **Al-Qaeda Connections**

- The Taliban provided a safe haven for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in the years leading up to 9/11, providing a base for al-Qaeda to recruit and train members for global attacks.

- **What are its capabilities?**

- U.S. government officials estimate the number of Taliban members at around 35,000.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**

- The Afghan Taliban has shown no interest in mounting an attack against the U.S. homeland.
- In cooperation with the Haqqani Network, the Afghan Taliban held U.S. Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl from June 2009 to May 2014.

- **Afghan Taliban Tactics**

- Despite International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) efforts, the Taliban continues to threaten Afghan stability by conducting mass-casualty attacks, exploiting tribal and historical rivalries and continuing its involvement in the opium trade.
- In 2013, the Taliban carried out several large-scale attacks in Kabul:
 - A suicide attack at the Kabul International Airport; then outside the Supreme Court, killing at least 17 civilians; and finally in Kabul's "Green Zone," where the presidential palace, ISAF headquarters, and multiple foreign embassies are located.
- As the United States and other countries prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban is advancing out of its traditional safe havens, controlling crucial highways surrounding Kabul.

- **The Future of the Threat**

- The Afghan Taliban continues to lead a potent insurgency in Afghanistan, remaining in control of significant swaths of land. They will continue to threaten Afghan stability after the NATO combat mission ends in December 2014.

U.S. and International Response

- **U.S. and Allied Efforts**

- Since the troop surge in late 2009, ISAF's increased presence and frequent operations — especially in the Taliban's safe haven of southern Afghanistan — have decreased the group's freedom of movement.
- Though the United States and Afghanistan have pursued a negotiated settlement with the Taliban, these talks look unlikely to succeed before international forces conclude combat operations in December 2014.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Background

- **What is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan?**
 - The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is an extremist organization which seeks to overthrow the government in Uzbekistan and form an Islamic caliphate in Central Asia.
- **Where is it operating?**
 - Based in Pakistan's Federally Administrated Tribal Areas, the IMU is active in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- **Where did it come from?**
 - Established in the late 1990s to overthrow the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan, the IMU since moved to bases in Afghanistan in the early 2000s and then fled to Pakistan after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.
 - The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) is a splinter group of the IMU, which split from the IMU in the early 2000s to pursue a more global vision of violent jihad.
- **IMU Leadership?**
 - After IMU leader Abu Usman Adil was killed in 2012, the IMU announced that his deputy Usman Ghazi would be its new leader.
- **What are its capabilities?**
 - In April 2014, the U.S. State Department estimated that the IMU had between 200 and 300 members and that its splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Union, had 100 to 200 members.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**
 - While the IMU has drawn support from radicalized Westerners and developed close ties with al-Qaeda-linked groups, its website has only addressed jihad in the West in general terms.
- **IMU Tactics**
 - IMU's training of fighters is among the more rigorous of jihadist groups in the region, and it has a robust media operation.
 - The IMU claimed responsibility for the June 2014 attack on Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, which killed 28 people.
- **IMU Affiliates**
 - The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has developed close ties with the Pakistani Taliban. The two groups have conducted several joint operations, including a 2012 attack that released 400 prisoners from Pakistan's Bannu Prison.
 - The IMU and the IJU have also been in close contact and collaboration with the Haqqani Network on attacks in Afghanistan.
 - In April 2013, Afghan National Army General Zalmay Wesa stated that IMU operatives are the focus of northern-based Afghan Special Forces units and that they have played a key role in spreading explosives knowledge to other insurgents.

- **Western Recruitment**

- Both the IMU and the IJU have specifically targeted its Western recruitments at Germany, releasing videos showing German militants and with German subtitles.
 - In September 2009, Pakistan authorities uncovered an IMU-controlled training camp attended by mostly Germans, as well as a few Swedes.
 - Ahmad Siddiqui and Rami Makanesi, German citizens who joined the IMU in Pakistan in March 2009, were caught in mid-2010 as they planned to return to Germany to fundraise for al-Qaeda.
 - German-born Muslim convert Eric Breininger was allegedly involved in a 2007 IJU plot to attack U.S. targets in Sauerland, Germany and in attacks on International Security Assistance Force soldiers in Afghanistan.
- Since 2012, four individuals linked or expressing links to Uzbek military groups have been indicted in the United States.

U.S. and International Response

- **U.S. Efforts**

- The United States designated the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan a Foreign Terrorist Organization in September 2000, and the Islamic Jihad Union in June 2005.
- U.S. counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations have broadened their focus on the IMU, increasing the number of drone strikes and raids against IMU strongholds.
 - U.S. drone strikes have killed two of the group's leaders: Tahir Yuldashev in September 2009 and Abu Usman Adil in August 2012.

Lashkar-e-Taiba

Background

- **What is the Lashkar-e-Taiba?**

- Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), also known as the Army of the Righteous, is one of the largest Kashmir-focused military groups.

- **Where is it operating?**

- LeT is based in Pakistan, and is active in India and the Af-Pak region.

- **Where did it come from?**

- Formed in the early 1990s, LeT began as the military wing of the Pakistani Islamist organization Markaz-ad-Dawa-wal-Irshad, which recruited volunteers to fight alongside the Taliban.

- Since 1993, Lashkar-e-Taiba has carried out numerous attacks against Indian troops and Indian civilians and has become active in the insurgency in Afghanistan.

- **Lashkar-e-Taiba Leadership**

- Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, located in Pakistan.

- **Al-Qaeda Connections**

- Though there are no official ties between Lashkar-e-Taiba and al-Qaeda, there is evidence of communication and cooperation between the two groups.

- Al-Qaeda operatives have attended LeT training camps and used LeT safehouses.

- **What are its capabilities?**

- According to the NCTC, LeT likely has several thousand members.

- LeT has its headquarters in Muridke near Lahore in Pakistan and is reported to operate schools and medical services across Pakistan.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**

- Lashkar-e-Taiba has not conducted a mass-casualty attack outside of the Af-Pak region since 2008 and has not carried out attacks against the West.

- **Lashkar-e-Taiba Tactics**

- LeT has primarily targeted Indians and Indian facilities, but it also assists insurgents in Afghanistan.

- LeT shares its core sentiments – opposition to India – with the Pakistani government and military, and so operates with few constraints in Pakistan.

- Lashkar-e-Taiba's most notorious attacks occurred in November 2008 in Mumbai, when militants attacked several sites, killing nearly 200 people.

- **Western Recruitment**

- Though LeT primarily recruits Pakistani nationals seeking a united Kashmir under Pakistani rule, it has also recruited internationally.
- “Shoe bomber” Richard Reid and Shahzad Tanweer, one of the London subway bombers, are believed to have attended LeT training camps or interacted with LeT militants in the early to mid-2000s.
- An American citizen, David Coleman Headley, was instrumental in the 2008 LeT Mumbai massacre. In January 2012, following a plea bargain with U.S. federal prosecutors, he was sentenced to 35 years in prison.

- ***U.S. and International Response***

- The United States declared Lashkar-e-Taiba a Foreign Terrorist Organization in December 2001, leading then-Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to ban the group inside Pakistan.

Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis

Background

- **What is Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis?**
 - Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) is an Egyptian jihadist group inspired by al-Qaeda.
- **Where is it operating?**
 - ABM is based and active in Egypt.
- **Where did it come from?**
 - Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis has been operating in the Sinai Peninsula since the Egyptian Revolution in 2011.
- **What are its capabilities?**
 - The group is in possession of anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**
 - Though ABM shares some ideology with al-Qaeda, it is not a formal al-Qaeda affiliate and its ambitions are primarily local.
- **Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis Tactics**
 - Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on the Israeli port of Eilat in January 2014.
 - ABM has also targeted government officials:
 - Attempted to assassinate the Egyptian Interior Minister in September 2013;
 - Assassinated the head of the Interior Minister's technical office in January 2014.
 - ABM has also targeted foreign tourists, and claimed responsibility for a February 2014 tour bus bombing in the Sinai Peninsula, which killed 4.

U.S. and International Response

- The United States designated Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in April 2014.

Ansar Al-Sharia

Background

- **What is Ansar al-Sharia?**
 - Ansar al-Sharia ("Supporters of Sharia") is an Islamist militant group active in Libya.
- **Where is it operating?**
 - Ansar al-Sharia is based and active in Libya.
- **Where did it come from?**
 - Ansar al-Sharia, along with other active Libyan militant groups, developed in the Libyan security vacuum after the fall of the Muammar Gaddafi regime in 2011.
- **What are its capabilities?**
 - The group is in possession of anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons.

The Threat

- **The Threat to the Homeland**
 - Though Ansar al-Sharia shares some ideology with al-Qaeda, it is not a formal al-Qaeda affiliate, and its attacks have occurred solely within Libya.
- **Ansar al-Sharia Activities**
 - Although the group's official leaders denied involvement in the 2012 attack on U.S. government facilities in Benghazi, some Ansar al-Sharia members participated in the attack.
 - In coalition with other Libyan militias, Ansar al-Sharia overran a Libyan Special Forces base in July 2014.

U.S. and International Response

- The United States designated Ansar al-Sharia as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in January 2014.
- In August 2014, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates reportedly conducted airstrikes on militias in Libya without U.S. knowledge.