

**Analitical Support & Sanctions Monitoring Team
1267/1988 UNSC Sanctions Committees**



**The evolving security threat - border implications
Brussels 2 - 4 October 2018**

Overview



A) Threat Assessment

- Status of ISIL
- Developing threat from ISIL and Al-Qaida

B) Regional Trends

- Levant
- Arabian Peninsula
- North Africa
- West Africa
- East Africa
- Europe
- Central and South Asia
- South-East Asia

C) Border Implications

A) Status of ISIL



- ISIL lost ground near Damascus, more resilient in Eastern Syria
- Revival of SDF commitment restored military momentum against ISIL in the east in May-June 2018
- ISIL has lost significant fighters and personnel but many are staying on
- 20,000-plus ISIL members in Syria and Iraq including thousands of FTFs
- Attrition to ISIL leadership and structures but Baghdadi is still in charge and key positions are still staffed and functioning
- Amaq news outlet still functioning. ISIL propaganda weaker than it was before 2017, more reliant on affiliates, but output level has stabilized.

A) Developing Threat from ISIL/AQ



- ISIL returnees and relocators pose “devolved threat” but numbers low – many FTFs may now opt to remain in the conflict zone – and many thousands await processing as detainees in Iraq and Syria
- ISIL is less capable than it was of directing attacks but this may be temporary – inspired terrorist activity continues at a high level
- Reduced, covert version of ISIL-core will survive in Iraq and Syria; no identifiable “new caliphate” but largest affiliate is IS-Khorasan; significant numbers also in Libya, South-East Asia, West Africa
- Al-Qaida resilient, affiliates and allies stronger than ISIL in Somalia, Yemen, South Asia and the Sahel

B) Levant



- Although defeated militarily in Iraq, ISIL maintains a strong low-profile presence in the north and near the Syrian border. In Syria it is strongest in Dayr al-Zawr province, but it also present in other parts of Syria. Other ISIL members are lying low in, and may represent a threat to, neighbouring countries.
- ISIL finances are harder to analyse now it is no longer a quasi-state. In early 2018 it regained limited access to hydrocarbons. It continues to move money across borders and provide some support to its affiliates. It is estimated to hold reserves in the low \$100 millions. Its investment and planned use of these is a key information gap.
- Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani leads Al-Nusrah Front and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the latter now listed as an alias of the former. ANF/HTS is the dominant terrorist group in Idlib and western Syria. It is associated with AQ but has complex, difficult relations with other Syrian opposition groups, including some more closely aligned with AQ-core.
- Member States report that Zawahiri has influenced these AQ-related issues in western Syria.

B) Arabian Peninsula



- AQ remains much stronger than ISIL in this region; AQAP continues to benefit from the war in Yemen and serve as a hub for threatening the wider region
- AQAP has suffered attrition from Yemeni and international CT operations – explosives expert Ibrahim al-Asiri the most strategically significant casualty
- AQAP practices kidnapping for ransom, still cash-rich from when it controlled Mukalla and was able to sell oil and loot the local branch of the Central Bank
- Inspire and Al Masra: again stressing AQAP's strategic importance to AQ-core, it is still entrusted with a global lead media and propaganda role
- ISIL-Yemen has 250-500 members – attempts to compete with AQAP, claim attacks which they also claim, but ISIL's extreme ideology and methods appear unattractive to Yemenis

B) North Africa



- Libya: Large ISIL presence poses significant internal and cross-border threat
 - Despite the earlier loss of Sirte, ISIL remains operationally capable in Libya
 - Its total strength is around 3,000, widely dispersed around the country
 - It killed 13 people in an attack on the Elections Commission in May 2018
 - AQ is resurgent in Libya and co-operates with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb
- Tunisia: ISIL and AQ elements present in mountainous west
 - Tunisia affected by security situation in Libya
 - Tunisian military successes against ISIL and AQ presences in Kasserine area
- Egypt: Military operations continue against ISIL-affiliated ABM
 - Resilience of ABM concerning but no significant recent attacks in Egypt/Sinai
 - Group assessed to consist of up to 1,000 fighters
- North African FTFs numerous, may join any network, serious threat to region
- Smuggling and trafficking huge issues in region, overlap with terrorist networks

B) West Africa



- AQ much stronger than ISIL in this region: AQ-aligned Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) coalition has consolidated in Mali and the Sahel, grown more active
- Al Mourabitoun component supplies main operational capability to JNIM, which has mounted a succession of ambitious attacks on French and other international targets
- Ansarul Islam having destructive impact on security in Burkina Faso out of proportion to its size – could represent attractive partners for JNIM
- Member State concerns about ethnic conflicts in the region and territorial control by terrorist groups which enable them to intimidate, divide and radicalize the populations; uncontrolled cash economy in region also exploited by terrorists for funding purposes
- Islamic State in the Greater Sahara is small (hundreds) and content to co-exist with the much stronger JNIM – cooperation is expected to increase but a merger is unlikely
- Islamic State West Africa is larger (low thousands) and dominates its Lake Chad Basin turf

B) East Africa



- Al-Shabaab remains the dominant terrorist group in Somalia – it continues to target AMISOM troops and conduct incursions into neighbouring countries
- Despite being under military pressure, it has diversified its modus operandi and been able to mount attacks into central Mogadishu from its reinforced presence in Banadir region
- Following the death of about 200 of its fighters in early 2018, Al-Shabaab dispersed personnel into small groups in various locations, with an adverse effect on operations and morale
- Al-Shabaab obtains military equipment locally, but also receives some light weapons from Libya and Yemen, and is assessed to have enough to sustain itself for the medium term
- ISIL in Somalia is weaker than Al-Shabaab, but operationally ambitious – its leader, Abdikadir Mumin, has been in touch with Somali FTFs in Syria, who may choose to relocate to Puntland
- ISIL is helped in Somalia by porous borders for movement of personnel and materiel, but hindered by scarce resources as it does not receive enough support from ISIL-core or IS-Y

B) Europe



- ISIL continues to inspire terrorist activity in Europe but appears unable to direct attacks – tempo was lower in the first half of 2018 than in early 2017 – most plots involved unsophisticated methods – perpetrators often had petty criminal records but were not returnees/relocators or known security threats
- 2018 FIFA World Cup Finals in Russia are an example where ISIL propaganda has aimed at inspiring attacks by lone or self-directed terrorists
- Returnees and relocators have not materialized in the numbers expected but represent a continuing challenge, with potential to galvanize existing ISIL networks and sympathisers – European Member States see Internet-based radicalization, recruitment and instruction as a key component in this
- In Europe as elsewhere, uncertainty over threat from dependents of FTFs
- Radicalization in prisons and release of terrorist inmates are also challenges

B) Central and South Asia



- AQ maintains a presence and strong alliances, with Zawahiri and potential future leader Hamza Bin Laden reported to be in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas
- AQ-aligned Central Asian groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan are mainly in northern Afghanistan; Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent mainly in the southeast
- ISIL Khorasan Province, membership is mainly from the immediate region. Most ISIL members in Afghanistan are ex-TTP (Pakistani Taliban) and the great majority have never been to the Levant.
- ISIL's numbers and geographical spread, and the proportion amongst them of relocators from the Levant conflict zone, are all reported to be steadily increasing
- ISIL continues to mount high-profile attacks, including in Kabul – it has impact out of proportion to its numbers – it sought to sabotage the June 2018 ceasefire
- Member States are concerned about the threat which ISIL may pose from its Afghan bases – some disrupted plots in Europe have had Afghan links – and Central Asian terrorists in Afghanistan may pose an emerging threat across the northern borders

B) South-East Asia



- ISIL claimed responsibility for attacks which it appears to have inspired in Indonesia in May 2018, against churches and security establishment targets; troubling new modus operandi of using whole families as suicide bombers
- Despite the defeat of ISIL affiliates in Marawi City in late 2017, the terrorist threat persists in southern Philippines – recruitment, organization and training continue – non-South-East Asian suspected FTFs have been arrested
- Leadership remains an issue for ISIL in Mindanao and the wider region, with no overall leader having been identified since the death of Hapilon; but they do have money, both from ISIL-core and from looting in Marawi
- Kidnapping incidents decreased in 2017, especially at sea, perhaps a result of increased trilateral Philippine-Indonesian-Malaysian maritime cooperation

C) Border Implications



- Flow of FTF, returnees, relocators, family members, UNSC sanctions listed individual (API, PNR).
- Cross-border transportation of IEDs components (Programme Global Shield).
- International diversion of small arms, weapons, dual use goods.
- Illicit financial flows (cash couriers, bulk cash smuggling).
- Illicit trafficking of cultural property.
- Assets freeze measure regarding cross-border transportation of commodities and financial assets controlled by or related to listed individual and entities.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

