

Assessing the Threat From al Qaeda

Is the militant Islamist group still a danger to the West?

Since carrying out the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, al Qaeda has become more decentralized, and some say stronger, with affiliates launching sectarian attacks in the Middle East, Somalia, Algeria and beyond. The ruthless Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) currently sweeping through Iraq, was a part of al Qaeda until February, when it was expelled for excessive brutality. In Yemen, President Obama has launched more than 90 drone strikes against an al Qaeda affiliate there, known as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, considered the most serious direct threat to the United States. Meanwhile, al Qaeda's traditional leadership in Pakistan is weaker as a result of U.S. drone strikes that peaked there in 2010 and the killing of Osama bin Laden by Navy SEALs in 2011. Counterterrorism experts are divided over how to define the al Qaeda of today, whether it continues to pose a danger to the West and how the United States should respond.



An anti-government Sunni militant cleans his weapon during fighting in Ramadi, Iraq, in January between the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria, known as ISIS, and government forces. Al Qaeda cut its ties with ISIS in February over its brutal tactics and challenges to al Qaeda authority. Still considered a serious global threat, al Qaeda is now more decentralized and linked to jihadist groups worldwide.

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Assessing the Threat from al Qaeda

BY BARBARA MANTEL

THE ISSUES

In late April, a CIA officer and a U.S. Special Operations commando shot and killed two armed men trying to kidnap them from a barbershop in Sana, the capital of Yemen. Officials later said the dead men were members of an al Qaeda-linked cell that had broken 19 inmates out of a Yemeni prison in February, tried to assassinate a German diplomat in April and killed a Frenchman in May.¹

The barbershop shooting shines a light on America's clandestine operations in Yemen, where U.S. Special Operations troops train Yemeni counterterrorism forces and American commandos help target al Qaeda suspects for drone strikes.²

As of April 21, the United States had launched 94 drone attacks and 15 conventional air strikes in Yemen, most since 2009 under President Obama, according to the Washington-based New America Foundation, a think tank that tracks U.S. drone warfare. The drone and cruise missile strikes have killed between 669 and 887 militants and up to 87 civilians.³

"For the foreseeable future, the most direct threat to America at home and abroad remains terrorism," Obama told graduating cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point last month.⁴ And Yemen has become the center of the country's counterterrorism campaign, home to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Sunni Muslim extremist group and al Qaeda franchise that poses the most serious direct threat to the United States, according to counterterrorism officials.



Getty Images/Anadolu Agency/Mohammed Hamoud

Sami Dayan, an al Qaeda leader in Yemen, was sentenced in April to 15 years in prison for his role in the 2012 assassination of a Yemeni general. Yemen-based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is among four Sunni Muslim extremist groups that have sworn allegiance to al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. AQAP targets local, U.S. and other Western interests in the region and has attempted attacks against the United States.

"AQAP . . . has made repeated efforts to export terrorism to our homeland," Jeh Johnson, Secretary of Homeland Security, told Congress in May.⁵ Operatives from AQAP hid bombs in printer toner cartridges being shipped aboard U.S.-bound flights in 2010, and AQAP was blamed for a suicide bomber's bungled 2009 attempt to detonate an explosive device — hidden in his underwear — aboard a Detroit-bound jet.

Al Qaeda will forever be associated in the American mind with the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks that killed 2,977 people and prompted President George W. Bush to declare war on terrorism. But today's al Qaeda is far different from the hierarchical organization that mounted the 9/11 at-

tacks, led by Osama bin Laden operating from a safe haven in Afghanistan. Since 2004, U.S. drone strikes have killed dozens of top al Qaeda leaders hiding in neighboring Pakistan, and a U.S. Navy SEAL team killed bin Laden there in 2011.

Now experts describe a smaller, weaker, Pakistan-based al Qaeda leadership, often referred to as "al Qaeda core," operating alongside a murky far-flung network of affiliates, associates and supporters. Such groups have been attempting to control territory in northwest and eastern Africa and in Iraq, Syria and Yemen in the Middle East. (*See map, p. 556.*) They are taking advantage of the instability and civil war that emerged in some countries after the Arab Spring protest movement swept across North Africa and the Middle East in 2011, dislodging at least four dictators.⁶

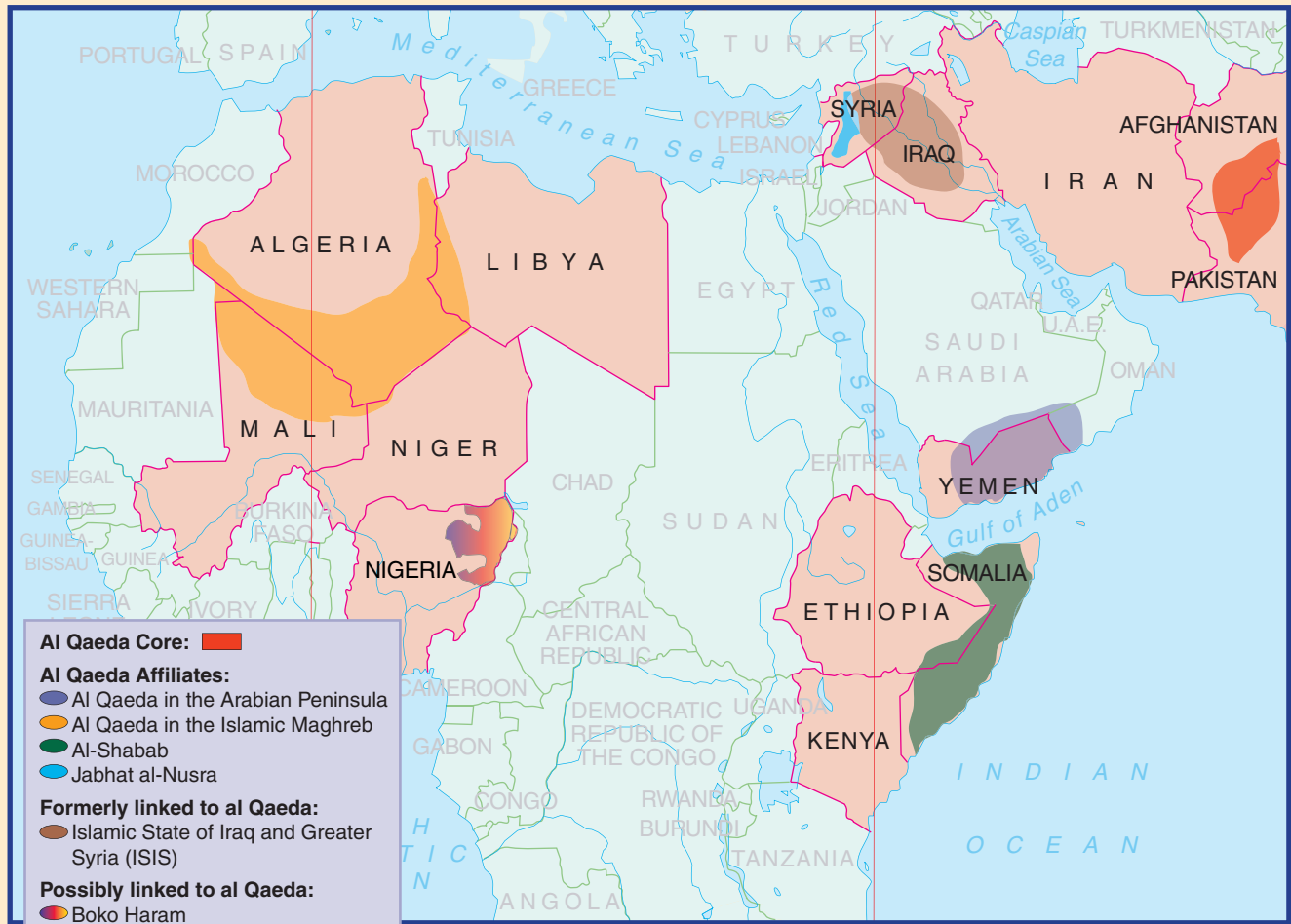
These groups, which are Sunni, are also taking advantage of renewed ethnic and religious conflict stemming from the age-old struggle over which branch of Islam — Sunni or Shiite — will control the Middle East. Shiite-led Syria* and Iraq are supported by the region's major Shiite power, Iran. The rival Sunni-led governments of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States have been supporting Sunni rebels in Syria, but not al Qaeda. Private citizens, however, have been sending money to extremists in Syria despite legal prohibitions in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, a big source of funds.⁷

But counterterrorism experts disagree about the strength of the operational ties of the affiliates and associates to al Qaeda's core leadership, their long-

* Syria's leaders are Alawites, a Shiite sect.

Al Qaeda Network Spans Africa, Middle East

Al Qaeda operates from bases in eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan. Al Qaeda affiliates operate in Syria, the Arabian Peninsula, Somalia and parts of northwestern Africa. Groups that share the Islamist philosophy of al Qaeda but are not official affiliates include the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) and Boko Haram in Nigeria.*



* ISIS, formerly Al Qaeda in Iraq, split off from al Qaeda in February.

Source: Colin Freeman, Barney Henderson and Mark Oliver, "Al-Qaeda map: Isis, Boko Haram and other affiliates' strongholds across Africa and Asia," *The Telegraph (U.K.)*, June 12, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/mubbuka>; "Global Terrorism Database," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, <http://tinyurl.com/m4bfw6>

term goals and whether they pose a direct threat to the West. In fact, the experts can't agree on the very nature of al Qaeda: Is it a strong terrorist network led by al Qaeda's core leadership in Pakistan, a loose network of affiliates with weakening links to core al Qaeda or more of a brand opportunistically adopted by disconnected jihadists groups?

"The Defense Department, the Justice Department and the State Department each have their own definition of the problem," says Christopher Swift, a fellow at the University of Virginia's Center for National Security Law.

Yet defining and understanding al Qaeda is critical to forming policy, experts say. "We can't fight an enemy that

we don't know," says Katherine Zimmerman, a senior analyst for the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank. "We need to understand the enemy to craft a strategy to defeat it."

Most analysts agree that four al Qaeda affiliates, or franchises, are part of the network. They have sworn allegiance

to Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's successor, believed to be living in Pakistan, and have been recognized by him in return. They are:

- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, whose leader, Nasir al-Wahishi, is also Zawahiri's second-in-command at al Qaeda;
- Al-Shabab, an extremist group fighting for control of Somalia;
- Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which aims to overthrow the Algerian government and institute an Islamic state;
- Jabhat al-Nusra, formed two years ago to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad in Syria's bloody civil war.

Until February, the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS)* — considered one of the most ruthless jihadist groups — was officially affiliated with al Qaeda. Formerly known as Al Qaeda in Iraq, the group broadened its fight into Syria and has dramatically expanded its presence in Iraq, taking control this year of the Iraqi cities of Ramadi, Falluja, Mosul and Tikrit and currently working its way south to Baghdad. Zawahiri severed ties to the group over its brutal tactics and its refusal to obey his order to leave the Syrian theater to Jabhat al-Nusra.

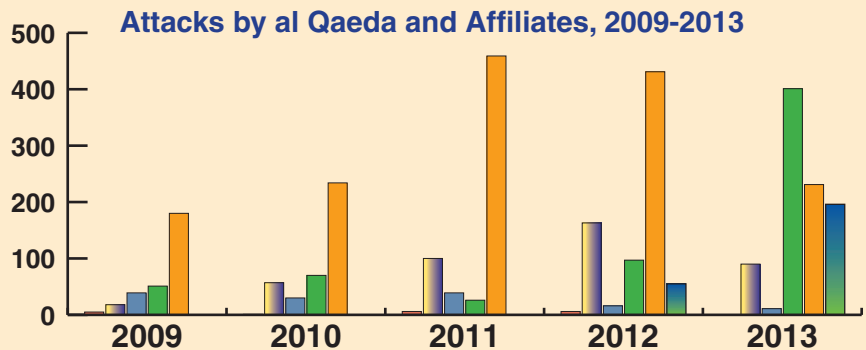
While most analysts agree on which groups are al Qaeda affiliates, they disagree on which other violent jihadist groups in Pakistan, the Middle East and North Africa are al Qaeda "associates." Arguments hinge on whether one believes a group shares al Qaeda's ideology — a belief in violent jihad to create an Islamic caliphate under strict Islamic law, or sharia, extending across all Muslim lands; has strong operational ties to core al Qaeda or its sworn affiliates; and potentially threatens the West.

For instance, Zimmerman and others who define al Qaeda broadly also include an alliance of militant groups

* ISIS is also sometimes referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

Al Qaeda Attacks Exceed 900 in 2013

Attacks by al Qaeda and its main affiliates — plus the breakaway affiliate Al Qaeda in Iraq — more than tripled from 2009 to 2013, to 929. Nearly 90 percent of the 2013 attacks were carried out by groups in Syria, Somalia and Iraq. Al Qaeda core has not launched an attack since 2012.



* Al Qaeda in Iraq split off from al Qaeda in February and is now called the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS).

Source: Seth G. Jones, "A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of al Qaeda and Other Salafi Jihadists," RAND Corp., 2014, p. 35, <http://tinyurl.com/pxtkmsm>

called Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is fighting the military in Pakistan's tribal territories.* "TTP has worked very closely with al Qaeda leadership and shares al Qaeda's ideology," says Zimmerman. She also includes Ansar al Din, which took control of northern Mali in 2012 but was ousted by French forces in early 2013. "It seeks to install a sharia-based government in north Mali and would permit AQIM to use the region as a base of operations."

Thomas Joscelyn, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank, also

* The TTP, also known as the Pakistan Taliban, is not directly affiliated with the Afghan Taliban, which is fighting international coalition and Afghan security forces in Afghanistan. Both groups are on U.S. foreign terrorist lists. The five detainees recently released from Guantánamo in exchange for U.S. Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl were from the Afghan Taliban, which is not formally part of al Qaeda.

includes Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia, a radical Islamist group formed in 2011 and accused of a wave of political assassinations last year. "First of all, the leaders have al Qaeda dossiers, and, second, their rhetoric is openly al Qaeda," says Joscelyn. "Third, there are reports of them working with AQIM, and their social media is littered with al Qaeda propaganda." He also includes Ansar al-Sharia in Benghazi, notorious for its role in the Sept. 11, 2012, consulate attack that killed U.S. Ambassador to Libya J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans.

But Swift says groups like Ansar al Din have only loose opportunistic ties to al Qaeda. "If you define al Qaeda by its ideology, you will find al Qaeda everywhere, which is not a terribly helpful basis for analysis," he says. "You can share the al Qaeda ideology and not have any operational link to al Qaeda and also have very different political objectives."

ASSESSING THE THREAT FROM AL QAEDA

“Al Qaeda is largely a brand more than a coherent organization,” says Robert Grenier, chairman of ERG Partners, a consultant to private security and intelligence firms, and former head of the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center. “The al Qaeda brand is still very powerful and is therefore appropriated by extremist groups which share a very similar doctrine of Islam, but operationally, those organizations, most often, have . . . only very tenuous connections with al Qaeda core.”

In fact, Grenier argues that even AQIM and al-Shabab, which have sworn allegiance to al Qaeda, “operate quite independently, and their specific local agendas, although maybe working in parallel, are actually quite separate.”

As the world watches the ongoing civil war in Syria and the increasingly successful insurgency in Iraq, here are some of the questions being debated by counterterrorism experts and government officials:

Is al Qaeda weaker since Osama bin Laden was killed?

U.S. drone strikes and targeted assassinations have killed bin Laden, nearly three dozen of his key lieutenants and hundreds of fighters in Pakistan. “Al Qaeda’s core leadership has been degraded, limiting its ability to conduct attacks and direct its followers,” said a recent U.S. State Department analysis.⁸

“The drone strikes have had a severe impact on al Qaeda core in Pakistan,” says former FBI Special Agent Clint Watts, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a Philadelphia-based think tank. The strikes have “really slowed down their communications and coordination.”

But al Qaeda’s core should not be underestimated, says Bruce Hoffman, director of Georgetown University’s Center for Security Studies. It has a defined and articulated strategy and “a deeper bench of personnel than we imagined,” says Hoffman. Al Qaeda is filling key spots with Pakistanis — its media arm

recently has been publishing more in Urdu, Pakistan’s national language, than in Arabic — and “there still are senior commanders in al Qaeda who have fought in Afghanistan against the [Soviets in the 1980s] and have gravitas and stature,” he says.

Even if al Qaeda’s core is replenishing its ranks and hanging on, Zawahiri is losing control of the group’s affiliates, say some analysts, citing Syria as a prime example. “In recent months, a full-scale civil war has erupted within al Qaeda,” said J. M. Berger, editor of *intelwire.com*, which publishes terrorism research and analysis.⁹

When Zawahiri ordered ISIS to leave Syria and allow rival affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra to spearhead al Qaeda’s fight against Syrian President al-Assad, ISIS openly defied him and continued its bloody feud with Jabhat al-Nusra. ISIS then taunted Zawahiri on social media.¹⁰ “In Syria, Zawahiri is starting to resemble a guide more than a military commander,” said Berger.¹¹

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, disagrees with Berger. ISIS has drawn little support from other groups, he said, while Zawahiri is supported “across the al Qaeda spectrum,” including by AQAP, AQIM, al-Shabab and other militant jihadist groups and “a coterie of extremist clerics.”¹²

In addition, al Qaeda’s leadership is still exerting some control in Syria, according to Gartenstein-Ross, with several senior al Qaeda figures “integrated into Syrian jihadists groups at the highest level.” They include founding al Qaeda member Abu Firas al-Suri and al Qaeda’s former head of security for counterintelligence, Abu Wafa al-Saudi.¹³

Still, Zawahiri cannot offer the deep pockets and safe haven that bin Laden could, many analysts say. In fact, most al Qaeda affiliates raise their own money, sometimes through kidnapping for ransom, such as AQIM.

In June, ISIS allegedly stole \$430 million from Iraq’s central bank in Mosul,

which would make it the world’s richest terrorist group.¹⁴

While core al Qaeda may be weaker, many analysts argue that the al Qaeda network, however defined, is stronger. In fact, al Qaeda affiliates — and former affiliate ISIS — control more territory today than in 2011, when bin Laden was killed and the Arab Spring began. Al Qaeda was not in Syria or Lebanon two years ago, but now Jabhat Al-Nusra and ISIS control large swaths of northeastern Syria, and ISIS is gaining considerable territory in Iraq. And both are making inroads into Lebanon. (See “*Current Situation*,” p. 571.)

If other groups with looser ties to core al Qaeda are included, the amount of territory under al Qaeda’s control expands. Since bin Laden’s death, “we’ve seen al Qaeda offshoots active in Mali, Mauritania, Niger and crossing the border to stage attacks in Cameroon,” says Hoffman. “They have been very adept at taking advantage of lawless border areas and ungoverned or undergoverned regions.”

However, al Qaeda affiliates and associated groups are often their own worst enemy, says Andrew Liepman, a senior policy analyst at the Rand Corp., a think tank in Santa Monica, Calif., and a former principal deputy director of the National Counterterrorism Center. “They overstretch, they establish brutal regulations that communities don’t welcome — whether it’s no drinking, no smoking, no mixing of the sexes or no education of girls,” he says.

For example, he cites what happened in 2012 in the northern reaches of Mali, a moderate Muslim country in West Africa. Ansar al Din and AQIM took over large swathes of territory, but when the French went in to clear them out in early 2013, the local population applauded the French — their former colonial masters — for liberating them from the harsh tactics and rules imposed by the Islamists.

And in Somalia, al-Shabab refused Western aid during the 2011 famine

in southern Somalia. “The local population thought that was ridiculous, and that, combined with a pretty aggressive campaign by Kenyan and African Union troops, pushed al-Shabab into the bush between Somalia and Kenya,” he says.

However, al-Shabab remains lethal, as it demonstrated last September, when members stormed the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, killing at least 67 people.

Does al Qaeda remain a threat to the West?

Al Qaeda’s core leadership has not directed a successful attack against a Western target since the 2005 bombings of the London Underground transit system and a city bus, which killed 56 people, including the four suicide bombers, and injured more than 800. But it has not stopped trying. Afghan-born American resident Najibullah Zazi, who plotted to bomb the New York City subway system on the eighth anniversary of 9/11, testified that he and two co-conspirators had trained with al Qaeda in Pakistan.

“Al Qaeda has been doing its utmost to attack the United States and has not pulled any punches,” according to retired U.S. Army officer Thomas Lynch, a research fellow at the National Defense University’s Institute of National Strategic Studies in Washington. However, the attacks “failed repeatedly before bin Laden’s death and should be expected to continue to fail now that he is dead.”¹⁵ Lynch says a seriously degraded al Qaeda core has lost its operational capability and is no longer a global threat.

What is left are Salafi-jihadist* groups operating with local agendas from Tunisia to Pakistan, many of which have existed, in one form or another, since before al Qaeda was created, says Lynch. “They will shout ‘death to America’ and ‘death to the West,’ and

* Salifists are ultraconservative fundamentalist Sunni Muslims who want to return Islam to seventh-century religious traditions.

Guide to al Qaeda Affiliates

Four Sunni Muslim extremist groups have sworn allegiance to al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri:

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP): Based in Yemen. Emerged when Yemeni and Saudi terrorists groups unified in January 2009. Targets local, U.S. and other Western interests in the Arabian Peninsula and has attempted attacks against the United States. Leader Nasir al-Wahishi is second-in-command to Zawahiri.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): Based in Algeria. Operates in the country’s coastal areas and parts of the south, as well as in Mali’s northern desert regions. Founded in 1998 as a faction of Algeria’s then-largest terrorist group. Algerian counterterrorism measures have reduced its ranks from more than 30,000 to fewer than 1,000. Targets local and Western interests.

Al-Shabab: Emerged from militant wing of Somali Council of Islamic Courts that took over most of southern Somalia in 2006. Recently weakened by Somali, Ethiopian and African Union military forces but continues lethal attacks in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. Members come from disparate clans, but its senior leaders are affiliated with al Qaeda and are believed to have fought the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Jabhat al-Nusra: Created in January 2012 to overthrow regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Composed mostly of Syrians, but also attracts Western fighters. Controls territory in northern Syria. Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) played significant role in its founding, but the groups have engaged in a bloody feud inside Syria for the past year.

Source: National Counterterrorism Center, www.nctc.gov.

some will even claim to be of al Qaeda, although many do not, but their focus is on local revolution and insurgency in Muslim countries.” And they lack “the capability to mount serious catastrophic terror threats in the West,” he says.

But Hoffman, at Georgetown, says that “completely disregards their statements and what they have argued is their strategy.” Salafi-jihadists may be focusing on local conflicts now, but that can change in the future, he says.

If any of the world’s violent jihadist groups pose a threat to the West, it is AQAP, says Watts, of the Foreign

Policy Research Institute. “Its capability has, however, been degraded a bit because of the drone strikes and the leaders they have lost,” he says, “and there is debate swirling about whether their master bomb maker is still alive.”

Last August, the U.S. temporarily shut down 22 embassies and consulates across the Middle East and North Africa after a message was intercepted between Zawahiri and AQAP leader Nasir al-Wahishi describing a planned terror attack.¹⁶ Although the message did not give time and location, it was “one of the most specific and credible threats I’ve seen perhaps since 9/11,”

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said at the time.¹⁷

Western security officials also worry about ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He took the reins of Al Qaeda in Iraq in 2010, when it was at a low ebb, having been marginalized after the U.S. convinced Sunni Iraqis to turn against the group. However, the 2011 withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq breathed new life into Baghdadi's organization, which has adroitly exploited a growing Sunni rebellion against the sectarian rule of Iraq's Shiite-led government. The recent gains by ISIS in western and northern Iraq have raised alarms that it, too, could shift its focus to the West.

"Ultimately, ISIS seeks to create an Islamic state from where they would launch a global holy war," said Theodore Karasik, research director of the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, located in Dubai, UAE and Beirut. "Perhaps that war is now beginning as Baghdadi's ISIS eclipses Zawahiri's al-Qaeda," he said.¹⁸

Yet ISIS has enemies, and its split with Jabhat al-Nusra favors the West, says RAND's Liepman. "Right now they are both busy trying to overthrow the Assad regime and also killing each other," he says. For instance, in just one 10-day period in May, a reported 230 militants were killed as the two groups battled one other.¹⁹

However, "given that both groups have at different times sworn loyalty to bin Laden and Zawahiri, what comes with that is antipathy to the West," says Liepman. "So in the longer term, who knows?" And Hoffman says competition between the two groups could lead one or the other to mount an attack on the West to boost its prestige.

Fractures have plagued other al Qaeda affiliates, as well, including al-Shabab, whose top leadership consists of committed international jihadis linked to al Qaeda and local Somali militants. Their relationship has been marked by "infighting and betrayal," and "the local

radicals' cooperation has been mostly opportunistic, a method of obtaining funding, arms and training for use against domestic foes," according to Bronwyn Bruton, deputy director of the Africa Center at the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank.²⁰

"My gut instinct is absolutely, no. I can't see al-Shabab launching an attack on the U.S. It's ridiculous to me," Bruton says.

Liepman also says that, despite its fiery rhetoric, AQIM's sworn allegiance to Zawahiri is a marriage of convenience for a group that is focused on forming a regional Islamist caliphate in Algeria and neighboring states. "AQIM says they buy into the global jihad, but their actions say otherwise," says Liepman. For one thing, he points out, the group is based just across the Mediterranean from Europe but has never tried to attack there.

Hoffman says he doesn't have an explanation for why AQIM has not yet struck abroad. "But al Qaeda hadn't struck in the United States either until 9/11," he warns. (The truck bomb that exploded in a World Trade Center garage on Feb. 26, 1993, killing six people and injuring more than 1,000, was not an al Qaeda operation. Mastermind Ramzi Yousef said the attack was because of U.S. support of Israel. Yousef is the nephew of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who funded the attack and later joined al Qaeda and allegedly planned 9/11.)

Can the United States do more to stem al Qaeda's spread?

After ISIS surprised the West in mid-June by quickly taking over key Iraqi cities, sending Iraqi soldiers deserting in disarray, President Obama scrambled to catch up. His national security staff met around the clock, Pentagon officials briefed lawmakers, and on June 19 the president announced that he would send up to 300 military advisers to help Iraq's security forces and was prepared to launch air strikes against the Sunni militants.²¹

Meanwhile, Shiite-dominated Iran sent three battalions to Iraq to defend the government of Shiite Prime Minister Nouri Kamal al-Maliki, according to Iranian officials, while ISIS — infamous for its beheadings, brutality and repressive rules in territory it controls — threatened Karbala and Hajaf, two Iraqi cities sacred to Shiites.²²

Analysts blamed Maliki, who they say has purged the Iraqi Army of capable leaders and centralized decision making. But many also criticize Obama's hesitation to arm moderate opponents of Assad in Syria when ISIS was gaining strength there, and his inability to reach an agreement with Iraq to keep a residual presence there when U.S. soldiers pulled out in 2011. Iraq had refused to grant legal immunity to U.S. troops beyond that date.²³

"It's hugely frustrating," said Michael D. Barbero, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant general who oversaw the training of Iraqi troops from 2009 to 2011. "We knew they had chinks in their armor, and we knew they weren't going to get better once we left. And yet we didn't try hard enough to get an agreement to keep some people there."²⁴

No one knows whether a U.S. presence could have prevented the recent resurgence of ISIS in Iraq, considering the Sunni population's growing antipathy for the Maliki regime's sectarian policies. But the same critique has been leveled against Obama's more recent decision to steadily pull most U.S. troops out of Afghanistan by the end of 2016, leaving only a normal military presence at the embassy. Just under 32,000 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan, down from a 2011 peak of 100,000. In 2015, there will be 9,800. Obama announced the Afghanistan withdrawal plans in a Rose Garden speech in late May, saying the United States had struck significant blows against al Qaeda's leadership, eliminated bin Laden, and "prevented Afghanistan from being used to launch attacks against our homeland."²⁵

But others worry that chaos, and large numbers of al Qaeda, will return to Afghanistan. “We’re going to risk squandering the gains that we have made, just as we did in Iraq,” said retired Gen. Jack Keane, Army vice chief of staff from 1999 to 2003. “We’re about to repeat the same mistake again.”²⁶

The rugged region between the capital Kabul and the Pakistan border is of particular concern. “Even now, an al Qaeda safe haven is emerging in north-eastern Afghanistan,” said Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. “And I question whether the enemy will take further advantage of the announced timeline to renew its efforts to launch new operations.”²⁷ Rather than a firm deadline, many analysts would like to see an open-ended drawdown, contingent on the situation on the ground.

However, not everyone agrees Afghanistan should be a high priority. “While there is some al Qaeda presence remaining in Afghanistan that we should be worried about, there is far more to worry about in Syria, Iraq and Yemen,” said Calif. Rep. Adam Schiff, a Democratic member of the Intelligence committee.²⁸

Obama addressed those concerns in his West Point speech the day after his Rose Garden remarks, announcing establishment of a Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CPF) of up to \$5 billion to build counterterrorism capacity and “facilitate partner countries on the front lines.”²⁹

However, four similar programs have been created in the past decade. “If the performance over the past three years of Iraqi forces and the likely performance of Afghan security forces is any guide, don’t expect stability, transparency, effectiveness and a lack of corruption to spring forth from the barren soil of the CPF’s new partners,” said Gordon Adams, a professor of international relations at American University and President Bill Clinton’s senior budget official for national security.³⁰

Taliban, Al Qaeda in Iraq Killed Most in 2013

Only three of the world’s 10 most violent groups that employed terrorist tactics against noncombatants in 2013 were affiliated with al Qaeda (in red). Among the 10, four were based in the Middle East, three in Asia, two in Africa and one in South America.

Groups That Committed Deadliest Terror Attacks, 2013

Group	Total Killed	No. of Attacks
Taliban (Afghanistan)	2,340	641
Al Qaeda in Iraq*	1,725	401
Boko Haram (Nigeria)	1,589	213
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan	589	134
Al-Shabab (Somalia)	512	195
Communist Party of India — Maoist	190	203
Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula	177	84
New People’s Army (Philippines)	88	118
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	45	77
Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (Philippines)	23	34

* Al Qaeda in Iraq split off from al Qaeda in February and is now called the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS).

Source: “Annex of Statistical Information: Country Reports on Terrorism 2013,” U.S. State Department, April 2014, p. 8, <http://tinyurl.com/o2s263b>

Finding reliable partners will also be a challenge for the CPF, says Bruce Riedel, director of the Washington-based Brookings Institution’s Intelligence Project and a former senior adviser to the last four U.S. presidents on South Asia and the Middle East.

“We don’t want to support the Assad regime to fight al-Nusra. Somalia really has no effective government whatsoever, so who are you going to support there? We gave a lot of money to the Pakistani government, but is there really any evidence that we are getting much help in fighting al Qaeda? Pakistan hasn’t arrested a senior al Qaeda figure since 2005,” says Riedel.

Yemen is the poster child for U.S. training and intelligence support, says Riedel. “Building up the [counterterrorism] capability of the government of Yemen makes a lot of sense . . . but even in Yemen, you have a weak government.”

Moreover, training foreign forces inside countries with weak governments can have unintended negative consequences, said Adams. “Just take the case of Mali, where a U.S.-trained captain, Amadou Sanogo, carried out a coup in 2012, leading to the disintegration of the Malian military, a nearly successful Islamic extremist revolt, and the need for foreign intervention.”³¹

Last year, U.S. Special Operations troops began to instruct and equip “hundreds of handpicked commandos in Libya, Niger, Mauritania and Mali,” according to *The New York Times*. “You have to make sure of who you’re training,” said Maj. Gen. Patrick J. Donahue II, commander of U.S. Army soldiers operating in Africa. “It can’t be the standard, ‘Has this guy been a terrorist or some sort of criminal?’ but also, ‘What are his allegiances? Is he true to the country, or is he still bound to his militia?’”³²

BACKGROUND

The Beginning

“Al Qaeda and transnational jihad in general are primarily creatures of the Afghan war against the Soviets,” wrote political scientist Fawaz Gerges in *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*.³³

From 1979 to 1989, an unprecedented migration of young Muslim men, predominantly from the Middle East, descended on Pakistan and Afghanistan to wage jihad, or holy war, against the Soviet Union after its invasion of Afghanistan.³⁴

They were inspired by the charismatic Sunni scholar Abdallah Azzam, a Jordanian of Palestinian descent. Azzam believed in the creation of a Muslim vanguard to fight and build a strict Islamic society ruled by sharia, or Islamic law. “Azzam’s preaching and advocacy of jihad to defend Afghan Muslims persecuted by the Soviets reached audiences throughout the world via audio broadcasts, magazines and flyers,” counterterrorism expert Watts, of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, wrote in a short history of al Qaeda.³⁵

In 1984, Azzam set up the Services Bureau, a staging base in Peshawar, Pakistan, to recruit and transition Arab fighters, known as “Afghan Arabs,” into training camps in Afghanistan. As a university student, Osama bin Laden, born in Saudi Arabia in the late 1950s to a Yemeni construction magnate, had heard Azzam lecture and agreed to finance his endeavor. Bin Laden also set up his own training camp in Afghanistan, called the Lion’s Den. And he began to associate with Egyptian radicals, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, a surgeon, who came to Peshawar in 1986 to work for the Red Crescent Society, the Islamic version of the International Red Cross.

Zawahiri and Azzam had competing views of jihad, a rift that deepened in

1988 as the Soviets began withdrawing from Afghanistan, which soon plunged into civil war. Zawahiri proposed redirecting the Afghan Arabs against “apostate” Muslim regimes, starting with Egypt and Algeria. In 1981, Zawahiri had been arrested and charged with collaborating in the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who had signed an historic 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Not long after his release in 1984, Zawahiri took over leadership of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, a terrorist organization bent on installing religious rule.

Azzam opposed taking up arms against other Muslims and, instead, wanted to send the Arab Afghans to the Palestinian territories to reclaim his ancestral land from Israel.

Both camps bitterly vied for bin Laden’s allegiance and money. But bin Laden did not share either of their priorities, wrote journalist Lawrence Wright in *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. “At the time, he envisioned moving the struggle to Kashmir, the Philippines and particularly the Central Asian republics, where he could continue the jihad against the Soviet Union.”³⁶

In August 1988, bin Laden and a small group of associates formed a new organization called al Qaeda — Arabic for “the base” — to direct the best fighters from among the Afghan Arabs. “But it was still unclear what the organization would do or where it would go after the jihad [in Afghanistan]. Perhaps bin Laden himself didn’t know,” wrote Wright. “Notably, the United States was not yet on anyone’s list.”³⁷

Global Jihad Emerges

In 1989, Azzam was killed by unknown assassins, and bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia. In 1990 he proposed that the Saudi government allow him to use Arab veterans of the Afghan conflict — now scattered across Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Middle East

— to fight Iraq, which had invaded Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia. The government refused, and bin Laden watched, enraged, as American troops established bases in the Saudi kingdom to protect it and expel the Iraqis from Kuwait. He soon came to see the United States as an occupying force of non-believers in the Arabian peninsula, home to Mecca, Islam’s holiest city.

In 1992, Sudan’s new Islamist-backed government invited bin Laden to move there, hoping he would invest in the country’s development. Bin Laden quickly built an empire of factories and farming estates. But American troops remained in Saudi Arabia, overseeing the ceasefire with Iraq and, equally galling to bin Laden, using his ancestral home of Yemen as a stopover on their way to famine-plagued Somalia to protect U.N. aid workers from local militias.

“After all the plans al Qaeda had nurtured to spread an Islamist revolution, it was America that appeared to be waxing in influence across the region,” said Wright.³⁸ In late December, 1992, two bombs exploded at hotels in Aden, Yemen, targeting U.S. troops. Bin Laden would claim credit for the attack, in which two Austrian tourists died, but no soldiers.

With the Yemeni attacks, “a new vision of al Qaeda was born” as a global terrorist organization, wrote Wright. “America was the only power capable of blocking the restoration of the ancient Islamic caliphate, and it would have to be confronted and defeated.”³⁹

In October, 1993, 18 U.S. soldiers were killed in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in an incident that ended with shocking images of dead, naked American troops being dragged through the streets and their bodies burned by local insurgents. In 1996, the U.S. initiated a grand jury investigation of bin Laden’s role in the “Blackhawk Down” incident, and the FBI and the CIA created a joint operation to track him down.

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Chronology

1980s *Osama bin Laden establishes al Qaeda.*

1984

Sunni scholar Abdallah Azzam and bin Laden establish a staging base in Peshawar, Pakistan, for Arabs fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan. . . . Future al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri becomes leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

1986

Bin Laden establishes training camp in Afghanistan for Arabs fighting Soviets troops. . . . He meets Zawahiri in Peshawar.

1988

Soviets begin withdrawing from Afghanistan. . . . Bin Laden founds al Qaeda, Arabic for “the base,” to redirect foreign fighters to other Muslim countries.

1990s *Bin Laden and Zawahiri decide to target the West.*

1992

From Sudan, bin Laden masterminds an attack against U.S. soldiers in Yemen, but two tourists die instead.

1996

Bin Laden moves to Afghanistan as Taliban guest.

1998

Bin Laden, Zawahiri and others call for Muslims to kill Americans. . . . Al Qaeda bombs U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing 224; President Bill Clinton launches cruise missiles against al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan but misses senior leaders.

2000-2005

Al Qaeda strikes United States mainland; bin Laden goes into hiding. Smaller attacks in Spain and London follow.

2000

Two al Qaeda suicide attackers ram an explosive-laden boat into the Navy destroyer *U.S.S. Cole* in Yemen, killing 17 U.S. sailors.

2001

Nearly 3,000 people are killed after 19 al Qaeda operatives fly hijacked jets into World Trade Center, Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field (Sept. 11); President George W. Bush declares a war on terror (Sept. 20); United States launches air strikes in Afghanistan (Oct. 7). . . . British al Qaeda follower Richard Reid tries to detonate a shoe bomb on a Paris to Miami flight (Dec. 22).

2002

Bin Laden escapes to Pakistan.

2003

Al Qaeda-linked groups blamed for bombings in Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Turkey. . . . United States invades Iraq after Bush claims it is producing weapons of mass destruction.

2004

Alleged al Qaeda bombers attack four commuter trains in Madrid, killing 191 and injuring more than 1,800.

2005

Four al Qaeda-trained British citizens bomb London’s Underground transit system and a bus, killing 56 people, including the four bombers, and injuring more than 700.

2009-Present

United States foils several al Qaeda attacks and kills bin Laden; al Qaeda affiliates focus on local conflicts.

2009

Al Qaeda-trained Afghan-American Najibullah Zazi is arrested in New York for plot to bomb subways. . . . Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab is arrested after trying to ignite an al Qaeda-supplied bomb hidden in his underwear aboard a U.S.-bound flight.

2011

U.S. Special Forces team kills bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan. . . . Civilian protests against authoritarian rulers spread from Tunisia to the Middle East; anti-government demonstrations in Syria morph into a sectarian civil war.

2013

Al Qaeda affiliate al-Shabab storms Nairobi’s Westgate Mall, killing at least 67. . . . To date, U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan have killed roughly three dozen key al Qaeda lieutenants and nearly 300 lower-level militants.

2014

Zawahiri cuts ties with the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) for its brutal tactics and for battling another al Qaeda branch in Syria’s civil war. . . . U.S. drone strikes in Yemen have killed up to 887 militants linked to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and up to 87 civilians. . . . ISIS forces in Iraq take control of Mosul and Tikrit; Iraq declares a state of emergency (June). . . . Obama sends the first of 300 military advisers to Iraq and is considering air strikes against ISIS.

Al Qaeda Seeks Weapons of Mass Destruction

While intent on attacks, the group lacks know-how, experts say.

Al Qaeda's interest in developing and using weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) dates back to the 1990s. During that decade, al Qaeda tried to purchase uranium for nuclear weapons, established a biowarfare laboratory in Afghanistan to develop weaponized anthrax and undertook a separate project to produce ricin and other chemical-warfare agents.¹

"Those efforts were seriously disrupted by the U.S. invasion [of Afghanistan], but I don't think that al Qaeda or its affiliates and associates have completely abandoned the desire for these weapons," says Bruce Hoffman, director of Georgetown University's Center for Security Studies.

In 2003, al Qaeda put out a fatwa — an opinion handed down by an Islamic scholar — justifying the use of weapons of mass destruction. "And in 2008, Ayman al-Zawahiri" — al Qaeda's second-in-command at the time — "wrote a book and explained why WMD was still important," says Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, a senior fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and a former director of intelligence and counterintelligence at the U.S. Department of Energy. Commentaries and statements from al Qaeda's core — its Pakistan-based leadership — since then suggest that "the goal is the same," he says.

But the focus of al Qaeda's core leadership and that of its affiliates diverge, says Mowatt-Larssen. Al Qaeda's core "recognizes that at the very high end there are two options: a nu-

clear event or a large-scale biological weapon, like anthrax," Mowatt-Larssen says. The affiliates are more interested in mid- and low-level events, such as a chemical attack on a rival's territory or an assassination using cyanide, "in order to get rid of rivals and start panic," he says.

But al Qaeda and its affiliates have not succeeded, as far as is known publicly, in effectively using weapons of mass destruction. Hoffman and Mowatt-Larssen point to several reasons for that.

First, such weapons, especially nuclear or biological ones, are difficult to develop and use. "It is really hard to get nuclear material," says Mowatt-Larssen. "There is some on the black market, but there may not be enough for terrorists to build a viable nuclear device."

Even if terrorists were about to acquire enough nuclear material, Hoffman points out, the terrorists would then "have to design a bomb and figure out how to trigger it. The technological and scientific hurdles are tremendous, and I would think that they would be insurmountable without state support."

Biological weapons are difficult to fabricate and difficult to disseminate effectively, says Hoffman. "I believe the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo had at least on nine occasions tried to use biological weapons, and it didn't succeed," he says. "And that's why they turned to chemical weapons and sarin." The group captured worldwide attention in 1995 when it released sarin,

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Meanwhile, under international pressure, Sudan expelled bin Laden, who settled in Afghanistan in 1996 as a guest of the Taliban, which had recently seized control of Kabul and implemented strict Islamic law. Zawahiri joined him in the late 1990s and officially merged Egyptian Islamic Jihad with al Qaeda.

In February 1998, bin Laden, Zawahiri and other radical jihadists declared that killing "Americans and their allies — civilians and military — is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it." Their main complaints against the United States were: the presence of U.S. troops in the Arabian Peninsula; their fear that the United States was intent on destroying the Muslim people of Iraq through economic sanctions; and its support of Is-

rael and corrupt dictatorships in the Middle East and North Africa.⁴⁰

The call to arms drew a new generation of young fighters — from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East — to train with al Qaeda in Afghanistan. And it signaled a shift in Zawahiri's strategy from attacking apostate and pro-Western Muslim rulers to attacking the West.

By that time, the number of intelligence reports on al Qaeda plots was growing, but "few in the United States government were listening," wrote terrorism analyst Seth G. Jones in *Hunting in the Shadows: The Pursuit of al Qaeda Since 9/11*. "It took gruesome terrorist attacks to spur the government to move against bin Laden and Zawahiri."⁴¹

On Aug. 7, 1998, al Qaeda operatives bombed the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam,

Tanzania, killing 224 people and injuring more than 4,500. President Bill Clinton responded by launching a cruise missile strike against a suspected al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan, but neither bin Laden nor senior al Qaeda leaders were killed.

The embassy bombings "had a profound impact on U.S. counterterrorism efforts," wrote Jones. The CIA established a special unit to plan operations against bin Laden and put a covert team in Afghanistan.⁴² But bin Laden and Zawahiri eluded capture, and on Oct. 12, 2000, two al Qaeda suicide attackers rammed an explosives-laden boat into the Navy destroyer *U.S.S. Cole* in the Port of Aden, Yemen, killing 17 U.S. sailors.

The United States did not respond militarily, and al Qaeda operative Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, with bin Laden's

a nerve agent, onto Tokyo subway cars, killing 12 people.

“What is the most likely WMD that al Qaeda might get its hands on? In my view: chemical,” says Hoffman. “But still, you need to have a lot of it to have an effect; you’ve got to have a way to deliver it; it can dissipate; and you have to protect yourself.”

When Tamil Tiger insurgents used chlorine gas to attack a Sri Lankan armed forces base in 1990, Hoffman explained, the wind changed direction and blew the gas back at the Tigers, who had to abort the attack.² And during the height of the Iraq War in 2006, Al Qaeda in Iraq used chlorine gas in its bombs, but while the explosions killed people, “the chlorine itself didn’t really harm anyone,” says Hoffman.

Besides finding it difficult to obtain destructive materials, al Qaeda hasn’t succeeded at deploying a WMD because U.S. drone strikes have seriously degraded al Qaeda’s core leadership, and security officials have been effective at preventing attacks, says Mowatt-Larsen. For example, a police raid of a London apartment in 2003 found castor oil beans — the raw material for ricin — along with production equipment and recipes for ricin, botulinum and other poisons. Two years later, a British court found a suspected al Qaeda operative arrested in connection with the raid guilty of plotting to spread ricin in public areas of the United Kingdom.³ A year ago, Iraq said it had captured an al Qaeda cell that planned to produce mustard gas and other poisons for attacks in Iraq, Europe and the United States.⁴

In addition, while al Qaeda and its affiliates are expert in conventional weapons, they may not have personnel with expertise in chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, Hoffman says. However, the civil war in Syria could change that equation, he says. In a deal brokered by the United States and Russia in the wake of a deadly chemical attack on civilians, allegedly by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Assad agreed to allow Syria’s chemical weapons stockpiles to be destroyed, which the United Nations announced on June 23 had been accomplished.

“What is worrisome is that veterans of the Syrian Army’s chemical corps might find their way into al Qaeda’s ranks in Syria and provide that expertise and knowledge,” says Hoffman.

“I think it would be hardest for [al Qaeda and its affiliates] to use WMD’s against the United States. I believe it is certainly becoming more of a problem in the Middle East,” he says.

— *Barbara Mantel*

¹ Bruce Hoffman, “Low-Tech Terrorism,” *The National Interest*, March-April 2014, p. 3, tinyurl.com/lgd4age.

² *Ibid.*

³ “Killer jailed over poison plot,” BBC News, April 13, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4433709.stm.

⁴ “Iraq says captures al Qaeda chemical gas team,” Reuters, June 1, 2013, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-06-01/news/sns-rt-us-iraq-violence-chemicalsbre9500cg-20130601_1-mustard-gas-iraqi-kurdish-chlorine-gas.

blessing, continued to plan an attack on the U.S. homeland, which bin Laden believed would force the United States to pull out of the Middle East and lead to the establishment of conservative Islamic regimes. Mohammed, a Pakistani citizen, was captured by the CIA and Pakistan intelligence in Pakistan in 2003 and is awaiting trial at the Guantánamo Bay military prison, accused of masterminding 9/11.

Retreat to Pakistan

Nine days after 9/11, President George W. Bush declared a “war on terror” and demanded that the Taliban turn over bin Laden and al Qaeda leaders.⁴³ Bin Laden “was confident that the United States would respond to the attacks in New York and Wash-

ington only with cruise missile strikes, as it had done three years earlier,” wrote journalist Peter Bergen in *Mambunt: The Ten Year Search for Bin Laden from 9/11 to Abbottabad*.⁴⁴

But the U.S. response was quick and fierce. Within a week, Congress granted Bush authority to use force against any “nations, organizations, or persons” involved in the 9/11 attack or that “harbored” those responsible. On Oct. 7, Bush launched air strikes in Afghanistan, and by early December, the Taliban was ousted and bin Laden and al Qaeda’s core members had retreated to the Afghan mountains, where they battled U.S. and British Special Forces. Rather than pushing the United States out of Muslim lands, 9/11 had invited an invasion.⁴⁵

In February, bin Laden and some associates slipped into Pakistan, where

many hid in the relative anonymity of the bustling city of Karachi and set about rebuilding al Qaeda. But after Pakistan and the United States captured several key operatives in the next several years — including 9/11 planner Mohammed — al Qaeda’s leaders retreated to northern Pakistan’s lawless tribal regions, where they set up training camps, albeit on a smaller scale than in Afghanistan. Bin Laden’s whereabouts were unknown.

Meanwhile, bombings of Western targets in North Africa, Europe and the Middle East demonstrated al Qaeda’s reach. In some cases, governments blamed al Qaeda directly, such as for the May 12, 2003, bombings in the Saudi capital Riyadh, which killed 35 people. In other incidents, violent jihadist groups with suspected connections to al Qaeda either claimed re-

Is Boko Haram Aligned with al Qaeda?

“They are boys who . . . rape women, kill children and steal from the population.”

Boko Haram caught the world’s attention when it kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from a remote northern Nigerian village on April 14. But the brutal Islamist insurgency has been terrorizing northeastern Nigeria and nearby border areas for years.

Since 2009, Boko Haram has killed an estimated 6,500 people, according to Bronwyn Bruton, deputy director of the Africa Center at the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank.¹ In a particularly horrific attack in February, the group — whose name, loosely translated from the local Hausa language, means “Western education is forbidden” — attacked a secondary school in northeastern Nigeria and shot, hacked or burned to death 59 boys, many as they slept in their beds. On June 23, the group reportedly abducted at least 91 more people, including 60 girls and 31 boys.²

Besides students and civilians, the group has attacked police officers, soldiers, politicians, and rival religious leaders. Their attacks, and a government crackdown on the group that began in 2009, have caused an estimated 250,000 people in the region to flee their homes in the past 10 months.³

Last month Nigerian officials met in Paris with representatives from neighboring Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin to forge an agreement to share intelligence and coordinate patrol and rescue efforts in the border areas where Boko Haram operates. At a news conference after the meeting, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan called Boko Haram the “al Qaeda of West Africa.”⁴

He is not alone in tying Boko Haram to al Qaeda. Last November, the State Department declared Boko Haram a foreign terrorist organization with “links to al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).”⁵

Yet some analysts say the al Qaeda label is misleading. “It is very much in President Jonathan’s interest to say Boko Haram is part of the international terror movement because it then gives him a claim on international resources,” says John Campbell, former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria (2004-2007) and author of *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*.

While the group issues statements supporting al Qaeda’s goals, Boko Haram’s focus is strictly local, and the organizations have no formal ties, Campbell says. “I don’t doubt that you have members of Boko Haram who have talked to people who claim to be part of al-Shabab or al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” he says, but Boko Haram “is a different kind of creature.”

Its violence is too unfocused and brutal even for al Qaeda, says Bruton, who calls Boko Haram an African rebel group. “Al Qaeda’s violence is very strategic. They use violence to send a very careful political message, whereas African rebel groups tend to be really predatory,” said Bruton. Members of African rebel groups like Boko Haram “are young boys who do drugs, they are not educated . . . and they are especially known to rape women, to kill children, to steal from the local population.” Al Qaeda’s leaders would worry that such behavior would sully its brand, she said.⁶

Other analysts, however, agree with the State Department’s assessment. “Al Qaeda affiliates’ purpose is to handle local affairs,” says Jacob Zenn, an analyst of African and Eurasian Affairs for The Jamestown Foundation, a Washington-based think tank. For example, “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb does mostly attacks in Algeria. Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria.” Zenn calls Boko Haram a “clandestine” al Qaeda affiliate, because they haven’t yet “formalized the connection to the world.”

The United States, France, Britain and Israel have sent special forces and intelligence operatives to help search for the kidnapped girls, although U.S. actions are constrained by prohibitions on direct military assistance to any foreign military unit that has violated human rights. “Since 2009, the Nigerian military has been widely accused by local witnesses and human rights groups of killing thousands of people — many of them innocent civilians — in its efforts to destroy Boko Haram,” said Bruton.⁷

Boko Haram was created in 2002 in the northeastern Nigerian state of Borno by Islamist cleric Mohammed Yusuf, whom the government executed in 2009 after an armed uprising in the

sponsibility or were blamed. Analysts still disagree about whether al Qaeda directed the March 11, 2004, bombing of commuter trains in Madrid, which killed 191 people and left at least 1,800 injured, or whether the dozens of men arrested, mostly Moroccan, were only tenuously linked to al Qaeda.

Al Qaeda’s link to the July 7, 2005, bombings of the London Underground and a city bus is much clearer: The four British citizens, three of Pakistani descent, who detonated the

bombs had trained at al Qaeda’s camps in Pakistan. The explosions — the deadliest terrorist attack in British history — killed 56 people, including the four suicide bombers, and injured more than 700.⁴⁶

Unbeknown to the CIA, that same year bin Laden moved into a walled compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and began relying on a few select couriers to communicate with others in the al Qaeda leadership and beyond, including al Qaeda in Iraq, which

was created after the United States invaded Iraq in 2003.

Bin Laden was initially “ecstatic about the opportunities that the 2003 American invasion presented to establish an al Qaeda affiliate in the Arab heartland,” wrote Bergen. But by 2005, “he had grown increasingly worried about the brutal tactics of al-Qaeda in Iraq.” The group blew up Shia mosques, killed fellow Sunnis, and its leader — Abu Musab al-Zarqawi — posted online the grue-

region. “From sermons and statements, you can say their goal is the establishment of God’s kingdom on Earth through justice for the poor, achieved through the rigorous application of Islamic law, or sharia,” says Campbell. The group has been unclear, however, as to whether it wants sharia law imposed nationwide or only in Nigeria’s predominantly Muslim northern states, he adds.

After the government crackdown in 2009, Boko Haram splintered into several groups and became increasingly radical and brutal. The group’s putative leader now is Yusuf acolyte Abubakar Shekau. Boko Haram “is a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency finally ripening into social chaos,” said Nigerian analyst and blogger Chris Ngwodo.⁸

While analysts disagree on Boko Haram’s ties to al Qaeda, they agree that a growing Western presence in Nigeria could push the group into the arms of international jihadists. Last month, says Campbell, a northern Nigerian religious leader warned that if Western troops get involved in the fight against Boko Haram, it would “lead to an influx of foreign fighters into northern Nigeria in support of Boko Haram.”

To eliminate the threat from Boko Haram, says Campbell, the Nigerian government should halt human rights abuses by its military and police, reduce government corruption and reduce the stark differences that have historically existed between the predominantly Muslim north and the mostly Christian south. For example, he points out, fewer than 20 percent of northern Nigerian women can read and write, compared to more than 80 percent in the south. “You are really asking for a country to transform itself, and that is usually hard for countries to do,” says Campbell.

— *Barbara Mantel*

¹ “Bronwyn Bruton on Boko Haram,” Atlantic Council, May 29, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/qh88yk2>.

² Robyn Dixon, “Nigeria kidnapping: 60 girls and women, 31 boys said to be abducted,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/koaafel>.



A woman rallies in Lagos, Nigeria, for the release of 287 Nigerian schoolgirls captured by Boko Haram on April 14. Thought by some to be linked to al Qaeda, the brutal group reportedly abducted at least 91 more youths on June 23.

³ Ishaan Tharoor, “MAP: What Boko Haram is doing to Nigeria,” *The Washington Post*, June 5, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/ku4dynn>.

⁴ John Irish and Elizabeth Pineau, “West Africa leaders vow to wage ‘total war’ on Boko Haram,” Reuters, May 17, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/lzgw7nt>.

⁵ “Terrorist Designations of Boko Haram and Ansaru,” U.S. Department of State, Nov. 13, 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/m7mmky6>.

⁶ “Bronwyn Bruton on Boko Haram,” *op. cit.*

⁷ Bronwyn Bruton, “Intelbrief: Nigeria: The Limits of US Assistance,” Atlantic Council, May 13, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/lerd7p7>.

⁸ Mohammed Aly Sergie and Toni Johnson, “Terrorist Groups: Boko Haram,” Council on Foreign Relations, May 5, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/q4yvapy>.

some videos of hostage beheadings. Bin Laden worried that Zarqawi was harming the al Qaeda brand and publicly apologized for Zarqawi’s behavior after U.S. air strikes killed him in 2006.⁴⁷

Bin Laden was also disappointed in al Qaeda trainees’ failed attempts to carry out attacks in the United States, thwarted partly by America’s post-9/11 intelligence and security apparatus and partly by the trainees’ own bungling. In early September 2009, Na-

jibullah Zazi, an Afghan-American trained by al Qaeda in Pakistan, traveled from Denver to detonate bombs in the subways of New York. But he was arrested by the FBI, which had him under surveillance. On Christmas Day the same year, Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab tried unsuccessfully to ignite a bomb hidden in his underwear as his Amsterdam-to-Detroit flight was about to land. He told investigators he had acquired the device in Yemen, home of AQAP.⁴⁸

After those attempts, President Obama intensified the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan, begun by President George W. Bush, and extended it to Yemen. By 2014, the controversial drone strikes — which international rights groups complained were killing innocent civilians and alienating the local population — had killed dozens of key al Qaeda lieutenants, including propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. citizen in Yemen, and hundreds in the middle ranks.⁴⁹

ASSESSING THE THREAT FROM AL QAEDA



AP Photo



AFP/Getty Images/Ali al-Saadi

Battle for Iraq

In a photo released by the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS), militants appear to be leading away captured Iraqi soldiers dressed in plain clothes on June 14. (Top) The militants' claims that they later executed 1,700 soldiers could not be independently verified. In the sectarian conflict in Iraq, the former al Qaeda affiliate has captured several major cities and in late June appeared to be closing in on Baghdad. Also on June 14, Shiites in Baghdad (bottom) pledged to join Iraqi security forces in the fight against ISIS. The Sunni-Shiite battle over Iraq and neighboring Syria reflects a 1,000-year-old conflict between the two Muslim sects and is seen by many analysts as a proxy battle to determine whether Shiite-dominated Iran or Sunni-led Saudi Arabia will dominate the Arab world.

Arab Spring

After a nearly decade-long manhunt, on May 1, 2011, a U.S. Navy SEAL team killed bin Laden at his Abbottabad compound. "The death of bin Laden marks

the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat al Qaeda," President Obama told the nation. "His death does not mark the end of our effort. There's no doubt that al Qaeda will continue to pursue attacks against us." 50 Six weeks later, al Qaeda appointed

Zawahiri as bin Laden's successor.

Bin Laden's death was soon eclipsed by the momentous events of the Arab Spring, which began five months earlier with peaceful protests in Tunisia and spread across North Africa and the Middle East. A combination of civilian protests, internal military intervention and, in the case of Libya, rebel fighting and Western military help, toppled dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, seeming to undercut bin Laden's claim that attacking America was a necessary prelude to dislodging dictatorial regimes. Initially, at least, "al Qaeda's leaders, foot soldiers, and ideas played no role," wrote Bergen. 51

But al Qaeda thrives where there is chaos, and the early promise of the Arab Spring has faded. While Tunisia adopted a new constitution in January and is transitioning to democracy, fighting among rival militias and a renegade general's attempted coup is pushing Libya toward civil war. Yemen's new president is battling separatist forces, and Egypt's military recently ousted a democratically elected, religiously conservative government. Anti-government demonstrations in Syria degenerated into a civil war, and the violence is spilling into Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, where a renewed Sunni insurgency is fighting the Shiite-led government. Al Qaeda's formal affiliates, loosely tied associates and professed supporters have inserted themselves into each of these conflicts.

In January, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that he expected worse to come: "In the three years since the outbreak of the Arab Spring, a few states have made halting progress in their transitions away from authoritarian rule. Nevertheless, political uncertainty and violence will probably increase across the region in 2014 as the toppling of leaders and weakening of regimes have unleashed ethnic and sectarian rivalries that are propagating destabilizing violence." 52

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At Issue:

Is the threat posed by former Guantánamo detainees exaggerated?



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the May 31 release of U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for five former senior Taliban officials being held at the U.S. detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, has renewed the debate over how many former detainees end up returning to the battlefield. Days after Bergdahl's release, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., told Fox News that 30 percent of the released detainees "have already gone back into the fight," a figure that has been repeated by a number of other sources. But this number is a misleading conflation of the U.S. government's own estimates.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) — which releases an unclassified summary report about the recidivism rates of former detainees every six months — said in January that 104 (17 percent) of the 614 detainees released from the prison have engaged in "terrorist activities," and 74 (12 percent) are suspected of doing so. Yet it is impossible to assess the validity of these numbers because the U.S. government has not publicly released the names of any of these detainees since 2009.

But even if the numbers were correctly parsed, the phrase "terrorist activities" adds to the confusion. In the public sphere, these are treated as if they were all attacks, but the ODNI combines planning and conducting attacks with financing terrorist operations and facilitating the movement of people involved in such activities.

While none of these are good, some are certainly worse than others. There is a scale to the level of threat these activities pose, but commentators act as if they are absolutes.

To be sure, some former Guantánamo detainees are quite dangerous. For example, Said Ali al-Shiri, who was transferred to Saudi Arabia in 2007, cofounded Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in 2009. And Abdullah Ghulam Rasoul emerged as a top Taliban commander after being transferred to Afghanistan and subsequently released in 2007.

Yet the men who were transferred from Guantánamo in exchange for Bergdahl are not being released freely into Afghan society. They must first spend a year in Qatar, a rich and efficient police state, and they have been banned from travel during that time.

Assuming that ban holds, by the time they are able to return to Afghanistan, there will no longer be a U.S. combat presence in the country, minimizing any potential threat they might pose to American soldiers there.



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in considering whether detainees released from Guantánamo Bay pose a real threat, the debate over recidivism rates is somewhat beside the point. Enemy combatants are detained during wars because of concern that, if released, they will return to the fight. So it's worth examining the impact released detainees have had, as revealed in militant propaganda, credible media accounts and the work of scholars. It's no exaggeration to say Guantánamo detainees have had an impact on tens of thousands of lives since their release.

Former detainees have played prominent leadership roles in Islamist groups. In South Asia, they served as the Taliban's chief military commander, led Taliban forces in southern Afghanistan, served as the shadow governor in Uruzgan province and commanded thousands of fighters in Pakistan's Waziristan region. Former detainees served as the deputy commander of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and as an AQAP operational commander (Othman Ahmed al-Ghamdi) and religious leader (Ibrahim al-Rubaish). A former detainee leads Ansar al-Sharia in Derna, Libya.

Detainees have been involved in numerous attacks since their release. They have orchestrated attacks against coalition forces in Afghanistan, directed a hotel bombing in Islamabad, participated in attacks in the Caucasus region and blew up a gas pipeline in Russia's Tatarstan republic. They carried out a suicide bombing in Iraq (13 dead) and oversaw a 2007 suicide attack in Pakistan (31 dead). Former detainees masterminded or participated in the kidnapping of a Saudi diplomat in 2012 and two Chinese engineers in Pakistan in 2004.

In addition, released detainees have found their way to the Syrian battlefield and served as foot soldiers or operatives in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Other former detainees are involved in terrorist recruitment. This month Spanish authorities arrested Lahcen Ikasrieni for running a cell that provided fighters to the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria, and others have been charged with recruitment or facilitation elsewhere.

There are serious policy questions about detention of non-state actors. Unlike state-to-state conflict, such enemies rarely wear a uniform, and conflicts may last far longer when non-state actors are involved. But these questions must be separated from questions of fact. Many released detainees do not return to militancy. But those who do have already had a significant impact.

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CURRENT SITUATION

Foreign Fighters in Syria

On a Saturday afternoon in late May, a man entered the Jewish Museum in Brussels and shot and killed two Israeli tourists with a .38-caliber revolver. He then pulled an assault rifle from a black bag and killed a French museum volunteer and wounded a Belgian man.⁵³

French authorities later arrested a suspect, 29-year-old Frenchman Mehdi Nemmouche, during a routine customs check as he arrived in France by bus. Officials said he had travelled to Syria last year to fight with the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS).⁵⁴

The killings are likely the first by a European citizen returning from the Syrian conflict, according to European officials, although they could not say what role, if any, ISIS played in the attack or whether Nemmouche was motivated by his experience in Syria.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, his arrest underscores Western governments' warnings that some of the thousands of foreign fighters flowing into Syria — where many are thought to connect with ISIS or the al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra — could pose a terrorist threat once they return home.

"This raises concerns that radicalized individuals with extremist contacts and battlefield experience could either return to their home countries to commit violence at their own initiative, or participate in an al Qaeda-directed plot aimed at Western targets outside Syria," Matthew Olsen, director of the National Counterterrorism Center, told Congress.⁵⁶

Since late 2011, as many as 12,000 citizens or residents from more than 80 countries have gone to Syria to fight the Assad regime, according to some analysts. "These numbers are unprecedented,"

says Aaron Zelin, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, whose own "best guesstimate" is more like 9,000. "It is unlike anything we've seen before" in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia or other places where foreigners have joined violent jihadist insurgencies.

About 100 foreign fighters in Syria are from the United States, and 2,000 to 3,000 are from Western Europe, the second-largest source after Arab countries, such as Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Morocco.

Several factors explain why foreign Muslims are attracted to the Syrian war, experts say. "Obviously the biggest driver is the fact that the Assad regime is slaughtering innocent people," says Zelin, "and they view it as a religious duty to help out their brothers and sisters being killed." Syria also is relatively easy to reach.

In addition, the extremist groups, especially ISIS, are using social media extensively to lure recruits. Foreign fighters are drawn to ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra because the groups "tend to be more inclusive, better organized and better financed than their more moderate counterparts," said Richard Barrett, senior vice president at The Soufan Group, a New York-based security consultancy. Concentrated in the north and the east, the extremists also are the first groups many foreigners meet after crossing the Turkish and Iraqi borders.⁵⁷

Threat in the West

Not every foreigner fighting in Syria is a potential domestic terrorist. Some may choose never to return home; others will be killed. In May, a Florida man, Moner Mohammad Abusalha, possibly became the first American suicide bomber in Syria, according to the U.S. State Department. Abusalha had spent two months training with Jabhat al-Nusra.⁵⁸

Most Western fighters who do return will never engage in domestic terrorism,

if past experience is any guide, according to Thomas Hegghammer a researcher at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment in Oslo. Hegghammer studied about 1,000 jihadists from North America, Western Europe and Australia who fought abroad between 1990 and 2010. "My data, with all its limitations, indicate that no more than one in nine foreign fighters returned to perpetrate attacks in the West," he wrote.⁵⁹ Still, extrapolating from that rate, "That is potentially 300 or more people who have gone to Syria who could be involved in attempted attacks in the West," says Zelin.

Experts say it is exceedingly difficult to determine which foreign fighters will return to become domestic terrorists. In the case of Syria, there is no uniform profile of foreign fighters, let alone those who might return home bent on violence, says Zelin. While most are young Muslim men, he says, they include converts and those born into Muslim families; immigrants and those who are European-born; and people who are poor and middle class. Education levels vary as well, says Zelin.

In addition, Western intelligence agencies have few resources in Syria to track their citizens or residents. "It's a bit of a black hole," said a U.S. counterterrorism official.⁶⁰ And back home, "most states lack the resources to identify and monitor more than a few returning fighters," said Barrett.

But even countries with generous resources are becoming overwhelmed. By the end of April, the number of people in France under surveillance was growing, "and the security forces were feeling the strain," according to Barrett.⁶¹ With far fewer American fighters in Syria, the U.S. government might have an easier time monitoring. Last month the FBI announced it had formed a special team to identify and investigate such individuals.

Some Western nations are turning to families and friends for clues. France is setting up a network of telephone hotlines and counseling centers for

family, friends and community members to report radicalized young men, and Germany is considering such a system as well.

Countries also are taking legal measures. Last month, the United States designated Jabhat al-Nusra a terrorist organization — ISIS, under its former name of Al Qaeda in Iraq, has been on the terrorist list for years — allowing anyone who fights with them to be prosecuted for knowingly providing “material support or resources” to the group.⁶²

In the past year, three American citizens or permanent residents have been arrested at U.S. airports or near the Canadian border for allegedly trying to leave the country to join Jabhat al-Nusra or another al Qaeda splinter group. All have pleaded not guilty or denied the charges. Another American, Sinh Vinh Ngo Nguyen of Southern California, pleaded guilty last year to “attempting to provide weapons training to al Qaeda” after fighting alongside Jabhat al-Nusra in 2012.⁶³

Britain has begun detaining returnees from Syria. Last month, Mashudur Choudhury, 31, became the first Briton convicted of preparing for a terrorist act after returning from fighting in Syria.⁶⁴ France has begun to arrest people for plotting terrorism as they try to make their way to Syria, leading some defense lawyers to claim civil liberties are being violated.

“In France all they have done is to purchase a ticket; it is impossible to foresee who will leave for the purpose of carrying out terrorism,” said lawyer Pierre de Combes de Nayves.⁶⁵

Middle East Spillover

Most foreign fighters in Syria are from predominantly Muslim countries. “I definitely think that we will see those who survive Syria and return to Saudi Arabia or Jordan or elsewhere in the region create new groups or join

existing radical jihadist movements,” says Riedel of the Brookings Institution, “and they will not only have the skill set acquired from having fought on battlefields, they will also have a lot of prestige as veterans of jihad.”

Spillover is already occurring: The ranks of two al Qaeda-linked groups in Lebanon, Jabhat al-Nusra and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, are filling with rebel fighters from Syria and have taken responsibility for a string of suicide attacks aimed at Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite Muslim political party and militant group that supports the Assad regime.

“Al Qaeda in Lebanon are like these beads,” said Omar Bakri Fostok, a radical Sunni preacher based in Tripoli, pulling on a string of prayer beads. “There were individuals, but they have always lacked the thread that holds them together. They were not organized. That is now changing.”⁶⁶

In Iraq, the ISIS resurgence over the last three years is partially due to “access to a steady flow of both weapons and fighters from Syria,” the National Counterterrorism Center’s Olsen told Congress.⁶⁷

In Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah decreed in February that citizens who fight in conflicts abroad will face three to 20 years in prison upon returning home. Early last month, Saudi Arabia detained 62 suspected Islamic militants with reported ties to al Qaeda groups in Syria and Yemen. They represent the largest group accused of Islamist militancy in Saudi Arabia for at least two years.⁶⁸

Jordan has recently criminalized “joining or attempting to join armed or terrorist groups, or recruiting or attempting to recruit people” to join such groups. “Let’s be frank,” says Riedel. “Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt are police states, and they’re going to go after anyone who is coming home from this in the manner that a police state does. They’re just going to round people up and put them in jail.”

Some governments are taking less punitive approaches. For instance,

Tunisia has established an amnesty program to integrate into society individuals who have gone to Syria but have not killed anyone. Morocco is considering a similar program. And Saudi Arabia is considering expanding its system of rehabilitation centers serving the thousands it arrested during the last wave of al Qaeda attacks in the kingdom in the mid-2000s.⁶⁹ ■

OUTLOOK

Improving Governance

Development is the key to countering al Qaeda and Salafi-jihadist groups, says the Atlantic Council’s Bruton. For example, in Nigeria, “If the U.S. can go in and build roads, build schools, speak out against Nigerian human rights abuses and be seen as a neutral party interested in resolving legitimate grievances, that would be very helpful,” she says.

“Simply by improving local governance we would start to roll back where al Qaeda is able to operate,” says Zimmerman of the American Enterprise Institute. “Granted, this is broad, difficult and ill-defined, but it is what is missing.” For example, when the Yemeni government clears out AQAP forces from an area, “it then needs to provide basic services — food, water, shelter,” with Western help, if necessary, says Zimmerman. “The Yemeni government doesn’t provide much to the population, which is one reason why the population is not very loyal to the government.”

Without that kind of Western strategy, “I see a very strong al Qaeda,” says Zimmerman. She sees a broad sectarian war between Sunnis and Shiites across Syria and Iraq, with al Qaeda as major player; AQAP continuing along its current path; al-Shabab developing further into an East African group; and al Qaeda’s resurgence in Pakistan as the United States pulls out of Afghanistan.

ASSESSING THE THREAT FROM AL QAEDA

“And, frankly, if al Qaeda moves into Afghanistan, Pakistan is not going to be pursuing it,” she says.

However, Watts of the Foreign Policy Research Institute cautions that the West should not try to help develop government institutions and civil society, often called “nation building.”

“I don’t see how that helps us in counterterrorism,” says Watts. “Mostly it creates weak democracies that become safe havens for groups like al Qaeda, which is what we’re seeing in Anbar Province in Iraq.”

As for ISIS’ relentless advance in Iraq, he sees the group replacing al Qaeda’s core leadership as the global leader of jihad, at least in the short run, especially if AQAP leader Wahishi shifts his loyalty to ISIS. But as the Iraqi Shiites, aided by the Iranians and with some Western support, repel ISIS, Watts predicts, an entirely different scenario will emerge, especially as infighting continues between ISIS and al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan.

“Al Qaeda affiliates and regional upstarts may find little incentive to hitch their group to a volatile global jihadi alliance that would only erode their local popular support without bringing in outside resources, operational capability or ideological clarity,” according to Watts.⁷⁰

Over the longer term, he says, al Qaeda affiliates and jihadi groups “would remain only very loosely connected to one another.”

“Al Qaeda is being forced to change by counterterrorism pressure and by regional events,” says Liepman of the

Rand Corp. And the two most important events are the civil war in Syria and the upheaval in Iraq, he says. “The next couple of years will be both unstable and unpredictable for the jihadist universe, primarily because of the instability in both Syria and Iraq.” ■

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Barbara Mantel is a freelance writer in New York City. She is a 2012 Kiplinger Fellow and has won several journalism awards, including the National Press Club’s Best Consumer Journalism Award and the Front Page Award from the News-women’s Club of New York for her Nov. 1, 2009, *CQ Global Researcher* report “Terrorism and the Internet.” She holds a B.A. in history and economics from the University of Virginia and an M.A. in economics from Northwestern University.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036; 202-797-6000; www.brookings.edu. Centrist think tank researching foreign policy, global development, economics and social policy.

Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, 2201 C St., N.W., Washington, DC 20520; 202-647-4000; www.state.gov/j/ct. Helps develop and coordinate counterterrorism strategies.

Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1528 Walnut St., Suite 610, Philadelphia, PA 19102; 215-732-3774; www.fpri.org. Conservative think tank focused on international issues.

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 8400 Baltimore Ave., Suite 250, College Park, MD 20740; 301-405-6600; www.start.umd.edu. University-based research center on terrorism.

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The Next Step:

Additional Articles from Current Periodicals

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