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aka al-Qa'ida in Iraq; al-Qa'ida Group of Jihad in Iraq; al-Qa'ida Group of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia; al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Qa'ida of Jihad in Iraq; al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Qa'ida of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Tawhid; Jam'at al-Tawhid Wa'al-Jihad; Tanzeem Qa'idat al Jihad/Bilad al Raafidaini; Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn; The Monotheism and Jihad Group; The Organization Base of Jihad/Country of the Two Rivers; The Organization Base of Jihad/Mesopotamia; The Organization of al-Jihad's Base in Iraq; The Organization of al-Jihad's Base in the Land of the Two Rivers; The Organization of al-Jihad's Base of Operations in Iraq; The Organization of al-Jihad's Base of Operations in the Land of the Two Rivers; The Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers; al-Zarqawi Network; Islamic State in Iraq; Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham; Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa-sh-Sham; Daesh; Dawla al Islamiya; Al-Furqan Establishment for Media Production

Description: Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on December 17, 2004. In the 1990s, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born militant, organized a terrorist group called al-Tawhid wal-Jihad to oppose the presence of U.S. and Western military forces in the Islamic world and the West's support for and the existence of Israel. In late 2004, he joined al-Qa'ida (AQ) and pledged allegiance to Usama bin Laden. After this, al-Tawhid wal-Jihad became known as AQI. Zarqawi traveled to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and led his group against U.S. and Coalition Forces until his death in June 2006. In October 2006, AQI publicly re-named itself the Islamic State in Iraq, although within the past year the group adopted the moniker Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to express its regional ambitions as it expanded its operations to include the Syrian conflict. Since 2012, ISIL has been led by Specially Designated Global Terrorist Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, aka Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri, aka Abu Du'a. On May 15, the Department of State amended the Foreign Terrorist Organization designation of AQI to add aliases, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and to make ISIL the organization's primary name. In June 2014, ISIL leader al-Baghdadi declared an Islamic caliphate.

Activities: As AQI, ISIL has conducted high profile attacks, including improvised explosive device attacks against U.S. military personnel and Iraqi infrastructure; videotaped beheadings of Americans Nicholas Berg (May 11, 2004), Jack Armstrong (September 22, 2004), and Jack Hensley (September 21, 2004); suicide bomber attacks against both military and civilian targets;

and rocket attacks. ISIL perpetrates the majority of suicide and mass casualty bombings in Iraq using foreign and Iraqi operatives. ISIL was active in Iraq in 2012 and 2013; in 2013 alone it was responsible for the majority of deaths of the over 7,000 Iraqi civilians killed that year. ISIL was heavily involved in the fighting in Syria during 2013, including against other militant opposition groups, and participated in a number of kidnapping incidents against civilians, including aid workers and reporters.

ISIL remained active in 2014, launching numerous attacks on a variety of targets in both Syria and Iraq. In January, ISIL captured Fallujah, Iraq, and proclaimed an Islamic state there. In June, the group took over Mosul, the second most populous city in Iraq, and a large part of the surrounding Nineveh province. In early July, ISIL captured Syria's largest oilfield, the al-Omar. By late July, they took a Syrian 17th Division base near Raqqah. In early August, the group captured the Iraqi city of Sinjar, precipitating a humanitarian refugee crisis when the Yazidi, an Iraqi minority ethnic group living in the area, fled to avoid ISIL atrocities. Reported atrocities include the massacre of Yazidi men and the holding of Yazidi women and girls captive and selling them as slaves. In mid-August, ISIL beheaded U.S. journalist James Foley; in September, the group beheaded journalist Steven Sotloff; in October, ISIL killed British aid worker Alan Henning; and in November, American aid worker and ISIL hostage Peter Kassig was also murdered. In late December, ISIL captured a Jordanian pilot after his aircraft malfunctioned and he ejected into ISIL-controlled territory.

Strength: Estimates at year's end placed the number of fighters that ISIL can muster between 20,000 and 31,500.

Location/Area of Operation: ISIL's operations are predominately in Iraq and Syria, although supporters and associates worldwide who are inspired by the group's ideology may be operating without direction from ISIL central leadership. In October 2014, Ansar al-Shari'a-Darnah publicly pledged allegiance to ISIL, and in November 2014, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis pledged allegiance to the group. Also in October 2014, the chief spokesman of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and five regional commanders defected from TTP and publicly pledged allegiance to ISIL.

Funding and External Aid: ISIL receives most of its funding from a variety of businesses and criminal activities within areas it controls in Iraq and Syria. Criminal activities include robbing banks, smuggling oil, looting and selling antiquities and other goods, as well as extortion and kidnapping for ransom.

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